

the tenants' VOICE

WINTER 2016

RENT FREE WEEKS

The rent free weeks over the festive period are the weeks beginning 19 and 26 December 2016. Please remember that if you have rent arrears you must continue to make payments over this period.

If you have any questions about paying your rent then get in touch with your area housing officer or the money advice team. It is completely free and confidential.

Do not worry about debt this Christmas, get in touch with us on **0300 123 4566**.

How to check your rent balance and make a payment

You can check your rent balance and make a payment at any time using the rent balance tool. All you need is the last 9 numbers from your barcode number.

The rent balance tool can be found online at: <http://rentbalance.moray.gov.uk/>



You can also pay your rent:

- by credit or debit card using our online service at www.moray.gov.uk
- at the Post Office or any Paypoint outlet
- by standing order
- by direct debit

Office closure during the festive period

Our offices will be closed from 3pm on Friday 23 December 2016 and will re-open on Wednesday 4 January 2017 at 8:45am.

If you have an emergency during this period please call our out of hours service on **03457 565656**.

NEW HOUSING PAYMENT CARDS

Due to a change in our bill payments service provider, replacement barcodes must be generated on all housing accounts (house rent, garage rent and tenants insurance).

You will shortly be issued with a new style payment card, which has a brightly coloured band across the top. Please start using your new cards as soon as you receive them and destroy the old ones to make sure your future payments can be processed efficiently.

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CONTACT US

If you need to contact us or need information please call our **Contact Centre on 0300 1234566** or visit our website **www.moray.gov.uk** Alternatively you can visit one of our access points.

BUCKIE

Buckie Access Point,
13 Cluny Square, Buckie, AB56 1AJ.

ELGIN

Elgin Access Point,
Council Office, High Street, Elgin,
IV30 1BX.

FORRES

Forres Access Point, Auchernack,
High Street, Forres,
IV36 1DX.

KEITH

Keith Community Hub, Mid Street,
Keith, AB55 5AH



EMERGENCY OUT OF
HOURS: 03457 565656



disability
information
scotland

let us be your guide

An information service
for disabled people,
their friends, family,
carers and people who
work within the sector.

National Helpline:

0300 323 9961

www.disabilityscot.org.uk

Scottish Charity SC030004



Elgin Youth Café: A safe space for Young People.

Group work focussed on confidence and self-esteem, one-to-one mentoring, cooking classes, fitness classes, volunteering opportunities, employment opportunities, drop-in sessions, holiday activity programmes and much more



Inkwell Moray: Our social enterprise -

Conference facilities, room hire and catering...

Community Kitchen: Cooking and baking classes for all ages. Cooking for one? Cooking on a budget?

Contact Details:

www.elginyouthcafe.org ~ 01343-548300



NEUTER YOUR CAT FOR £5

- Are you on income based benefits or low income?
- Are you a full time student?
- Are you in receipt of a state pension or pension credit?

Moray Cats Protection may be able to help you with the cost of neutering your cat.

Neutering is good for your cat:

- It stops unwanted kittens & costly vet bills when the pregnancy goes wrong
- Your cat is less likely to fight, reducing the risk of catching life-threatening diseases
- Neutered cats are less likely to wander and get run over
- Neutered male cats are less likely to display territorial behaviour such as spraying

Let us help you and your cat.

Please contact us for more information:

Tel: 07837 342 646 or email: moraycp@hotmail.com

Visit our Facebook page: Moray Cats Protection



Dear readers,



Welcome to the winter edition of the Tenants' Voice.

It has been a busy year for the Housing Service. We have made a number of changes to our services as a result of feedback from you. One example of this is the structural changes that we have made to our Building Services (DLO) to address some areas of poor performance. These changes are currently bedding in. We know we still have improvements to make, but we do hope that you will begin to see real improvements in our repairs and maintenance services in the months ahead.

There are further changes proposed to our other services during 2017 and we want your views on these proposals. Details of the changes are provided within this edition of Tenants' Voice and include:

- rent increase options for 2017/18 (letter enclosed);
- a new medical assessment process;
- a new budget to improve the neighbourhoods that you live in; and
- improvements to the downsizing incentive scheme

As the cold nights draw in and temperatures drop, some advice is provided on how to avoid burst pipes, understand your heating system and keeping warm this winter. If anything does go wrong then our article on 'emergency' and non-emergency repairs might be of benefit to you. We hope you find this helpful.

We continue to seek the involvement of tenants in designing our housing services. The Moray Tenant Forum is an active voice for all tenants and I encourage you to get involved. Please read on to find out how you can get involved and what is in it for you.

Finally, I wish all our readers and their family and friends a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

George G. Alexander

Councillor George Alexander
Chair of Communities Committee



Waste Management Arrangements Xmas/Hogmanay Period 2016/17

Household Refuse and Recycling Collections

Household collections of residual waste (green bin) and garden/food waste (brown bin) will continue to alternate weekly and recycling containers will continue to be serviced fortnightly over the festive period.

Collections may be carried out earlier than usual, please present your containers for 7:30am.

NORMAL COLLECTION DAY	ALTERNATIVE COLLECTION DAY
Monday 26 December 2016	Saturday 31 December 2016
Monday 2 January 2017	Saturday 7 January 2017

25 - 26 December 2016 and 1 - 2 January 2017 – ALL SERVICES CLOSED



RECYCLING CENTRES: Closed 25 - 26 December 2016 and 1 - 2 January 2017 - Open as normal at all other times

PUBLIC CONVENIENCES: Closed 25 - 26 December 2016 and 1 - 2 January 2017 - Open as normal at all other times

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND WASTE HOTLINE

The Special Collection and Waste Hotline will be closed from:
3pm on Friday 23 December 2016 re-opening at 9am Wednesday 4 January 2017



EXCESS WASTE, RECYCLING AND OLD CHRISTMAS TREES CAN BE TAKEN TO THE FOLLOWING RECYCLING CENTRES:

Gollachy, Buckie; Waterford, Forres; Chanonry, Elgin; Balloch Road, Keith

For further information please contact the Waste Hotline on **0300 1234565** or **waste@moray.gov.uk**

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM ALL AT ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Tips for Cold Snap

The inconvenience of burst pipes can be considerable and even a small fracture can result in gallons of water being released which can damage masonry, plaster, carpets and other valuable house contents.



Follow our tips to try and prevent burst pipes and keep your home safe over the winter period:

- If you are not going to be at home over the festive period, ask a trusted neighbour or friend to check your property on a daily basis and leave your heating on a low setting to prevent pipes freezing. If you do not wish to leave the heating on when you are away then drain down your water system until you return. We offer a **free** drain down service, phone us on **0300 123 4566** for an appointment.
- Use your thermostat to keep the temperature comfortable if you have central heating. We recommend between 18 and 22 degrees. Remember however, that the higher the thermostat the more fuel you will use.
- Make sure you know where the stopcock is. This is usually in the kitchen under the sink. Check that it is working properly **now** and if not report it.
- Make yourself familiar with your heating controls – central heating thermostats and time switches can be complicated. If you need help to understand your heating system please contact us.

IF YOU DISCOVER YOU HAVE A FROZEN PIPE:

- Find the stopcock and turn off the water straight away.
- Turn on all your taps to drain any excess water.
- Turn off your electric boiler or immersion heater and let fuel fires die out.
- Contact us as soon as possible.
- Never try to thaw out your pipes by turning on your central heating or immersion heater.
- Wrap a hot cloth around the pipe and wait to see if any drips of water appear. If there are drips of water, this suggests that the joints may be leaking or the pipe has burst. Get in touch before further damage occurs.

IF YOU SUFFER FROM A BURST PIPE:

- Find the stopcock and turn off the water straight away.
- Turn on all your taps to drain any excess water and minimise any damage.
- If there is a chance of the water coming into contact with any electrics, turn off the electrics at the mains immediately.
- Turn off your electric boiler or immersion heater and let fuel fires die out.
- Call us immediately and let your neighbours know if it is likely to affect them.

Call us on **0300 123 4566** during office hours or in an emergency call our out of hours number on **03457 565656**.

Scottish Environment Protection Agency – www.sepa.org.uk

There is a service that you can sign up with to receive free advance flood warning messages direct to your landline or mobile phone if there is a risk of flooding in your local area. You will need to put in your postcode when registering.

SEPA can give two different types of warning messages depending on your location. When you enter your postcode, the system will check and confirm which warning service is available for your area.

- If your property is within an area covered by a SEPA flood monitoring system, you will be able to sign up to receive a targeted flood warning message for your local area;
- If your property is not within a warning target area, you can sign up to receive a more general flood alert message for the wider geographical area, usually representing local authority boundaries.

If you would like to register more than one property address, or you need help to register, please call Floodline on 0345 988 1188 for more information or register online at <http://bit.ly/KnNcja>.

Christmas Fire Safety Tips

Each year the fire service responds to fires caused by Christmas trees. We want everyone to enjoy their Christmas so take a few simple steps and cut the risk of a fire in your home.

Picking your tree

- If you want an artificial tree, make sure that it is labelled, certified, or identified by the manufacturer as fire retardant.
- If you are choosing a real tree, make sure that it is fresh, the needles are green and they don't fall off when touched.

Placing the tree

- Make sure that your tree is at least 3 feet away from any heat source, for example a fire, radiator, candles or lights.
- Make sure the tree is not blocking an exit.
- If you have a real tree make sure that you keep it well watered to stop it from drying out.

Lighting the tree

- Never use candles to decorate a tree.
- Make sure that the lights have been safety tested when buying them.

- Replace any lights where the cord is worn or broken, or has loose connections.
- Always turn off Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.

After Christmas

- A dried out tree is a fire danger and should not be left in the house or garage or put outside the home against a wall. Check the waste notice for which recycling centres will take your old Christmas tree.
- Bring in your outside lights once the festive period has finished, this will prevent hazards and also make them last longer.



Winter Travel

Severe winter weather can cause many challenges when travelling so it is useful to be prepared for the weather. Trains and buses may be cancelled and some people may even be stranded in their vehicles due to weather issues. Winter weather can lead to people in rural communities being isolated and can cause everyday tasks to become difficult for some. With the winter upon us, we have some helpful advice.

When using your own vehicle:

- Always check the weather and road conditions before you start your journey.
- Consider alternative routes if possible and use the safest route.
- Allow extra time for your journey when the weather is bad.
- Check your car battery.
- Make sure all bulbs are clean and working.
- Keep washer levels topped up and make sure wiper blades

are working.

- Check fuel level, tyre pressure, brake fluid, anti-freeze, water and oil levels regularly.
- Check the terms of your breakdown cover. If you do not have breakdown cover, consider buying this.
- Make sure you have an emergency car kit in your vehicle.

Emergency car kit essentials:

- Ice scraper and/or de-icer
- Snow shovel
- Torch and spare batteries
- Warm clothes, boots and a blanket
- Food and water
- First aid kit
- Battery jump leads
- Map



HouseKeeping Project

A Scottish Legal Aid Board Initiative



OBTAIN HOUSING ADVICE ON RENT AND MORTGAGE ARREARS

Advice about court proceedings, options, choices and their consequences to enable you to make an informed decision.

FREE, CONFIDENTIAL, INDEPENDENT AND IMPARTIAL ADVICE

For more information contact:

SLAB Project Workers

Victoria Gordon

Email: Victoria.Gordon@moraycab.casonline.org.uk

Tel: 01343 559003

Alan McDonald

Email: Alan.Mcdonald@moraycab.casonline.org.uk

Tel: 01343 59007

Moray Citizens Advice Bureau

6 Moss Street, Elgin, IV30 1LU

Tel: 01343 550088



myaccount service

Soon you can sign-up to **myaccount** for an easier and more convenient way to manage your council accounts and services.

Have you had enough of the time it takes to fill in long forms, contacting us to follow-up on requests or making arrangements during the day to visit council offices? If the answer is yes, our new myaccount service is here for you.

Due to be launched in early 2017, myaccount is your online customer account. A Scottish Government initiative, it's a free and voluntary service that is a completely secure and easy way to access and use council services online. It's accessible 24/7 so you can pay, apply, review or report what you need, wherever and whenever it suits you - from the comfort of your own home, at the school gate, on the train home from work or from an access point on the computers provided, as long as you have access to the internet, you can log-in to myaccount.

Flexibility and convenience are not the only benefits of myaccount. You only need an email address to complete the simple registration process which only takes a few minutes and on registering you will have:

- more time because forms are automatically populated with your personal details
- a single sign-on for all services
- the choice of quick and easy contact – no need to call or visit us
- the ability to save forms to complete later
- visibility of all your online requests, transactions and contact
- avoid re-registration if moving elsewhere in Scotland.

From the start there will be a handful of services available including bulky uplift and road faults. We'll then take a phased approach to transferring services over to myaccount so you can expect many more to follow over the coming months, including the 'check your points and position on the housing list' and 'view your rent balance online'. Check on the 'Services' tab on myaccount to see when more services have been added. You will continue to have access to services in their current location on the website until they are moved over to myaccount.

myaccount is your service and we are working hard to make sure that it works for you.

Stay informed – follow us on facebook, twitter or check our website to see when myaccount will be available to you.

About myaccount:

- Your online customer account
- Manage council accounts and services when it's convenient for you
- Accessible 24/7
- Safe and secure
- Quick registration process
- All you need is an email address to sign-up
- Forms can be auto-populated with personal details
- Single sign-on for all services
- Quick and easy contact
- Save forms to complete later
- All online contact stored in one location
- No need to register again if you move elsewhere in Scotland

Lends equipment such as electric/manual wheelchairs, scooters, walkers etc.

SHOPMOBILITY MORAY



Helping people who have limited mobility, long or short term, or visual/hearing impairments access to shops and other facilities in Elgin City centre and further afield.

Certain equipment can be taken away for longer use.

**Opening Hours are:- Tuesday – Saturday 10am – 4pm
59 High St, Elgin IV30 1EE - 01343 552528**

Quarriers

Quarriers
Reach your true potential

Carer Support Service (Moray)

Call 01343 556031

Email carersmoray@quarriers.org.uk

www.quarrierscarersservice.org.uk

There are almost 8000 people in Moray providing unpaid care and support for a family member or friend who depends upon them because of physical or mental ill health, disability, substance use or frailty.

Speak to Quarriers today about how we can help carers with information, advice and support in their caring role.

“ I feel more able to cope because Quarriers staff allowed me to talk through my problems. ”

Quarriers is a registered Scottish Charity No SC001960

Review of the downsizing incentive scheme

In January 2012, we introduced a scheme offering tenants of larger properties a financial incentive and practical support to move to a smaller home. The aim of the scheme was to release larger family accommodation for those in the greatest housing need.

To be eligible for the scheme, you must live in a 3+ bedroom property, under occupy your home by at least one bedroom, have a satisfactory tenancy report, and live in a property that we can easily re-let. You must also be moving to another council property.

The financial incentive includes a basic payment of £1,500 and an additional £400 for each spare bedroom given up.

Improvements to the scheme

We have been reviewing the scheme and in November, we presented a report to our Communities Committee with our findings.

WE HAVE IDENTIFIED THE FOLLOWING IMPROVEMENTS:

- Tenants (or qualifying occupiers) become eligible where the household no longer requires the adapted

or specialist features of the house. There will be no requirement to consider under occupancy and all sizes of this type of property would be considered. Tenants (or qualifying occupiers) giving up an adapted property will receive a flat basic rate plus the proposed new disruption element.

- Increase the financial incentive offered to tenants to include a £400 disruption payment.
- Increase the number of tenants we support each year from 20 to 25 households.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

We intend to relaunch the scheme in April 2017 but before we do, we would like to know what you think about the changes. You can tell us what you think by filling in a short survey.

For more information or to get a copy of the survey:

- visit our website and fill in the survey online at <http://bit.ly/2gg1u7t>
- phone **0300 123 4566**
- email housing@moray.gov.uk

The consultation ends on 31 January 2017.

Do you have mobility problems or a disability?

Are you having problems getting in and out of the bath or having difficulty managing steps?

In some circumstances we can adapt your home to improve your quality of life.

We may be able to fit handrails or grab rails, install a ramp, stairlift or remove a bath and fit a level access shower.

If you feel that this would benefit you then please contact the Access Care Team on **01343 563999** or email accesscareteam@moray.gov.uk. If it is easier, you can get a friend or relative to contact us on your behalf.

You can find more information on our website at www.moray.gov.uk/communitycare.



CHANGES TO MEDICAL POINTS

In November, the Communities Committee agreed to consult on changes about how we award additional points to people who have applied for housing because their house is not suitable due to their health and/or disability.

WHAT ARE THE PROPOSED CHANGES?

The changes that we want to make are:

- **to change the way which we assess applicants' needs**

The functional assessment model considers the ability of an applicant to maintain essential day to day activities in their own home. The assessment considers:

- if and why a person's current accommodation is unsuitable, unavailable or inappropriate to adapt, or
- if rehousing is essential to maintain longer term health, welfare or independence and /or
- if health and welfare or independence could be significantly or moderately improved by re-housing and/or
- if reasonable and practical adaptations can be made to the property but rehousing would meet longer term needs more fully and efficiently.

- **to change who will carry out the assessment**

A Housing Occupational Therapist (OT) will assess all applications for additional points using a functional based assessment.

- **to change the criteria that is used to award points**

We have changed the wording in the criteria that we use to make our assessments. We want to make the criteria clearer and more transparent and easier for everyone to understand.

- **to change our appeals process**

As part of the new process an appeals panel will be set up to review appeals. It will include the Housing Needs Operations Manager, the Senior Housing Needs Officer and the Advanced Occupational Therapist.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

Your feedback is an important part of how we do things. We would like you to tell us what you think about the proposed changes. You can do this by filling in a short survey.

For more information or to get a copy of the survey:

- visit our website and fill in the survey online at <http://bit.ly/2gdjqlb>
- phone **0300 123 4566**
- email housing@moray.gov.uk

The consultation ends on 31 January 2017.



Your heating system and keeping warm in winter

Controlling your heating correctly over the winter will keep your fuel bills under control and help you to keep warm during any cold spells. In most cases, setting your heating and hot water to come on, and off, when you need them, rather than having them on when you are not at home, will make your home more comfortable, more cost effective, and be more environmentally friendly.

GAS AND OIL SYSTEMS

Gas and oil heating systems are generally supplied by a boiler located somewhere in your home, or in the case of the small number of oil systems, this could be outside.



If you have 'wet' radiators heating your home:

- Set your timer 15-30 minutes before you need your house to be warm, when you wake up in the morning for example, so that it has time to reach your chosen temperature.
- Turn your heating off 30 minutes before you leave home or go to bed and the heat already built up will keep your house warm.

There are 3 main types of boiler you may have in your home and there are slight differences in how they work.

- Conventional boilers** have a separate water tank and normally only one control for both hot water and heating. In winter, and any other time you need heating regularly, set this temperature control to max (80°C).
- Combination boilers**, more commonly known as 'combi boilers' usually have separate temperature controls for hot water and heating.
 - If your boiler has two dials set the heating control at a high setting (80°C) during the winter. For hot water set the water control at the lowest setting available but high enough for your own hot water requirements (usually between 55°C and 60°C).
 - If your boiler has a single dial set it at a maximum (80°C) in winter or when it's very cold, and middle or lower (55-60°C) when you don't need the heating in the summer. Set it somewhere in between for the rest of the time.
- Back boilers** will sit behind a gas fire in the living room. In winter, and any other time you need heating regularly, it is recommended that you set this temperature control to max (80°C).

HEATING CONTROLS

Room thermostats are normally used to control the overall temperature in your home. They turn your boiler on and off automatically when it reaches the right temperature.



- Aim to set your main room thermostat somewhere between 18°C and 22°C.
- Turning your thermostat down 1 degree could lower your gas bill by 5 to 10%, so try this and see if you still feel comfortable at a lower temperature.

The majority of the radiators in your home will be fitted with thermostatic radiator valves (TRVs) to control the temperature in each room by reducing the flow of heated water to the radiator.

- If a TRV is positioned in a main living space **where there's also a room thermostat**, we recommend using the **maximum** setting on the TRV. This allows the room thermostat to control the temperature efficiently.
- If a TRV is positioned in a main living space **without a room thermostat**, set it to what you are comfortable with.
- In rooms that are not used regularly, turn your TRV's down. This will keep the room warm enough to prevent damp but not so high that you're heating the room for no need.

AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMPS



Air source heat pump systems (ASHP) are normally located outside the house and use refrigerant to power a unit inside the house, which then provides hot water to the heating system. Air source heating is believed to cause fewer problems to the environment as it does not directly use any 'fossil fuels' such as gas or coal.

An air source heat pump extracts heat from the outside air in the same way that a fridge extracts heat from its inside. It can get heat from the air even when the temperature is as low as -15°C .

The settings on your air source unit will have been set by the installer to match the most suitable electricity tariff and generally should not need to be altered.

If underfloor heating (UFH) is installed you may see a manifold in your airing cupboard, or similar, with pipes going into the floor. This will heat your floors, which in turn heat your home.

Your heat pump will automatically control the temperature of the water going through your central heating. The colder the temperature gets outside, the warmer the circulating water through your central heating. It is important that you do not turn off the ASHP at any time as this will increase your bills due to the need to charge up the unit from 'cold' using the back-up heating element.

ELECTRIC STORAGE SYSTEMS



Energy supply to this type of heating is restricted to off peak hours.

When in the 'on' period, electricity directly heats the elements in the heaters, which in turn heat up clay bricks within the casing. However you may also have direct acting panel or fan heaters in your home, which are supplied from the standard rate meter.

Although surrounded in a layer of insulation, as the brick within the storage heater get hotter, the casing of the heater also becomes hot, heating your home. Heat is also released from the heater by the operation of a damper valve. As the day progresses the bricks inside the heater become cooler and heat output decreases.

Storage heaters are very straight forward to adjust. Every heater has 2 controls, an Input control and an output control.

The input control works out the level of heat stored over night during the off-peak period. The setting of the input control will have the biggest effect on the level of comfort and also on the running costs. The higher the setting the more heat will be stored and released, however, you will also use more electricity.

When the output control is opened, air goes through the brick core and is released from the grille at the top of the heater. Setting the output control between 'min' and 'max' will open the damper valve slightly to allow the heat to escape in a more controlled way through the day. However, if you are out all day it is best to close the damper valve and then open it when you come home.

Everybody is different and has their idea of the right temperature. Generally the most comfortable temperature for a room should be between 18-22 degrees.

SOLID FUEL SYSTEMS



Your home will be fitted with one of two systems – either a traditional 'open fire' or a modern sealed room-heater, together with radiators in each room.

Solid fuel systems are generally less efficient and less controllable than a gas or oil system but can give similar levels of heating output depending on the fuel being used.

If your radiator has a fixed valve (known as a 'heat soak' radiator) this deals with excess heat from the system. It is a safety feature and should **never** be turned off when the heating is in use.

Gas Safety

We need your support to keep your family, you and your neighbourhood safe.

We have a duty under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 to make sure that all gas installations in our houses are safe to use, and serviced on an annual basis. To do this we need access to your property.

If a serious fault occurs in the gas heating system in your home, your safety and that of your neighbours could be affected.

So far this reporting year, we have progressed **52** forced entries to tenant's homes to carry out gas services, with **14** of these resulting in an actual break in to the property. As your landlord, we are unable to simply ignore gas safety therefore if entry cannot be achieved with your co-operation then it will take place by force. This is something we would prefer to avoid. There is also a rechargeable cost to the you of £120.00 which is preventable. Please help us to help you.

Our Building Services (DLO) service your gas installations, as well as providing a repairs service for all gas heating problems. Access is normally arranged by telephone, three weeks in advance of the required service date to agree an appointment. Appointments can be either morning (between 8am and 12.30pm) or afternoon (between 12.30pm and 4.30pm). You can have a choice of date but this must be before the existing gas safety certificate is due to expire.

Tenants are sent written confirmation of their appointment as well as a text message. A reminder text is sent on the eve of the appointment and it is

important that tenants let us know if this date is no longer convenient. You can do this by phoning **0300 123 4566**.

We can arrange a further appointment with you but if access cannot be obtained then as stated, we have little choice but to move towards a forced entry.

In preparation for your gas service there are things that you need to do.

- 1) You must have gas and electricity at your meter to allow your gas installations to be serviced. Due to the legal requirements placed upon landlords, if you have no active power in your home at the time of servicing, the engineer has no alternative but to turn off your gas supply for your own safety. Again, this is an avoidable inconvenience for both us and you.
- 2) If you have a gas fire, please turn it off in good time before we come to your home as this will allow the fire to be serviced.
- 3) For safety reasons, please do not smoke while the gas engineers are servicing or carrying out repairs.

GAS AUDITING

We also make sure that the gas servicing that we do is audited by an independent company. If you have gas heating and have had it serviced recently then the company (Richard Irvin) may contact you to arrange for one of their staff to carry out some extra checks after your service. This is important and is an additional safety check designed to make sure that we all remain safe.

National fraud initiative

By law we must take part in the national fraud initiative (NFI) data matching exercise. This is an exercise that matches your electronic data within and between public and private sector bodies to prevent and detect fraud. As part of this initiative we must tell individuals that their information is being processed. This is known as a 'fair processing notice' or 'privacy notice'.

As well as telling you in this newsletter, we also include

a statement within an applicant's declaration on their housing application. This makes sure that tenants and prospective tenants know about our duty to take part in the national fraud initiative.

For more information about the national fraud initiative and to view the full text of the privacy notice, go to <http://bit.ly/2gbiUkP>.

Smart meters

Smart meters are to be offered to every household in Scotland by 2020 through the national energy suppliers. These meters will replace traditional gas and electricity meters with new digital meters. The main benefit is that smart meters will give consumers more flexibility without the need for different types of meter.

Pre-payment customers will be able to top-up up their meters in new ways, including online and via text message. For credit customers, there will be no more estimated bills and manual readings as meter readings will be sent directly to the energy provider via a secure, dedicated network.

Smart meters come with a separate display that can be sited anywhere in the home and this will show exactly how much energy the household is using, almost in real-time and in pounds and pence. This will give people the information they need to take greater control over their energy use – and save money as a result.

Energy suppliers are responsible for upgrading their own customers by 2020. If the property has separate gas and electricity suppliers, then each supplier will do their own meters.

Whoever pays the gas and electricity bills can ask for or accept a smart meter upgrade. Although we do not have any responsibility for the meter in your home, if possible tenants should tell us when their meter is changed. We can be contacted on **0300 123 4566** or by email at **housing@moray.gov.uk**.

Every energy supplier is at a different stage with the installation of meters so it's worth asking your own supplier what their current position is with their change over timescale. Smart meters and the displays come at no additional cost.

Smart Energy GB has also been set up by the Government to tell consumers about the smart meter rollout and there is a lot more information about the process on their website **<http://bit.ly/2gjWlth>**



connecting folk, work and place



SCOTLAND

FREE ENERGY ADVICE IN YOUR HOME

Many householders will find it difficult to keep their energy costs low.

We work in partnership with REAP (Rural Environmental Action Project) to give free advice to households on energy saving and energy efficiency measures. You can contact REAP for advice suitable to your property and circumstances.

Home energy advice visits are available to all households. They may be particularly valuable to those who are older or are facing other challenges by offering hands-on, personal support to deal with all energy-related issues.

For further information call and see what we do:

- Visit our website: www.reapscotland.org.uk
Visit our local office: **177 Mid Street, Keith, AB55 5BL**
Open: **Monday to Thursday 9:30am to 5:00pm**
Call us on: **01542 888070**
Email: info@reapscotland.org.uk

Improving your estates

We want tenants to participate in annual walkabouts with tenant groups, housing officers and elected members to help prioritise the type of improvements they would like to see in the neighbourhoods that they live in.

At our Communities Committee in November, it was agreed to consult with tenants and seek their agreement to:

- take part in an annual estate walkabout;
- identify what estate improvements would make most difference to them; and
- work as part of a group to help prioritise improvements so that these are reflected within the annual housing investment strategy.

We have set an annual budget of £100,000 for 2017/18 to improve your housing estates. It is important that we hear from you on whether you support this proposal and whether you would be willing to take part in this process.

For more information or to get a copy of the survey:

- visit our website and fill in the survey online at <http://bit.ly/2gkg1uh>
- phone **0300 123 4566**
- email housing@moray.gov.uk

The consultation will end on 31 January 2017.

We will use your feedback to make recommendations to the Communities Committee on 7 March 2017.

Council **new build** update

We are continuing with our programme to build 500 new council houses over the next 10 years. Since the programme started in 2011/12 we have completed 438 new build homes for rent.

During 2016 we completed:

- 8 flats at Corries Way, Forres
- 6 bungalows and houses in Keith
- 19 houses and flats in Dufftown
- 29 bungalows and houses in Buckie



Our future build programme is at an early stage but will probably look like this:

Location	Forres	Buckie	Forres	Elgin
	Burdshaugh	Alba Road	Grantown Road	Linkwood Steadings
estimated completion	August 2017	Nov 2017	Spring 2018	Spring 2018
1 bed, 2 person flat	12	8	12	8
2 bed, 3 person bungalow	4	4	4	
2 bed, 4 person wheelchair accessible bungalow		1	2	
3 bed, 5 person bungalow		2		
3 bed, 6 person 2-storey house		2		4
4 bed, 7 person 2-storey house		2	2	4
Total	16	15	20	16

All our new homes have been built to the highest standard of energy efficiency to save tenants money on fuel costs. The houses are bright and spacious. Most have dining kitchens and their own car parking spaces. Most kitchens have space for a washing machine, dishwasher, fridge freezer and tumble drier. All our bungalows and most of our ground floor flats are step free, have level access showers and are designed to be accessible for older people or people with disabilities.

We use a New Build Lettings Plan to allocate the first tenant in a new build home. You can apply for Council housing via the Apply4Homes website at www.apply4homes.org.uk or phone us on **0300 123 4566**.

Up to date details of our new build developments are available on our website at <http://bit.ly/2gO96kc>.

Emergency repairs out-with normal hours

Important notice

We all know how inconvenient it is when things go wrong at home, that's why our repairs service is always open. You don't have to wait until normal office hours to report an emergency repair. If your repair is an emergency and cannot wait, please call our emergency out of hours number on 03457 565656 (Monday to Friday 5pm - 8.45am, Saturday and Sunday 24 hours)



We will make sure emergency repairs are carried out within our agreed timescale of four hours of a qualifying emergency repair being reported. An emergency repair will involve work carried out to make a problem safe where there is a safety risk to tenants or the public. This, in some cases, may only be a temporary repair and a 'follow on' visit will be required during normal working hours to complete the repair. In most emergencies we will attend within 2 hours, however if you suspect a gas leak turn off the gas supply immediately and contact the National Gas Emergency Service on 0800 111 999.

Typical emergency repairs include:

Electrical

- Total loss of electrical power (but not when a supplier has shut off supply)
- Unsafe power or light socket or electrical fitting
- Total loss of communal lighting to a block
- Smoke alarm fault/sounding

Plumbing

- Total loss of water (but not when a supply company has shut off supply)
- Burst pipes or hot water cylinders, causing internal flooding
- Significant leaks or flooding from water or heating pipes, tanks, cisterns
- Any leak that is a serious danger to the structure of the building
- Blocked toilet
- Toilet not flushing where there is no other toilet in the house

- Uncontainable leak on toilet pan, soil pipe or waste stack
- Blocked or leaking foul drains, soil stacks or toilet pans where there is no other toilet in the house
- Blocked sink, bath or drain
- Hot tap that won't turn off

Heating, hot water and gas safety

- Total failure of central heating systems
- Uncontainable leak from heating system
- Blocked flue to open fire or boiler
- Loss or partial loss of gas supply (but not when supply company has shut off or capped supply)
- Loss or partial loss of central or water heating where no alternative heating is available
- Carbon monoxide detector fault or alarm sounding

Brickwork

- Structural faults to roofs or walls
- Dangerous or missing brickwork, concrete or rendering likely to cause injury or damage to property
- Damaged or missing grates/covers or inspection chamber covers.

Carpentry

- Insecure external window, door or lock where security of home is at risk (any vandalism to your home should also be reported to the Police as we will need a crime reference number)
- Broken window panel, pane or fastener where security of home is at risk (as above)

Roof or structure

- Works to make property secure or prevent further damage, (such as broken window glass, burst pipes, loss of water, gas or electric supply)
- Falling gutters, slates or tiles when dangerous (dependent on weather conditions)
- Unsafe access path or step

Other (rechargeable)

- Keys lost (proof of tenancy and an agreement to pay recharges is required in advance)

It is essential that our out of hours emergency phone number is only used to report genuine emergencies. Our staff are trained to authorise qualifying emergency repairs only. A high number of non-emergency repairs are reported out with normal hours, which wastes staff time and can delay more serious repairs being dealt with.

Below are some examples of non-emergency repairs, which should only be reported during normal working hours:

- Partial loss of electric power (including external lights)
- Partial loss of water supply
- No hot water (heating available)
- Central heating timer fault (heating working)
- Power or heating loss as a result of no credit in your card meter for gas or electric
- Leaking radiator (minor leak that can be contained without causing serious damage)
- Mechanical extractor fan in internal kitchen or bathroom not working
- Loose or detached banister or hand rail
- Bathroom or hall light not working
- Power loss to circuit as a result of faulty tenant electrical appliance

Are you happy with our repairs service?

If we've carried out a repair at your home, we want to know what you thought of our service.

You may have noticed we left a 'Tenant Satisfaction Survey' card when we completed your repair. Please fill out this card telling us how we did and return it using the

freepost address provided. We value your opinion so if you haven't returned your card you may receive a phone call from us.

Your feedback is vital and helps us to deliver the best possible repairs service.



Building Services

– promoting employability in Moray

We are one of the main public agencies involved in the development of employability in Moray. The Moray Strategic Skills Pipeline was produced by the Moray Employability Action Group, of public, private and third sector organisations to develop the skills, knowledge, attitudes and aspirations of our young people.

The aim is to develop closer links between local schools, colleges and employers, and develop ways to support people back to work. The group liaises closely with employers large and small to understand their needs from potential employees.

Building Services provides building maintenance and improvement services to the Council's housing stock. This includes reactive and planned maintenance as well as disability adaptations and gas servicing. Maintenance is also carried out to other council buildings such as schools, offices and libraries as well as a number of local Registered Social Landlords and other public bodies.

With a combined workforce of 140, Building Services is one of the largest building maintenance providers in Moray. The team includes over 100 craft and manual workers

skilled in various trades such as carpet fitters, electricians, joiners, gas engineers, masons, painters, plumbers, tilers and slaters.

Building Services is a Moray Strategic Skills Pipeline partner, providing craft apprenticeships for school leavers and adult trainees, as well as work experience placements for all local secondary schools and short and long term placements for local training providers.

Now employing 11 apprentices, over 25% of the current workforce stayed on in permanent employment with the Council after completing their apprenticeship.

Building Services Manager, Mike Rollo, said: "Apprenticeships continue to play an important role in helping us to produce the craftsmen of the future. Investing now in the skills we will need is an important part of our business planning that matches the Council's corporate priority of cultivating ambitious and confident children and young people in our community".

Moray has a strong tradition in producing highly skilled tradesmen, with local training providers such as Moray

College providing quality training that has seen a number of apprentices achieve recognition at national level.

For more information on Moray Skills and Training Pipeline contact the 16+/ Opportunities for All Officer on **01343 563108** or email **educationandsocialcare@moray.gov.uk**.

Alternatively, to find out more about Moray Council's current general job vacancies, go to **www.myjobscotland.gov.uk/**



Left to right: George Beange (plumber), Matthew Edwards (apprentice joiner) and Angus McKinnon (plumber).

Contract timescales

Many tenants will have improvements carried out in their homes during the financial year and depending on the scale of the work there may be some disruption. Below are some of the timescales that should be expected when our contractors carry out major improvements such as kitchens, heating and replacement windows.

If you have any queries on the timescales involved in delivering these types of improvements in your home or a query over timescales for other types of works that we carry out please contact the Capital Programmes Team on **01343 823057**.

Kitchen replacement

Before the work begins	Your kitchen will be surveyed and you will be included in the agreement of the new kitchen layout. An asbestos survey may be carried out.
How much notice will you get	Minimum of 7 days.
What you can do	Clear cupboards and drawers and make sure that anything of value is packed away.
Time to finish the work	Maximum of 15 days.
Further information	We will disconnect and reconnect any appliances e.g. cookers, fridges and washing machines, but it is your responsibility to move these goods. We will not be responsible for any damage caused if our operatives are asked to move these items for you. We will make sure that you are left with heating, water, electricity and cooking facilities at the end of each working day.

Heating installation

Before the work begins	The gas supply company will, if needed, install a new supply pipe and meter. In some cases, your new meter may be fitted before the heating installation starts. We may get in touch with you to talk about your choice of heating or to ask you questions about a survey of your existing heating system. An asbestos survey may also be carried out.
How much notice will you get	You will be contacted between 7 and 14 days before the work starts to talk about the installation and agree locations for radiators.
What you can do	Move any household items from any areas where the contractor is going to be working to install radiators or heating pipes. Make sure that any items of value are packed away or removed from the work area.
Time to finish the work	Within 5 working days. Follow up work such as decoration or relaying of carpets can take up to a further 10 working days.
Further information	We will not be responsible for any damage caused if our operatives are asked to move any items for you. We will make sure that you are left with heating, water, electricity and cooking facilities at the end of each working day.

Window replacement

Before the work begins	You may be contacted about a survey of your windows and an asbestos survey may also be carried out.
How much notice will you get	Minimum of 7 days.
What you can do	You should take down your curtains or blinds and move any ornaments or furniture away from the windows.
Time to finish the work	Within 5 working days and this will include decoration work to any new timber facings fitted as part of the window installation.
Further information	Help may be given with taking down curtains or blinds and moving furniture if you are unable to do this due to age or health restrictions. In these circumstances, we will not be liable for any damage caused as this is not part of the contract. The contractor will cover carpets and furniture with dustsheets for protection.



TPAS Conference

The Moray Tenants Forum travelled to the Fairmont Hotel in St Andrews in November, where the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) Scotland held their annual conference. Over 400 tenants, staff and board members travelled far and wide to take part.

The conference opened with a bang and delegates were welcomed by Lesley Baird, Chief Executive of TPAS. Delegates were then invited to participate in a drumming session using different lengths of plastic pipes to create music. The first evening saw the annual awards ceremony taking place compered by STV weatherman Sean Batty.

The following day was packed full of interesting and varied workshop sessions including 'The Charter Revealed' during which delegates found out the results of a recent review of the Scottish Social Housing Charter. Other sessions were held on a wide variety of topics ranging from 'Money Management',

'Tenant Scrutiny', 'Working together for better services' and many more. The day was rounded off with a 60's themed evening and the following morning saw a panel debate and the closing session being held to end what was a very informative weekend.



Sean Batty presented the awards during the ceremony

How to get involved

Join the Moray Tenants Forum

The Moray Tenants Forum is a tenant-led group who aim to improve housing services and conditions. Any tenants who wish to join the Forum will be made most welcome. They meet every few months and can be contacted through their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/moraytenantsforum. The next meeting of the Tenants Forum will be held on **24 January 2017**. For more information contact us on housing@moray.gov.uk

Help is available to cover travel costs and other out of pocket expenses.

Interested tenants register

We realise that some tenants are unable to attend meetings but that does not stop you becoming involved. We can add you to our list of 'interested tenants' and this means that we will contact you when there are consultations or reviews that are relevant to you.

We have used this list in the past to ask tenants to test

changes made to our website and to ask them to fill in a short survey. We use surveys regularly and it is important to us that tenants fill these in and return them so we know what we have done well and where we can make improvements.



Tenant-led reviews

The Service Improvement Panel (SIP) is a group of tenants who review our services and make recommendations on what we can do to improve things. This means tenants are able to hold us to account for our performance and the service we provide. The Panel gather information by mystery shopping, interviewing staff or visiting our offices and empty properties. This is valuable to us as it lets us know how we can do things better.

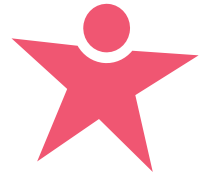
Help is available to cover travel costs and other out of pocket expenses. There may also be an opportunity to gain a qualification for those that are interested.

To find out more about any of these options, phone us on **0300 123 4566** or email housing@moray.gov.uk.

CALLING ALL YOUNG TENANTS BETWEEN 16 AND 25!



SPEAK OUT!



SOCIAL HOUSING & YOUNG PEOPLE RADIO SHOW



HAVE YOUR SAY...

and take part in a radio show about social housing in your area. Find out about

- how to apply for social housing
- the realities of homelessness
- real-life stories from young tenants
- what support is out there for young tenants

You'll also hear about volunteering opportunities available and how you can get involved in your landlord's decision-making process.

Whether you are a young tenant already, or a tenant of the future, we'd love to hear from you. If you have a story to share, or questions to ask, get involved in this radio show with other young people and housing professionals.

Contact Katie on 01224 202947 or Catherine at catherine.coutts@netra.lt.org.uk if you'd like to take part.



If you have a story to share, or questions to ask, this is your chance to get involved in a discussion with housing professionals and other young tenants.



North East Tenants Residents
and Landlords Together



Moray Tenants Partnership



Moray Tenants Partnership Elgin café event

We are a group of tenants that aim to bring together members of tenant groups from other social landlords in Moray, in order to share information and good practice to improve housing services.

We would like to invite you and your family to an informal café event on **Thursday 2 February 2017**. Drop in any time between 11am and 2pm to speak to other members of the group and find out more about their activities. Members of the Moray Tenants Partnership will be available to answer any questions and there will be a light lunch provided.

If you would like to attend please contact us by email at housing@moray.gov.uk or phone **0300 123 4566**. We may be able to help with expenses such as travel or childcare costs.



**HAVE YOU CHANGED YOUR PHONE NUMBER?
DO YOU HAVE A NEW E-MAIL ADDRESS?**

If so, please let us know so that we can update your details.

Contact us on housing@moray.gov.uk or phone
0300 123 4566.



Meet your new area housing officer

We are pleased to welcome Angela Oxley as our new area housing officer for the Housing West team. Angela takes over from Liz Thomson who has now retired from the Council after 20 years service.

Angela is a relative newcomer to Moray, having moved here 4 years ago. She brings with her a wealth of housing knowledge from the public and private sector.

Angela is based in the Auchernack office in Forres and will assist tenants in Brodie, Dallas, Dunphail, Dyke, Rafford and some parts of Forres.

Congratulations



Congratulations to Mr David Stratthdee who was the winner of a £50 gift card for filling in and sending back the New Tenants Survey. Mr Stratthdee was presented with his gift card by Councillor George Alexander at Elgin Access Point.

Winter Competition



S G Y C A T N A S G V H Z S E X G E N Z
 U S O F H X A M Y Z J H D O N K E Y U K
 R T K C T R T D U R Y J U A W O O D H X
 H O U S N O I T A R O C E D K C W E Z T
 M C L E B W V S N F R A T S C P V M C L
 I K F L J E I M T T Y T S O R F G U A A
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 Q Q H T A V T N E L J W O H O L L Y T E
 F S H E P H E R D E S O F W Y W R K I L
 J A I K P X L L Z H D L S O S B M D N C
 T P K M P V M R D E D N E C A R O L S L
 N A U Q V L Q C G M I B I I Q R K C E V
 B E E R T I O E N Z B P D E G C Y N L E
 I Z K D S T N E S E R P T D R H S Q G U

- ★ REINDEER ★ SANTA ★ STOCKING ★ SLEIGH ★ BAUBLE ★ STAR ★
 ★ BETHLEHEM ★ INNKEEPER ★ TINSEL ★ CRACKERS ★ TURKEY ★ PRESENTS ★
 ★ FROSTY ★ CHRISTMAS ★ SNOWFLAKE ★ HOLLY ★ CAROLS ★ SNOWMAN ★
 ★ DECORATIONS ★ TREE ★ ANGEL ★ DONKEY ★ NATIVITY ★ SHEPHERD ★ CANDLE ★

ENTRY FORM:

Name:

Address:.....

..... Postcode:

Phone number:.....

Email address:.....

Please return in the pre-paid envelope provided.

Congratulations

To Mrs Phyllis Milne who won the £20 gift card from our Summer word search competition

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Link with peers to support one another, challenge stigma & create change.

MORAY wellbeing HUB

CONTACT US:

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 moraywellbeinghub  wellbeingmoray

EMBRACE Elgin Business Improvement District

Your Ticket to Elgin



WWW.EMBRACEELGIN.CO.UK

Visit our Website to find out What's On, Where to Eat, Shop, Get the Best Services or even open your own Business

Need help with high energy bills?

REAP can provide free and impartial advice on:

- ✳ **Switching energy suppliers**
- ✳ **Sources of help with fuel debt**
- ✳ **Energy saving tips and advice**

Get in touch for more information

Tel: 01542 888 070

Email: info@reapscotland.org.uk

REAP

177 Mid Street

Keith

AB55 5BL

Charity number (SC037988)

