

Draft Housing (Scotland) Bill

MTF on behalf of the tenants in Midlothian got together to formulate their response to the new draft Housing (Scotland) Bill. The new bill has two main pillars; reforming the right to buy and modernising the Scottish Housing Regulator. More information about the Bill can be found on our website.

New Build News

The council's programme of building new homes for rent continues on schedule with 426 new homes completed by August 2009 in Dalkeith, Bonnyrigg, Newtongrange, Gorebridge, Mayfield and Lasswade. Another 129 homes are under construction in Mayfield and Loanhead with a further 281 already planned in Bonnyrigg, Penicuik, Dalkeith and Gorebridge.

All new council homes have been designed on accordance with the Scottish Government's design standards for Registered Social Landlords. All are Housing for Varying Needs compliant, are highly energy efficient, meet secured by design and incorporate a range of sustainable development themes.

As well as best practice procurement, designs have focused on providing easily maintained, secure and efficient houses meeting good environmental standards.

The Point in Dalkeith

The Point is an information and advice centre for people who are threatened with or experiencing homelessness.

Located in Eskdail Court, Dalkeith, this new facility is due to open in September and will be staffed by members of the council's Homeless Team assisted by a number of advice agencies who will provide specialist advice and support where required and signpost people to appropriate information and advice.

Finally...

We would like to encourage you to complete the survey form as it is important that your opinion is taken into consideration. All returned forms will be entered into a prize draw and you could be one of the lucky winners!



Dates for your Diary

MTF committee meetings

5th October
2nd November
7th December

6.15pm
Bonnyrigg Halls

MTF Annual General Meeting 14th November

10.30am
Dalkeith Arts Centre

This newsletter is sent to all Council tenants and we try hard to make it interesting, informative and useful. If there is anything you would like us to cover in a future issue, please let us know.

If you would like to know more about MTF contact Lavinia Kilbride tel. 0141 552 3633

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You can also use our website to contact us:
www.midlothiantenants.co.uk



TENANTS NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2009

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Welcome to the autumn 2009 edition of the Midlothian Tenants Newsletter. The purpose of the newsletter is to keep you up to date with the latest housing news in Midlothian.

Midlothian Tenants Forum has been very busy this year with the launch of our new website www.midlothiantenants.co.uk. The Forum were successful in obtaining a Scottish Government Grant to develop the site and we have been working hard to ensure that everyone knows about it. It is hoped that that many people will use the site to give their views on the housing services they receive. We have topics listed for anyone to comment on and we hope this way we can gather views in an interactive way. The site is constantly being developed and we welcome any of your thoughts and views on how we can improve it.

On a personal note I must say a big thank you to Elaine Sneddon, Lillias Reid and Lavinia Kilbride (TPAS) who are our web administrators they have done a great job developing the site which looks excellent.



Our web administrators training day

We hope you find the newsletter interesting and that you will consider using the website or even join the Forum we would love to hear from you. We are still finding our feet and we need your input so that we can truly reflect the needs of the tenants across Midlothian.

We are working in partnership with the Council conducting a survey which is included with this newsletter. There are prizes to be won if you return them, so we would encourage you to complete them and return them using the FREEPOST address or hand them into your local Housing Office.

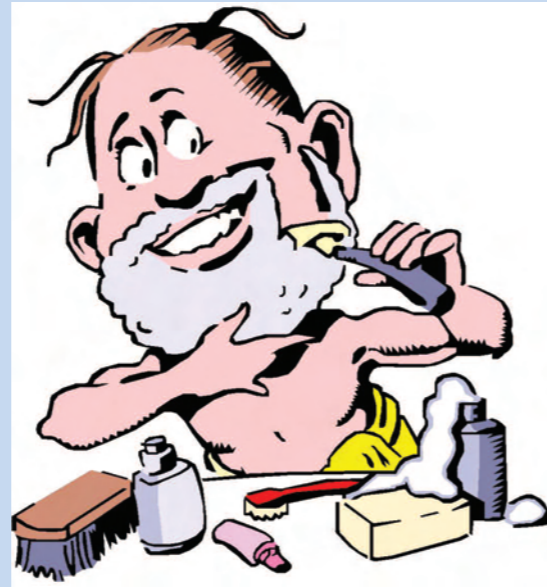
If you require any further information about the Forum speak to any of the committee members or contact Lavinia our Tenant Participation Advisor who will be happy to have a chat with you.

Peter Moonie
Chairperson

MTF vice chairperson decides to shave to raise funds for the Heart Failure Forum

It was no joke when Alex Robertson decided to have his beard shaved off to raise funds for charity.

As a keen fundraiser Alex decided that his distinctive beard could be used to help raise funds. Alex was a bit worried that people would think he was joking because the date he had arranged to have it shaved off was Wednesday 1st April!



Clean shaved Alex managed to raise £875 for the Heart Failure Forum.

We think he deserves all our praise for having the courage to go through with it and raise such a fantastic sum.

MTF Annual Tenant Conference Report Saturday 16th May 2009

The MTF conference is one of the main ways the Council consults with and provides information to tenants. This year we leafleted all 6,000 tenants to ensure they were aware of the event and for those who attended they found the presentations very informative.

Our first presentation was from Hillary Kelly who is Head of Revenues and Housing Management. She gave an overview of how the Council works out rental charges highlighting that Midlothian sits 12% below the national average rent level. She also spoke about how they are tackling rent arrears and the new system where everyone is sent a letter detailing if they are up to date with their rents. Tenants reported that many of them had been sent letters stating they had no arrears and they questioned the point of this. Hillary agreed to take these comments on board in the future.

We also had a presentation from Gary Whyte who is a Council Maintenance Manager which gave an insight into how Midlothian are working towards achieving the Scottish Quality Housing Standard in all homes and the stock condition survey. He informed the group of how they now use thermal imaging cameras to see if homes require top up cavity wall insulation. By doing this Midlothian has a score of 7.4 out of 10 with only 5 required under the Housing Standard which everyone agreed was an excellent achievement. Both Hillary and Gary's presentations can be downloaded from our website.

Dianne Welsh from Changeworks was also present to give advice to tenants about the ways they can save money on fuel bills and inform them of where to apply for grants for home insulation informing everyone that even owner occupiers can apply for certain grants.

Midlothian Tenants Forum

The Midlothian Tenants Forum is the Council wide registered tenant organisation for Midlothian Council. The Forum is run by a committee of tenants that are elected each year at an annual general meeting.

The Forum meets on the first Monday of the month in the Public Hall in Bonnyrigg to discuss housing issues in Midlothian. It is also regularly consulted by the Council when it is reviewing housing policies.

The Forum are keen to attract new members to take part in activities such as the estate walkabouts and consultation groups. If you would like to find out more about how you can get involved with the tenants forum and in tenant participation, please come along to any of our meetings and have a chat with some of the other committee members there. Or contact Lavinia Kilbride our independent advisor from the Tenants Participation Advisory Service whose contact details are on the back of this newsletter.

Estate Walkabouts

Housing staff are keen to encourage tenant involvement as a way of improving housing services. One of the ways they do this is by arranging Estate walkabouts; this allows tenants and housing staff to work together highlighting any local areas of concern.

At the beginning of June a small group of tenants conducted a walkabout in the Waverly estate in Bonnyrigg. The main concern which was raised was the issues surrounding parking of cars on the grass verges. However, it would be too expensive to take away the verges but we will endeavour to have the holes filled in with soil. If you live in the estate it would help if you could park at the same side of the road to allow through traffic and endeavour to keep off the grass verges. Parking of cars on pavements and at T junctions was also noted but these are all issues for the Police but again you live in this area could you please be more considerate for other drivers.

It is hoped that the Council can send someone from the highways department along to speak to the Forum at a future meeting to discuss these issues further.

If you would like to take part in an estate walkabout contact any of our committee members or speak to your local housing officer.



This photo demonstrates how some drivers are using the footpaths as a driveway to their homes. Everyone agreed that this was very dangerous for pedestrians and this needs to be addressed. The grass has been worn away by the constant traffic mounting the kerb and driving along the footpath.

The bollards which were installed to prevent drivers from parking on the grass have had little effect on parking in this part of the estate.