

## **Inverness-shire and Nairn Albyn Tenants Forum**

Note of meeting held on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2009 in the Royal Highland Hotel, Inverness.

### **Present**

13 Tenants

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### **In attendance**

Helen Barton, Housing and Communities Director, Albyn Housing Society  
Natasha Shearer, Housing Team leader, Allocations, Albyn Housing Society  
Lucy Fraser, Community Involvement Officer Albyn Housing Society  
Anne Mackay, Administrative Assistant, Community Involvement, Albyn Housing Society

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Lucy welcomed everyone to the second Tenants' Forum, and introduced Helen and Nat, explaining that Nat was present to answer general questions only and that any personal problems should be kept until the end when there would be time to talk privately with members of staff.

### **Presentation by Helen Barton – Allocations**

Helen explained to the group what the Allocation policies are, and in particular what they can and can't do. She explained what Albyn is bound by law to do, and also what the Regulator demands they do. She continued by explaining about the Highland Housing Register, how each application for housing is dealt with, and the difference this Register has made to the general public by cutting out a lot of the red tape. Helen then explained the procedure that is carried out once the application for housing is received, and the steps the Housing Associations of the HHA take to ensure that the person in most need is housed, emphasising that where an applicant comes from is not taken into account, nor is their income or savings. There are approx 10,500 people on the housing list at present and the highest demand is for the Inverness & Nairn area.

When someone is looking to transfer or exchange houses, it is now much easier as their application is dealt with by all of the housing providers so there is more choice. Albyn Housing is a member of 'Homeswapper', which is an internet based list of tenants who are looking to swap houses all over the country, and tenants can access this free of charge. 80% of all enquiries get matched within 24 hours although not all go through with the swap.

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### Questions & Answer Time

Q At what age should a child have it's own room?

A If different sex - 6 years old. ]

If same sex - if 4 years or less of a difference in age they can share a room

Q What does Albyn consider to be 'Overcrowding'?

A The number of adults and children in the property are compared with the number of rooms that they have access to. Albyn's policy is much fairer than is required by Law. Albyn only looks at the number of people per bed / sleeping space

Q How long can a tenant be in an overcrowded situation?

A There is no time limit. Larger houses can only be allocated when a property becomes available

Q Is there a certain number of houses that Albyn has to allocate to Homeless people?

A No, each property is allocated on points, the same as all other housing providers on the HHR. Albyn has a target of allocating 50% of empty properties to people with 'Homeless points', but this has to be balanced with other priorities too

Q What about tenants with Long term medical needs?

A An assessment of the tenant/s is carried out by NHS Highland and medical points awarded accordingly. Any ground floor accommodation is then allocated to the person in most need

- Q Why do Homeless people get more points than Medical needs / Overcrowding?
- A 15 points are allocated for overcrowding, and 70 for being homeless. Other points are allocated according to the individuals needs, so it is not always the case that the Homeless person will always have more points overall
- Q How many points to you need to get to the top of the list?
- A Not able to say as this depends on which area you are applying for
- Q Can you buy an Albyn house?
- A No, we do not have the tenants 'Right to Buy'. This only applied to a small number of houses which were transferred to Albyn. The Highland Council still has the 'Right to Buy' in certain areas and this is due to level of housing need in these areas
- Q What is Albyn's policy regarding Social Work Tenants? Where this tenant lives there are 4 long term tenants and 4 Social Work tenants and the result is a nightmare! No supervision of Social Work cases and any complaints they make are not checked out.
- A The Social Work cases are dealt with by the Highland Council, not Albyn Housing. Some of these tenants have been homeless, some not, and visits from Housing Support team depend on the tenant and are done in conjunction with the Council and other agencies. If the activity is criminal then you should advise the police.  
Helen agreed that Albyn should look at the spread of 'difficult' tenants.
- Q What is a Balanced Community?
- A Each area is different so e.g. in rural areas they need housing for people to work, but also in Urban areas they need housing in regeneration areas for workers too. Other obligations need to be considered too so it is not always possible to get a balance.
- Q Can't background checks be done before allocating a house? Anti-social behaviour is being reported but nothing is done. Tenants are frightened in their own homes.
- A Helen asked the tenants who had specific problems to give details after the meeting.  
Albyn is only able to check out a prospective tenants housing circumstances, not their personal circumstances.  
Anne to send information about how to deal with Anti-social behaviour, discussed at the previous Tenants Forum, to all tenants who had concerns.
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## **Close of meeting**

Lucy thanked everyone for attending and for their contribution to the meeting. She advised that the next meeting would be held in in September, a date to be arranged nearer the time but it would be in the evening. The tenants agreed that this venue was better than the previous one, and so the next meeting will be held at the Royal Highland Hotel.

Lucy then asked for suggestions for topics and it was agreed that the next meeting would deal with 'Repairs', (the tenants had asked to discuss 'Anti-social behaviour' but Lucy advised that this subject will be dealt with by a Focus group later in the year and that the tenants would have the opportunity to be involved then).

Lucy then reminded the tenants about the Tenants Conference on 21<sup>st</sup> March at the Ramada Jarvis.

Helen thanked everyone and closed the meeting