

# Bricks and Mortar

The newsletter of Fife Federation  
of Tenants and Residents Associations



February 2012 Issue

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## SCOTTISH SOCIAL HOUSING CHARTER!

### What is it?

A Customer Charter tells you how an organisation or service will deliver its service to you. For example a banks charter might say:

- Our customers will be served within 5 minutes
- Our phones will be answered in 5 rings

A charter outlines the quality and value of services that you should receive.

The Scottish Social Housing Charter is the same – it outlines the standards and outcomes of services tenants and other customers of social landlords should expect to receive and sets the national aims of service delivery for you as a ‘customer’.

The Scottish Housing Regulator will assess and report to you on how well your landlord (Fife Council/ Fife Housing Association/Ore Valley/Kingdom etc.) is performing against the Charter. The Regulator will tell your landlord where performance is good and areas where improvement is needed.

Over the last 16 months FFOTRA and individual members have responded to this Consultation by attending seminars / conferences / participating in the on-line discussion, via the Scottish Government website and by responding to the consultation document in October 2011.

I am very pleased to tell you, they have included several of your views within the Charter outcomes and standards.

### What happens now?

The Charter will be submitted to the Scottish Parliament for approval and will come into affect 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012.

It is *important* to note none of the charter outcomes replace any legal duties which already apply to social landlords.



Tenants will be involved in negotiating their own local Charter with their own landlord based on the National standards and outcomes.

### What does it say?

Every tenant and customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.

Tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services that the landlord provides.

Tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in, and, influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

Tenant's homes as a minimum meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by April 2015, and continue to meet it thereafter and are always clean, tidy and in a good state of repair when they are allocated.

Tenant's homes are well maintained, with repairs and improvements carried out when required, and tenants given reasonable choices about when work is done.

Tenants live in well maintained neighbourhoods where they feel safe.

Social landlords work together to ensure:

- People looking for housing get information that helps them, make informed choices and decisions about the range of housing options available to them.
- Tenants and people on the housing list can review their housing options
- People at risk of losing their homes get advice on preventing homelessness.

- People looking for housing will find it easy to apply for the widest choice of social housing available and get the information they need on how the landlord allocates homes and their prospects of being housed.

Homeless people get prompt and easy access to help and advice, they are provided with suitable, good quality temporary or emergency accommodation, when this is needed, and are offered continuing support, to help them get and keep a home.

Tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay.

A balance is struck between the level of services provided, the cost of the services and how far current and prospective tenants and service users can afford them.

Tenants get clear information on how rents and other money is spent, including details of individual items of expenditure above thresholds to be agreed between landlords and tenants.

### Gypsies & Travellers:

Sites are well maintained and managed.

For full information on the Scottish Social Housing Charter, visit the Scottish Government website and follow the links, follow the discussion on-line via the links on page 3 or see the full document and provide comments direct to FFOTRA via the website.



# Fife Federation AGM 2011

We would like to express our thanks to everyone who attended last years Annual General Meeting on the 8th November 2011 and helped make it a success. Thanks to the effort contributed throughout the year by our Committee Members and staff.

Derek Muir (Head of Housing & Neighbourhood Services), gave a presentation on the Scottish Social Housing Charter and the Impact for Fife Tenants.

**The Charter** - Introduced by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010.

Will set the outcomes and standards that social landlords should aim to deliver for tenants and other customers. Subject to the approval of Parliament, it will come into force on 1st April 2012.

The charter is all about outcomes - so it should not describe actions, processes or resources.

It is intended to describe what good landlords are achieving already and challenge all landlords to match this.

To keep up with, and participate in the debate at:

<http://housingcharter.scotland.gov.uk>

<http://twitter.com/housingcharter>

The way Ahead:

Fife Council has welcomed the broad aims of the Charter (enabling tenants/other customers to have a better understanding of the QUALITY of service they should expect from their Landlord)



Fife Council are not convinced that the Charter is wholly fit for the purpose:  
CIH Streamlined version (fewer outcomes/easier measurement)

The Charter needs to, reflect the tenants' needs, rights and aspirations, but balance that with the capacity of landlords to deliver and report on performance and the ability of the regulator to provide accurate/objective views of landlord performance /progress.

**Article by Michael Paterson FFOTRA  
Convenor**



# Members Seminar

22nd February 2012  
4.00pm - 7.00pm  
St Bryce Kirk Centre



We would like to invite all our members to our next Members Seminar which is taking place on Tuesday 22nd February 2012. Seminar Topic is:

**Anti-Social Behaviour with representatives from Fife Police, Community Warden and Local Housing.**

Further Details will be sent out at the beginning of February

*Early booking is recommended!*



## Nominations for the Executive Committee

There are 3 positions still available on the Executive Committee which were not filled at the Annual General Meeting held on 8th November 2011. If your association wishes to nominate one of their members for election, please send in your nomination form no later than 18th February.



Nominations will take place at the Members Seminar on:  
**Tuesday 22nd February 2012**



### NEW START AT FFOTRA

In January we welcomed a new member to our team - Nazia Arshed. She replaced Llana Kidd who left FFOTRA in November 2011. Come along to our next seminar and meet Nazia.

# New Executive Committee

As part of the business of the Annual General Meeting, a new Executive Committee was elected for the year 2011-2012.



*Pictured from left clockwise: Michael Paterson, David Henderson, Jim Hume, Jim Buchanan, Philip Shave, Tam Allan, Janice Manzur, Etta Melville, Cath Reilly, Tam Livingstone*

## The new committee comprises:

Michael Paterson	-	Kincardine Tenants & Residents Association
David Henderson	-	Glebe Residents Association
Jim Buchanan	-	Lower Dysart Residents Association
Jim Hume	-	McDuff Tenants & Residents Association
Tam Livingstone	-	Walter Hay Court Tenants & Residents Association
Tam Allan	-	Cardenden Tenants & Residents Association
Etta Melville	-	Gallatown West Tenants & Residents Association
Karen McGregor	-	Gallatown East & Sinclairtown Tenants & Residents Association
Sally Walsh	-	New Linktown Tenants & Residents Association

Following the first Executive Committee meeting, the office bearers & Ex Officio Members of the Federation were elected as:

### Office Bearers

Convener	-	Michael Paterson
Vice Convenor	-	Tam Livingstone
Treasurer	-	David Henderson
Secretary	-	Jim Buchanan

### Ex-Officio Members

Thomas Smith	-	Honary President
Janice Manzur	-	Tayford Regional Representative
Cath Reilly	-	Cardenden Heat & Power Representative
Philip Shave	-	Fife Housing Association
Cllr Ann Bain	-	Fife Council

# Unveiling of Vince Heneghan's Plaque



Convener Michael Paterson delivering his speech

A gathering was held at FFOTRA on the 17th October 2011, to unveil a plaque in honour of the late Vincent Heneghan. Cllr Brian Goodall and FFOTRA's Convener Michael Paterson gave an upholding speech on Vince's role and involvement on the committee, TPAS and KATRA. (for full details see Newsletter July 11)



Cllr Goodall unveiling the Plaque

Colleagues, Members and representatives from Fife Council got together to raise a glass to Vince.



Maureen (Vince's daughter) receiving the book of condolences from Project Co-ordinator Rosalind Eals



## Tenant/Resident of the year The Vincent Heneghan Award

This award is for people who go beyond the call of duty, acting as local leaders, ensuring that the words around tenant involvement translates into real change and empowerment and contributes to providing housing and communities that people want to live in. In memory of Vincent Heneghan, a long standing member of TPAS board of Management. Vince will be remembered for his outstanding work and contribution to TPAS, his community and commitment to participation



*Alison Kerr*

Alison from West Lothian Tenant Participation, builds and engages with groups in her Blackburn community. She always makes herself available to members of the community in Blackburn who approach her on a daily basis seeking advice and support. This leads (on some occasions) to Alison making contact with service representatives and councillors and even arranging meetings in order to progress the enquiry to a satisfactory result.



*Jennifer Mcleod*

Jennifer plays a key role in improving housing services locally and nationally through her work with West Ales Residents Association, Firhill Residents Association and Regional Networks (Highland, Argyll & Bute). She has been heavily involved in tenant participation for over 17 years. Within the groups that Jennifer works with, she helps them to build capacity by increasing skills and confidence and acting as mentor. Her average working week is around 70 hours - not bad for a retired person!



## Beautiful Scotland Silver Gilt



As a Tenants & Residents group, Nicol Street TRA have taken part in Beautiful Scotland Awards, for the past three years and progressed forward. We enter the 'Flatted Complex category'.

In 2011 we were awarded a silver gilt, all of those who took part, worked tirelessly, to achieve this. We were also helped by Fife Council's 'Floral Grant' and Community Payback Scheme and not to forget Keith Jackson. During the high winds, many of our flowers took a battering, the judges took this into consideration and were very impressed with the display we were awarded the Beautiful Scotland Silver Gilt.



Margaret Nisbet &  
Celia Proctor

### Managing your money

The rent increase might leave rents in Fife below the average for Scotland, but we all still have to find ways to meet this - as well as other increases in the cost of living. Fife Council's top tips to manage your money are:

**Set a budget** – if you can get on-line, Money Advice Service offers some simple-to-use budget and spending tools to give yourself a financial health check

Be sure to **claim the benefits** you are entitled to. Fife Council did a project on Working Tax Credits with the Job Centre, many people didn't realise they can get help with this and with Housing Benefit. Energy Saving Scotland Advice Centre can do 'free benefit checks', and on top of that offer referrals for energy advice to those who qualify

**Don't pay too much for credit** – your local Credit Union can help you save small amounts and offer access to low cost loans. The savings you can make using a Credit Union instead of, for example, Brighthouse, can be well worth making. Beware of short term – high interest loans as advertised on TV and other places. The amount you will end up paying back will be much more than you borrowed in the first place. It is likely that illegal and unregulated money lending still – if you borrow money from an illegal money lender, it is unlikely you will have any protection if you get into difficulties.

Use **free, local services to get advice** if you fall behind with your finances. Companies who advertise on television will charge for the services that Money Advice Service and CARF can offer for free. Local Offices have trained advisors who can offer help, and can refer you to more specialist agencies if needed.

Make sure you are getting **value for money on your gas and electricity**. U-switch or other Price Comparison Websites can help with this, or call the energy helpline to make sure you are on the right tariff for you. Low energy light bulbs and switching off TVs rather than leaving them on 'Stand-by' are two easy ways to save on power

**Make sure you are insured** - You can pay fortnightly for insurance through the Tenant Insurance Scheme

**Direct debits or on-line accounts** are often the cheapest ways to pay bills – check to see what savings you can make when you are paying your bills. [See attached for useful Telephone numbers](#)





## Outreach Worker

Andy Neill

We have been busy lately supporting our Broomhead Flats TRA, who have now held both a Multi Agency event based around safety, a meeting with senior Fife Council staff and elected members, which was followed up by a Drop In Session.

Our Outreach worker has been touching on Action Plans and Projects to some of our existing associations, as well as highlighting the attendance lists that are now required. Any recent or newer enquiries will still have a slight priority against our long standing existing associations. FFOTRA is still seeing as many as three of our associations meetings being scheduled on the same night. Our Outreach Worker is trying to attend as many of these meetings as possible.

The new Database is being utilised with written and logged daily reports via our Support Worker.

Some Anti-Social Behaviour elements are still being raised, and those present at meetings have been advised the need for keeping any statements confidential and logging all incidents in a diary. This makes sure that all the information is accurate and IS passed onto the relevant authorities to try and resolve or rectify these matters. The February Seminar is based around Anti-Social Behaviour, if you have an issue please book a place on the seminar.

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## Federation Mailings

Thanks to all associations, organisations and individuals who continue to completed our Data Protection Consent Forms.

This will allow the Federation to continue to send out information and newsletters to subscribers, while also making sure we comply with the requirements of our Data Protection Policy and the Data Protection Act.



If you have an opinion, good or bad about any aspect of Bricks & Mortar, then we would like to hear from you. Send your comments and contributions to:

**Bricks & Mortar**  
**Fife Federation of Tenants**  
**& Residents Associations**  
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**Kirkcaldy**  
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