



THE NEWSLETTER FOR LANGSTANE HOUSING ASSOCIATION TENANTS

LANGSTANE *news*

ISSUE 18 • SUMMER 2009



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AGM *Date*

This year's Annual General Meeting for Langstane Housing Association and its subsidiary Next Step Homes, will take place in Langstane's offices at 680 King Street on Tuesday 22nd September.

The AGM itself will take place at 7pm and we are keen to encourage tenants to join the Association take part in the Annual General Meeting and if possible stand for election to the Committee of Management.

We will be organising events on the day of the AGM and we will give you more details nearer the time. In the meantime however anyone wanting to know more about what happens at the AGM, how to become a member of the Association or to stand for the Committee of Management, should get in touch with the Chief Executive, Alan Grant on 01224 423004.



Group Structure Talks



As we have indicated in previous newsletters, Langstane is making significant progress towards setting up a group structure with Grampian Housing Association. All tenants of both associations will have received a separate letter from the independent tenant advisor TPAS advising them of all the implications. All views expressed by tenants will be reported to the governing bodies of both associations and will form a major part of the final decision on whether or not to go ahead.

In the meantime, progress is being made in setting up the staff structure. Langstane's Chief Executive Alan Grant has been appointed as the Chief Executive Designate of the Group and the remaining senior staff are in the process of being selected. These appointments will not become official until the group structure finally takes place and that is expected to be towards the end of

this year. We require however the approval of the Scottish Housing Regulator, and we are regularly in touch with the Regulator's office discussing our plans.

One of the main reasons why we are going for a group structure is so that both Grampian and Langstane can continue as independent landlords. Langstane will still be your landlord and Grampian will continue to serve its own customers directly. What we will do however is set up a top company which will provide centralised business services to both organisations. We are currently trying to recruit Board members for that company and have recently advertised in the press. Tenants are always welcome on the Boards of the top company and the individual associations. If anyone wishes to know more about that, they should contact the Chief Executive Alan Grant on 01224 423004

How to Pay Your Rent

Rent increase letters will have now been delivered to all Langstane tenants, with the increase due to commence on 1st July 2009. Please consider the following with regard to payments.

Direct Debit



If you have an existing Direct Debit, the payment will be automatically adjusted by the Association. If you wish to start paying by Direct Debit, please download the form from our website and post it into our office for processing. Alternatively, you may prefer to telephone us and we can set up your Direct Debit immediately without requiring a signature from you. Payments can be arranged weekly, fortnightly or monthly on the date of your choice. Please see our website for further information.

Standing Order

If you pay rent by Standing Order, please ensure that you contact your bank and instruct them to change the amount which is to be paid. The Association has a new and more flexible Direct Debit system in place, and it is designed to replace the requirement for Standing Orders. Please see our website or contact the office if you wish to change over to pay by Direct Debit.

Allpay Card



Please be aware that after the rent increase, you will have to increase your payments. You can use your Allpay card at any Post Office or PayPoint outlet – simply present your card and payment at the counter. When the transaction has been completed you will be given a receipt which should be kept for your records.

Telephone



Again, if this is your chosen method to pay your rent, please remember to increase the payments. If you would like to pay by telephone using your allpay card and your bank debit card please telephone the allpay.net payment centre on 0870 243 6040 and follow the guidance instructions. This service is available 7 days a week.

By cash or Cheque

You can pay by cash or cheque over the counter at our offices. To pay by post simply send your completed cheque by post to Langstane Housing Association, 680 King Street, Aberdeen, AB24 1SL. Please remember to write your name, address and reference number on the back.



STAFF NEWS

There have been a number of staff changes since the last newsletter.

"I Say Hello"



Neil Mutch who has joined as Property Services Manager. Neil brings with him several years of Social Housing experience from previous work with in the Grampian area and central belt



Marcie Balance has joined as Development Officer. Marcie is a qualified Architect and has joined Langstane from McColl Architects. Prior to that Marcie worked for a several years in Development Department at Castlehill Housing Association.

Julie Hall has joined LHA in the role of Property Services Assistant.

"In House Moves"



Colin Shaw has moved from Neighbourhood Services to become Senior Property Services Officer and is overseeing issues of planned maintenance



John Noble has now taken a new post and is Senior Neighbourhood Services Officer



Barbara Kay has taken up a role of Full time Estates Assistant.



Toni Sherriffs after a number of years as an assistant in First Response has moved to the role of Estates Assistant.



Lisa Cameron has moved from role as Customer Services Assistant in First Response to become a Housing Officer for Next Step Homes.

"And I Say Goodbye"

Jane Hepburn who was our Human Resources Manager has left to take up Human Resources Role outside the Social Housing sector.

Robbie Wood has left his role of Property Services Officer to take a similar role with the Local Authority.

Committee Changes

There have been a number of significant changes to Langstane's Committee of Management. At the end of February, Douglas Watson, who had been our Chair for a little over a year, decided to stand down.

That was a disappointment and we miss Douglas' wise contributions to the Association. We understand his reasons however and wish him well.

Since then, Dennis Wood who was previously Vice Chair has taken over the Chairman's role while the new Vice Chairman is Forbes McCallum who himself was Chairman of Langstane some years ago. The full list of Langstane Committee members is as follows:-

Chair
Dennis Wood

Vice Chair
Forbes McCallum

- Sandra Barrett-Ayres
- Erik Bjorkelund
- Jeannie Felsing
- Kevin Hutchens
- Sandra Macdonald
- Councillor Mike McConachie (The Moray Council)
- Councillor Mark McDonald (Aberdeen City Council)
- Councillor Debra Storr (Aberdeenshire Council)
- Bob Tait
- Sandy Wallace

RENT INCREASE SET AT 3.9%

During March & April tenants were consulted about a proposed rent increase of 3.9%. The consultation period ended on 24th April 2009, during which time all tenants were given the chance to air their views regarding the annual rent increase. Having taken into account the contributions provided by tenants, the Associations Committee of Management made the decision to confirm the increase of 3.9% for the coming financial year. Tenant's contributions covered a range of topics, with the following three the most asked.

Q. How can Langstane justify a rent increase given the current economic crisis and the overall increase in costs of basic living?

Given the current economic climate every effort was made to minimise the increase, the main reason for the increase is that maintenance and repair costs have risen.

Q. How did Langstane arrive at a figure of 3.9% rent increase?

It has been calculated using the average rate of inflation for the period February 2008 to January 2009 plus 0.2%, as per the terms in your tenancy agreement.

Q. Why does Langstane have a higher rent increase than Grampian Housing Association?

Rent increases are set by each Housing Association's respective rent setting policies. As independent organisations housing associations have no obligation to set rents at equivalent levels. The rent levels are different because each association has different types of stock and different methods of operation.



New Developments

Listed below are details of new developments expected for completion in 2009.

St Andrews Court, Buckie

17 two bedroom and 8 one bedroom properties now completed and handed over. Phase 2 to follow with a further 5 flats.

Thornton Court, Laurencekirk

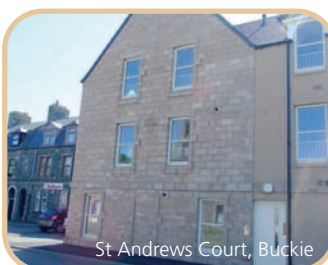
9 three bedroom terraced properties. These are 'super-insulated' homes designed to have very low heating bills. The ground floors are open plan and the whole house can be kept warm using only one electric storage heater. The timber cladding for the houses is untreated Scottish larch, sourced from Newtonmore, and will weather over time to a deep grey. The properties are complete and were handed over last week.

School Road, Seaton

24 two bedroom flats, Due for completion October 2009



St Andrews Court, Buckie



St Andrews Court, Buckie



Thornton Court, Laurencekirk

Reminder About Parking Within Langstane Housing Association's Schemes

Each tenancy is allocated one permit only. A permit does not guarantee a parking space as it is on a first come basis.

Permits must be displayed and clearly visible at all times. Display only on front / side of the windscreen, not on dashboard / gear stick.

A motor vehicle displaying a permit must also display a current Tax Disc. Authority does not apply to untaxed vehicles within a scheme car park.

No authority will be granted for keeping a car which is the subject of a DVLA SORN Certificate in any of the Association's car parks.

Motor vehicles larger than "Ford Transit" size exceeding 2,600 Kg gross vehicle weight, caravans or trailers are not authorised to park in the Association's car parks.

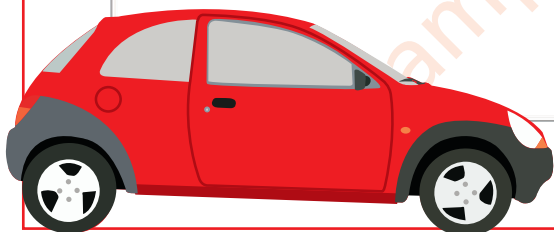
Cars parked within Disabled Parking Bays must also display a current Local Authority Blue Badge.

At the end of tenancy or transfer to another scheme the parking permit must be returned to the Association.

The Association reserves the right to take legal action against tenants or others for repeated breaches of the above conditions.

Any tenant requiring further information about Parking permits, should contact Langstane Housing Association on 01224 423000 and ask to speak to a member of the Neighbourhood Services Team.

A full copy of the Parking Authority Terms and Conditions can be obtained at Langstane Housing Association, 680 King Street, Aberdeen, AB24 1SL



Community and Environment Improvement Scheme

A certain amount of money is set aside each year for Langstane Tenants who would like to undertake a project to improve their housing development or the immediate area they live in. This is known as the Community & Environmental Improvement Scheme. The aim is to provide support for projects which get tenants working together to make decisions which improve their communities.

We are looking for any ideas that encourage our tenants to talk to each other about what their immediate neighbourhood areas need to improve them. We would expect to fund projects or ideas which improve your environment, e.g. garden maintenance, car park improvements, play area equipment, communal cleaning equipment, poop scoops and bins etc.

This scheme is designed to get tenants participating in exciting community-centred projects. Langstane is proactive in seeking initiatives to get tenants involved in making decisions which influence their lives. Please speak with your neighbours and get the applications in.

As we go to press, Langstane is currently involved in a gardening project where a number of tenants have expressed an interest in adopting some of the old shrub beds which have over time become shabby. The tenants would like to create a wild flower gardens, a formal rose garden and an area to grow a few veggies. Langstane's commitment to this project is to provide raised flower beds and also gift a garden shed to store gardening tools in. It is hoped that a composting bin will also be provided in the future. The team at our Elgin office who have been involved are delighted with the level of initiative and interest shown by the tenants and are keen to see them put their creative gardening skills to good use for the benefit of themselves and the community.

If you are interested in applying for the scheme or require more information please contact Susan George, Tenant Participation Co ordinator direct on 01224 423152.



Stay safe from fire Check your smoke alarm

Although 80% of the population own smoke alarms, statistics show that one in every eight fires attended by Fire and Rescue Services the smoke alarm failed to work, mostly due to flat or missing batteries (Communities and Local Government Fire Statistics). Your smoke alarm is the 1st line of defence against fire. Test your smoke alarm once a week and report any faults to Langstane immediately on 01224 423000.



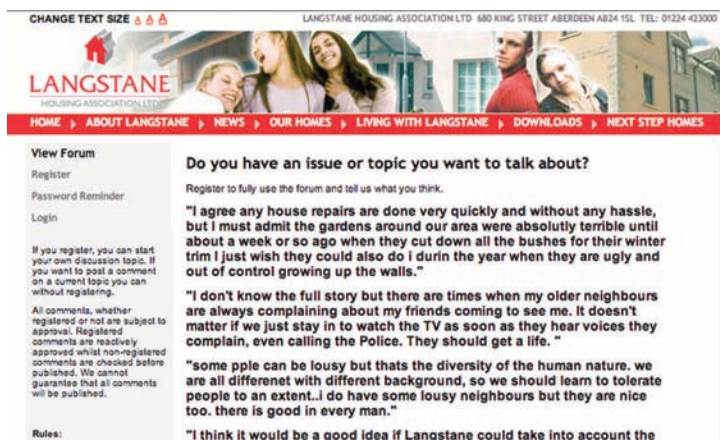
Tenants Forum - now live !!

- Do you have a good idea for a debate ?
- What do you want to comment on ?
- Do you want to find out what others think regarding housing issues ?
- Do you want answers from Langstane ?

Tenant's Forum Now Live on www.langstane-ha.co.uk

Our tenant's forum has been up and running now for a few months and some interesting and challenging topics have been raised. As a housing provider it is paramount that we find out what you the tenants and any other interested parties have to say and what issues affect you. This is the perfect platform to air such views and hopefully get some debate going. Through this medium, we would hope to pick up important issues which in time may lead to policy changes that will benefit all.

So get on line now and see what the latest topics are and if you have something to say, simply log on www.langstane-ha.co.uk follow the link and get typing.



Useful Telephone Numbers



Please note that in the first instance whether you are an Aberdeen , Aberdeenshire or Moray tenant, during working hours you should contact 01224 423000 to report any repairs.

ABERDEEN

Gas (Heatcare) **01343 545005**

Electricity – Power cut **0800 300 999**

Loss of Water Supply **0845 601 8855**

Associations out of hours emergency cover **01224 480281**

ABERDEENSHIRE

As above

Associations Out of hours Emergency **08456 08 12 03**

Moray

As above

Associations Out of hours Emergency **08457 565 656**



Langstane's main contact number for all tenants **01224 423000**
www.langstane-ha.co.uk

COMMENTS FORM - WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR YOUR VIEWS

We would like to hear what you think about the information contained in this edition of the tenant newsletter. We would also welcome any comments you want to make about Langstane Housing Association or any of the services provided by the Association. Please complete this form, cut out and return it to the Association at the FREEPOST address below.

Name:

Address:

Contact Details (e.g. phone number / email):

- Please tick the box if you are interested in becoming a member of the Association. We will send you more information and an application form.
- Please tick the box if you are interested in joining the Langstane Register of Interested Tenants. We will send you more information and a registration form.
- Have you ever viewed or used the Langstane housing association website available at www.langstane-ha.co.uk

Comments:

Return to: Langstane Housing Association Ltd, FREEPOST AB264, 680 King Street, Aberdeen, AB24 1ZQ.

Office Opening Hours

Monday – Friday
9.00am – 5.00pm
(Aberdeen and Elgin)

Our Aberdeen Office is closed between 9.00am – 12 noon on the last Wednesday of each month for staff training.

Office Closure

Langstane's Offices will be closed on the following days over the next few months

Monday 14th July 2009

Friday 25th September 2009

Monday 28th September 2009

Friday 25th December 2009

Monday 28th December 2009

Tuesday 29th December 2009

Wednesday 30th December 2009

Thursday 31st December 2009

Friday 1st January 2010

If you need assistance reading this newsletter, please let us know so that arrangements can be made.

You have the right to make a complaint about any aspect of our service to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. Any such complaint must be submitted within 12 months of the day you first had notice of the matter you wish to complain about.

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
4 Melville Street, Edinburgh, EH3 7HS.
Tel: 0870 011 5379, email:
enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk
website:
www.scottishombudsman.org.uk

Langstane Housing Association
680 King Street, Aberdeen, AB24 1SL
Tel: 01224 423000
Website: www.langstane-ha.co.uk
E-mail: info@langstane-ha.co.uk



Have you considered freecycling your unwanted goods rather than consigning them to the refuse centre?

Freecycle - A Brief History

On May 1st, 2003, Deron Beal sent out the first e-mail announcing The Freecycle Network™ to about 30 or 40 friends and a handful of non-profit making organisations in Tucson, Arizona. At the time Deron founded The Freecycle Network, he worked with a small nonprofit organization, RISE, which provides recycling services to businesses and residents in need.

Rather than watching perfectly good items being thrown away, the founder members found themselves calling around to see if various local businesses and residents could use them. Thinking there had to be an easier way, Beal set up that first Freecycle e-mail group in a way that permitted everyone in Tucson to donate and receive goods. Freecycle was up and running.

The Freecycle concept has since spread to over 85 countries, with thousands of local groups representing millions of members -- people helping people. As a result, we are currently keeping over 500 tons a day out of landfills! By giving freely with no strings attached, members of The Freecycle Network help instill a sense of generosity of spirit as they strengthen local community ties. People from all walks of life have joined together to turn trash into treasure. Log on to www.freecycle.org to find your nearest freecycle network. Offer your unwanted goods and find yourself a treasure.

**If You Have A Story To Tell
we would like to hear from you**

We are always looking for features to publish in future editions of the 'Langstane News'. If you have a story, any household tips or even recipes that you would like to share with other tenants of Langstane then please get in touch with Susan George on **01224 423152**.

Langstane Housing Association
21 Culbard street,
Elgin, IV30 1JT
Tel: 01224 423000

**Association's Out-of-Hours
Emergency Repair Cover:**
01224 480281 (Aberdeen)
08457 565 656 (Moray)
08456 08 12 03 (Aberdeenshire)

Registered Scottish Charity SCO11754