Spring Edition Newsletter 2024

Happy Easter to everyone

Prefer Paperless?

Did you know you can receive this newsletter by email?

Going paperless is better for our planet and helps us to keep costs down.

We want to make sure that we are providing you with the best value for money.....email **kevin@forgewoodcoop.org.uk** to make the switch today!

See back page for Office Closure – Public Holidays

Forgewood Housing Co-operative Ltd

Retiral of our Director - Cathy Brien

Cathy Brien, Director of both Forgewood Housing and Garrion People's Housing Co-operative is retiring at the end of March from her position as Director for both Co-operatives.

She is retiring as Director after 5 years in her role leading the Co-operative, its Management Committee and staff during that time. She has served the Co-operatives for 30 years and during this time she held a number of positions. She progressed to Depute Director for both Co-operatives in 1999 until 2019 when she became Director.

Cathy said "it has been a great honour to lead the Management Committee and staff during this time. Both the Management Committee and staff have been hugely supportive to me during this time and have achieved an enormous amount together. I am delighted to be leaving the Co-operatives in such a strong position and wish my successor all the best in continuing this success and I am re-assured the Co-operatives future is in good hands."



Alan Thomson, Chair of Forgewood Housing Co-operative's Management Committee and Victoria Dallas, Chair of Garrion People's Housing Co-operative's Management, expressed their deepest gratitude to Cathy for her years of exemplary leadership, dedication, and contributions to the Co-operatives.

She will be missed by everyone and wish Cathy the very best for the next chapter in her life.

Congratulations to our new Director – Paul Lennon



Following the announcement of CathyprovBrien's retirement, the two Co-operativesteamengaged the services of EVH to support themPaulin taking forward a recruitment exerciseoppofor the position of Director who providesand

Further to interviews, the panel unanimously decided to appoint Paul Lennon to the post.

services to both Co-operatives.

Throughout the process, Paul demonstrated a commitment to the vision and values of the Co-operatives along with the necessary skills and abilities to continue to deliver excellent services to tenants and the wider communities. Paul was delighted to accept the offer.

Paul has worked with the Co-operatives in a number of positions since 1999. Most recently Paul has carried out the role of Depute Director and has excelled in this role. Paul brings all of this experience along with great partnership working skills and the ability to provide leadership to the teams at both Co-operatives.

Paul said: "I am delighted to have this opportunity to work with the Committee and staff at both Co-operatives to continue to deliver and develop great services for tenants. The opportunity to work with two independent Co-operatives is unique and I look forward to continuing working with committee and staff at both organisations".

Alan Thomson, Chair of Forgewood Housing Co-operative's Management Committee and Victoria Dallas, Chair of Garrion People's Housing Co-operative's Management, added: "We are delighted to welcome Paul as our new director for both Co-operatives. Through the selection process, Paul demonstrated that he has the skills, abilities and vision for the position. We look forward to working alongside Paul to take forward services in both Co-operatives."



Rent Increase 2024/25

Everyone will now have received their letter confirming their new rent charge from 1 April 2024.

A big thank you to everyone who took part in the Rent Consultation Survey and attended the Rent Review Focus Group meeting in January. Your views are important to us and are taken into consideration when making the final decision.

After taking into account the feedback received from our rent consultation process, our Management Committee approved a rent increase of 5% for all properties commencing from 1 April 2024.

It was not an easy decision due to the increased running costs but the Co-operative has kept the increase as low as it can.

WELL DONE TO OUR PRIZE DRAW WINNERS!

We have two lucky prize draw winners who entered our Rent Consultation Survey......

Elaine Lyness and Halina Pacanek.

Rent Increase from 1 April 2024 – Changes you may need to make

Do you receive Housing Benefit?

Should you receive housing benefit we will have notified North Lanarkshire Council, Housing Benefit Department of your new 4 weekly rent charge. They will in turn revise your claim with your new rent charge and you will receive a letter from them advising of your new award.

Do you claim Universal Credit?

When your rent increases from 1st April 2024 you will need to change the rent amount on your Universal Credit account. To do this, you will have to report any change to the Department of Work and Pension (DWP). You can do this via your online Universal Credit account/journal. You should receive a **"To-Do"** notification requesting you to advise them of any change of housing cost. Please follow the necessary steps to ensure your new rent charge is updated on your journal. This will ensure the amount you receive in Universal Credit will continue to cover the cost of your rent.

Do you pay by standing order?

If you pay by standing order you **must** contact your bank to increase your payments from 1 April 2024 as this will not be done automatically.

Do you pay by other payment methods?

If you pay by any other method, please ensure you pay the correct amount to prevent your rent account going into arrears. You can refer to the **"Paying Your Rent & Ways To Pay Leaflet"** that was sent along with your rent increase letter or you can find details of this at https://www.forgewoodcoop.org.uk/ rent/10.pay-your-rent

For information, help and support or if you are having difficulty paying your rent, please contact Susan by email **susan@forgewoodcoop.org.uk** or phone on **077769 90405.**

You have a legal and contractual obligation to pay your rent. Please do not put your home at risk by refusing to pay or by failing to engage with us.



Universal Credit Managed Migration

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The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) have started 'migration' to Universal Credit for tax credit only claimants (those

in receipt of working tax credit and/or child tax credit and don't receive employment and support allowance, income support, jobseeker's allowance, or housing benefit).

If you are affected, you will receive a letter called a "Universal Credit Migration Notice" follow the instructions in your letter before the deadline. Please respond as your tax credit will stop after the 3-month time limit if you haven't made a claim for Universal Credit.

Should you wish assistance with this please contact your Housing Officer and they can make an appointment with our AFTAR advisor or for more information, visit **https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit**

Changes to our AFTAR Project

Universal Credit

We are sorry to say farewell to Robert Mummery our Income/Money Advisor who retired at the end of March after being with us for an impressive 6 years!

I think it's safe to say, Robert deserves a wellearned rest!

Everyone at Forgewood will miss Robert and so will the many tenants and residents he has helped over the years......

We wish him a long and happy retirement!

Our AFTAR Project will continue to be available for anyone who requires support to claim benefits, maximise income, assist with financial / budgeting, debt, council tax and energy advice.



A new Advisor, Jody McBride, who has been appointed as Robert's successor will be available to provide this assistance. Please call us on **01698 263311** and we can arrange an appointment.



Local support for Social Security Scotland benefits

Clients across Scotland, including Lanarkshire can access face to face support when applying for Scottish benefits at a time and place that best suits them.

Benefits currently being delivered by Social Security Scotland include:



Child Disability Payment; Adult Disability Payment; Scottish Child Payment; Best Start Grants; Best Start Foods; Funeral Support Payment; Job Start Payment; Young Carers Grant; Carers Allowance supplement; Child Winter Heating Payment and Winter Heating Payment.

Social Security Scotland's Local Delivery increases the range of ways people can get help to apply for payments they are entitled to. Client Support Advisers can answer any queries about Social Security Scotland benefits, help populate paper or online applications forms, and offer other support in relation to Social Security benefits including help with submitting change of circumstances information.

Local Delivery support is by appointment only and can take place:

- in local community venues;
- in people's homes;
- in hospitals and prisons;
- via video call;
- via telephone appointment.

The Local Delivery service can help people to apply for Social Security Scotland benefits only. It cannot help complete applications for other types of benefits or provide advice or representation. For benefits Social Security Scotland don't deliver, Client Support Advisers will suggest and signpost clients to the relevant services that can help or provide them with additional information where they are able to do so.



Social Security Scotland Tearainteachd Shòisealta Alba

You can arrange to speak with a Client Support Adviser at one of the North Lanarkshire venues below and at a time that suits you.

Meetings are by appointment only.

Tuesday

Wednesday

Friday

Centre Point, 70 Smith Avenue, Wishaw ML2 OLD

Forgewood, 49 Dinmont Crescent, Motherwell ML1 3TT Citizens Advice Bureau, 61A Stirling Street, Airdrie ML6 0AS

To book an appointment with a Client Support Adviser please contact Social Security Scotland on 0800 182 2222.



Apply now at mygov.scot or call us for free on 0800 182 2222



Working Together to Keep Our Areas Clean & Tidy

Estate Walkabout

Do you have any ideas how to improve the area?

If you have a spare hour or two, why not come along to our next Estate Walkabout and be part of our Estate Management Focus Group.

Being part of this focus group allows you to highlight any improvements you think could enhance the area and have influence in any decisions we make. During the walkabouts you can look out for anything that might appear untidy or unsafe in your community.

Our next walkabout will be on **Wednesday 15 May 2024 at 10.30am.** If you would like to come along, or if you are unable to do so but would still like to be involved, contact Yvonne on **01698 263311.**

See it, report it!

We do our best to monitor communal areas and attend to repairs that would cause a hazard. However, should you notice a hazard or anything you feel poses a risk, then please let us know by emailing **enquiries@forgewoodcoop.org.uk** and providing a picture where possible.

Or alternatively, call our office on **01698 263311** and speak to a member of staff.

Disposal of Household Items

It is the responsibility of tenants to arrange the safe disposal of their own household rubbish in the bins provided or for any bulk items to be taken to your nearest recycling centre, which is located within **Jubilee Way, Bellshill, ML4 1SA.**

As you are aware we instruct a contractor, Cameron Cleaning on an ad hoc basis to carry out our kerb side / bulk uplifts within our estates.

As they have intimated there will be an increase in the cost of this service we are currently reviewing our options. We would encourage any tenants who can, to take any bulk items to the local recycling centre.

If you are unable to dispose of bulk items yourself, you should call Northline on **0345 143 0015**. There is currently a charge for this service and details of this can be obtained form www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/binsandrecycling/request-special-uplift.



2023 Garden Competition - Here Are Our Winners!

Last year's garden competition was closely fought and the 2023 Winners were:-

26 Lorne Drive

69 Fife Drive



A big thanks to our landscapers, Murray Landscapes who kindly donated the prizes to our winners.

2024 Garden Competition – Enter Now!

Entry for our 2024 Garden Competition is now open!

Whether you have a private garden, shared or communal garden, we love to see your hard work come to life. This year we are again holding our Annual Garden Competition.

This year we are sure there will be just as many gardens in full bloom. We really appreciate the great efforts that tenants make to brighten up their garden areas.

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The categories for the garden competition this year will be an "overall winner" and a "runner up".

You can nominate your own garden or a neighbour's garden. If you think one of your neighbours have put a lot of effort into maintaining their garden or common area, please nominate them by emailing **enquiries@ forgewoodcoop.org.uk** providing your name, address, phone number and a photograph.

All entries must be submitted to the Co-operative by 31 July 2024.

The judging will take place in August 2024. All entries will be judged by our landscapers, Murray Landscapes.

In addition to this, we will also be carrying out a walk round of all our estates within July to identify any gardens we will enter into the garden competition.



COMMUNITY TEAM UPDATE

Once again, it's been a busy winter with activities ranging from weekly Lunch Club to Men's Group, Women's Group, Community Cinema, Community Clean Up and our Social Isolation Trips and activities.



We also continued to support the ForgeAhead Group, helping them to host an amazing Burns Lunch.

Working with Braidhurst High School we hosted an Upcycling Fashion Show in February which was a massive success.

Over the coming months, we have a mixture of new and exciting activities and events. We will also continue some of our regular activities.

A big thank you

Forgewood Housing Co-operative applied to the Cash for Kids Costof-Living Grant Fund and we were delighted to secure £4,100 with an additional £2,500 funded from Forgewood Holdings. This funding allowed us to provide £50 supermarket vouchers to families within our community which has made a huge difference to them.

Community Team Contact

For more information please contact:

Richard Bolton Community Development Officer community@forgewoodcoop.org.uk 07495 549 065 01698 263311

Thanks to our funders and partners





Would you like to Join our Committee?... We want to hear from you!

We currently have two vacancies and we would love to hear from **YOU**. The Co-operative welcomes applications from anyone who has a genuine interest in the local community and is committed to help drive our Co-operative forward. For more information on how to join our committee please call **01698 263311** or email us at **paulm@forgewoodcoop.org.uk**

Keeping You Informed...

It is important that tenants provide the Co-operative with the most up to date contact details. This will enable us to keep you up to date on our services, share important information with you and advise you on what is happening in your community.

To update your contact details you can email **enquiries@forgewoodcoop.org.uk** with your name, address and mobile number and preferred email address that we can use to communicate with you. Alternatively call us on **01698 263311** and speak to a member of staff.

Staff Changes

We said goodbye and good luck to Laura MacDonald as she left the Co-operative at the end of December. Laura left to pursue her career in housing with Queens Cross Housing Association and wish her all the best. Laura will be missed by tenants and staff alike.

We also say a big hello to Jodie Stewart, who joins us as the new Community Development Assistant. Jodie has settled well into her new role with the Co-operative and has met several tenants and residents within the community.



Being A Good Neighbour

Looking after your garden

The growing season is upon us and if you have a garden, we encourage you to maintain it.

Should you have a private garden or communal area you are looking after, you should take care to prevent it from becoming overgrown, untidy, or causing a nuisance to your neighbours.

I am sure you will all agree the area looks lovely when people take the time to look after their gardens and keep all paths/driveways free of litter and weeds. These are some of the responsibilities that comes with having a garden.

Our housing staff will be out and about inspecting gardens throughout the summer to ensure that tenants are maintaining the legal obligation in their tenancy agreement to keep their gardens tidy.

Landscape Maintenance

As the growing season is upon us the landscape contractor, Murray Landscapes will commence with the cutting of the grass in all our communal areas starting early April.

We should thereafter be in a regular programme of work with the grass scheduled to be cut every fortnight.

The contractor will not cut any grass where dog foul has been left lying. It is essential that all dog owners clear up any mess to allow the landscapers to attend all areas.

Dog Fouling... There's no excuse

The majority of dog owners are respectful of other people and pick up after their pets. However, dog fouling continues to be a problem within the common areas including back courts, grassed areas and pavements within the estates.

Authorised officers from North Lanarkshire Council can carry out dog fouling patrols and will issue dog fouling fixed penalty notices to anyone found not picking up after their dog has fouled.

You can report this direct to the Co-operative or via North Lanarkshire Council, Customer Service Hub on **0345 143 0015**.

BAG THAT POO



Noise Travels!

We have received several complaints about noise, the most common ones being loud music and TVs, parties and loud voices, dogs barking, children screaming or jumping and the use of DIY tools.

All of us have to appreciate that all households are not the same. There are young people, elderly people, families with children, some with regular visitors, people working different hours, some up early, some up late, people with disabilities, some may be hard of hearing while others can hear a pin drop, plus all the rest that comes with living in flatted accommodation.

Everyday living will always bring an element of noise between flats, please be aware of how noise travels. Have respect for your neighbours and an element of tolerance – that way everyone will be able to live their lives.



Being A Good Neighbour

Keeping of Pets

We understand that dogs are part of the family and loved, however we have seen an increase in complaints of dog fouling in back courts and in public areas like pavements etc.

Back courts or common areas within the estates are not a place for your dogs to run free or foul, we expect tenants to walk their dog or keep them on a lead at all times.

You are required to seek the Co-operative's permission to keep a pet in your property.

Usually, we don't have any issues in granting this permission. However, due to increased complaints received regarding dog fouling if we find out the responsible owner(s) we may start removing permission to keep a dog.

If you see dog fouling in the streets or back court areas you can report it to North Lanarkshire Council, Environmental on **0345 143 0015** and to the Co-operative with as much information as possible.

XL Bully owners in Scotland

XL Bully dogs have been added to the list of dogs banned in the UK by the Dangerous Dogs Act on 31 December 2023.

Under the terms of the tenancy agreement, dogs specified in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 must not be kept at any Co-operative property. Any tenant who already have permission for an XL Bully dog will be allowed to keep them, but they need to prepare for changes as a two-stage safeguards approach is introduced.

From 23 February 2024, it will remain legal to own an XL Bully dog but owners must ensure their dog is muzzled and on a lead when in a public place.

You must apply for a 'Certificate of Exemption' to legally keep your pet beyond July 2024.

These changes are subject to parliamentary approval, and you can find more details on the Scottish Government website www.gov.scot/news/new-xl-bully-dogsafeguards-being-introduced From 23 February 2024 in Scotland it will also be against the law to:

- sell an XL Bully dog;
- abandon an XL Bully dog or let it stray;
- give away an XL Bully dog;
- breed from an XL Bully dog;
- have an XL Bully in public without a lead and muzzle.

If you have any further questions, please contact the Co-operative.

Fire Safety Test Your Smoke Alarms

Regular routine testing and maintenance of your smoke, heat and carbon monoxide alarms are very important to ensure they are working properly.

By taking a few minutes of your time every week by using the integral test button on the alarms helps keep you and your family safe..... Test them today!

If you have any missing or faulty smoke, heat or carbon monoxide alarms, or require assistance with testing your alarms, please contact our office on **01698 263311.**

Fire Safety In Closes – Keep them Clear!

All residents are reminded the common close is not an extension of your home to store items.

Please ensure bikes, prams,



household rubbish and any other items are not stored within the close area. Primarily this is to ensure a clear escape route in the event of a fire for anyone living or visiting your property.

We appreciate that you may think a few items stored in your close may not appear to pose a risk. However, in a smoke filled area, any items could help fire to spread and also cause a hazard which prevents a safe escape.

You can help keep everyone safe by making sure nothing is left in your close or communal area at any time and utilise any stores should you have one. CHINA LON OCL

Attention Warning do not cover your electric storage heaters!

It is **not** recommended that you use storage heater covers as they pose a serious risk of fire!

When the heaters are operational the bricks can reach very high temperatures. If you surround the heater with items of furniture or curtains placed too close to the heater this can restrict airflow, leading to overheating. We suggest any items of furniture etc should be at least 1 metre away from your storage heater, ensuring enough clearance around the heater.

In addition, please do not cover your storage heaters to dry clothes as this also creates temperatures which could cause fire.

Covering the vents of your storage heater can cause it to overheat this is when major problems can arise. Please do not put yourself or others at risk of a fire within your home.

If your storage heaters are damaged through fitting covers on your storage heaters or drying your clothes on them, you may be re-charged for the cost of replacing the heater(s).

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Lost keys

The Co-operative **DO NOT** hold keys to any of our properties and recommend that all tenants leave a spare key with a trusted friend or family member. If you lose the keys to your property, you will be recharged the cost of material and labour to gain entry to your home and replace the locks.

Access for Repairs and Inspections

It is essential that all appointments for any repairs or services within your property are given access at the agreed time. Please ensure that you update your contact details with us and let us know if you have changed your telephone number. If for any reason you are not going to be available, please contact the office with as much notice as possible to allow the service to be allocated to another property.

How to tackle mould growth

Condensation can cause mould to form in your home and lead to staining or damaging wallpaper, wall surfaces, window frames, furniture and clothing.

You can treat little spots of mould quickly and easily. Use three part warm water and one part bleach.

If you have followed the advice and you still have problems please call us on **01698 263311** and we will check out your home for any problems.



Contents Insurance

We strongly recommend that you take out home contents insurance. Many people underestimate how much it would cost to replace their belongings if they are stolen or damaged.

No matter how careful you are, there is always a risk that your belongings could be broken, damaged or stolen and home contents insurance can help provide peace of mind.

The Co-operative is not responsible for covering damage to any of your possessions in case of fire or flood, this includes decoration and floor coverings.

We suggest that all tenants take out home contents insurance, either through Thistle Tenant Risk Home Contents Insurance Scheme or by making your own arrangements.

To find our more information on the options and costs of Thistle Tenant Risk:-

Call 0345 450 7286:

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- Request an application pack from the Co-operative;
- Visit https://www.thistletenants-scotland.co.uk where • you can also request someone to call you back!

Gas Card Meter

Sometimes when adding credit to your pre-payment meter you may have issues with the gas flowing, due to:-

Is your card faulty?

 Give the electronic strip or chip on your gas card a wipe with a clean, dry cloth to see if that helps. If not, you might need to get a replacement card from your supplier.

Did The Payment Work?

- Check the receipt from your last topup. If it says 'cancelled' or 'failed', your payment didn't go through. So please try again;
- If the machine at your usual top-up outlet isn't working, you can find another Payzone, PayPoint or Post Office outlet.

Error message on your meter?

Please get in touch with your energy supplier they will help you sort out the problem. Please be near your meter, as they will need to ask you a few questions.

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Smell gas? Call 0800 111 999

- Or if you suspect a gas leak;
- Or if you suspect a carbon monoxide escape.

And then remember to:

- Open all your doors and windows to let the gas out and some fresh air in;
- Don't switch anything electrical on or off;
- Put out all naked flames. Don't smoke, strike matches, or do anything which could make the gas catch fire;
- If you have any electrical security entry phones or locks, don't use them. Open your doors manually.

If your meter is showing none of these symptoms, you should be aware that it can take a few minutes for your radiators to heat up!

Please Note give

your heating system sufficient time to heat up and always check your gas meter for issues before calling out a Saltire engineer. You may be recharged the cost of the call out if there is no issue with your gas boiler.



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How Well Are We Doing?

The tables below outlines how well we are performing within key areas of Housing Management and Maintenance for the following periods:-

EMPTY HOMES (VOID) & ALLOCATION INFORMATION	1/4/22 – 31/12/22 (same period last year)	1/4/23 – 31/12/23	Scottish Average				
Number of terminations	15	9	N/A				
Rental loss for year as a percentage of annual income	0.19%	0.05%	1.40%				
Number of re-lets	16	9	N/A				
Average number of calendar days void for relets	9.56 days	4.67 days	55.61 days				
RENT INFORMATION							
Total rent due (annual)	£887,167	£931,578	N/A				
Gross rent arrears in £	£20,210	£13,886	N/A				
Gross rent arrears as a %	2.28%	1.49%	6.86%				
REPAIRS	1/10/22 – 31/12/22 (same period last year)	1/10/23- 31/12/23	Scottish Average				
% of gas services done before anniversary date	100%	100%	N/A				
No of emergency repairs reported in period	77	62	N/A				
Time taken (in hours) to complete emergency repairs	3.7 hrs	2.3 hrs	4.17 hrs				

	year)		
% of gas services done before anniversary date	100%	100%	N/A
No of emergency repairs reported in period	77	62	N/A
Time taken (in hours) to complete emergency repairs	3.7 hrs	2.3 hrs	4.17 hrs
No of jobs failed (not completed in timescale target)	0	0	N/A
No of non-emergency repairs reported in period	177	168	N/A
Time taken (in days) to complete non-emergency repairs	3.1 days	2.9 days	8.68 days
No of jobs failed (not completed in timescale target)	0	0	N/A

COMPLAINTS RECEIVED 1/4/23 – 31/12/23	Number Received	Resolved	Upheld	Some Upheld (Partially)	Not Upheld	Withdrawn
No of 1st stage complaints responded to in full Stage 1 - (Front line 5 Working Days)	10	10	0	0	0	0
No of 2nd stage complaints responded to in full Stage 2 - (20 Working Days)	1	0	1	0	0	0

Timescales to Resolve

When a complaint is received, we aim to resolve the matter within 5 working days however if the complaint is more complex and requires a full investigation we aim to respond within 20 working days. We responded to 11 of these complaints on time.





Useful Numbers

(Including Emergency Contacts)

- » Saltire Facilities Management Ltd Emergency Repair Number 0845 606 1555 (all gas central heating faults 24 hours)
- » Saltire Facilities Management Ltd Servicing Number 01698 743647
- » Rodgers and Johnston (all other out of hour EMERGENCY REPAIRS) 0844 247 2120 0800 999 2520 (Freephone number)
- » North Lanarkshire Council (housing benefits and council tax) 01698 403210
- » North Line North Lanarkshire's 0345 143 0015 contact centre dealing with Bulk uplift, bins, roads and lighting, abandoned vehicles, Dog fouling, dog nuisance, gritting
- » TRANSCO (National Grid) (smell of gas) 0800 111 999
- » POLICE SCOTLAND 101 (999 EMERGENCY)
- » FIRE BRIGADE (999 EMERGENCY) or text "FIRE" to 80800 from your mobile phone
- » SCOTTISH WATER 0800 077 8778
- » **ELECTRICAL DAMAGE** to electrical supply or network equipment Call 105 or your own electrical supplier

COMMITTED ·

- » CRIMESTOPPERS 0800 555 111
- » ALLPAY 0330 041 6497

SORRY WE'RE

Public Holidays

Our office will be closed on the following dates:-

Friday 29 March and Monday 1 April, Monday 6 May, Friday 24 May and Monday 27 May.

Customer Feedback

Your feedback means a lot to us whether it be a complaint or a compliment or just some general thoughts on our service.

All your feedback helps to shape out services for the good of all our tenants. You can give us feedback in writing, email, phone or in person.

Different Formats

We are striving to make this newsletter as accessible as possible for everyone.

Please let us know if you require a copy in larger print, Braille, audio or in another language.





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employers