

Garden Competition



Congratulations to the winners of this year's Garden Competition as well as to all those who took part.

Prizes were presented by Jim Canning, Secretary of the Association, along with the sponsors of the competition Land Engineering and Patten & Prentice Solicitors.

Owners Competition Prize Winner's were:

- 1st Prize – Mr McArthur
- 2nd Prize – Mr McCafferty
- 3rd Prize – Mr & Mrs Joyce

Tenant's Competition Prize Winners were:

- 1st Prize – Rosemary Collins
- 2nd Prize – Mr & Mrs McGrath
- 3rd Prize – Mr James McCrumlish.

Bonfires

There have been a large number of recent fires in the area, especially in Oxford Road, giving a lot of concern. **Parents** should take care to make sure their children are not starting fires, as they can be dangerous, leaving aside any concerns for the damage to the area they cause. If anyone sees a fire, call the fire brigade immediately. If anyone has any information on who is starting the fires, please let the staff at the office know. The Community wardens will also be keeping an eye on the area.

There still seems to be a problem with illegal dumping around the Larkfield Area. Should you see anyone dumping household items then please phone **Dumb Dumpers Hotline on 01475 714714**

Illegal Dumping

Evictions

Unfortunately we have had to evict two tenants recently for non-payment of rent and rechargeable repairs. Despite these tenants being offered several opportunities to make repayments we regret that this course of action had to be taken. Eviction is a last resort and we provide a range of services to deal with debt management. If you are struggling to make payments please contact us before it is too late, as we are here to help.

RECYCLING

WHY RECYCLE? It saves the Earth's Natural Resources, It saves energy and reduces the risk of global warming and it reduces the need for landfill.

As a reminder you can only put the following items into your blue bin to be recycled:

- **Cans** (aluminium/steel food & drink cans)
- **Clean Cardboard** (cardboard with no food residue)
- **Paper** (newspapers, brochures, catalogues, junk mail, magazines etc)
- **Plastic Bottles**
- **Plastic food containers** (margarine tubs, yoghurt pots)
- **Textiles** (blankets, towels, handbags, old clothes, sheets, shoes etc)

When putting items into the blue bin please do not use a plastic bag as this cannot be recycled. Please also note that Extra bags that are not able to fit into your bin will not be uplifted. It is essential that you do not leave these lying in the street as it makes the estate unsightly. If you are experiencing any problems please phone Kerbside Recycling on 715901.

Financial Fitness Resource Team

(FFRT) have secured funding from Communities Scotland to offer

Benefit advice to tenants of Larkfield Housing Association. Under this scheme, tenants having financial difficulties or problems paying their rent can speak to an adviser from the team, who may be able to help access unclaimed welfare or local authority benefits. Tenants who have rent arrears may find this service particularly useful. The team can offer advice and guidance on:

Form filling, Benefit checks, Benefit Advice, Back to work calculations, referring to other services. The service is free and confidential. The team are now holding monthly surgeries in Larkfield HA offices. For elderly or housebound tenants, house visits can be arranged. If you wish an appointment let the Housing Management staff at the office know and we'll set you up with an appointment. **Please note that the next 3 FFRT surgeries at 1 Cambridge Road are on the following dates:- 12th October, 9th November and 14th December, between 10.00 a.m. and 12.00 noon.**

Alternatively you can call at the FFRT own offices at 5 Sir Michael Street, Greenock or by tel:729239.

Tenant Participation Strategy Review

The Association is reviewing its Tenant Participation Strategy. To help us look at this important issue we are asking our tenants and service users for their views on tenant participation. We are looking at the results of our Tenant Survey which was carried out in February 05 and telephone and office surveys are presently being carried out to look at a number of issues including quality of information, consultation, newsletters, policy reviews and public meetings.

Through the implementation of our current strategy we have aimed to look at policy reviews with the creation of rent arrears and customer care focus groups, the continued development of the Larkfield Community Safety Group, a second Environmental Art Schools project and the completion of a full Tenant Satisfaction Survey. Full copies of our current Strategy can be supplied at the office. Remember we can supply copies of our current strategy in Audio, Braille or other language formats if required. **We are keen to hear your views both good and bad on how we consult with our tenants and help tenants to participate in the review of our services.** Please pass on your comments to the Housing Management staff at the office by tel:630930 or call into the office and speak to the staff in person.



Another new face joining the staff at L.H.A

Hello my name is Sharon Rowatt and I have the pleasure of being the new housing officer for LHA. My previous post was as a Senior Benefit Assessor with West Dunbartonshire Council. It's great being part of the team and if you see me out and about around the estate please stop me and say hello.

AGM - nine years of success



Twenty six members of the Association, plus an equal number of guests and staff, heard Danny McMillan report on another successful year. This view was amplified by Bob Hartness, the External Auditor, who spoke highly of the Association's sound financial performance in the year ending 31st March 2005. Provost Ciano Rebecchi from Inverclyde Council gave a sincere and informative account of the wide variety of work in which he is engaged as Provost. His enthusiasm for all that is good within Inverclyde was well received by all present.

The prize draw for £100 of Argos vouchers was won by Mrs Susan Sinnamon. Following a question and answer session the Chairman closed the meeting. Tea and buns were then served.

New Committee elected

Immediately following the AGM the new committee met for the first time and welcomed Rev Allan McIntyre back as a fully elected member for 3 years. The Committee also agreed to Co-opt Ryan Malloy who will serve until the next AGM. Office Bearers for the next year are: Danny McMillan – Chairperson; Robina McCann – Vice Chair and Jim Canning – Secretary.



There still remain 2 unfilled posts on the Committee and shareholding members of the Association are encouraged to come forward and fill these places. If you would like more information please contact Jim Pollock, the Director, at the office.

Chemist Re-Opens

Staff and Committee of Larkfield HA would like to express their joy at seeing A.C. Still Pharmacy re-opening in Cumberland Walk. This is an invaluable local service for tenants and residents in Larkfield and we wish them every success for the future.

Repairs Prize Draw

The winner of the £20.00 TESCO voucher for May/June 2005 is **Amanda Hughes, 49 Berwick Road** and the winner for July/August is **E.McQuillan, 9 Cambridge Road** Congratulations. Please remember to return your repair receipts to the office to ensure your entry into the next prize draw.

Customer Care Policy Consultation

The Customer Care Focus Group has now completed its review of the Association's Customer Care Policy and Committee has now approved the following changes/additions to the policy.

1. Our policies and other information will be accessible to all our tenants and service users and we will provide information in alternative formats on request.
2. We will answer telephone calls quickly and politely. Staff will give their names to callers to allow callers to identify who they are speaking to.
3. Letters will normally be acknowledged within 1 working day and replied to within 10 working days. They will be written language. It will be clear from the letter who is dealing with the enquiry and how that person may be contacted.
4. Reports will be produced for the Committee to monitor service delivery and ensure performance standards are met. Reports will include details of correspondence received, response times against targets set, Housing Application processing times and feedback from tenant/resident surveys.

Housing Benefit

Just a reminder that you should report any change in your financial, household, or Living Circumstances to the Housing Benefit office **immediately** as these changes can affect the amount of Housing Benefit you are entitled to. The consequence of not reporting a vital change immediately is that the Housing Benefit section demands the money back creating a Housing Benefit overpayment which then leads to rent arrears on your rent account.

Succession Strategy

- The way forward. Mention has been made by the Chairman in various newsletters and more recently in his report to the AGM. The Committee and Staff want a stronger future for the Association and have been exploring many options over the past year. Merging with other organisations is not an acceptable option because the Larkfield identity would be lost. Becoming part of a larger Group Structure appears to present the Association and its tenants/other customers with the kind of secure future required. The Committee have whittled down the options in this regard to the Link Group which is one of the largest and most established housing organisations in Scotland. Detailed discussions are now underway and in the months ahead there will

be more detailed information available to keep you in the picture as to progress or otherwise.