

What's on the

Horizon Housing Association
Leving House, Fairbairn Place,
Kirkton North

Livingston EH54 6TN

Phone: Lo call 0845 600 8648

Fax: 01506 400052

Email: e-mail@horizonhousing.org

Website: www.horizonhousing.org

horizon

Housing Association Ltd

BUSINESS PLAN REVIEW FOR 2003/04

The Association's mission remains:

**"WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES TO PROVIDE
EQUALITY OF HOUSING OPPORTUNITY"**

Our corporate objectives are to:

- Provide integrated housing opportunities that meet people's needs.
- Set rents and charges that are affordable to people on low incomes.
- Provide services that are responsive to the needs of tenants and others.
- Increase public awareness of the work of the Association and
- Contribute to the social and economic regeneration of Communities.

The past year has been a challenging one for the Association, with major work priorities such as the signing up of tenants to the new Scottish Secure Tenancy, having a significant impact on staff's workload.

On the staffing front, there was significant turnover, particularly within the Management Team. The In House maintenance Team was increased and now makes an even greater contribution to the Association's repairs and estate management services.

The caseload of the Care and Repair service in West Lothian continues to grow and a full time administrative assistant was appointed during the year to assist the Project Officer.



Housing Services

We have set 11 targets for the coming year and the business plan included a review of our performance against last year's targets. Two areas of particular interest for tenants are control of rent arrears and the delivery of the repairs service.

Our performance in these important areas is highlighted. The targets for the coming year are also outlined. If you would like a full copy of the plan please contact our office.

Current Target - Rent Arrears

Loss of rental income, excluding technical arrears, to be no more than 1.7% of rent roll.

Performance

We continually monitor our performance and the target remains both challenging and realistic. Average rent loss attributable to non-technical arrears in 2002/2003 was 1.41% (1.47% in 2001/02) therefore target was achieved.

New Target

The target remains unchanged.

The collection of rent is critical to the viability of the organisation. We are proactive in our approach to rent collection and recovery. We introduced ALLPAY as a means of payment this year and we plan to introduce other methods to increase tenants' options.

The recovery of debt is also a key service. As an organisation we not only have to recover rent arrears but also the cost of rechargeable repairs. Non-payment threatens the level of services, which we can deliver, and also has potential legal implications for non-payers. As always, the message is, if you are experiencing difficulty paying your rent or any other charge, speak to us and we will come to an appropriate arrangement. Don't ignore the problem. It will not go away.

Maintenance

Our in-house maintenance team has continued to grow, resulting in a higher proportion of work being undertaken by the association's own staff. However, we are still reliant on external contractors for many of the core services including gas maintenance and emergency repairs. This year we have continued to consolidate our list of contractors and we hope to reap the benefits of increased partnership working.

Current Target - Repairs Service

- a) 100% of emergency repairs to be attended within 3 hours.
- b) 95% of urgent repairs to be completed by the next working day.
- c) 95% of non-urgent repairs to be completed within 10 working days.
- d) 95% of routine repairs to be completed within 20 working days.
- e) 95% planned work to be completed within timescale set out in works order.
- f) All repairs "by appointment" to be carried out on the due date.

Performance

- a) 93% achieved
- b) 91% achieved
- c) 93% achieved
- d) 96% achieved
- e) 97% achieved
- f) 100% achieved

All Targets retained other than (b) which now reads:

- b) 95% of urgent repairs to be **attended** by the next working day.

**Should you require
a copy of this
Newsletter in
LARGE print please
call 01506 424140.**



Office Opening Hours

Please note Horizon will be closed over the Easter period as noted below
 Close Thursday, 8 April at 5.00 p.m. and reopen 9.00 a.m. Tuesday, 13 April, 2004.
 When the office is closed please contact the normal emergency numbers.

RE-ASSESSMENT AS AN INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

The Investors in People Standard is a nationally recognised award to businesses of all shapes, sizes and nature, who recognise the importance of having an appropriately experienced, skilled and trained workforce to meet their objectives.

Horizon was first recognised as an Investor in People in December 2000. In December of last year, we were re-assessed to ensure that we still met the demanding requirements of the standard. I am delighted to report that we passed with flying colours. Of the 22 criteria, we:

- Exceeded the standard in 8
- Significantly exceeded the standard in 13 and
- Demonstrated outstanding characteristics in 1 area.

This is a worthy recognition of the commitment which the Association has to the delivery of quality services to our tenants, other customers and partner organisations. We are ever mindful that it is people's rents which has to pay for training and therefore, it must always be focussed on enabling staff to meet their individual, departmental and corporate objectives.

A copy of the IIP Assessor's report is available from the association on request.

Jim Watt
 Chief Executive

WARNING OVER SMOKE ALARMS

The **Scottish Fire Service** has called for families to ensure that their homes are fitted with working smoke alarms.

Dennis Davies, the Chief Inspector of Fire Services, spoke out after his final report revealed that working alarms were fitted in only a third of houses that suffered fatal fires in Scotland last year.

His report revealed that 59 house fires killed 72 Scots during the last 12 months. Of the fatal fires, only 40 of the homes had smoke alarms and only 21 of those were working properly.

Mr Davies said: "I remain concerned that more of these lives could have been saved, had a smoke alarm been fitted or maintained in working order. I am saddened to report that there was no reduction in the number of deaths from fires last year."

Mr Davies hopes that, by focusing on community education about the danger of fires and ways to prevent them, the country's fire brigades will be able to cut fatalities.

The Chief Inspector's report showed that fire brigades responded to 109,712 emergency calls, a 10% fall on the previous 12 months – which was blamed in part on the series of strikes last year.

If you need your smoke alarm repaired or checked, please contact our maintenance officer. More details can be found on our website.

www.fire.org.uk/scotland

STAIRLIFTS

The Assistant Firemaster at Strathclyde Fire Brigade has released information regarding a house fire in Cornwall, where it was discovered that a Stairlift blocked the means of escape from the house. The following steps can ensure a safe means of escape should fire break out in your home!

If the Stairlift within your home has a folding rail, which obstructs a doorway when in the 'down' position, PLEASE ENSURE THAT THE RAIL IS FOLDED INTO THE 'UP' POSITION WHEN THE STAIRLIFT IS NOT IN USE.

If your stairlift rail does not obstruct a doorway in this manner but the seat does, when located at the bottom of the rail, then PLEASE ALSO ENSURE THAT THE SEAT IS PARKED AT THE TOP OF THE RAIL WHEN NOT IN USE.

From: Shirley Lenahan, 15 Archway, Kilsyth
Tel. 01236 827290

TENANT CONSULTATION/PARTICIPATION

POLICY REVIEWS:

"Running A Business From Home"

Our Committee has considered our policy review "Running A Business from Home". We would now like your comments prior to seeking committee's approval in June 2004. If you would like a copy to review or to comment on please contact our office.

There is little alteration to the policy which will be posted on our website for comment.

"Anti Social Behaviour"

Our Anti Social Behaviour Policy is now with the working party for comment. If you would like to read our policy or comment on its content, either log on to our website or phone to request a copy.

VOLUNTEERS:

Tenants Conference

We are hoping to have our second Tenants Conference in September, 2004. We already have an established working party, however we are keen to hear your views on the topics which should be covered and potential venues. We hope to combine our Annual General Meeting with the Tenants Conference thereby maximising attendance at both events.

Contact Chris Thomson, Housing Services Manager, for further information.

Editorial Group

Our Newsletter is currently produced by staff. As part of our Participation Policy and in view of the requests received during our Tenant Survey in 2003, we are keen to involve tenants in the production of the Newsletter.

We are looking to establish a regular section within the newsletter dedicated to local issues. We are looking for representatives from each estate to update us on any local issues or events. If you would be interested in representing your estate please contact Michelle Adams.

WEB SITE UPDATE

We advised you in our Autumn edition of the launch of our website.

Have you visited it yet?

Log on to www.horizonhousing.org and you will find the following page:



Why not pay us a cyber visit?

HEALTH COMPETITION

Test your health knowledge with a chance to win a £20 Argos voucher.

Please send in your answers together with your name and address by 8th April, 2004.

- 1 How many portions of fruit and vegetables should you eat each day?
- 2 Does walking count as exercise?
- 3 What counts as one unit of alcohol?
- 4 What is the average persons heartbeat per minute?
- 5 Name two places where you could take someone's pulse
- 6 Too much sodium in your diet can cause:
 - Increased blood pressure
 - Retention of fluid
 - Increased blood volume causing your heart to work harder
 - All of the above
- 7 What is the maximum number of egg yolks you should eat in a week?
 - 1 2 3 4 5
- 8 The best fish to eat are those that live in cold water like salmon and mackerel
 - True False
- 9 What are the most cups of caffeinated coffee you should have in 1 day?
 - 1 2 3 4 5
- 10 The biggest risk of sudden cardiac death is from
 - High Blood Pressure
 - Smoking
 - High blood cholesterol
 - Physical inactivity



COMPETITION WINNERS



Christmas Quiz:

Congratulations to Mark McQueeney, aged 11, from Giffnock who was the winner of our Christmas Quiz.

Mark won a £20 Argos voucher.

The correct answer was

"Merry Christmas".

Thank you to all who took part.

Changing Rooms

We are delighted to report that the successful tenants who will have a makeover of their homes are Mr and Mrs Watters and Mr Steven from Inglis Lane in Dunfermline. Photographs of the work progress will appear in the next edition. Watch this space!

Opening Hours – Your Feedback

As we advised, in our Winter Newsletter, we have been running a pilot scheme for in-house training. This has resulted in the office being closed Wednesday mornings from 9 a.m. – 10 a.m.

We'd like to invite your comments on:

The impact this has had on you.

Do you feel this should continue?

We also asked you to comment on whether you would benefit from the Office being open all day, rather than closing between 12.30 p.m. and 1.30 p.m.

Again, your comments are crucial in assisting us to provide the best possible service to you.

Please either drop a line to our Freepost address, or call the office on our Lo-call number 0845 600 8648, where the Admin team will be happy to collate your comments.

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

KINGDOM GAS SERVICE – Gas Heating/Hot Water

0800 389 9463

All other emergencies please contact BIELD RESPONSE 24

0800 7837937