

A FOND FAREWELL!

This month saw the retirement of our **Director Stephen Macintyre** after dedicating 21 years of hard work to the Association.

Stephen arrived in Hillhead in 2003 when there was still a great deal of uncertainty as to whether the stock transfer would ever take place. Thankfully it did, and Stephen was able to start overseeing the transformation of the Hillhead area.

Together with dedicated staff and committee teams, he was able to drive forward his agenda for improving the lives of tenants through better housing and services. And his skills, passion and hard work have helped make Hillhead the place it is today.

Stephen is very much valued by everyone connected to the Association and will be greatly missed.



Stephen



Catherine

However he leaves the organisation in the safe hands of Catherine McKiernan, our former Depute Director / Housing Manager who took over the reins last month. Catherine is committed to ensuring the values of Hillhead and services to tenants are maintained.

We would like to wish Stephen all the very best in his retirement and thank him for his service to the Association and for his contribution to the regeneration of Hillhead.

RENT INCREASE - CHANGES YOU MAY NEED TO MAKE

Everyone will now have received their rent increase letter informing them of how much rent is due to be paid from 28 March 2024. Please see our information below on what you need to do now.

If your rent is paid by Universal Credit

Please check your journal as the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP) will set a 'To-Do' for you in your journal about your rent increase. You should receive this around 1st-3rd April. It is extremely important that you update your journal with the new rent amount as soon as possible. If you don't change your rent figure, Universal Credit will continue to pay at the old rate, and you will need to pay the shortfall.

For those tenants on Universal Credit and whose assessment period is 28th-31st of the month, please report your rent increase during those dates and do not wait until the 1st of April. You do this by selecting the **change of circumstances option**. Again, it is vital that you do so straight away. Failure to do this on time will mean that your rent will not be increased leaving you to pay any shortfall.

Even if you have updated your rent

figure you will still get a 'To-Do' on your journal. You must also complete this to ensure that the correct rent figure is paid.

Universal Credit will not backdate any shortfall in rent. If you need any help amending your rent figure, please get in touch and we will assist.

If your rent is paid by Housing Benefit

You do not need to do anything; we advise East Dunbartonshire Council of your new rent figure.

If you pay by standing order or direct debit

If you pay by standing order you will need to contact your bank and increase your payment or if you have on-line banking you can log on and update the figure yourself.

For those tenants paying by direct debit, the Association will amend the payment accordingly. If you are interested in changing your payment to a direct debit, please contact your Housing Officer who will be able to set this up for you. Once set up you never need worry about having to update your rent figure again.

Finally, if you have lost your letter and are not sure what to pay, please contact us and we can let you know.



Downsizing

We appreciate that times are hard for a lot of residents at the moment with the cost-of-living crisis and although we try to help where we can with food and fuel vouchers, the funding we receive is limited.

If you currently live in a home and have bedrooms that you no longer use you could consider downsizing to a smaller property to reduce some of your bills. We know that moving can be a very overwhelming experience which can prevent people from completing an application form. We can support you through the process and explain what would happen at each stage. We can also help complete a housing application form either in your home or at the office. If you would like to find out more information about our housing waiting list please contact the office on **0141 578 0200**.

Spring Clean Time & Housekeeping

It's been a tough winter for us all especially with increased fuel costs and the cold weather, but it looks and feels like spring is finally on its way. The clocks spring forward as we welcome the sunnier days of spring and summer and it's time to get your home and garden looking there best.

March and April are 'spring cleaning months' and many use this as an opportunity to get the inside and the outside of their homes looking cleaner and tidier.

As a tenant it is important to keep your home as clean and tidy as possible and with the weather getting warmer opening your windows to let the fresh air in also helps to ventilate your home.

Those living in flatted properties with a shared close

and garden should all take your turn with the other tenants sharing the common parts, in keeping them clean and tidy. Wipe down the doors, give the windows a clean and sweep and mop the floors or a regular basis.

As per your tenancy agreement you should take care to keep your garden from becoming overgrown, untidy, or causing a nuisance to your neighbours. Cutting the grass, trimming hedges and weeding are some of the responsibilities that comes with having a garden. Remember to use your green wheelie bin for all the cuttings and this will be collected every fortnight. Then you can relax and enjoy the sunshine (hopefully) in your garden.





If you live in a home that no longer meets your needs or you simply want a fresh start, a mutual exchange may be your solution. Mutual exchanges are a good option for tenants who may not have a high priority for a transfer or for a move with another Registered Social Landlord.

Home Swapper is an online mutual exchange service that allows you to advertise your property and find someone to swap with - both locally and nationally. You will have access to thousands of other tenants who are looking to swap their home and it's free to use for tenants of Hillhead Housing Association. You can register online directly at homeswapper.co.uk.

If you need any further assistance or have any questions, please contact Kelly Wallace, our Housing Assistant, who will be happy to help.

Tenancy Support Service

Hillhead Housing Association provides a tenancy support service in partnership with Simon Community Scotland. The service is designed to provide practical support for people who need assistance and advice in maintaining their home.

Angela Taylor provides this service and can be contacted on **0141 776 8628** or mobile **07876077751** Monday to Thursday 9am to 4.30pm.

Please speak to your housing officer or another member of staff if you are interested in being referred to the service.

How can Tenancy Support Service Help?

The service is designed to provide practical support for people who need assistance and

advice in maintaining their home and can help with.

- moving into accommodation
- Benefit claims
- Budgeting
- contacting energy companies
- Income and Debt management
- Assisting tenants to engage with other agencies and professionals
- Making referrals on your behalf to other service providers/ agencies
- Getting out and about
- Assisting with life skills

The Support Worker can work alongside tenants on a one-to-one basis to help motivate and build confidence with the aim that they will in time be able to manage better and enjoy an increased quality of life.

Property Services News

Useful Hints and Tips To Avoid Blocked Sinks

Blocked sinks can cause all sorts of problems and once a blockage is formed it can quickly escalate. Slow draining water, bad odours and eventually complete blockage can occur and the

longer you leave the problem, the harder it is to address. To prevent any blockages forming, please follow the advice below.

Tips To Prevent Blocked Sinks

- Do not pour fat down the drain as this can solidify when cooled and clog the drain.
- Do not leave vegetable peelings in the sink.
- Scrape plates and empty pans completely of food before washing them up.
- Run hot water down the sink after each use.
- Do not rinse any food or rubbish down the drain.
- If you have long hair, place a hair catcher over the plug hole in the shower and bath.

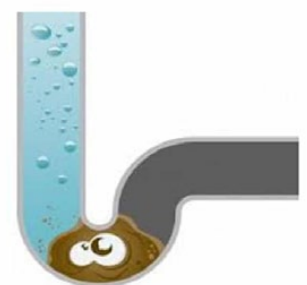
Unblocking Sinks

If you find yourself with a blocked or slow draining sink it will need to be unblocked before the issue gets worse.

Hair caught in the pipes can often be the be the problem for bathroom drains. You can use drain snakes to fish out the blockage or a bathroom specific drain gel which will dissolve any soap and hair lodged in the pipes.

For kitchen sinks, the blockage is more likely to be food waste or fat, sometimes hot water is enough to break down the blockage; try flushing the drain with boiling water a few times. If this isn't enough to clear the blocked sink you may need to use a kitchen drain unblocking gel. This should dissolve the fat or food waste in the drain.

It is your responsibility as a tenant to take care not to block your sinks. If blockages occur due to inappropriate usage or cause damage to drains tenants may be charged.





We provide smoke alarms in all our houses, and they are also subject to annual checks. However, you should test these weekly to make sure that they are always working. (TEST IT TUESDAY) If there appears to be a fault, you should report this to our Property Services Team.

ELECTRICAL SAFETY CHECKS

It is a legal requirement for every property to have an electrical safety check carried out every 5 years. This check is carried out within your property and seeks to identify any faults that may be present. These faults are rectified to ensure the property is safe. AC Gold are

working with us to ensure we are 100% compliant throughout all our properties. If you have received a missed call, text, or have been carded at your property, please contact the Property Services Team on **0141 729 9666** to arrange an appointment. We operate a flexible appointment system.

MOVING HOME

If you are moving out of your property it is the tenant's responsibility to arrange the safe disposal of all your household items. You can arrange a special uplift from East Dunbartonshire Council by contacting them on **0300 1234510**, please note there is a charge for this service. If you do arrange a special uplift, please inform your Housing Officer of the reference number you receive from the Council. The Association will recharge you for any items that are left at the property where a special uplift has not been arranged and paid for.

GAS & ELECTRIC SUPPLIERS

If you are moving home, please provide us with your current electricity and gas supplier details to enable the Association's Property Services Team to have your meters reset. This will allow the association to credit any pay as you go meters to enable the Association to carry out our Health & Safety checks. If you have a key meter or card meter, please provide these when handing your keys into the office.

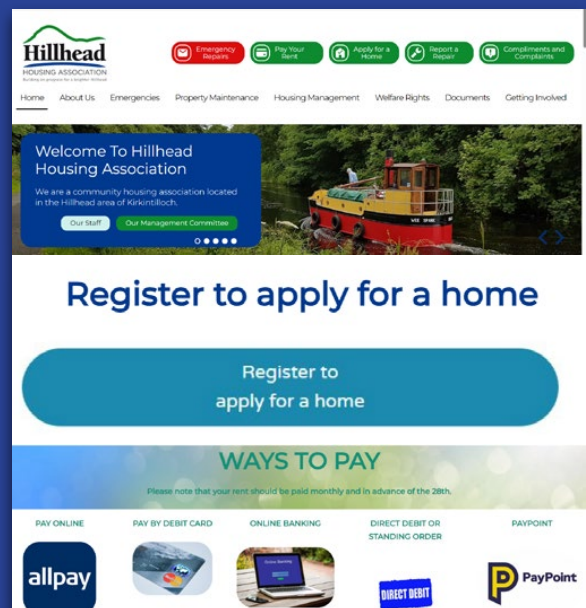
General News

LET OUR WEBSITE WORK FOR YOU!

We mentioned in our last newsletter that our website had gone through a re-design. This went live on 1 December, and we hope you have had a chance to visit to see the improvements we have made.

As well as being able to access a large amount of information about the Association and our services, you can also find a library of documents including forms and applications relating to your tenancy, policies, minutes and much more, you can:

- **Complete an application for housing**
- **Pay your rent** **if you do not know your customer reference number please let us know*
- **Report a repair** ** emergency repairs should be reported to our office or direct to our contractors if our office is closed.*
- **Make a complaint or pay us a compliment**



BE A WINNER – IT COULD BE YOU!

We also hold more regular prize draws for the following:

REPAIRS SATISFACTION SURVEYS

Whenever you report a repair this generates a text message asking if you wish a satisfaction form to be sent to you. Once you receive this form all you need to do is answer a few short questions, return it to us in the reply paid envelope provided, and you will be entered into a prize draw.

These prize draws will take place on a quarterly basis from April – meaning that a draw will take place at the end of April, July and October. If your name is lucky enough to be drawn we will contact you to ask you to choose from a selection of top prizes!

You might already be aware of the prize draws we run from time to time as a thank you for taking the time to take part in consultations and to give us valuable feedback on our activities.

TENANT LOYALTY SCHEME

This draw takes place every 2 months and includes all tenants who have maintained a clear rent account for a minimum of 6 months and also who have had no anti-social or estate management complaints against them in that period.

PRIZES

If you are lucky to have your name drawn for one of the above you could win:

- **An air fryer**
- **A slow cooker**
- **Large George Foreman grill**
- **£100 shopping voucher for the grocery store of your choice**



These prizes may change over the course of the year but there will always be a good selection to choose from!

Remember – it is important to keep us updated with your contact details – the repair texts won't get through if we have an old mobile number in our records. YOU'VE GOT TO BE IN IT TO WIN IT!

RECIPE COMPETITION

Do you have a tasty budget friendly recipe that you would like to share?

WIN A £50 VOUCHER

Submit your recipe via our Facebook page: Hillhead Housing Association 2000 or email us: admin@hillheadhousing.org

The Winner will feature in our quarterly Newsletter and receive a Grocery Voucher of choice worth £50.

*Terms and conditions apply

Lentil & Bacon Soup

Ingredients:

- 250g red split lentils
- 2 Litres of Water
- 1 pack of bacon lardons
- 2 ham stock cubes
- 2 carrots peeled and diced
- 2 medium onions diced
- 2 medium potatoes peeled and diced
- Salt and freshly ground pepper

Budget Friendly

Prep Time
20min

Cook Time
1 hr 15 min

Serves
6

Instructions:

- Put Onions, bacon lardons, potato and carrots in a hot pan with a little oil and cook until the onions have softened.
- Add the lentils, 2 litres of water and your stock cubes
- Simmer for 1 hour or until lentils are cooked.
- Season to taste
- Serve & enjoy



HOW WELL ARE WE DOING?

The tables below show some key areas of performance within both Housing Management and Property Services, this includes Current Tenant Rent Arrears, Number of Property Allocations and Repair Performance information.

We always encourage feedback from our tenants and customers, this helps us improve our service. Please get in touch and take part in our regular surveys that are issued.

Period between 1 October and 31 December 2023

CURRENT TENANT RENT ARREARS

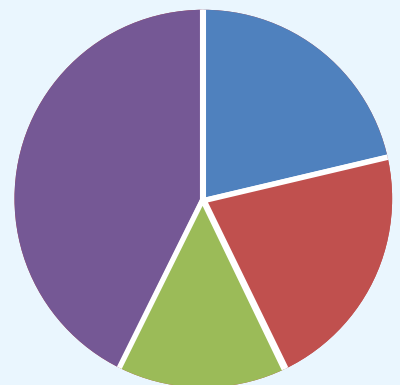
Month	Tenant Arrears	Level of Arrears
October	£105,919	2.48%
November	£105,002	2.46%
December	£119,174	2.79%

ALLOCATIONS

Month	No. of Lets
October	5
November	7
December	2

WHO WERE PROPERTIES ALLOCATED TO?

- Lease
- Section 5
- Transfer - Hillhead Tenants
- Waiting List



REPAIRS RESPONSE TIMES (excludes gas servicing)

Category/Month	% Completed within time scales		
	October	November	December
Emergency (24hours)	100%	96.77%	100%
Urgent (3 days)	98.76%	100%	96.72%
Routine (10 days)	100%	98.73%	100%
Voids (7 days)	100%	100%	100%
All Repairs - HHA 2000	99.45%	99.15%	98.59%

HOW WE COMPARE TO OTHER HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

As a member of Scottish Housing Networks, we take the opportunity to compare our performance against other Housing Association members.

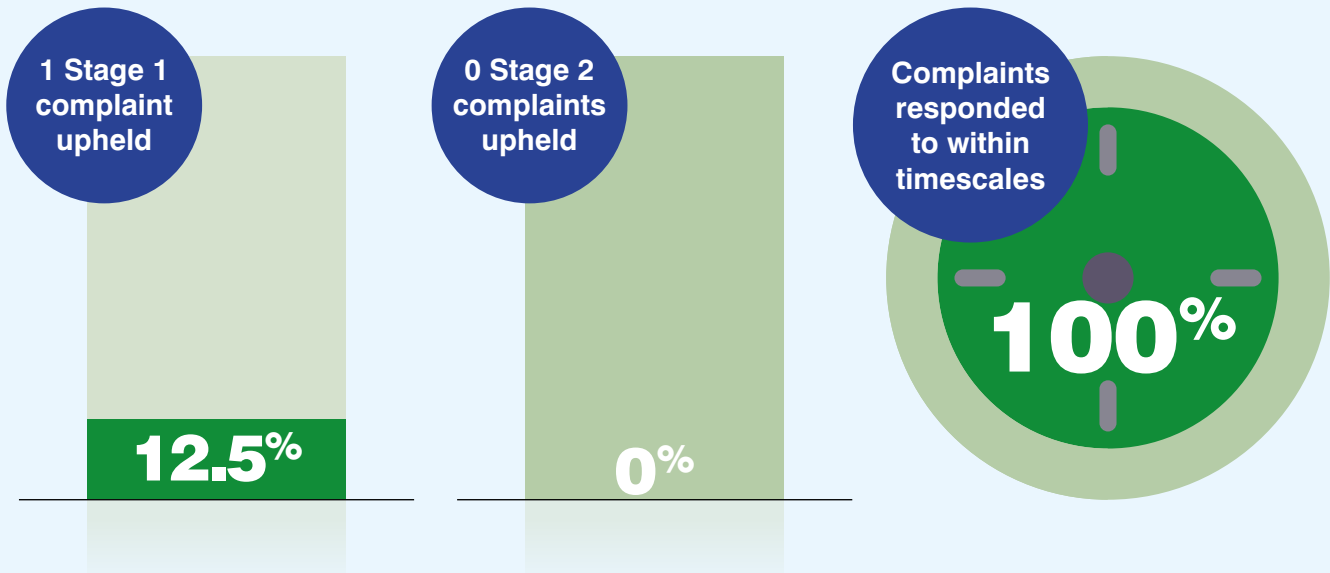
As shown in the table below, our performance remains favourable, with Hillhead’s current tenant rent arrears and empty house/flat rent loss only slightly above the SHN average. In relation to relet times and average number of days to complete non emergency repairs, our timescales are significantly better than the SHN average.

Performance Area	Hillhead	Scotland Housing Network
Rent Arrears	2.79%	2.56%
Rent Loss for empty houses/flats	0.61%	0.54%
Average time taken to re-let a house	24.29 days	32.67 days
Average number of days to complete non emergency repairs	3.25 days	6.50 days

COMPLAINTS

Between 1 October and 31 December 2023, the Association received 8 Stage 1 complaints and 0 Stage 2 complaints.

COMPLAINTS RESULTS



COMPLAINTS BY NATURE OF COMPLAINT

Housing Quality & Maintenance	7
Access to Housing and Support	0
Customer / Landlord Relationship	0
Getting good value from rents & service charges	0
Complaints relating to equalities	0

ACTION TAKEN TO IMPROVE SERVICES

The upheld complaint related to a one-off incident which was rectified by the contractor.

Useful Telephone Numbers

Below is a list of contact telephone numbers that we hope you will find useful

Advice and Response EDC
0141 775 1311

Emergency Housing EDC
0141 578 2133 / 0141 578 8000

Kirkintilloch Integrated Care Centre
0141 232 8200 /
0141 304 7400 / 0141 355 2200

EDC – The Hub
0800 901 057

Housing Benefit
0800 901057

Caledonia Housing, Kirkintilloch
0141 578 0260

Police Station, Kirkintilloch
0141 532 4400 or 101

Special Uplift
0300 1234515

Cleansing and Recycling
0300 1234514

**Environmental Protection
(including dog fouling, dog
barking, antisocial noise)**
0300 1234510

Fire Station
0141 776 6263

**National Grid (formerly Transco)
Gas Emergency**
0800 111 999

DWP (Cumbernauld)
01236 786500

Local MP, Stuart McDonald MP
01236 453 969

Local MSP, Rona Mackay
0141 776 1561

Citizens Advice Bureau
0141 775 3223

Crimestoppers Scotland
0800 555111

How to contact us:

Hillhead Housing Association,
2 Meiklehill Road, Hillhead, Kirkintilloch, G66 2LA

Email: admin@hillheadhousing.org
Web: www.hillheadhousing.org

Free Phone Number: 0800 0523 188
Tel: 0141 578 0200 • Fax: 0141 578 4817
Text Number: 07491 163429

Our phone lines are open between 9.00AM
and 12.30PM and from 1.30PM to 5PM.

OUT OF HOURS EMERGENCY REPAIRS CONTACT NUMBERS:

(Gas Heating repairs–James Frew Ltd)
01294 468 113

(all other repairs–Rodgers & Johnston)
0800 999 2520

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS - OFFICE HOURS

Our office will be closed on the following dates:

- Friday 29 March and Monday 1 April
- Monday 6 May
- Friday 24 May and Monday 27 May

**KEEP
US UP
TO DATE!**

Please remember to let us know of any changes in your circumstances, for example change of name, change of number in household etc.



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