

The PARTICK TIMES

Winter 2019

SEASON'S GREETINGS



The Board and staff at Partick Housing Association wish all of our tenants, customers and partners Season's Greetings and best wishes for a Happy New Year.

As in previous years and in common with other housing associations, we will close PHA's office during the festive break. Office opening/closure times during the 2019/20 festive period will therefore be as follows:

- Tue 24 Dec 2019 – office open, but closing early
- Wed 25 Dec 2019 – office closed
- Thu 26 Dec 2019 – office closed
- Fri 27 Dec 2019 – office closed
- Mon 30 Dec 2019 – office closed
- Tue 31 Dec 2019 – office closed
- Wed 1 Jan 2020 – office closed
- Thu 2 Jan 2020 – office closed
- Fri 3 Jan 2020 – office closed
- Mon 6 Jan 2020 – office open, regular working hours

During the festive break, our maintenance contractor and partner organisations will deal with any out-of-hours emergencies.

0300 303 1703 is our Freephone Repairs number. But full details of our emergency contact details are included within this newsletter, on our website and on our office window.

Emergency Repairs for Tenants

These numbers are for use when PHA's offices are closed.

Electrical

Power loss after flooding, major electrical failures, but not resetting of trip switches
MPS Housing - 0845 600 8624
helpdesk@mpshousing.co.uk

Joinery

Board-ups/lockouts, security works after break-ins
MPS Housing - 0845 600 8624
helpdesk@mpshousing.co.uk

Plumbers

Burst pipes & flooding
MPS Housing - 0845 600 8624
helpdesk@mpshousing.co.uk

Slaters

Major storm damage, rain penetration via roof
MPS Housing - 0845 600 8624
helpdesk@mpshousing.co.uk

Heating Engineers

Gas central heating failures, burst or leaking radiators, burst boilers
City Building - 0800 595 595
(this number should be used at all times)

Gas

If you trace a gas leak
Transco - 0800 111 999

Stair & backcourt lighting
City Building - 0800 595 595

Scottish Power

Power loss throughout your local area
08452 727 999

Scottish Water

Water hydrants damaged, street flooding
0845 600 8855

CUSTOMER PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

We recently held a successful Customer Engagement Event at Partick Burgh Hall – a big thank you to everyone who came along and gave us your views.

Rents, Value For Money & Investment:

- We discussed how we set our rents and how we spend this money.
- Tenants gave us their views and generally felt that our rents represent good value for money and that we needed to continue our focus on upgrading our properties, but also building new affordable housing to meet the needs of tenants and the wider community. There was also support for trying to improve our backcourts and communal areas.

Repairs & Maintenance:

- We gave an overview of our repairs and maintenance service, looking at what the law requires us to do and considering the differences between day-to-day reactive repairs and planned home improvements to meet modern standards.
- Tenants gave their views on our current repairs service and there was strong support for continued investment in modern kitchens, new bathrooms and upgraded central heating systems. There was also an understanding that some common works within blocks needed the involvement of neighbouring homeowners.

Smarter Ways of Working

- We spoke about the need to consider new ways of working and delivering services to meet the changing needs and expectations of our customers.
- Tenants were interested in the possibility of accessing more services online and our plans to update our website so that it met their needs.

Georgina Kent,
Operations Director, said

“The feedback from customers was positive and raised a number of good points. We’re developing an action plan to take these forward. It was great to meet our customers face-to-face and we look forward to more customers engaging with us and helping to shape our future direction”.



Investing in Improving Homes

As part of our 2019-20 Planned Maintenance Programme, we have been investing to continue improving homes.

Windows

45 properties received new windows, including some blocks in Kennoway Drive, Sorley Street, and various addresses along Dumbarton Road.



Kitchens

We have recently installed just over 100 kitchens. We are surveying the next 35 flats with work starting soon.



Bathrooms

We started our latest phase of bathroom replacements in October. We are surveying the next 60 properties with work starting soon.





How do we spend your rent money?

Keeping the rent as affordable as possible is important to us!

We always try our hardest to make the best possible use of your rent, and it's right that you should expect us to be as efficient as we can.

Each year we look at the different challenges we need to meet, and then consult our tenants on the options for reviewing the rent level.

Community based housing associations came into being because of the desire of local people to improve their communities and to make bad housing and poor services a thing of the past. And that continues to be our aim.

But you might be surprised at how many pressures housing associations face in trying to ensure the rent is reasonable. Below we aim to highlight the various uses housing associations make of the rent you pay.

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Looking after your home

- Making sure your home is ready when you first move in.
- Responding as quickly as we can when you tell us a repair is needed, and then getting the work done properly – whether it's an emergency repair or a less urgent one.
- We also need to put a small part of your rent money aside to make sure we always have funds to carry out longer term repairs and improvements – this includes things

like roof repairs and new boilers or central heating, as well as new kitchens and bathrooms.

- Investing in older housing stock, especially blocks of flats, brings particular challenges. People who own their flat are sometimes unwilling or unable to pay their share of the cost of repairs and improvements. We don't want this to delay work to tenants' homes, but equally we don't think tenants' rents should be used to cover owners' costs.

Building new homes

- Many housing associations see building new rented homes as a really important way of helping to improve the local community. This work is funded by government grant and bank loans repaid with rent money.

Keeping you warm

- As housing associations we can't control what the fuel companies charge, but we can try to make sure your home is as energy efficient as possible so that you're not paying for heat that's being wasted.
- Currently housing associations are working towards meeting the Scottish Government's Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing – this means that homes rented from housing associations are much more energy efficient than housing which is privately owned and privately rented.

Keeping you safe

- Fire safety has always been a priority for us. The Scottish Government has set new standards for smoke alarms, kitchen heat detectors and carbon monoxide detectors.
- This work has to be done by 2021, and means we'll be spending a significant amount of money on each and every home that we own.
- Rightly we must by law make sure – every year – that your gas supply is safe, and we also need to do regular testing of your electricity supply.
- We try to respond as effectively as we can when anti social behaviour is reported to us, or a neighbour dispute arises. Sometimes we may need to spend a lot of staff time trying to sort things out, and sometimes we'll need support from other agencies such as the local council or the police.

Collecting the rent

- We put a lot of staff time into making sure we collect the rent that's due to us. We know some tenants can run into difficulties from time to time, and we try to work with people to sort things out
- One of the newer challenges housing associations and tenants are facing is the new system of 'Universal Credit', which will normally mean tenants who get help with their rent will receive the money direct from the DWP, instead of it being paid directly to the housing association.
- This means our staff will need to spend extra time to keep closely in touch with tenants to ensure they're still able to pay their rent each month.
- In the early stages of Universal Credit, many housing associations have found that rent arrears have been rising sharply. Where this happens, it puts pressure on the rents we charge across all of our homes.
- More and more housing associations have been employing money advice officers to help make sure people are claiming what they're entitled to and make sure rent is paid.

Tackling homelessness

- People can find themselves homeless for all kinds of reasons, and Scotland prides itself on dealing with homelessness fairly and compassionately. Housing associations have a big role to play in helping the local council to house people who have become homeless.
- Supporting homeless and other more vulnerable people to maintain their tenancy can mean spending more time with some tenants.

Helping your community thrive

- Most local housing associations do a lot more than just being a landlord. This includes working with others to support activities for people of all ages, such as promoting tenancy sustainment for those with particular needs, delivering a bin 'pull out' service, providing allotments, delivering modern apprenticeships and promoting school sports.
- Wherever possible, associations try to apply for special funding for this work, but it can be another pressure on rent money in some cases.

Being open and accountable to you

- Housing associations need to make sure that you can get hold of us when you need to, and that when you need to make a complaint it gets looked into as quickly as possible – these things are important to us and to our tenants, and so investing the right amount of resources is important.
- We also know that as well as writing to tenants when we need to, and sending out regular newsletters, we need to make sure our websites are easy to navigate and have the information tenants need.

Not everything costs money!

- The Board is responsible for the overall running of the association and is made up entirely of unpaid volunteers. Over the years they – and the people who served before them – have given many thousands of hours of time and effort for no financial reward.

Dealing with the bodies who regulate us

- All housing associations have to meet important standards set out by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR), on issues such as how we are run and how our finances are managed, and this means providing a lot of information to SHR each year.
- Most associations also deal with the Charities Regulator, and there's a wide variety of legislation on things like data protection which we must comply with.

Tell us what you think

- Overall we like to think that rents are good value for money – you only have to look at the higher rents and poorer levels of service in the private rented sector.
- But no housing association is complacent about value for money. Housing associations are always keen to get feedback from tenants on the rent, the services we provide – and perhaps on services you would like us to think about providing in the future.

Do you need advice or support to pay your rent?

- We are here to help. If you want to find out more about different methods of payment, any benefits entitlement or are struggling to pay your rent, please contact your Housing Officer on **0141 357 3773**.
- We also offer a free, confidential and independent money advice service through our Money Advice Officer, Stephen Lawson. Stephen can offer help and advice on all aspects of social security and tax credit benefits. If you would like to make an appointment to discuss your circumstances with Stephen, please contact him on **0141 330 1487** or email **slawson@partickha.org.uk**



MAKING PAYMENTS *by Direct Debit*

Direct Debit is the simplest and most convenient way for you to pay regular and occasional bills. Direct Debit is an automated payment method that is preferred by over half of all UK bill payers.

Direct Debit payments come with a guarantee so you're automatically protected by three important safeguards:

- an immediate money back guarantee from your bank in the event of an error in the payment of your Direct Debit;
- advance notice if the date or amount changes; and

- the right to cancel at any time.

Paying by Direct Debit can save you time as it takes away much of the hassle of paying your rent or property factoring charge. Once the Direct Debit is set up, the payment will be collected on the same agreed date every month or more frequently if required. You will also receive advance notice from us before any changes are made to the amount or payment date.

Partick Housing Association is able to offer a flexible and convenient Direct Debit service for our customers, so you can choose any payment date to suit you.

We will be working together with a company called 'allpay' who already provide other payment collection services on our behalf.

We have already contacted our customers who already use Direct Debits to make their payments. If you are interested in signing up for Direct Debits, please contact your Housing Officer or Factoring Officer to find out more about how this service could work for you.



You will by now have received a letter and been offered the opportunity to respond to our proposal to increase your rent for the year 2020-21.

If this rent increase proposal goes ahead, it would mean that for the 2020/21 financial year your rent would increase by 2.2% from 1 April 2020. As a result you would pay an additional 2p or so for every £1 you currently pay in rent.

However you might recall that over the past two years we have simplified and streamlined how we set our rents. We call this process 'rent restructuring' and it is being phased in so every tenant in the same size and same type of property is paying the same.

So for a small number of tenants as well as any 2.2% rent increase charge, your new monthly rental charge from April 2020 may be adjusted to include the result of the rent restructuring. Therefore if your rent charge increases by 2.2% from the rent you currently pay in 2019-20 – the actual rent charge from 1 April 2020, may be a bit less, or indeed a bit more than an actual 2.2% increase.

But after applying the 2.2% increase for 2020-21, the maximum extra increase that is allowed under our rent restructure plan would be £15 per month.

If you are a tenant who is eligible for assistance with your rent, any rent increase will be reflected within your Housing Benefit or Universal Credit.

This consultation exercise provides a valuable opportunity to review feedback before the PHA Board makes their final decision in January 2020. We would like to thank those of you who have taken the time to respond and we will let you know the outcome in due course.

SCOTTISH HOUSING DAY

This year we celebrated Scottish Housing Day, 'Housing as a Human Right' with an open invitation to our office reception for a chat with cake and a cuppa.

This gave us an opportunity to promote housing options within the Partick area and offer advice in a relaxed atmosphere.

All visitors were given a free raffle ticket for our Scottish themed hamper and our lucky winner was thrilled to receive his prize.



Charitable Donation

As in previous years, we have made a charitable donation to Glasgow City Mission which provides the Glasgow Winter Night Shelter for homeless people. This is an important project that provides accommodation, food and assistance to those in the greatest housing need during the winter period.





ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Those of you attending our 44th Annual General Meeting (AGM) in September had the opportunity to hear first hand about our achievements over the past year, as well as looking forward to our plans for the future.

The well-attended event, held at Partick Burgh Hall, heard about another successful year at PHA with strong financial results and positive customer satisfaction.

We also spoke about our plans to deliver continuous improvement and value for money, with a big focus on investment in our current homes and providing new homes to meet local housing needs. Our new housing developments at St Peters and Laurel Street are well underway and will be ready for new tenants to move in during 2020.

We showed a couple of short films at the AGM. One highlighted the history of PHA refurbishment and new build projects throughout our history and how this has transformed the area. The other film highlighted the series of community events that have taken place in the past year. Look out for more details on our website.

Part of the AGM saw the election of the PHA Board. Les Milne has now completed his five-year term as PHA Chair and we thank him for his hard work and dedication – we are pleased that he will remain on the PHA Board. The PHA Board has elected Alan Howie as the new PHA Chair and Iain Mackenzie as the new PHA Vice Chair. Details of PHA's full Board membership is available on our website.



Margaret Burke

It is with great sadness that the Board and staff of Partick Housing Association announce the death of Board member, Margaret Burke. Margaret passed away peacefully after a short illness.

A committee and Board member of PHA since 2001, she helped the organisation develop from its roots in protecting historic tenements, to its current status as a developer of innovative new-build schemes.

A tireless volunteer, Margaret also chaired the Partick United Residents Group for more than a decade, was a member of the Partick Community Council, a director (and former chair) of the Friends of Mansfield Park (a key focal point of the community) and an Executive Director of the Tenants Information Service.

Margaret spent almost all her life in and around Partick. Apart from two years' evacuation during the Second World War and a year in her teens, living in The Gambia where her father worked in teacher training, she lived and was immersed in this community. Her 40-year career in administration with the Health Service started and finished at the Western Infirmary, just across the street from her home.

During this time, Margaret has seen Partick transformed from a neighbourhood facing acute deprivation and disadvantage to become one of the city's most fashionable and sought-after areas. Her own, unceasing commitment has played a substantial part in this change.

Margaret became a Partick Housing Association tenant in 1999, after being forced to leave her privately rented family home of more than 50 years. She was so grateful for her new first-floor flat that she quickly threw herself into supporting the Association's work with the local community. Claiming that she initially got involved simply because she was "nosey", Margaret quickly became a prominent part of the Association's governance, character and local presence.

Our sympathies go out to Margaret's family and friends.

PARTICK ACTION ON LITTER (PAL)

Partick Action on Litter's volunteers have been keeping Partick 'partickular' with monthly litter picks since the summer of 2015, removing hundreds of bags of carelessly-discarded rubbish from local neighbourhood streets.

Their 2020 programme of events has just been announced and invite you to "be a PAL and enlist in the Hot-Pink Hi-Vis Rubbish Army - wage war

on waste and prettify Partick's pavements!"

PAL's two-hour litter picks take place on the last Sunday of every month, meeting outside Fortrose House, 14 Fortrose Street, G11 5NS, at 10am. All equipment provided, with support from Partick Housing Association and Glasgow City Council's Environmental Task Force.



THORNWOOD TIDY UP CLUB

Formed in September 2018, the Thornwood Tidy Up Club (TTUC) has made a great contribution to make the Thornwood area tidy and clean in 2019. From their first litter pick on Crow Road, the group has gone from strength to strength, acquiring new members and collecting over 300 bags of litter and several tonnes of bric-a-brac.

It has received donations and support from Partick Housing Association,

Community Safety Glasgow and recently has been joined by staff from McDonald's restaurant on Crow Road, who actively engage in the litter picks, distribute leaflets and provide welcoming refreshments at the end of the activities.

Residents in Thornwood are supportive of the group's endeavours to make the area tidy and clean. It is anticipated that the group will move on to bigger projects

to enhance the environment, for example, 'Thornwood in Bloom' is a project currently being planned.

Join your local resident volunteers every last Sunday of the month (10am outside McDonald's on Crow Road) and make a difference.

Be prepared for the unexpected... get insured

What would you do if your home was flooded and your household possessions were damaged? How would you have them repaired or replaced?

It's important that tenants and factored homeowners have adequate contents insurance in place for such an eventuality.

Your household contents are your responsibility, not the responsibility of the housing association. If you're a factored homeowner you should also have adequate building insurance.

Insuring your home is not a luxury... it's a necessity. It will give you peace of mind that if the worst happens, assistance would be at hand to help sort out any damage.

There are lots of insurance companies you can choose from... you have probably seen adverts on the television, in newspapers or on-line. Basic household insurance cover is probably not as expensive as you might think and peace of mind is priceless.



Cold Weather Precautions

BE PREPARED



There are some precautions you can take in the event of cold weather, but despite insulation, in very cold weather pipes can freeze and burst.

- * Keep your home as warm as you can – warmth offers the best protection against frozen pipes. In severe weather, or if severe weather is forecast, you should leave your heating on day and night at your usual temperature setting, especially if you are going to be away from home for any length of time.
- * If your neighbours do not have a key for your home, make sure they have contact details for someone who does in case of an emergency. Or ask a friend or relative to visit your home every day if you are away. This will mean that if you do suffer a burst pipe, it will be detected as soon as possible and any damage caused will be minimised. Alternatively, if you are going to be away for a longer period you should turn off your water supply and drain the system – contact the Repairs Team on **0300 303 1703** for more information
- * Keep furniture away from radiators and other heat sources so they do not block heat from circulating freely. Thick, lined curtains are very effective in slowing down heat loss.
- * Be a good neighbour. When cold weather hits, keep an eye out for your neighbours, especially the frail, elderly and disabled.

KEEPING SAFE AND SECURE



At this time of year, more than any other, it is important that you take every possible step to protect your property and belongings.

Follow these simple steps and ensure that we all have a safe, secure, crime-free festive season:

- lock all doors even when you are at home;
- lock all windows when you are out, particularly those that are vulnerable, even if only for a short time;
- consider fitting an intruder alarm – and use it;
- secure any rear access to your home – this is the area most likely to be attacked;
- do not leave valuable items unattended;
- look after property belonging to others – it may be you next time; and
- if you see anything suspicious report it immediately to the Police, or contact Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111**.

New Apprentices at PHA



We are delighted to welcome Leah and Lachlann to the PHA Team as Business Administration Modern Apprentices. They joined us in October and will be here for the next two years. They'll have the opportunity to work across the business in all departments while working on their business admin qualification.

Lachlann said about joining the Association: "I applied for this

apprenticeship because it is a great opportunity and I hope to progress here because it helps people and communities. At school I enjoyed English and Gaelic and in my spare time I love watching football".

Leah said: "I've always had an interest in Business Administration and when I saw this apprenticeship advertised, I thought it would be great to learn how a Housing Association runs and how the different functions work.

I look forward to learning new skills. In my spare time I like to socialise and spend time with my family".

At PHA we believe strongly in investing in and developing the future workforce so we are excited to watch our two new recruits thrive and grow within their roles.

Welcome to the team!

DOMESTIC ABUSE DON'T SUFFER IN SILENCE



Unfortunately the festive period can be a time when relationships can become strained, which in some cases can result in domestic abuse. Don't suffer in silence.

If you are experiencing domestic abuse you can get confidential advice and assistance, including information on housing options, by contacting:

- Domestic Abuse Helpline on **0800 027 1234** (24 hours); or
- National Domestic Violence Helpline on **0808 2000 247** (24 hours).

If you're homeless or threatened with homelessness, you can get independent advice from:

- Shelter Scotland on **0800 800 4444** (24 hours)

If you need advice and assistance about temporary or longer-term accommodation needs, you can contact:

- Glasgow City Council Homelessness Team on **0141 287 2000** (0800 838 502 outwith office hours)

Mansfield Collective Men's Group

The Men's Collective has evolved from the Annexe Communities Men's Group. Their activities reflect a diverse range of interests as well as contribute to wider social events in the area.

For example, working with Glasgow Life, the Group recently had access to the Glasgow Museums' Collection at Kelvin Hall. This took them to the Bronze Age, discovering some of the fascinating archaeological artefacts in the collection and the stories behind them. The display featured a selection of ancient objects unearthed in the West of Scotland.

Group members have varied backgrounds and interests. Their message is that "all have much to contribute". The door is open for any who want to join. If you're interested in joining the group or would like some more information please contact admaclean@btinternet.com





New Homes at Laurel Court

We are delighted to report that in August 2019 our contractor CCG started on site to deliver new homes on a gap site at Laurel Street. This project will provide 24 social rented flats to meet local housing needs.

Ground works are well underway and over the coming weeks, the new buildings will start to emerge from the site.

It is important to allow a safe flow of local traffic in and around the site, so parking restrictions have been agreed and put in place for both sides of Laurel Street from the junction of Crow Road to Laurel Place while construction is underway.

CCG have been distributing regular newsletter to local neighbours advising of works on site, outlining progress and highlighting any key activities.

We expect the flats will be ready for new tenants to move in around September 2020.

New Homes at Mansfield Gate

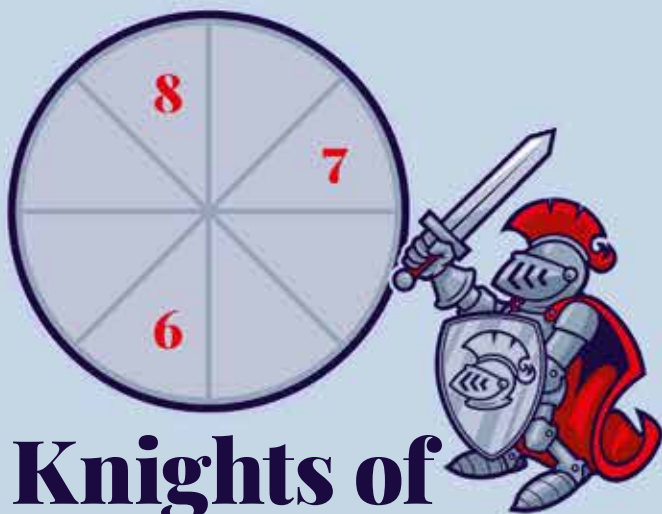
In previous editions of The Partick Times we've kept you up to date with progress in building new homes on the site of the former St Peter's Primary School next to Mansfield Park.

This is a big project that will deliver a total of 60 affordable flats to meet local housing needs, including 31 flats for social rent, 21 for mid-market rent and 8 for supported accommodation.

Works are progressing well. We are finishing off the facing brick on the last section around Chancellor Street and Dowanhill Street, as fitting out the flats.

Development Director, Brian Lochrie, added "Most of the building work should be finished for the New Year and we expect that we will be allocating these flats to new tenants early 2020".

Look out for future updates in The Partick Times and on our website.



Knights of the Round Table

Eight knights, numbered 1 to 8, are seated facing the Round Table in such a way that no knight sits next to any knight whose number is less than three away, plus or minus, from his own. With knights, 6, 7 and 8 seated as shown, seat the rest of the knights.

The winner, drawn from correct entries will win a **£25 M&S voucher**.

Name

Address

Phone no

Email

Please return entry to the office (10 Mansfield Street, Glasgow, G11 5QP)

10 Mansfield Street,
Glasgow G11 5QP.

Tel: 0141 357 3773
Fax: 0141 357 4503



www.partickha.org.uk