

# CATHCART CDHA STANDARD

Cathcart & District Housing Association



The Newsletter of Cathcart & District Housing Association

ISSUE 5



## NEW OFFICE OPENS

On 15 April CDHA moved out of our old premises on Holmlea Road and into our newly refurbished office at 3 Rhannan Road. As many of you will know CDHA improved more than 200 homes for residents in the area through the previous Housing Action Area Programme. During that time the Association converted two flats and a former shop in Holmlea Road into our first area based office. We moved in on 22 November 1990, on a temporary basis with the intention to find somewhere permanent as soon as possible..... Some 20 years, 4 months and 24 days later we moved to our new premises at Rhannan Road.

During that intervening period we considered no less than 9 possible office sites in the area and for various reasons, mostly to do with the excessive

property prices experienced before the economic downturn we lost out to the private market. However I am happy to say we eventually succeeded beyond our expectations. Not only do we have a very generous amount of office space but we have a perfect location right in the heart of the community which is so important for all our service users. We look forward to welcoming everyone who has business with the Association to our new offices where you will be assured of a first class service and complete privacy to discuss your business.

For anyone who is still not sure where our office is located we are immediately beside Cathcart Railway Station. Turn right under the railway bridge and we are on the corner. There is ample parking for anyone visiting by car.

### Official Opening

On 3 June we officially opened the office and Former First Minister now the Rt Hon. Lord Jack McConnell of Glenscorridale came along and met just under 100 guests all who play a part in the overall service provided by CDHA. Lord McConnell entertained everyone with an interesting and amusing speech and then unveiled a plaque in reception. Among the guests were Councillor Archie Graham who provides our Committee of Management with a link to Glasgow City Council issues in the area, and the newly appointed MSP James Dornan, who along with our consultants, contractors and partner agencies, spent a pleasant afternoon looking round our offices and catching up with colleagues.

# Transfer.. One year on

Apart from the office development the year has been taken up getting to grips with all our new property following stock transfer in June 2010. Housing Officers have dedicated a large amount of their time to looking at rent arrears. We have followed arrears stringently and I am happy to report that the total arrears have dropped by 22.8% between June 2010 and May 2011. This is a major achievement for the Housing staff however we are not complacent and there is still work to be done. If you have arrears and have agreed a payment plan with your Housing Officer I cannot stress enough

the importance of keeping to that payment plan. It has been designed to take into account the on going rental charges along with reducing the arrears at the same time. Failure to keep to the plan will just set you back and you will carry the arrear on your account for longer than is necessary.

We offer many ways to pay your rent now and loss of a pay-in book or Allpay card is not a reason for not paying you can telephone the office and pay over the phone, or come into the office and get a substitute giro slip or new Allpay card.

**ARREARS CONTROL IS AN ACTIVITY OF HIGH IMPORTANCE AND FAILURE TO MEET ARREARS, PAYMENT PLANS, ETC. WILL EVENTUALLY LEAD TO EVICTION.**

We understand that people suffer financial hardship from time to time and we will offer help and support during these times. Long standing arrears however are viewed differently and we will be clamping down even harder on this category of arrear.

## On the investment side.....

Since transfer we have completed the Kitchen Bathroom and rewire project. There are a few houses that still require new kitchens and bathrooms and owing to access problems for a variety of reasons these properties will be up graded at a later date. If you are a former tenant of GHA and think you have missed out on this project please get in touch with our maintenance section as soon as possible.

We will shortly be issuing tenders for alterations to close doors and common windows at Spean Street and Cumming Drive. We plan to upgrade extractor fans in Cumming Drive, Spean Street and Gavinton Street during the course of this financial year and tenders for this work will go out in the near future.

The window staining contract in Tulloch Street will

commence in August of this year. Tenants will receive a letter shortly about this and owners can join in with the scheme if they wish. This is part of our planned maintenance and ensures that components within our properties achieve their longest life span.

During the year we upgraded 20 Gas boilers in Holmlea road and as part of the rolling programme there will be a further number of boilers replaced in this financial year. Those properties involved will receive correspondence from our Maintenance section.

The close cleaning service got off to a faltering start but hopefully is now running a little more smoothly. Our maintenance staff continue to monitor the cleaning rota and follow up any missed properties.



# Welfare benefits... a year in focus



Since April 2010 Our Welfare Rights Officer Suzanne Lavelle has assisted 216 tenants with their benefits, by giving advice, assisting with filling in forms and in some cases attending tribunals on tenants behalf to obtain benefit which she knows is due to them. Given that Suzanne works 1 day a week for this association that is no mean achievement.

Her hard work as paid off and she has obtained a total of £68,228.85 in Housing Benefit for tenants who may not otherwise have received this entitlement. By way of other benefits including disability and care allowances she has achieved a total of £126,326.11. These figures show that many tenants now have a better chance of managing their finances and ensuring that their tenancies run smoothly

The total additional benefits achieved for CDHA tenants for the year to 31 March 2011 is £194,554.96

Last year the total was £133,376.64 so there is an increase this year of £61,178.32.

This means that we really are trying to ensure that everyone receives the benefit that they were entitled to. If you are not sure about any aspect of your benefits, call our office and make an appointment to see Suzanne..... It really can be worth your while. She is busy and you may have to book 1 or two weeks in advance to see her but please do so as she will assist in all the complicated issues surrounding benefits.

Owing to her extensive workload she now has an assistant and Kevin will also undertake work with our tenants.

## New Maintenance Officer



On 7 June Craig Welsh accepted a permanent contract and became our new full time Maintenance Officer. Craig joined us in March on a temporary contract whilst the Maintenance Department underwent a review period. Craig is a qualified building surveyor and has proved

to be an asset to the Association. Craig and/or Sandra will be able to help with all issues regarding maintenance including Gas, Garden Work and Close Cleaning.

Craig will take ownership of the Associations stock condition survey and ensure that planned maintenance and cyclical maintenance are carried out within the timescales identified.

# BIKES...BIKES... BIKES...



One of the most common complaints we have received of late is that people continue to leave bikes chained to the railings in the close area or in some cases on individual landings.

### This is unacceptable for two principal reasons

1. It presents a Health and Safety Hazard to other residents
2. It prevents the close cleaners from being able to clean thoroughly in common areas.

Our new premises now afford us the luxury of storage and as a result any bikes reported as being kept in the common areas will be subject to the following procedure.

1. A letter will go to the whole tenement advising that the bikes should not be kept there and must be moved prior to a date approximately 1 week ahead.
2. The day before this deadline our staff will visit the premises and if bikes are still there a notice explaining that they will be removed the following day will be placed on them.
3. Our contractor will be instructed to remove the bikes and take them to our store.
4. Residents will be able to retrieve their bikes on payment of their share of the contractor's time in moving these. The contractor's time will be apportioned between the numbers of bikes moved.

We hope that people appreciate the reasons for this action and undertake to keep bikes inside houses. This procedure also applies to scooters and prams.

# MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

## BECOMING A MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATION



Cathcart & District Housing Association is a Registered Social Landlord operating in the Cathcart & Mount Florida area of Glasgow. We

are registered with the Financial Services Authority. This means that the affairs of the Association are controlled by a Management Committee who are elected by the Members. and are also a registered charity.

To qualify for Membership a person must be 18 years of age. To become

a member, individuals purchase a £1 share in the Association which entitles them to attend and vote at General Meetings and to stand for election to the Committee of Management. The Association does not trade for profit and it should be stressed that no personal liability is attached to shareholders. All local residents are encouraged to become members as the Association believes that in this way activities will best meet the needs and aspirations of the community. If you have not already done so and wish to become a member, please complete the details on the enclosed leaflet and return it to the office with £1.

## COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

The Full Committee of Management is the main board responsible for the overall governance of the affairs of the Association. They meet every two months and receive reports from staff on all areas of operation. Strategic planning is part of the remit of the Full Committee and matters such as what improvements are carried out and when, are discussed along with Policy formulation and Implementation of all matters of best practice and statutory requirements. Senior staff advise the Full Committee on relevant changes in Statute that affects the Association to allow appropriate policy changes

to be made. In addition to the Full Committee we have two sub-Committees who have delegated responsibility for certain aspects of the Association.

Housing Management/ Maintenance Sub-Committee is responsible for Rental matters, Allocation, maintenance issues and other day to day business which falls into this category.

Finance Development/General Purposes Sub-Committee is responsible for the Development Programme, appointment of consultants, staffing issues and all financial matters both strategic and operational.

## COMMITTEE OPPORTUNITIES

In accordance with our rules the Association can have a maximum of 15 members on the Committee of Management at any one time. In order to stand for election to the Committee, members are required to submit their nomination form 7 days before the AGM. Each year a nomination form is sent to all members with the notification papers for the AGM. Nomination forms require to be seconded by existing committee members, if this poses a problem please speak to a member of staff at the time of completion of the form.

## Gas Servicing

Our Gas servicing contract is on-going with each property being serviced on an annual basis. This is a legal obligation on the part of the Housing Association. Every tenant must by law give access to their property once a year to allow our contractors to carry out this check. We commence the access process at the 10 month stage to be assured of getting access by the 12 month point. Anyone who fails to provide access after two visits will be subject a legal process, We have no choice about this. If any tenant does fail to provide access or arrange for anyone else to do so on their behalf we will obtain a decree. This also gives us the right to charge any legal expenses to you. As you will be aware any legal process is very expensive and we would urge everyone to ensure access is given once a year for this purpose.

### How to contact us:

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Our AGM will be held in September at our new premises in Rhannan Road. Papers will be sent out 2 weeks prior.