

Albyn's tenants' conference



how to involve local residents where we don't have tenant groups.

After a fabulous lunch and more chatting amongst new friends, we all came back for some very informative quick fire information sessions. We learnt about the new Highland Housing Register from Helen Barton. We also had a fascinating talk from Community Beat Sergeant Gus Stewart about Community Safety and new initiatives being taken by the police to tackle anti-social behaviour and under-age drinking. In addition, we heard from our Property Maintenance Director, John Clarke, about how we can all be more energy efficient in our homes, and what Albyn is doing to reach new government standards.

Last but not least, was our famous "prize draw", with no delegate leaving empty handed!



"This year, we were also delighted to welcome along some tenants of The Highland Council registered groups"

On Saturday 21 March 2009, Albyn residents from all over the Highlands met together at the Ramada Jarvis hotel in Inverness for our second tenants' conference. Delegates included tenants from Inverness, Drumadrochit, Muir of Ord, Evanton, Golspie, Rosemarkie and Ardersier. This year, we were also delighted to welcome along some tenants of The Highland Council registered groups to share the information and to join in our discussions.

After our coffee and bacon rolls to wake us up, we eased ourselves into a mid-morning start with a welcome from our Chief Executive, Calum Macaulay. The Chief Executive of the national Scottish tenant organisation Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS), Lesley Baird, then got us warmed up with a fun "bingo" game to get us all speaking and finding out more about each other. Would you have guessed

that we had two Sutherland sheep experts, a friend of an Eastenders regular, people who had been on TV, several fans of country music, secret crisp eaters and a professional story teller amongst us?!

Our slightly more serious session was to hear from Lesley about good examples of how tenants all over Scotland have been involved with their landlords in influencing what goes on and producing better services. We heard how important this is, and were encouraged to keep up the activities that we are already involved in across the Highlands. Then Helen Barton, our Housing and Communities Director, followed with an update of what Albyn has done to improve our services to tenants over the last few years; and about how we are aiming to involve tenants in improving our delivery of customer services over the next three years. Lively and informative discussion groups then took place about what we need to do next, and

in this issue...

- Albyn's tenants' conference
- Looking after the elderly and vulnerable
- Allpay.net
- "Save Xmas" campaign
- Tidy tenancy reward scheme
- Rent arrears
- Want to get rid of your rubbish?
- Waste not, want not
- Useful phone numbers
- Callpay or "Call and pay"
- Three £25 vouchers up for grabs
- We want your views

www.albynhousing.org.uk

Looking after the elderly and vulnerable

Just over a year ago, we sadly discovered that one of our elderly tenants in Ross-shire had died at home alone. This was not discovered for some considerable time after his death by us, other agencies involved with him, or anyone else connected with him.

This was deeply saddening and a huge concern to us, and there are a number of things we have been doing since then to try and make sure that other elderly or vulnerable people living on their own in our houses are not at risk in the same way.

- We have changed our database, so that all elderly tenants and anyone else we think might be at risk is automatically noted as potentially vulnerable
- We have had meetings with other organisations such as housing support providers, health workers and housing benefits, to discuss how we can share relevant information between us better – where we have the tenants' permission to do so
- We have comprehensively reviewed how we contact tenants in arrears with rent, and where we can simplify this to avoid delays wherever possible
- We are setting up a form to contact our tenants every year to make sure that our records are up to date about who is living in the house, and to make sure we have the right contact details for you, including who you would want us to contact in an emergency

There are things you can do too:

- Make sure someone knows if you are going to be away for a while – you may already have a neighbour or residents' group you speak to, but if not, tell your housing officer and we will keep a note of when to expect you back
- Make sure we know how to contact you, or who we should get in touch with if we need to speak to you urgently and you are not at home
- If you are on your own and worried that you don't have regular contact with anyone, please get in touch with the Housing Plus Officer in Inverness (telephone: **01463 712516**). We may have information about voluntary groups or local services that would help you.



ALLPAY.NET

Allpay.net is the UK's only dedicated payment solution specialist, providing revenue collection systems and consolidating payments for hundreds of public and private sector organisations to make bill payments easier for everyone.

Whether paying rent, council tax or any other bill, Allpay.net's range of products and solutions are designed to provide the maximum convenience and choice for people in how they can pay their bills - including over the Internet, over the telephone, by Direct Debit or over the counter.

They are committed to tackling financial exclusion and helping the financially vulnerable. They are one of the few organisations in the UK that understands there is

a huge demand for people to be able to pay for their goods and services with cash.

Allpay.net rent payments can be made at:

- Spar
- Morning Noon and Night
- The Co-op Group
- Alldays
- Mace
- Somerfield
- Post Office

plus many small and independent retailers.

If you would like any further information regarding Allpay.net, please visit their website on www.allpay.net or call their general helpline on telephone: **0870 243 3434**



“Save xmas” campaign

Following the collapse of the company Farepak Hamper in 2006, the Office of Fair Trading launched a public awareness campaign with the objective of ensuring that consumers were empowered to make decisions on the most suitable options for short term saving for Christmas.

Albyn have so far delivered two training sessions regarding the “Save Xmas” campaign, one for Housing Support staff in Inverness to enable them to advise their clients, and one at the Milton Community Centre for tenants and support workers. Both sessions were enthusiastically received and it is hoped that three more sessions will take place soon.

Tidy tenancy reward scheme

Each year, Albyn Housing Society spends thousands of pounds clearing and cleaning out empty properties before we can carry out any repairs and get them ready to let to new tenants.

This means that we have less money to spend on other improvements and repairs to our properties which would benefit our tenants.

You can help to change this!

When you move out and leave a ‘Tidy Tenancy’, we will give you £50*.

To qualify for this £50* reward, you must meet all the conditions explained here.

General conditions

- Give us a minimum of four weeks’ notice that you intend to move out of your Albyn home
- Allow our Property Maintenance staff to carry out an inspection of your home prior to you moving out
- Return the full set of keys to your property
- Provide us with your forwarding address
- Leave details of your gas and/or electricity suppliers and a final meter reading, if appropriate

Cleaning and clearing conditions

- Make sure that your garden is tidy and free of rubbish
- Remove all furniture, belongings and any rubbish from the property - including the loft, garden, shed and/or garage
- Leave the property in a clean condition. Kitchens and bathrooms should be cleaned to an acceptable hygienic standard
- Leave your wheelie bin(s)



Decoration, fixtures and fittings conditions

- Leave the property in reasonable decorative order
- If you remove any fixtures, make good any damage
- Put right any repairs you are responsible for

The payment will normally be made in the form of either BACS or cheque and will usually be paid within 20 working days of the tenancy end date.

Payment will be made to the outgoing tenant. In the case of a joint tenancy, payment may be made in joint names, unless previously and mutually agreed by all parties. Payment may be made to third parties but only in certain circumstances.

The award scheme does not apply to the following:

- Tenants transferring to another Albyn Housing property
- People doing a mutual exchange
- Sharing Owners

* Any debts you owe to the Society will be deducted from the Reward

RENT ARREARS

We have recently completed a big review of our Debt Prevention and Recovery Policy. Lots of people, including both staff and tenants, helped to shape the new document. The new approach focuses on our responding to problems at as early a stage as possible. The buzz words are “early intervention” and we hope that this approach will help our tenants to successfully manage their way out of rent arrears.

Albyn Housing Society treats rent arrears very seriously. While every consideration is given to people who are having genuine difficulty, our first priority is to collect the rent we are owed so that we can provide the services that you need. There is a direct link between rent payments and our ability as a landlord to deliver good quality housing services, such as stock investment and repairs.

Whilst we will offer support to our tenants in arrears, we will pursue arrears and take firm actions against those who won't pay. Albyn views eviction as a last resort and would far rather offer assistance and help our tenants to keep their homes. However, when all else fails we will evict tenants who do not pay their rent. If you are evicted for rent arrears, the local authority may not have a duty to re-house you, even if you have a family, unless there are strong mitigating circumstances.

We aim to help tenants to maintain successful tenancies, so if you are having problems paying your rent, or have missed a payment, you should contact a member of our Housing Management Team right away. You will be able to speak to a Housing Officer who will give you advice and try to help find a way to solve the problem. This may include setting up a repayment arrangement or referring you to other specialist agencies such as Money



Advice Scotland, the Department of Work and Pensions and/or the Citizens Advice Bureau. The following information details who the Officer is for each area and how you can get in touch with them.

Housing Team South

Patrick Quinn: Housing Officer

(Inverness East, Inverarnie, Daviot, Badenoch and Strathspey)

Telephone: **01349 855966** • Email: patrick.quinn@albynhousing.org.uk

Meg Milne: Acting Housing Officer

(Strathpeffer, Maryburgh, Muir of Ord, Black Isle, Kirkhill, Beauly, Drumnadrochit, Fort Augustus, Foyers, Inverness West, Ardersier, Nairnshire, Dyke)

Telephone: **01349 855540** • Email: meg.milne@albynhousing.org.uk

Audrey Greig: Administration Assistant

Telephone: **01349 855992** • Email: audrey.greig@albynhousing.org.uk

Housing Team North

Grace Mackay: Housing Officer

(Inverasdale, Contin, Dingwall, Evanton, Alness, Invergordon, West Ross)

Telephone: **01349 855974** • Email: grace.mackay@albynhousing.org.uk

Paul Green: Housing Officer

(Caithness and Sutherland, Ullapool, Milton of Kildary, Tain)

Telephone: **01349 855975** • Email: paul.green@albynhousing.org.uk

Gill Garland / Dyan Berry: Administrative Assistant (job-share post)

Telephone: **01349 855979** • Email: gill.garland@albynhousing.org.uk or dyan.berry@albynhousing.org.uk

Alternatively, phone our main reception number on **01349 852978** and your call will be put through to the right person.

It is important for you to take action as soon as possible before the arrears become more difficult for you to clear.

Want to get rid of your rubbish?

Are you planning a spring clean or just having a general tidy out? If the answer to either of these is "YES" then there are a number of options you can use to dispose of all that extra stuff you no longer need.

If you have access to transport you can use one of Highland Council's many recycling centres across the area to recycle a variety of items. For details of your local recycling centre and to find out what types of items they accept please contact The Highland Council on telephone: **01349 868439**.

If you don't have transport you can arrange for The Highland Council to collect the items from your address. All you have to do is contact your nearest Highland Council Service Point and they will arrange for a suitable date for your items to be collected.

For further information about these services and the types of items they accept, please contact your local Highland Council Service Point – as follows:

Highland Council service points

- Alness: 3/5 Obsdale Road
01349 882366
- Ardersier: Station Road
01667 462658
- Aviemore: School House, Milton Park
01479 811990
- Bettyhill: Naver, Telecottage (NTC Bettyhill)
01641 521242
- Bonar Bridge: Carnegie Building, Lairg Road
01863 766838
- Brora: Gower Street
01408 622644
- Dingwall: Ross House, High Street
01349 868527
- Dornoch: Castle Street
01408 635300
- Drumadrochit: Tourist Info Centre, Car Park
01456 459050
- Durness: Durine
01971 511750
- Fort Augustus: Memorial Hall
01320 366733
- Fortrose: Leisure Centre, Deans Road
01381 620797
- Gairloch: Achtercairn
01445 712572

- Golspie: Main Street
01408 635200
- Hilton: Hilton Village Complex
01463 246007
- Invergordon: 62 High Street
01349 852472
- Inverness: 23 Church Street
01463 703999
- Kingussie: Council Offices, Ruthven Road
01540 664502
- Lochcarron: Main Street
01520 722241
- Lochinver: Culag Annex, Culag Pier
01571 844777
- Muir of Ord: Seaforth Road
01463 870201
- Nairn: The Court House, High Street
01667 458500
- Tain: 24 High Street
01862 892122
- Ullapool: North Road
01854 612426
- Wick: Area Office, Market Square
01955 607719

Moray Council service point

01343 557073

Waste not, want not

Northern Recycling Solutions recently presented Albyn Housing with a certificate which confirmed that Albyn had succeeded in recycling 2,353 kilograms of paper.

This is the equivalent of: 941 reams of office paper, 12,699 rolls of two ply toilet paper, 10,238 daily newspapers and 7.2 cubic metres of landfill.

This is a great result - Albyn is in the top three companies in the Highlands for recycling!

We haven't stopped there and have now started recycling plastics and cans as well.





Useful phone numbers

**ALBYN HOUSING
EMERGENCY
REPAIRS
24 HOURS CONTACT
NUMBER
0845 130 9995**

Allocations Team

Responsible for:

- Maintaining the housing lists
- Giving advice and information to applicants
- Allocating houses
- Transfers
- Mutual exchanges

To check on your housing application, transfer, mutual exchange or housing points:

Telephone:

0845 130 1017 or
01349 852978 (Office)

Housing Management Team

Responsible for any issues to do with your tenancy:

- Rent payments
- Arrears
- Neighbour complaints
- Estate problems such as parking and messy gardens
- Sub-letting
- Successions

This work is dealt with by two Housing Officer teams, who cover the North and South parts of our area.

Telephone: **01349 852978**

Rent Payments

To pay your rent by telephone you will need your rent payment card and a debit or credit card e.g. MasterCard, Visa, Switch or Connect (regrettably Electron cannot be used).

To make a payment simply telephone: **0844 557 8321**.

To make your payment on-line simply log on to:

<https://www.allpayments.net>

where you will be prompted to enter your Payment Card Number.

Housing Support

Our Housing Support team provides flexible housing support to homeless or potentially homeless people in their own temporary tenancies to help them manage a tenancy on their own and then make a planned move into a permanent tenancy. They also provide “floating” housing support to Highland Council, private and our own tenants.

Telephone: **01463 712516**

Community Development

If you want to become more involved in what we do, need advice about setting up a local residents’ group, or want some help with a local initiative in your area, contact our Community Involvement Team.

Telephone: **01349 855976**

Callpay or “call and pay”

We are constantly looking at ways to make our services even better and we are pleased to tell you that we can now offer you an additional way to pay your charges to us. Since the beginning of February 2009 you have been able to pay your rent, occupancy charge and/or service charge over the phone by calling our Invergordon office direct. Whilst we don't expect this to become the primary route for payment, it does give you further flexibility in how you pay your charges and will be particularly useful for making one-off and occasional payments, perhaps at the outset of a new tenancy or when a repayment arrangement has been agreed.

To pay by phone all you will need is your Allpay swipe card and your debit or credit card e.g. MasterCard, Visa, Switch or Connect, Maestro, Solo, Visa Electron. To make a payment simply call **01349 852978** between 9.00am and 5.00pm Monday-Friday and ask to speak to a member of staff in the Housing Management Team. An authorised member of staff will then be able to process your payment and provide you with an authorised receipt code. We recommend that you note this down for safekeeping. We will soon be able to issue you with a receipt which can be printed and sent to you, or emailed to you.





Three £25 Vouchers up for Grabs!

Albyn Housing Society Ltd

Registered Office

98-100 High Street,
Invergordon, Ross-shire IV18 0DL
Tel: 01349 852978
Fax: 01349 853859
email: office@albynhousing.org.uk
(Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

Inverness Office

(Housing Support and Low Cost Home Ownership Enquiries Only)
68 MacLennan Crescent,
Inverness, IV3 8DN
Tel: 01463 712516
Fax: 01463 242590
(Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

www.albynhousing.org.uk

www.pelican-design.com

Are you one of Albyn Housing's rented tenants? Want to win a £25 voucher for a shop of your choice? There are a total of three vouchers available.

Albyn is currently in the process of updating our household details for all rented tenants. This will ensure that all information regarding who is staying in our rented properties is fully up to date and that we have your accurate contact details.

You will be receiving a short questionnaire soon. Please complete it and post it back using the pre-paid envelope provided.

A prize draw will take place within four weeks of the form's suggested return date and the winners will be notified by post.

If you have nursery or school age children in your household, they might like to get in on the action too! We would love to receive a picture/drawing of your family in their Albyn home. You can send it in along with your questionnaire. A panel of elite art critics (better known as our four Directors!) will select their favourite three pictures. Those children will each receive a £10 voucher. So remember to put your name and address on the back! The pictures and results will be included in our next newsletter and displayed in our offices.

WE WANT YOUR VIEWS!

Albyn always welcomes your feedback and views on anything we're involved in. For example:

- Do you want to tell us something about the services that we provide to you?
- Do you have something that you would like to see included in these newsletters?

- Do you want to be involved in a focus group to look at what sorts of articles and information we include in our newsletters?
- Do you want to publicise your coffee mornings / charity jumble sales / resident group meetings in our newsletters?

You can contact us in the following ways:

Email: office@albynhousing.org.uk
Telephone: **01349 852978**
Fax: **01349 853859**

or you can cut out and return this form to the address below:

Name		Post Code	
Address		Telephone	
		Email	

Comment/Query:

Would you like us to contact you with a response and, if so, which method of contact is best? (Please tick one.)

Yes No
Letter Phone email

Return form to:

**Corporate Officer, Albyn Housing Society Ltd,
98-100 High Street, INVERGORDON, IV18 0DL**

