



Housing Matters

Taigheadas na Gàidhealtachd

Spring 2019

Two Chances to Win!

*With our Easter competition and our
'Best Garden' competition!*

Spring into Action ...

See page 3

Useful Contacts

Housing Enquiries
& Repairs

01349 886602

Waste Enquiries &
Special Uplifts

01349 886603

Council Tax enquiries

0800 393811

Welfare Team

0800 090 1004

CAB

0808 800 9060

Trading Standards

(CAB consumer advice)

0345 404 0506

Environmental Health

01349 886606

Scottish Water

0845 600 8855

Scottish Power

0845 272 7999

GAS (Emergency)

0800 111 999

NHS 24

111 (Out of Hours Health Advice)

Police

101 (Non Emergency)

Samaritans

116 123

Social Work-out of hours

08457 697284

Meet Donna Manson, Chief Executive, Highland Council

It has been a busy and challenging time since taking up post as Chief Executive in September 2018 but I am delighted to have the opportunity to serve the public in the Highlands and one of my main priorities is to focus on retaining the talent of our people in their local communities by creating local learning and training opportunities linked to jobs, housing and high quality Council services.

I am confident that the Council can thrive and overcome the challenging budget times and I look forward to being out in communities meeting tenants and customers, listening to people within their local area and working together on matters that are important to them."

I have been a regular visitor to all areas in the Highlands for over 30 years as a sailor and hill walker, and when visiting family in Thurso and Inverness with my husband Drew who is from Thurso. I have a grown up son, Andrew.

It is a real honour and privilege to have the opportunity to serve the Highlands with the staff team of Highland Council. This really is a once in a lifetime job in the most amazing place that is the Highlands and so much part of my family.



Did you know you can now keep updated on Tenant Participation by following us on Facebook?

Just 'like' our page and you will be notified when we post updates.

Find us on Facebook - **Highland Tenants Together**

You can also call us on **01463 702683** or email: tenant.participation@highland.gov.uk

Getting Involved...



Highland tenants
together

Welcome to your new look Newsletter! We hope that you like it!

You may have noticed that, for the first time, there is a "Tenant Approved" logo on the front cover - the tenant Communications Working Group have worked with us to produce this newsletter to make sure that the information provided is relevant to our tenants and interesting to read.

There is also a new "Tenants Chat" section in this edition - this is produced by the Communications Working group and they want to hear from you! (more on page 8!)

There are lots of ways that you can get involved in Tenant

Participation to help improve the housing service that you receive.

We especially want to hear from **new tenants** - we are about to start a review on the Tenants Handbook and the sign up process - if you have signed your lease in the past 6 months or so and would be willing to talk to us about your experience please contact us.

Contact the tenant participation team on 01463 702683 or email tenant.participation@highland.gov.uk for more information.

Easter Competition

Win £50 of Shopping Vouchers in our Easter Egg Hunt!



Since its Easter time and to celebrate our new format newsletter we have hidden 8 Easter eggs (like the example on the left) throughout this newsletter.

Can you find all 8 of them? All you have to do to be in with a chance of winning is tell us what page you found them on and what article you found our eggs hiding in!

Use this handy tear off form ensuring you complete your details and post it to Mandy Macleman, **Community Services Housing Team, Freepost RTSB-EBHT-JZTJ, The Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, INVERNESS IV3 5NX**

Name:

Address:

Telephone:.....

Email:.....

Egg 1:

Page..... Article

Egg 2:

Page..... Article

Egg 3:

Page..... Article

Egg 4:

Page..... Article

Egg 5:

Page..... Article

Egg 6:

Page..... Article

Egg 7:

Page..... Article

Egg 8:

Page..... Article

All correct entries will be entered into the prize draw for a chance to win £50 worth of shopping vouchers.

Closing date for entries is **10th May 2019**





Are you on Universal Credit?

Notifying the DWP of your rent increase...

Don't forget it is your responsibility to notify the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) of your rent increase.

You will need to log in to your online journal on the 1st April 2019 to add the rent increase details. The rent increase letter that we recently sent to you has all the information you need.

Unfortunately you won't be able to do this before the **1st April 2019**.

If you don't notify the DWP of the increase you will need to make up any shortfall between your Universal Credit Housing Element and the rent we charge you from your income, otherwise you may fall into rent arrears.

If you have any concerns or need help to notify the DWP of your rent increase ring us on **01349 886602** and ask to speak to your Housing Officer for advice.

I'm on Universal Credit, why are my arrears so high?

As more and more tenants move over to Universal Credit, many are experiencing increasing levels of rent arrears even when their housing costs are paid direct to the Council.

This is because social landlords are currently paid at a different time each month to our tenants.

Are you confused by what this means for you?

Come along to our **'Universal Credit & Your Rent'** session on 25th April at the Old High Hall, Academy Street, Inverness between 1pm - 4pm. For more information / to book a place call 01463 702683 or email tenant.participation@highland.gov.uk

If you need advice or assistance about Universal Credit or any other issues relating to welfare benefits or money/debt advice you can contact the **Welfare Support Team on 0800 090 1004** or your local **Citizen's Advice Bureau**.

Do you know how much your rent is?



The Department for Work and Pensions has recently announced that more than half of the people claiming Universal Credit do not know the correct details about their rent when they make their claim for benefit. This can result in delays to benefit payments.

- The amount of rent for your home
- The frequency of your rent charge - Weekly
- The number of people named on the tenancy agreement
- The number of rent free weeks is four

If you are unsure of any of these details or have service charges included in your rent please contact your Housing Officer on **01349 886602** to find out the correct information and which service charges are paid by Universal Credit.

Make sure that you know your details before making a claim for Universal Credit. You will need to know the following;



Home Fire Safety Visit



SCOTTISH
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE
Working together for a safer Scotland

Get your FREE home fire safety visit now!



As part of our commitment to building a safer Scotland we offer everyone in Scotland a free home fire safety visit. We'll help you sort out a fire escape plan and provide information about smoke, heat and carbon monoxide alarms.

Get in touch with us; it's so easy to arrange:

- call **0800 0731 999**
- text **"FIRE"** to **80800** from your mobile phone
- complete our online form on our website
<https://www.firescotland.gov.uk/your-safety/for-householders/home-fire-safety-visit.aspx>
- call your **local fire station**

If you have decided that you want the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) to undertake a Home Fire Safety Visit, it is important that you understand how your personal information will be collected and used, and what rights you have when it comes to your information.

SFRS have a full HFSV Privacy Notice available on our website which explains all of this and if you have any further queries, please don't hesitate to contact us at SFRS.GDPR@firescotland.gov.uk.

If you think you smell gas then call **0800 111999 IMMEDIATELY!**



Do not call the Repairs service or wait for the engineer to visit to service your boiler.

Once you have called **0800 111999** you should also vent the property by opening the windows and turn the gas off at the lever next to the gas meter.

The main thing is that you should not delay - phone **0800 111 999** if you think you smell gas. We would rather have a false alarm than a gas incident.

The Highland Council, as your Landlord, has a responsibility to service your gas boiler every year. This is to keep you SAFE! When your service is due our service provider will write to you with an appointment time, if the appointment is not suitable you MUST call them to re-arrange. If our service provider fails to gain access on 2 separate appointments, we will then have the right to forcibly enter your property to service the boiler. Remember this is to KEEP YOU SAFE!

You said...



In our recent Customer Satisfaction Survey a number of you said that you would rather receive this newsletter by email. Can you please complete this very brief survey and return it to us at:

Community Services Housing Team, Freepost
RTSB-EBHT-JZTJ, The Highland Council,
Glenurquhart Road, INVERNESS IV3 5NX

You can also email your response to
tenant.participation@highland.gov.uk

Would you rather receive this Newsletter by email?

YES NO If yes, please give us your name, address and email address below:

Name:

Address:

.....

Email:



Customer Satisfaction Survey

In the third quarter of 2018 we carried out our comprehensive Customer Satisfaction Survey.



This survey is sent out to all Highland Council tenants every three years and is reported to the Scottish Housing Regulator every year as part of the Highland Council Annual Return on the Charter (ARC).

The Survey was posted to 13404 tenants and we received 2343 responses which is a return rate of 17.48%

We asked five main questions – here are the responses:

1. Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the housing services provided by Highland Council?

78.1% were satisfied with housing services overall
12.7% were dissatisfied and 9.2% didn't know or had no opinion

2. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the quality of your home?

75.2% were satisfied with the quality of their home
16.4% were dissatisfied and 8.4% didn't know or had no opinion

3. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the Highland Council's Housing Service's management of the neighbourhood you live in?

68.0% were satisfied with the management of their neighbourhoods
16.0% were dissatisfied and 16.0% didn't know or had no opinion

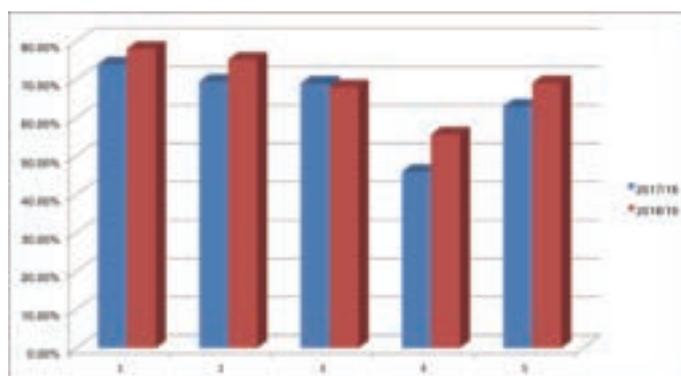
4. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with opportunities given to you to participate in the Highland Council Housing Service's decision making processes?

55.7% were satisfied with the opportunities to participate
8.1% were dissatisfied and 36.2% didn't know or had no opinion

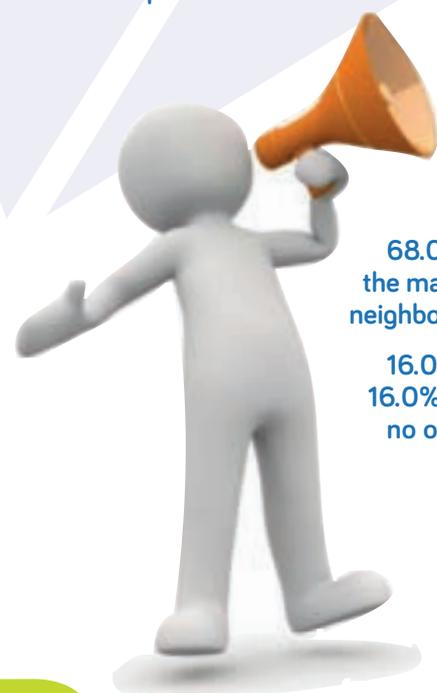
5. How good or poor do you feel the Highland Council is at keeping you informed about their services and decisions?

69.0% felt the Council were good at keeping you informed.
11.4% were dissatisfied and 19.6% didn't know or had no opinion

This is mostly an improvement on previous years, we still have a way to go, but these responses show that we are on the right track!



We shall be reporting these figures to the Scottish Housing Regulator as part of the ARC and will be measured against other local authorities. The results will also be discussed at the next tenant forums.



First Modern Apprentice in Housing!

In November 2018, the Inverness Housing Management Team appointed Joe Tuddenham as our first Modern Apprentice Housing Management Assistant.

Joe, a school leaver from Inverness, is being supported through the 2 year Modern Apprenticeship by an in-house assessor, an internal verifier and a mentor. Joe is also working on a Chartered Institute of Housing level 2 award in Housing Practice.

We caught up with Joe to ask him what getting this apprenticeship meant to him.

“As the idea of further education had never appealed to me, I knew that an apprenticeship was something to pursue after I had left school. After seeing the apprenticeship advertised online and reading the job role and specification, I knew that the position would be a great fit for me. Being offered this apprenticeship granted me the opportunity to learn an entirely new set of skills through an SVQ qualification and gain valuable experience, all whilst earning a good wage, and to be granted this opportunity I am very thankful.”

And what he does on a day to day basis.

“On a day-to-day basis I provide support to the housing management team in Inverness. This includes administrative work such as processing documents and updating our housing system, but also dealing with enquiries which can include responding to letters, answering and making phone calls, and on occasion delivering paperwork to tenants.”

Joe said “I would highly recommend an apprenticeship to anyone who is unsure of what they want to go on to do after leaving school. It can provide you with valuable skills and experience, as well as possibly carving a career path for life.”



Dates for your *Diary*

When	What	Where
16th April, 2019	Rate your Estate walkabout	Durness, Kinlochbervie & Scourie
17th April, 2019	Rate your Estate walkabout	Drumbeg and Lochinver
24th April, 2019 - 11am	Haugh Court Sheltered Housing group AGM	Haugh Court Inverness
25th April, 2019 - 1pm	Universal Credit Info Day	Old High Hall, Academy Street, Inverness
29th April, 2019 - 5:45pm	Upper Achintore Action Group	Upper Achintore School
Date TBC	Thurso Interested Tenants Group meeting	TBC
1st May, 2019 2pm	Older Persons Forum	Seaview, Wick
1st May, 2019 - 6pm	Inverness Tenants Forum	Artysans Café, Inverness
2nd May, 2019 - 10am - 12	Wick Interested Tenants Group meeting	Wick Youth Club
3rd May, 2019 - 11am	TPAS “Next Steps” meeting	Town House, Inverness
8th May, 2019 - 11am	Communications Working Group meeting	Drummuie, Golspie
10th May, 2019 - 1:30pm	Lochaber Tenants Group	Charles Kennedy Building
13th May, 2019 - 7pm	Smithton Residents Group meeting	Smithton School
15th May, 2019 - 11am	Scrutiny Panel meeting	Drummuie, Golspie
16th May, 2019 1pm	Mansfield Residents Association	Mansfield Estate, Tain
16th May, 2019 6pm	Balintore Residents Group AGM	The Pavilion, Balintore
24th May, 2019 11am	Finance and Participation Group	Cameron Youth Centre, Inverness
20th June 2019 2pm	Sutherland Sheltered Housing meeting	Ardgay Hall
21st June, 2019 - 2pm	Mid Ross Sheltered Housing meeting	TBC
26th June, 2019 - 6pm	Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross Tenants Forum	Royal Marine Hotel, Brora

We are in the process of setting dates for Rate your Estate walkabouts in all areas of Highland - if you would like us to bring Rate your Estate to your area please contact us on the number / email below:

For further information on the above or any other events please call **01463 702683** or email tenant.participation@highland.gov.uk

Hello, my name is Gez and I have been a member of the Wick Interested Tenants group for about 7 years. We meet every six weeks or so for coffee, a chat and to learn about Housing. We have different guest speakers, such as a local fire officer, our local housing officer, food bank, Citizens Advice Bureau, information about Power of Attorney etc. all very useful and informative. It is good to put a face to these organisations. We have regular meetings with housing staff and our local Tenant Participation Officer (TPO), Lorna Simpson, who is a wonderful caring lady and very supportive, she is always available to answer any questions or direct you to the correct person, Lorna, along with all the other TPOs, are happy to help in anyway to ease worries and concerns we may have regarding housing.

The TPO encourages you to expand your interests into areas of housing that are perhaps surprising to tenants, as an interested tenant I took part in Health issues in the Community (H.I.C courses) this was 2 free courses each lasting 6 weeks. We were encouraged to write essays which were sent away to be graded we all passed and received diplomas, which could be used in the hope of finding a better work position, however I am retired but found it very rewarding to get the little grey cells working.

I joined the Highland Tenants Scrutiny panel 2 years ago, we work to help Highland Council housing by scrutinising working practices within the housing services (not the staff!) Last year we looked at customer complaints, we looked at what happens when tenants complain; how it is dealt with by staff and how long it takes. Our place is not to police staff but to see if there is an easier more efficient way to deal with complaints. We wrote a report and presented it to senior management who were most complimentary on our efforts and findings and are now in the process of implementing most of our recommendations.

I am also a member of the Communications Working group and we are currently looking at ways that Highland Council housing can be more adventurous in informing their tenants of their rights, what's happening in their areas and generally to be proud to belong to your housing estate, village, street etc.

We will be asking for your help in the future if you are able and willing to do so.

Our next newsletter will be our first to try and bring change in how we, as tenants, are perceived. All of us pay our rent and we have legal rights passed by the Scottish Government to have a say in how our rent money is spent.

I would urge you to come along to meetings organised by the Tenant Participation Team and find out more about how you could help change things for the better. We are friendly groups always ready to listen to you, even if you just want to come for a coffee and blether to find out what it's all about, you would be welcome at any meetings.



Welcome to T

In this new look edition of the newsletter we, the tenant run Communications Working Group (CWG), is going to maintain these two pages. We want to hear from you, news and views, letters, questions which we will try to answer, or direct to the correct person to answer. We would also like you to send in your favourite recipes, tried and tested / cheap and cheerful etc. We want to reach all tenants young and old - tell us

Capital Program

One of the things that come up most often at Forums and other tenant meetings is the Programme - tenants all want to know who will be getting a new kitchen / bathroom have asked for that information to be made available and the Council are currently looking at how they can best provide that information at a

The Council is responsible for maintaining over 10,000 residential properties across the Highland area. Each individual Area Committees has recently agreed their Highland wide Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme for the next two financial years. In financial year 2019-2020 almost £14.9 million will be invested in improvements across Highland and in 2020-21 almost £14.9 million to be invested in 2020-21.

This investment is used to carry out upgrade works, replacing kitchens, bathrooms, windows and doors and structural work to roofs, chimneys and the external properties and also environmental improvements. This work will also be used to carry out heating and energy efficiency work in line with the Scottish Government's Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing.

Kissed by the Moon

by Alison Kirk

The beams of the moon
Light the waves on the sea,
Kissing them with silver
As they dance for me.

Lying back on my pillows,
My face bathed in its light,
I drift into dreamland
As it sails out of sight.

It plays hide and seek
With the clouds as they sail,
Flying high in the sky
In front of the gale.

© By Alison Kirk
8/3/2019



Tenants' Chat

what you would like to see in the Newsletter!

You can contact the Communications Working Group through tenant.participation@highland.gov.uk putting "Tenants Chat" in the subject line or by post to **Tenants Chat, Community Services Housing Team, Freepost RTSB-EBHT-JZTJ, The Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness IV3 5NX.**

Income

Tenant Capital when they etc., we more widely looking at how local level.

over 14,000 of the 8 part of the programme 20-20, £14.2 Highland, with

including: as well as fabric of s. Money efficiency Efficiency



Happy Birthday Angus!

Tenant participation is open to all Council tenants living in the Highlands and our oldest participating tenant Angus Ross from Golspie just turned 90 on the 5th February 2019. Angus has been involved in Tenant Participation for the last 7 years and continues to regularly attend the Sutherland Sheltered Housing meetings held in Ardgay as well as the Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross Area Forum meetings, tenants' conferences and events run by Highland Senior Citizen Network.

Angus is a very keen gardener and is regularly seen pottering about in his greenhouse. He said 'I thoroughly enjoy attending the meetings as they give tenants a better understanding of how the housing service works. We have an annual get-together with Sheltered Housing tenants from Caithness and Easter Ross and they are a great way of meeting tenants from other areas. I would encourage people to get involved in tenant participation as it is interesting and I have definitely benefitted from it.'

It just goes to show that you are never too old to participate – if Angus at 90 is still getting involved, what's stopping you?

If you would like more information please get in touch with your local Tenant Participation Officer.

Recipe

This is one of my husband Tez's favourites served with a mixed salad. It is easy to prepare. I very often take advantage of a store's special offer of a large pack of chicken breasts and make them up for freezing. (as long as they have not been frozen before)

Stuffed Chicken Parcel

You will need:

- 1 small chicken breast per person
- 2 tsp of made up stuffing
- 1 slice of lean bacon
- 1 square of foil to wrap the breast

Method...

Take the chicken breast and lay it flat on a clean surface, take a sharp knife and slice a cut along the smooth top of the breast. Fill the space with the stuffing and wrap the bacon around the chicken. Place the whole on to the square of foil, bring the front and back together and seal, fold the ends over to resemble a Cornish Pastie, job completed.

Place in a preheated oven on 180 degrees / Gas mark 4 for 30 mins. Always check that the chicken juices are running clear.

Goes well with salad, roasted Mediterranean vegetables or traditional vegetables.





The Highland Council's Welfare Support Team

'The team are proud winners of the UK IRRV Performance Awards, Benefits & Welfare Reform Team of the Year 2018'.

Support to maximise and manage your income

Are you claiming your benefits and entitlements and managing your money? You are better off finding out where you can get free, confidential and impartial help.

Our aim is to put more money in your pocket so that you can pay your bills, heat your home and have a better quality of life. Our welfare specialists do this by ensuring you receive quality and timely support to secure everything you are entitled to. We undertake benefit checks to ensure you are not missing out on any benefits and complete benefit forms on your behalf. Our specialists will even challenge and appeal decisions about your claims and help you to budget and to deal with other money matters.

Many benefits take your income into account. However some are based on your individual circumstances. For example, if you need help to look after yourself because of physical or mental disabilities, you may qualify for benefits known as Personal Independence Payment or Attendance Allowance. If either of these benefits is awarded to you, they can help to obtain additional benefit for you and may also qualify you for concessions on public transport, exemption from road tax, the Blue Badge Scheme, and the Motability Scheme.

Don't miss out, find out

Getting in touch with our welfare specialists is the first step to maximising your potential income and managing your money well. For professional support phone **0800 090 1004** or complete the secure online request form for advice at: www.highland.gov.uk/welfareadvice

If you are frail, elderly or vulnerable and are unable to meet with us at our offices, our welfare specialists are available to visit you in your home.

CHANGEWORKS

Free advice on heating and electricity bills

We offer **free** and impartial home visits to anyone who wants to save money on their heating and electricity bills.

Our Affordable Warmth Advisors can help you to:

- Make your home warmer
- Use your heating more efficiently
- Understand your heating and electricity bills
- Save money by finding the best tariff
- Reduce condensation and dampness

Speak with an Affordable Warmth Advisor in Inverness on 01463 259712

To find out more, call Changeworks' Affordable Warmth Team on 01463 259712, email warmth@changeworks.org.uk, or visit changeworks.org.uk

Changeworks, Resources for Life Ltd is a company registered as a charity and limited by guarantee with Charity No. SC015144 and Company No. SC107964. Registered office: 36 Newhaven Road, Edinburgh EH6 5PY

Struggling with fuel costs?

The Scottish Government's key objective is "A Scotland where everyone lives in a warm home, has sufficient income for healthy living, has access to affordable, low carbon energy, and has the skills to make appropriate use of energy."

Highland Council has been working hard over a number of years to mitigate fuel poverty increases. This is in the context of rising fuel costs. There are still areas in Highland which do not have access to mains gas.

Fuel poverty is a key issue in Highland. Currently 27% of households in Scotland are defined as fuel poor – in Highland this rises to 49% (figures from Scottish House Condition Survey). Help and advice is available from the following:

- Caithness** **Pentland Energy Advice** **01847 892507**
- Skye & Lochalsh** **Lochalsh & Skye Energy Advice** **01478 612035**
- Lochalsh** **Energy Advice**
- Nairn** **Changeworks – affordable warmth project** **01463 259712**
- Badenoch & Strathspey** **affordable warmth project**
- Lochaber Ross & Cromarty** **Inverness**
- Sutherland**



Veterans Project



Advice for older tenants who have served in the military is free and easy



Later life can bring big changes - sometimes bigger than the changes veterans experience moving from military to civilian life. If your health deteriorates, your home no longer meets your needs, you become socially isolated or your financial situation worsens, it can be hard to know where to turn. Age Scotland, Scotland's charity helping everyone love later life, can help.

We offer a free and confidential helpline for older veterans on **0800 12 44 222**. We can check your benefit entitlements, give advice on matters including care, housing and wills, and help you join in at local clubs and activities, including ones specifically for veterans. The law

and public services in Scotland are very different from in the rest of the UK, so it's vital that if you live here you get the right advice. We work alongside specialist armed forces and civilian charities as part of a consortium called **'Unforgotten Forces'**, so if we don't know the answer we can put you in contact with someone who does.

We publish free advice guides for older veterans - if you call us on **0800 12 44 222** or email veteransproject@agescotland.org.uk with your address details we can post them out to you. **'The Veterans' Guide to Later Life'** tells you about your rights and support entitlements, as both an older person and a veteran, on topics including health, money, transport and care. Our **'Combating Sight and Hearing Loss'** guide will help you spot problems with eyesight and hearing early - and get help, including from our partners Scottish War Blinded and Action on Hearing Loss. And our **'Housing for Older Veterans'** guide explains your housing options as you get older, from help to make your current home more suitable, to moving to a new home, drawing on the expertise of **Housing Options Scotland's Military Matters Project**. Anyone who has had one day's service and one day's pay in the UK Armed Forces is viewed by government as a veteran and potentially entitled to additional help and support, whether they did national service, were regular, a reservist or supported a military operation with the merchant navy.

For more information call us today on **0800 12 44 222**.

SSAFA

"SSAFA, the Armed Forces Charity, provides lifelong support for our Forces and their families. This means that if you're currently serving or have ever served in the Royal Navy, British Army or Royal Air Force, we're here for you and your family for life.

We understand that your time in the Forces can impact on you, now and in the future. And sometimes you might need a bit of practical help. But we also know the challenges everyone faces are different. So we're committed to being here whenever and wherever you need us.

At SSAFA we've been supporting our Forces and their families for more than 125 years. Today, we continue to help thousands of people in hundreds of different ways.

For information on how we can help, visit: www.ssafa.org.uk/help-you

or phone our free confidential helpline Freephone **0800 731 4880**.



Inverness Tenants Forum



The Inverness Forum met at Artysans Café in Inverness for their quarterly meeting on 6th February. The new venue proved a massive hit with all of the tenants who attended. Brian Cameron, Housing Policy & Investment Manager with the Highland Council, came along to give the Tenants an overview of the Housing Repairs service and Rob Ford, from the Rural Affordability Warmth Project, talked about the aims of the project which is to provide energy and fuel poverty advice.

The next meeting of the Forum will be on Wednesday 1st May when the main topic of the forum will be Anti-social behaviour and what communities can do to help. If you are a Highland Council tenant in Inverness / Inverness-shire and you are interested in coming along on 1st May please contact Mandy Macleman on **01463 702683** or email tenant.participation@highland.gov.uk

Caithness, Sutherland and East Ross Forum

A very lively Forum was held on Wednesday 27th February 2019 for tenants living in Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross. Before the business of the meeting started, David Goldie, Head of Housing and Building Maintenance, who was chairing the meeting, gave a fitting tribute to Norman Vincent who sadly passed away in November 2018. Norman was very active in Tenant Participation over a number of years and a regular member of this forum. It was agreed by everybody that Norman would be sadly missed by all who knew him. David continued with a very informative talk on the new build Council housing programme and how it is funded. Tenants also received an update from Mandy Macleman, Principal Tenant and Customer Engagement Officer on what's happening in the world of Tenant Participation including the Next Steps programme, the development of new tenants groups throughout the Highlands and Rate Your Estate walkabouts.

The Forum tenants had an energetic discussion

about the capital programme and agreed that they would like somebody from Highland Council to come along to the next Forum in June to give a talk on Capital works and how the process works.

If anybody would like more information on the CSER Area Forum please contact **Lorna Simpson** on **07774 337689** or email lorna.simpson@highland.gov.uk



Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey Tenants get together!

Around 50 Sheltered Housing tenants from Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey had a great time at their get together in the British Legion in Inverness on 7th February when Highland Council and the Highland Senior Citizens network hosted a lunch and information day for them. There were presentations and information stands from Police Scotland, Trading Standards, Scottish Fire & Rescue, NHS, CAB, Victim Support and many more! Highlife Highland Otago instructor Ailee Maclean led a taster session where participants learnt how to sit down and stand up safely! The event was also attended by senior Highland Council management and local Councillors Graham Ross and Bet McAllister. Many thanks to the British Legion staff and management for a lovely soup and sandwich lunch and an excellent venue.



Safe, Well and Connected on Skye!

What an excellent day was had in Skye on the 4th March at the Aros Centre Portree!

Highland Senior Citizens Network, Age Scotland and Highland Council Tenant Participation team jointly hosted a **free** information day and ceilidh on Monday March 4th at the Aros Centre in Portree. The event was very well attended with residents from far and wide. Everyone had access to lots of really useful information about keeping safe, well and connected in their communities, with speakers from Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Services, Highlife Highland, Age Scotland's Veterans project, Highland Council Welfare Team, Community Partnership, NHS telecare, Befrienders, and many more local groups. The attendees were treated to a lovely lunch and an afternoon Ceilidh.



New Lochaber Tenant Group!

A group of interested Tenants had their first meeting on Friday the 22nd February in Charles Kennedy offices in Fort William.

Mandy Macleman, Principal Tenant and Customer Engagement Officer, along with Karin McKay Tenant Participation Officer, met with the group of Lochaber Tenants who wanted to know how they could get involved in Tenant Participation.

The group of eight tenants, from Caol, Corpach and Upper Achintore, watched a presentation on the importance of tenant participation and how they can get involved to help improve the housing services that they receive.

The group were very keen to learn how the Capital works programme is managed; Jonathan Henderson, Housing Investment Manager, attended their March meeting to give an insight into how this is put together. The next meeting of the group is on May 10th and will be looking at the Housing Revenue Account (How rent money is spent!)

Any Highland Council Tenants can come along to these meetings although we need to know for numbers. If you would like to be part of the Lochaber Tenant group contact Karin McKay on **07785 477696**, or email karin.mckay@highland.gov.uk

Next Steps for Highland

Nineteen staff and twenty tenants got together in the Town House in Inverness on 5th March as part of the Tenant Participation Next Steps programme.

The programme is aimed at social landlords across Scotland and will help landlords and tenants who want to **review, improve, and develop** their current tenant participation and scrutiny arrangements and develop an action plan for doing so. This programme is funded by the Scottish Government, and delivered by **TIS and TPAS Scotland**.

Tenants and staff worked together to talk about what direction tenant participation should go in Highland and how to best involve tenants in the decision making process. They set out what should be in an action plan to implement their ideas. Lesley Baird, of TPAS Scotland, who facilitated the session, has now taken away everyone's ideas and will put these in a draft action plan which she will bring back to the group around May time.

It was really great to see so many tenants and staff working so well together!



Trading Standards, Doorstep Crime & Scams!



Criminals can use a variety of tactics in order to scam money out of unsuspecting householders. Highland Council Trading Standards are urging tenants to be on your guard against both rogue traders who turn up at your door and scammers who contact you by mail or telephone.

Doorstep Cold Callers

Rogue traders can strike at any time of year but are especially prevalent now that the weather is getting better and people are looking to tidy up their properties after winter. They usually offer exterior home improvements and often have glossy, professional looking leaflets; it may sound like you are getting a bargain but the work carried out is normally shoddy and overpriced. As well as home improvements, rogue traders may also call at your door trying to sell you products that often you do not want or need and are of poor quality or unsafe – this can range from kitchenware to mobility aids, personal security products and tools.

Many rogue traders use bogus names and addresses and often claim to be based in the Highland area, when in fact they are not. Tenants are then left with no idea of who they are and no means of getting their money back when things go wrong. As a Highland Council tenant if you require any repairs or maintenance to be carried out, your first port of call should be to report the matter to the council. If the repair is not something that is covered by the council maintenance team then Trading Standards advice to any householder is to follow these simple steps:-

- Be wary of traders who appear at your door uninvited. Most legitimate traders do not cold call or distribute leaflets
- Verify who it is you are really dealing with – ask for ID including the trading name and contact address
- Ask for a written quote – this should detail the works, who you are dealing with, exactly how much it will cost as well as terms & conditions of any guarantees which are offered
- Shop around – get quotes from other local traders. Discuss it with friends, family or your local housing warden. They may be able to recommend a good trader
 - Don't pay until the works are complete and you are completely satisfied



- Report any incidents, it may prevent someone else from being conned

Mail and Telephone Scams

Scam telephone calls and mailings are an unwanted nuisance that plagues people up and down the country. Scammers trick people into providing personal information in order to scam them out of money. These scams come in many guises, from lotteries or prize draws, to people claiming to be from your bank. Once you have responded to one scam you are likely to be targeted again and again as these criminals pass your information on to other scammers. A recent project undertaken by Highland Council Trading Standards found that Highland householders are being targeted by telephone scammers at twice the rate of the rest of the UK.

Trading Standards urges tenants not to engage with these scammers. Many people don't want to be rude and hang up or try to string telephone scammers along, however, this puts you at risk of divulging personal information without even realising it.

You should never provide your personal information or bank details to someone you don't know and your bank will never ask you to transfer money as the result of a fraud. Scammers use sophisticated tactics such as spoofing phone numbers and staying on the line even when you think they have hung up. If you think your bank account has been compromised, never rely on the phone number provided by the caller – ensure you get the correct contact number from another source such as your bank card or statement and if possible phone the bank using a different phone line.

To report rogue traders contact The Highland Council's Trading Standards on **01463 644570** or Police Scotland on 101. If you or someone you know has been the victim of a scam report it to Action Fraud on **0300 123 2040**. For free and confidential advice regarding doorstep sellers or scams, telephone Citizen's Advice Consumer Service on **03454 04 05 06**.



Alternative Housing Options

Depending on your circumstances there are other options to Social housing. Mid-Market Rent, Rent to Buy or LIFT (Low-cost Initiative for First Time Buyers) housing are also available. Tenants and applicants on the HHR (Highland Housing Register) waiting list have a priority status for these types of housing. Sometimes this can be the best way for someone to get a home in the place where they want to stay. To find out more, have a look at the new information on the Highland Council's website www.highland.gov.uk (search for 'housing choices') or contact one of the housing providers below.

Highland Housing Alliance are excited to confirm that more mid-market rent homes will become available during 2019. This follows on from recent completions at Munloch, Drumadrochit and Glendoe Terrace, Inverness at the end of 2018 which were exceptionally popular.



The development at Balloan Road, Inverness will see a further 6 homes available from summer 2019 and will be 6 semi-detached three bedroom villas. Glenfield in Ullapool will see a further 6 homes, which will be 2 semi-detached three bedroom homes and 4 self-contained cottage flats which will be ready towards the end of the year. Wyvern House on Academy Street, Inverness will provide a mix of both 1 and 2 bedroom flats right in the city centre.



Information about any of these developments can be found on our web site www.hhahomes.co.uk or at www.highlandhousingalliance.com Application forms can be downloaded from the web site or direct from our office on 01463 251133.



Highland Residential is a social enterprise and a wholly owned subsidiary of Albyn Housing Society Ltd. Our social purpose is to combat the significant shortage of affordable homes faced by local communities.

In 2019 we will have 7 x 3 bedroom properties coming available to purchase in Kiltarlity under the LIFT **New Supply scheme** - For more information about LIFT New Supply and the properties available call us on 01463 701271 or email LIFT@highlandresidential.co.uk

We also have a selection of properties available under the **Mid-market rent scheme** in Dornoch, Alness, Aviemore and Inverness. For more information about Mid-Market Rent and the properties available call us on 01463 701271 or email Lettings@highlandresidential.co.uk



The Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust (HSCHT) offers a wide range of housing options which are complimentary to those offered by the Highland Council and Registered Social Landlords. These include: Homes to rent; Discounted **Homes to purchase**; a **Rent to Buy Scheme**, where tenants rent for 5 years before purchasing the property at a discounted price; **Live / work homes**; **Self-build plots** for sale at discounted prices and **Self-build finance** via the Scottish Government's Self Build Loan Fund.



Another potential route to achieve housing is through the creation of **Woodland Crofts** which support the environment, employment and has the potential for housing on a small scale.

You can find out more on the HSCHT web site www.hscht.co.uk telephone **01463 233549** or email info@hscht.co.uk



Highlands in Bloom!

Gardening competition... *sponsored by*

SIMPSONS

Last year, when the Tenant Participation Team was out and about visiting tenants across the Highlands, we came across some beautiful gardens!

This year we are on the lookout for the best Highland Council Tenant's Garden. There will be a **first prize of £50** worth of garden centre vouchers for the best garden and **2 runner-up prizes of £25** vouchers. All you have to do is send in a clear photo of your garden or it could be a neighbour's garden that you want to nominate (with their permission of course!). The garden can be a traditional or non-traditional garden or an edible garden or allotment – anything goes!

Send your photos via email to **tenant.participation@highland.gov.uk** or post with your full name, phone number and address, to **Community Services Housing Team, Freepost RTSB-EBHT-JZTJ, The Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, INVERNESS IV3 5NX**

The closing date for this competition will be **9th August 2019** and the winner will be picked by the sponsor **Simpsons Garden Centre**.

Message from our Sponsor

Why not plant a rainbow of colour by packing patio pots and filling flower beds with cheerful bedding plants. Not only do they offer great value, they flower their hearts out for weeks on end to brighten your outlook on even the dullest of days.

So how should you plant them? Bold blocks of primulas and spring bedding always look striking, but impressive displays can also be created by combining them with other spring favourites, flowering bulbs and foliage plants too. Small pot grown plants are available now in full flower, making them perfect for creating instant displays in any garden, patio or front door.

By planting these spring favourites now the plants develop strongly to establish and bloom well over the next few months.

Gardening is also a great way to keep fit and healthy! Did you know that doing just half an hour of gardening regularly can keep you physically fit and cut the risk of a heart attack plus there are also many mental health benefits of gardening too – from relieving stress and enhancing your mood to reconnecting you to nature!

Make 2019 the year you get into gardening! The award winning team at Simpsons are on hand with plenty of help and advice about how and what to plant and how to maintain your garden. For more information visit our website at: **simpsonsgardencentre.co.uk** or pop into the store Monday to Sunday.

