



Shetland Tenants Forum Newsletter

Nov 2011

The Shetland Tenants Forum

1a Water Lane,

Lerwick.

ZE1 0AG



Our office is open from 10.30 am – 3.30 pm Monday to Thursday, for all tenants either with SIC, HHA, or private landlords. If you wish to make an appointment to see our worker just phone and make an appointment.

Our Tenants Participation Worker will help you with any questions you may have. If for any reason Joann does not know the answer she will find out for you or put you in contact with some one who will be able to help.

If you are a tenant and would like to be involved in the STF just come along and join our group.

Telephone /Fax No: 01595 695197

E - m a i l a d d r e s s : -
joann@shetlandtf.plus.com

Set up a Tenants Group

If you have a problem in your area sometimes several voices are better than one.

If you would like to set up a tenants group in your area just come along or phone the office and ask for an information/start up pack.

We offer practical and financial help to anyone wishing to start up a group.

STF News

We have had another successful summer at the Forum with various queries etc coming into the office all are being/have been dealt with.

We had our AGM in August and Chris Robertson is now our Chairperson, Susanne Willshaw is the vice chair, Joann Johnson is our Sec/Treas

STF have representation on different groups all associated with Housing, Crudens Refurbishment Group, Anti Social Behaviour Group, Common Housing Register, Local Housing Strategy.

These groups meet on a regular basis. All information and minutes are taken back to the STF meeting for discussion, then passed on to the other groups for comment.

Chris Robertson attended the TPAS conference in Dundee in October, Chris attended several workshops and said it was good to meet up with different people and to hear their views.

Several SIC Staff and HHA Staff have attended our meetings to discuss different subjects relating to housing, all members feel this is a good way to get the latest information from SIC, HHA, Government issues and any other different projects.

NINES

Developed in partnership with Hjaltland Housing Association, the SIC Housing and Scottish and Southern Energy, the NINES (Northern Isles New Energy Solution) project involves the installation of a new style of storage heater and water tank in 231 Hjaltland and around 500 SIC houses.

These will offer a more controllable, comfortable method of heating the home, and contribute to a wider "smart-grid" system, which aims to stabilise the electricity grid in Shetland and allow more renewable energy to be produced.

The proposed HHA schemes include: Colonial Place, Thistle Court, Brind, Grostane, Browns Road, Kirkhus, Stackhoull, Tronaster, Sanblister Place, Upper Glebe, Nederdale, Gremmasgaet, Stoney Hill, Water Lane, Swarthoull, Gibblestone, Norrendal, Setters Hill, Hulsidale, Stocketgaet, Norgaet, Breiwick Road, Nordavatn, Gostagert, Lowries, Udirhoull.

SIC schemes are also included in this project.

Tenants needing more information should contact:

Louise at louise@hjaltland.org or on 01595 694986.

Useful Phone No's:

SIC Emergency Out of Hours Phone No:- -01595 693972

S.I.C. Out of Hours Homeless Phone No:- -01595 695611

Emergency Phone No for H.H.A:- -07818594752

Neighbourhood Support Workers Contact:- -01595 744347

Safer Shetland Action Line:- -01595 694544

Advocacy:- -01595 743929 /743930

Community Mediation Team:- -01595 743934



Remember

The Home Swapper On Line Service is available for tenants wishing to swop properties.

www.homeswapper.co.uk

Latest News from Hjaltland Housing Association

The Association is delighted that we have been successful in our bids to the Scottish Government for funding to continue with our new build programme. We had submitted 4 bids with a view to building units in Lerwick, Brae and Tingwall.

Our projects in Brae, Lerwick (Old North Star site) and in Tingwall at Strand have been successful and this will see 47 units built. 11 of the units will be Shared Equity units with the remainder being social rented properties. Our partnership with the Council and their agreement to match fund the projects has played a significant role in these bids being successful. These developments will help to meet the high level of demand for affordable housing in Shetland.

The Association is presently involved in assessing the impact of the Government's proposed Welfare reforms on our tenants. If introduced, this will see a reduction in the amount of housing benefit that tenants may be entitled to. This will impact on those under the age of 35, tenants who are under occupying their accommodation and tenants having to manage their own rental payments rather than having it paid directly to the landlord. We have detailed these changes in our own newsletters to all our tenants but would encourage tenants in receipt of housing benefit to consider how they might be affected. There is further information about the welfare reforms available on the SFHA (Scottish Federation of Housing Associations) website www.sfha.co.uk.

Another change the Scottish Government are introducing is the introduction of the Housing Charter and changes in the way housing organisations in Shetland will be regulated. As part of the Charter, the Association, in conjunction with our tenants will agree key outcomes to ensure that a high quality service is provided. The Government will be finalising the requirements of the Charter in February and the Association would then like to meet with as many tenants as possible to get their views on what our local Charter should contain. The Shetland Tenants Forum will be helping us with this process but we also need your support and involvement as our tenants. It will be a challenging but exciting piece of work and if you would be interested in being apart of this please either contact Fiona Robertson at Hjaltland on 01595 694986 or email Fiona@hjaltland.org or contact Joann Johnson at the Shetland Tenants Forum.

The Government has recently released the APSR (Annual Performance & Statistical Returns) information for the whole of Scotland. This is information that the Association has to submit each year to outline our performance in key areas of our service.

In 2010/11 our figures showed that we built 34 new properties and allocated a total of 102 properties. It took an average of 3 days to re-let a property and 17% of our lets went to transfer applicants, 30% to those on our waiting list and 53% to nominations to the Council. On the 31 March 2011 there were 648 applicants on our waiting list and this level of demand continues. We had 4.94% arrears level at the end of the financial year which is an area we take very seriously and encourage and support tenants to make their rent a priority. However, we do take action where tenants continue not to make payments and last year we issued 12 Notices to tenants advising them that we would take legal action. If you are in arrears please do not ignore the situation come and speak to us and a payment plan can be put into place.

You can learn more about Hjaltland at:
www.hjaltland.org

Latest News from Shetland Islands Council (Housing Services)

The Scottish Housing Regulator

Following an improvement progress inspection carried out in 2011, Councillor Allison Duncan, Vice-Chair of the Social Services Committee was "absolutely delighted that the housing regulator has identified some major improvements in the Council's performance since 2007. These improvements included improved information on housing need and good supporting strategies as well as improvements in the repairs service, temporary accommodation and in tackling homelessness. The full inspection report is available online at www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk.

Shetland's 2011-2016 Local Housing Strategy (LHS)

The **LHS** is a comprehensive plan covering all aspects of housing supply and demand in Shetland. It is informed by our **Housing Need and Demand Assessment**. The LHS has been produced in partnership with Councillors and relevant agencies in Shetland and following consultation with the public during the summer of 2011. The Strategy has been approved by the SIC and is now with the Scottish Government for their final assessment.

The Social Housing Charter

The Scottish Government is looking to develop a **Housing Charter** that will look after the interests of tenants and housing applicants across Scotland. It is intended that the first national charter will come into effect in April 2012.

Further information is available online at <http://housingcharter.scotland.gov.uk/>.

Housing Annual Report

The SIC Housing Annual Report will be published before Christmas, and adverts letting you know when the report is available will be in the local press. In line with the council's efficiency drive we won't be sending copies to every house, but will make the report available on the internet at:

www.shetland.gov.uk/housing/Statistics.asp

we will also send out paper copies on request.

SIC Housing will also email copies out to tenants directly – if you would like to add your email address to our mailing list, please get in touch with SIC Housing at housingpolicyandinformation@shetland.gov.uk.

Similarly you can also get in touch if you do not wish to be included in any mailings.

For More Information Contact
www.shetland.gov.uk