

# Cunninghame Housing Association Newsletter



*More Than Just a Landlord.....*

Issue 1- Spring 2008



## MSP OPENS CHA'S REFURBISHED HEAD OFFICE

Kenneth Gibson MSP formally opened CHA's newly refurbished Head Office in Ardrossan on Friday 28th March 2008. Joining the MSP were members of the voluntary Management Committee of Cunninghame Housing Association, the Provost of North Ayrshire Council, Councillors, tenants' representatives, partners and staff.

The premises were refurbished during the course of last year, with works being carried out to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and the desire to open up the Association's reception area and services to be more customer focused and user-friendly.

The Contractor for the job was Thomas Johnstone from Inchinnan in Paisley.

Opening the ceremony, Frank Sweeney, Chief Executive of CHA commented: "The Association is delighted that our local MSP, Kenneth Gibson, could be here to officiate at this important occasion for the Association."

Margaret Munn, Vice-Chairperson of CHA echoed the Chief Executive's comments saying: "CHA in responding to a request from our customers have improved the reception area facilities bringing it into the 21 century. By redesigning the front office we have greatly enhanced provision of services and ensured equal access for all our clients, making the area more user friendly. This marks another important stage in the development and forward thinking of CHA and I am proud to be part of it."

Kenneth Gibson MSP on officially unveiling a plaque in the Reception area said: "I am delighted to have had the opportunity to open this excellent new facility. Cunninghame Housing Association is one of the most innovative, ambitious and forward thinking housing associations not just in Scotland but the entire UK. This investment will go a long way to help improve the working conditions for CHA staff and the service provided to tenants. The designers, management and board should be commended for their hard work in bringing this quality development to fruition."

## CHA LAUNCH ITS REVAMPED WEBSITE ON 31 March 2008

[WWW.CUNNINGHAME-HOUSING.ORG](http://WWW.CUNNINGHAME-HOUSING.ORG)

Following on from our Customer Market Research Survey, the Association has over the past few months been working towards the launch of its re-vamped website.

We would invite all our tenants who have access to internet facilities to visit our new website and give us your comments on the following:-

- Is it easy to find your way around the site?
- Did you find the content of the pages and sections easy to understand?
- Did you find everything you were looking for, or was there anything you were looking for which you couldn't find?

The launch of the website is the first phase of improving our communication, information and governance processes and should be viewed as a consultation stage with our tenants and customers prior to implementing phase two in the next few months.

## CHA WIN BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AYRSHIRE AWARD FOR THE FIRST TIME

At a ceremony held in the Princess Royal Banqueting Suite at Ayr Race Course on Friday 14th March 2008 the Ayrshire Chamber of Commerce & Industry hosted their Annual Dinner. As part of the evening Business Excellence Ayrshire announced the finalists and winners of their award for Excellence 2007.

The Management Committee and staff members present were delighted when Minister for Defence (and Secretary of State for Scotland), Des Browne MP, announced Cunninghame Housing Association as winners of the Business Excellence Ayrshire Award 2007 in the Social Enterprise category.

Photo: Chief Executive, Frank Sweeney, accepting the Business Excellence Ayrshire Award 2007 from Des Browne, MP with Jim McGeehan of Business Excellence Ayrshire.



## TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE AT SHARPHILL, SALTCOATS

Cunninghame Housing Association is delighted to report that as a direct result of its development of the Sharphill site in Saltcoats, local Contractor, McLaughlin Construction has recruited 3 new recent apprenticeship placements (one apprentice bricklayer and two apprentice joiners). In addition to the new jobs created, the Contractor has created 5 job rotation training placements to be involved in the 3 year project with appointments including trainee buyers, site engineers, ground workers and tele-handlers. Commenting on the initiative, Paul McLaughlin said: "I am delighted to be working in partnership with Cunninghame Housing Association on this Design & Build project at Sharphill in Saltcoats. This project has provided much needed training and employment opportunities for the young people in this community, which in turn provides a sound platform for the future."



Apprentice, Kevin Wilson stated: "It's great to get an opportunity to learn a trade and help to improve the area where we live."

Apprentice, Conor McLeod commented: "Projects like this offer full apprenticeships for young local people which is important."

The Association has a Project Charter which is introduced for every project and requires the contractor to sign up to the Charter with the Association and agree to make provision for apprenticeship/training places associated with the project being delivered.

The Association acquired the site in March 2005 from North Ayrshire Council and it will be developed over 3 phases:

Phase 1 will provide 29 x 2, 3 and 4 bedroom properties for rent including 2 wheelchair units. Works at Phase 1 commenced on site on 17 Sept 2007 and will be complete in January 2009.

Phase 2 will provide 34 x 2,3 and 4 bed properties for rent including a further 2 wheelchair units. Work at Phase 2 commenced on site on 18 February 2008 and will be complete in June 2009.

Phase 3 has yet to be approved but is expected to provide approximately 24 houses for sale on a Homestake basis, allowing people to purchase between a 60% - 80% share in the property.

The Association is building and designing Homestake in a number of different towns at the moment including: Ardrossan, Kilmarnock, Irvine and Kilbirnie.

CHA's Chief Executive, Frank Sweeney, intimated that: "the Association is delighted to showcase what can be achieved in terms of housing led investment, helping to create employment and training opportunities for local people with a forward looking local Contractor.

## CHA DEVELOPS AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR SALE IN KILMARNOCK AND ARDROSSAN

Homestake is a scheme to help people on low incomes who wish to own their own home but who cannot afford to pay the full price for a house. Homestake purchasers will normally purchase between a 60 - 80% stake in the value of the property with the remaining amount being met by grant. This scheme mainly aims to help first time buyers but it is also available for tenants or waiting list applicants, provided they are eligible. If you are interested in finding out more, please contact our Development Services team on 01294 468360.

We are currently marketing 2 Homestake projects in Kilmarnock and Ardrossan.

### Bluebell Drive, Altonhill, Kilmarnock

The Association is offering 30 semi detached 2 & 3 bedroom houses for sale at Bluebell Drive, Kilmarnock.

Prices are starting from £75,000 for a 2 bed property based on a 60% stake and subject to qualifying criteria being met.

We are now taking reservations for these properties and we would be delighted to send you out more details of the houses for sale if requested.

This well positioned site is close to Kilmarnock town centre and benefits from excellent transport links.

### Bluebell Gardens, Dalry Road, Ardrossan

Our site at Ardrossan is only now being released for sale and will provide 33 new build Homestake houses, a mixture of 2 & 3 bedroom semi detached and terraced house types.

This high quality development is located in an excellent position, next to the new bypass and near local amenities. Prices starting from £63,000 for a 2 bed terraced house based on a 60% stake and subject to qualifying criteria being met.

**The Association is holding an Open Day at the Lauriston Hotel on Friday 2 May 2008 between 1.00pm and 7.30pm and you are more than welcome to attend to view the proposals for the houses in greater detail.** Our Development Team and the Project Architect will be at the event to help with any questions you may have. We have also arranged for an Independent Financial Advisor to be in attendance in case you have any questions regarding mortgages etc.

**Interested in either of these projects? Give us a call now on 01294 606009 or e-mail us at [homestake@chaltd.org](mailto:homestake@chaltd.org)**

## 2008 RENT CONSULTATION EXERCISE

Our proposal for this year's rent increase is an annual increase of 6% (except L.S.V.T. tenancies in the Garnock Valley). The rent increase for 2008-2009 has not, as yet, been formally agreed by the Management Committee. Before this happens we would like to take this opportunity to seek your views on the proposed increase.

By increasing our rent by 6%, enough money will be generated to fund our existing services and continue our future planned programme of improvements.

Your views on the proposed annual rent increase will help us plan for the future. You can comment on this proposal in a number of ways:

- By returning the questionnaire previously distributed to you
  - By writing to us at the address below
  - By e-mail to [enquiries@chaltd.org](mailto:enquiries@chaltd.org)
  - By completing our web questionnaire on our website at <http://www.cunninghame-housing.org>
  - By telephoning the Association (Tel: 01294 468360)
  - By arranging a home visit from a member of the Association's staff
- Or
- By attending one of our consultation events, which take place during April and May each year.

## RIGHT TO REPAIR

All tenants have the 'Right to Repair' under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. This legislation governs the need for certain repairs (known as qualifying repairs) to be undertaken within specified timescales, and sets out the compensation levels payable to tenants if the repair is not completed by the Contractor within the set timescales. The compensation payable is £15 plus £3 per day up to a maximum of £100. For further information please request a copy of our separate leaflet covering the Right to Repair or for further clarification, please contact your local Area Team within our Property Services department.



## GAS SAFETY SERVICING CHECKS

The Association has a contract with Jas. Frew Ltd to carry out the gas servicing and maintenance work within your property.

This year's programme will shortly commence and as you are aware, Cunninghame Housing Association has a legal requirement to arrange for ALL properties with Gas Central Heating and Appliances to undergo an annual Safety Check. Despite concerted efforts by the Association, a small number of tenants continue not to allow access to our Engineers.

**TENANTS ARE REMINDED THAT THEY HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO PROVIDE ACCESS FOR THESE CHECKS AND ARE PLACING THEIR OWN, AND OTHERS, SAFETY AT RISK BY DENYING ACCESS.**

The Association will take all necessary steps to ensure that we comply with our legal duty and ensure **YOUR** safety.

Repeated failure to gain entry will result in the Association forcing access to carry out the safety check.

## DOG FOULING

We have received complaints about the issue of dog fouling in a number of areas. We hope that the majority of the dog owners in our estates are responsible and clean up after their dogs, but unfortunately there are some who do not. It is not acceptable that people can't walk about the area without fear of stepping on dog's dirt. This is your local area, so why would anyone not want to help to keep it as clean and pleasant as possible?



There are bins in all areas, to encourage dog owners to clean up and dispose of their dogs' mess. The Dog Fouling (Scotland) Act now makes it an offence not to clear up after your dog. Offenders can receive a fixed penalty of £40 rising to £60 if not paid within 28 days and can also be reported to the Procurator Fiscal and may be fined up to £500.

If you see any of your neighbours allowing their dogs to foul in the street or other public areas and they fail to clean up the mess you should report them by phoning **East Ayrshire Environmental Health 01563 554022** or **North Ayrshire Cleansing Services 0845 603 0594**

## RENT ARREARS

We make every effort to assist any tenant who is having problems paying their rent and give ample opportunity for tenants to address such problems. We use a range of measures to encourage tenants to pay their rent including payment reminders, warning letters, home visits and referrals to other agencies like Citizens Advice for debt management advice and assistance. Only once all of these measures have been fully exhausted will we begin any legal action against a tenant.

Ultimately legal action can lead to a decree for eviction being granted and enforced. We do not undertake such action lightly but if tenants persistently fail to pay their rent we have no option but to pursue a decree for eviction.

If you are having any difficulties paying your rent please contact your local area team. Please do not ignore the problem. Get in touch and work out a solution before it is too late.

## CHANGES IN CIRCUMSTANCES

Do you know that if you want someone to move in with you, that you need to advise the Association? This includes a partner. Permission would only be refused if it would cause overcrowding of the house if an additional person were to move in. If you have had additional children since you first moved into your home, you should also advise us so that we can keep our records up-to-date. The same applies if someone leaves the house. This is especially helpful if you are on housing benefit as the amount of housing benefit you are receiving could be wrong which could lead to an overpayment or underpayment of housing benefit. This can cause financial problems. It is in your own best interest to inform the Association of any changes in your household.

This newsletter along with other information we provide can be produced in other formats e.g. large print or other languages if required. If you need this service please let us know.

## TENANT ENGAGEMENT & PARTICIPATION

Everyone benefits from tenant participation and engagement, helping to:

- improve services to the standards you want
- identify what is important to you
- make better decisions
- understand your point of view
- ensure customer focus.

The Association meets regularly with 3 Registered Tenants' and Residents' Associations in Dalry, Longpark and Ardrossan. Contact your local Area Team if you want to know more about these groups and how to get involved.

East Team – Mary Black, Area Team Leader      Tel: 01294 606024  
North Team - Susan Howe, Area Team Leader      Tel: 01294 606017  
Central Team – Isabel Moreland, Area Team Leader      Tel: 01294 607552

## CLOSES – DOOR ENTRY SYSTEMS

Tenants are reminded that the Close door entry systems are provided for your convenience and to prevent uninvited nuisance from unwanted visitors or fouling of the communal areas by stray animals. We would take this opportunity to highlight that these systems are NOT security entry systems. Within Closes, the individual Flat doors provide the security to the property.

The door entry systems are vulnerable to misuse and vandalism and are increasingly difficult and costly to repair. Where spares are unavailable or repair is not cost effective the result is complete replacement of a system. This can result in delays of around 12 weeks to carry out the work and there are presently some 5 door entry systems waiting to be replaced.

## POLICIES

CHA has recently reviewed several key policies which are currently out for consultation with our Registered Tenants' and Residents' Associations

Complaints & Appeals Policy  
Share Membership Policy

Why don't you download the documents from our website ([www.cunninghame-housing.org](http://www.cunninghame-housing.org)) and give us your comments. For example, are they easy to read, easy to understand etc., etc..

## £1 SHARE MEMBERSHIP

If you are interested in becoming involved in the work of the Association, why not apply to be a £1 Share Member. Here's some information on how to join Cunninghame Housing Association:

### Membership Eligibility/Criteria

1. Any tenant of the Association, aged 16 or over.
2. Any other permanent resident in North Ayrshire or East Ayrshire, aged 18 or over.
3. No member can hold more than one share in the Association.
4. Shares cannot be held jointly.
5. There is no interest, dividend or bonus payable on shares.
6. Under certain criteria £1 shares can be transferred.

### Categories of Share Membership

The following categories of share membership are operated by the Association:-

- Individual membership for all tenants of the Association
- Individual membership for any other individual within North and East Ayrshire
- Tenants' Association Membership for a Registered Tenants' Organisations (RTOs) who meets the Housing Association qualifying criteria
- Body Corporate Membership to North Ayrshire Council and East Ayrshire Council

### Corporate Social Responsibility of Share Membership

£1 share membership of the Association will entitle you:-

1. To stand for election to the Management Committee which is the Association's governing body.

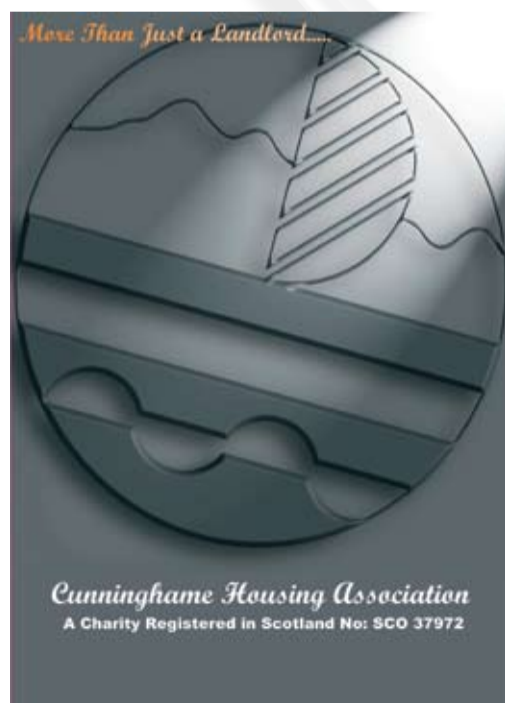
2. To receive Share membership newsletters at least twice per year.
3. To receive a copy of the Association's Annual Accounts and Annual Report and our Community Regeneration Unit's Annual Report.
4. To receive a copy of the Annual Report of our subsidiary company, Cunninghame Enterprises Ltd.
5. An invitation to attend and participate and vote in the Annual General Meeting of the Association.

### How To Apply for Share Membership: Our Procedure

1. To apply for membership, the applicant must submit an application form and £1 to the Association's Secretary at our registered office at 82-84 Glasgow Street, Ardrossan.
2. The applicant will complete the membership application form providing his/her name, address, gender, ethnic origin, age group and type of employment (if applicable) skills and interests together with a statement as to why they wish to join the Association. The personal information will be used for ascertaining the level and types of skill that is within the Membership, confirming residency and monitoring purposes only.
3. Our Management Committee will, upon receipt of the fully completed application form, consider the application at their first available meeting. In this respect it is important that the applicant fully completes the form.
4. We will also acknowledge receipt of your application within 5 working days upon receipt of same.
5. The Association's Corporate Services department is responsible for the administration of all share membership applications, and following confirmation of residency details, will submit the application to the management committee. Thereafter, the following will apply:-
  - The minutes of the meeting will record the committee's approval/disapproval of the application.
  - If approved, within 7 working days of the meeting the share application will be recorded in the Association's Membership Register.
  - A £1 Share Certificate will be issued in the name of the new member. The certificate will be sent to the member.

If you would like an application form, please telephone Jackie Keegan, P. A. to the Chief Executive on 01294 606005 or download one from our website: [www.cunninghame-housing.org](http://www.cunninghame-housing.org)

## NEW CORPORATE IMAGE FOR OUR SUITE OF INFORMATION LEAFLETS



You will be pleased to hear that the Association is further improving our service to customers by introducing a suite of information leaflets, which will provide you with details on our key policies and procedures. We will also be producing leaflets containing information on the Association's services and how customers can access information on specific areas of our business.

The first leaflets will be available in all our Reception areas from the end of June 2008 with more being added throughout the year.

Please remember that all our leaflets will also be available on our website [www.cunninghame-housing.org](http://www.cunninghame-housing.org).

## CHA MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE - WHY NOT ATTEND A MEETING?

If you're not sure about whether to stand for election and you want a sneak preview of what the voluntary Management Committee actually does, why not attend our next Management Committee meeting on Thursday 8th May 2008 at 7.30pm in our Ardrossan office?

Just give us as much notice as possible, but a minimum of 2 working days, and we'll send you out a set of non-confidential papers and you can come along and see first-hand how the Management Committee conducts its business. You'll be able to attend for the non-confidential part of the meeting, which is always at the beginning, but will have no speaking rights.

**WE'LL EVEN ARRANGE  
TRANSPORT FOR YOU!**

## NEW WAYS TO PAY YOUR RENT

More great news from  
**WOOLWORTHS**

You can now use your Allpay card to pay your rent at any Woolworths.