

Housing News

Issue 3
2014

Welcome and thank you

Welcome to this latest Housing News which is intended to keep you up to date and to provide you with important information in relation to your tenancy. Also a big thank you for all your valuable feed-back on the new Housing Section over the past year.

Over the last twelve months 890 Customer Satisfaction Forms have been returned in response to our Housing Repair Service – Thank you to all those tenants who have taken the time to return these to us.

Although it is great to know how well our service and that of our contractors has been received it is also extremely important to know when we have not met your expectations. We as your landlord and service provider need this feedback in order to provide the best possible service that we can.



Willaston Refurbishment

Major housing projects

2013 has seen the completion of a further 40 new properties at Upper Pulrose Phase 9 together with the refurbishment and conversion of the remaining existing properties on the outer ring of the estate. Additionally, the kitchen refurbishment programme and the external door replacement programme have progressed on programme and will continue to other properties during 2014 and beyond through to completion.

After a successful trial in 2013, the Willaston external refurbishment programme has commenced on site and will continue for at least 10 years into the future in order to fully address the damp issues being experienced on this estate.

2014 will also see the completion of a new sheltered complex at Upper Pulrose which will complete the overall Pulrose estate redevelopment that began in 1999. If you are at or above the state retirement age and would like more information on this new sheltered housing complex, please contact the housing office.



Upper Pulrose Phase 9



New Sheltered Complex at Upper Pulrose

FOR ALL HOUSING ENQUIRIES PLEASE CALL 696435 DURING NORMAL OFFICE HOURS 8:45-5:15 WEEKDAYS

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Housing Office, PO Box 2, The Town Hall, Ridgeway Street, Douglas, Isle of Man, IM99 1AD

Meet your "Estate Officers"



Carrie, Nick and Jenny are available to assist you with any queries you may have regarding your property/tenancy agreement and rent account.

Please see details below of the area's each is responsible for and their direct contact details.

Please be aware that their role often takes them out of the office, but if you leave a message they will be happy to call you back upon their return, alternatively if you have a query which is urgent we do have a team of Customer Care/Maintenance Assistant's available to take your calls between 08:45 – 17:15 on 696435.

- Carrie Yates- 696325- Customer Services Officer for Pulrose, Spring Valley, Lheannag Park, Ballavagher, Olympia & Saddle Road
- Nick Barnes- 696359- Customer Services Officer for Anagh Coar, Hillside, Town Centre & Waverley Court
- Jenny McAuliffe- 696439- Customer Services Officer for Willaston, Ballanard Court & Tynwald Court

Lodgers and Homestay

Tenants cannot sublet their home under any circumstances, but can take in lodgers or persons under a homestay scheme, subject to the size of their property and with the written consent of the Council.

A lodger is considered to be any person other than a spouse/partner or dependant child/children who take up residency at the address over and above any reasonable temporary visit, for example, more than four weeks in duration.

Homestay schemes are usually for short periods of up to two weeks in duration which is normally permitted, subject to the size of the property and after notifying the Council and registering with the homestay organisers. The tenant(s) must remain in occupation of their home during any such homestay scheme period.

Routine Repairs

You can report repairs required to your home by telephone on 696435 Monday to Friday 8:45am to 5:15pm or by email at : housingrepairs@douglas.gov.im

You are responsible for the upkeep of your home. Details of repairs you are responsible for are included in the Tenant's Handbook and your Tenancy Agreement.

Emergency Repairs

An emergency repair is one undertaken in response to serious risk to your health and safety and/or serious damage to the property. If the emergency is reported outside of normal office hours, workmen will usually call within three hours and make safe the fault and a full repair will be completed as soon as possible during normal working hours.

You will be charged for the work if you have given misleading information or were not at home when the emergency workmen called. Depending on your circumstances, you may also be charged for damage you have caused yourself or if you have locked yourself out and require assistance to gain access to your property. Storm damage may be considered as requiring an emergency repair only if there is a potentially serious risk to your, or a third party's health and safety, such as loose and dangerous masonry or loose and falling roof tiles etc.

To request an emergency repair, please call the Housing Section on 696435 during normal office hours, or the out-of-hours emergency service on 671100 at all other times.

Changes to Public Sector Rent System

The points system used for Public Sector Property rents across the Isle of Man has been updated and will be adopted by the Council from the 7th April 2014. Changes to the points system will now take into account any improvements to the property and benefits to tenants including modern facilities and energy efficiencies carried out in recent major investment projects.

The Council of Ministers have approved a 5% rent increase which will take effect from April 7th 2014. Your new rent figure from this date will also include any additional amenity and energy efficiency value where applicable.

Overall rent increases for tenants of older properties with limited amenities will be much lower than for tenants in new build energy efficient properties.

As examples, a typical older three bedroom house with energy efficiency value improvements and the exclusive use of a private garden will cost £3.28 more per week. A typical recently built three bedroom house with solar panels will cost £14.13 more per week than an older property.

Summer Solstice

Please be reminded that Summer Solstice will take place on the 30th March 2014, and with it comes the bi-annual issue of altering clocks around your home.

Please ensure that while altering your clocks, that you also alter the time clock on your central heating boiler or programmer. You will need to turn the clocks forward by one hour.

By remembering to do this, you will help us reduce the number of false call outs to central heating boiler issues, allowing us to concentrate on real emergencies.

Please note that you may risk being charged for any call outs made by Douglas Borough Council, when the issue is found to be related to the incorrect setting of programmers or timers.

Central Heating Oil Levels

If you are living in a property with oil fired central heating please ensure you keep a watchful eye on your central heating oil level within your storage tank. Alternatively all bulk central heating oil suppliers offer a "top up service" and monthly payment options, why not look into this to spread the cost of your oil purchases.

If you notice your oil level to be low, do not be tempted to tilt/jack up your tank. "Jacking" up of the oil storage tank is unacceptable and could result in damage to the structure of the tank which could cause failure and subsequent oil leakage and also damage to the oil supply lines. This practice also results in disturbed sediment being drawn into the boiler which will result in the boiler shutting down and the potential to cause damage to the appliance.

It should also be noted that only Oil from authorised and reputable suppliers should be deposited in the Oil Storage Tank, bio fuels and diesel should not be used as heating oil. These oils have different burning temperatures and can also leave residues which can render the boiler inoperative causing damage.

If Douglas Borough Council is called to attend to a boiler which is not operating and the tank is found to be tilted/jacked up or a substandard fuel has been used, you may be liable for the repair or replacement costs.

New uPVC External Doors & Windows

Your home may already been fitted with new external doors or is due to have these installed in the near future. In order to ensure a long service life of these doors it is asked that you follow these simple maintenance steps.

- Keep the doors and moving parts clean and free from a build-up of surface dirt and grime.
- Lubricate the moving parts annually
- Report any defect early before damage is caused to any locking mechanisms or moving parts.

Fixed Term Tenancies

Commencing from the 7th April 2014, all new public sector tenancies with the exception of sheltered housing will be granted for a fixed term of five years. This will include tenancy agreement changes for existing tenants of Douglas Borough Council who are party to a transfer or mutual exchange.

The role of such a tenancy is to :-

- Provide the Landlord with the opportunity to formally review a tenant's circumstances
- To adjust the terms of the tenancy if required (i.e. by way of rent increase or otherwise such as downsizing etc.)
- To provide a fixed term with a set expiry date, so that both the Landlord and the Tenant can reconsider their respective positions and decide whether a new contract of tenancy should be entered into.

A fixed term tenancy could 'terminate' in any of the following ways:-

- Passage of time (i.e. natural expiry of the five year term);
- Mutual consent of the parties (i.e. usually voluntary surrender of the tenancy by the tenant);
- Notice to Quit or Notice before Forfeiture (i.e. due to no- payment of rent, failure to address arrears, anti-social behaviour or other breach of the tenancy agreement).

Where the tenant continues to meet the eligibility criteria for public sector housing, then subject to a satisfactory tenancy history, a new tenancy will be granted for a further five years.



New uPVC External Door

Is your home too big?

We have a long waiting list of young families who desperately need family sized houses. If you would like to transfer to a smaller home with possible lower rent payments, please contact the Housing Office and speak to a Customer Services Officer.

Contents Insurance

It is highly recommended that all tenants take out their own contents insurance policy to cover personal belongings in the event of fire or other accidental damage. Please note that the Council's insurance policy does not provide cover for any tenant owned property, contents or personal belongings.

Please refrain from feeding the Birds

We have received an increased amount of complaints regarding the feeding of birds, please be advised that there are negative risks associated with bird droppings which could cause serious harm to you, your families and your neighbours health.

Please also be mindful that food left out for birds can also attract other vermin to the area.

Tenants found to be feeding birds are in breach of their tenancy agreement, as this is considered a nuisance to their neighbours, all reports of causing such nuisance will be taken seriously and dealt with appropriately.

Please continue to advise the Housing Office of any issues in your area.

Testing of Smoke Alarms

Smoke alarms have been fitted in all Council properties and are the easiest way to alert you to the danger of fire, giving you precious time to escape. For your safety the alarms should be tested, by you, once a week as part of your regular household routine. The smoke alarm should be tested by pushing the test button on the outside cover of the alarm. If you are not sure how to carry out this test, refer to the operator's manual or contact the Housing Office.

If your home does not have a smoke alarm on each level or the smoke alarm doesn't sound when pressing the test button or the smoke alarm beeps on a regular basis contact the Housing Office on 696435 immediately.

A smoke alarm is the first crucial step to protect you from fire; you should also plan an escape route and make sure everyone knows how to escape.

Useful Information

Data protection. From time to time your details may be given to third parties, especially contractors who will be doing work on your home. Any data revealed is in compliance with the Data Protection Act. If you do not want your details to be given out please contact the Housing Office.

Any person who calls at your home on our behalf will carry official identification which you should ask to see.

Street lighting. To report a street lighting fault the number to call is 696434, or alternatively complete a form online at www.douglas.gov.im

Recycling. Kerbside collections are made from all our properties except Lord Street, King Street and James Street. For more information on the Kerbside collection service and recycling visit www.douglas.gov.im and follow the Recycle for Mann link.

The nearest drop off recycling points for tenants in town is either the carpark opposite Lord Street Police Station or the carpark at Tesco, Lake Road. Both sites take glass, cans and paper.

Rent payments. You can now make arrangements to pay your rent by direct debit. No more queues waiting to pay your rent and no more worries if you forget to increase the payments in April. Complete the direct debit form to arrange payment by direct debit. Alternatively, you may like to pay by debit card online at: www.douglas.gov.im or by telephone to the Borough Treasurer's Department on 696344.



Willaston Refurbishment

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