

Welcome

Welcome to the Leaseholders Newsletter. In this edition we will be providing you with information to keep you up-to-date with relevant Leaseholder news, issues and topics. We would like to know what you want to see in future editions of this newsletter, so please complete the enclosed survey and give us your views. This survey will help us to ensure that the information we provide in future newsletters is relevant to you, so please take a few minutes of your time to complete it. Once completed please send this back to us in the freepost envelope provided by Friday 7th August. We'll give you an update on the results in the next edition of the newsletter.

Tenant and Leaseholders Conference August 2009

After receiving the completed 'Conference Option' feedback forms from you and through discussions at Leaseholder Forum Meetings, we will be holding a joint Tenant and Leaseholders Conference this year as well as continuing with the quarterly Leaseholder Forum meetings.

The Conference is planned to take place on Thursday 27th August from 1pm until 7pm at the Pavilion Theatre, Blackpool Winter Gardens. The Conference will include the popular market place format with stalls from the different departments of Blackpool Coastal Housing as well as many other agencies.

There will also be the opportunity of talking to Staff from the Home Ownership Team throughout the day. Free giveaways and fun activities will also be planned.

We hope that you can come along and look forward to seeing you there!!

Inside this issue:

Leaseholders Forum AGM	2
Gas Safety	2
Contracts Update	3
Digital Switchover	3
Service charges	4
Contact Us	4



To ensure our services are accessible to all, documents are available in large print, Braille, on audio-cassette or computer disk upon request. We can also provide help for British Sign Language users and provide information in other languages.

For more information please contact 477900.

Leaseholders Forum AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the Leaseholders Forum was held on 20th April at Progress House. Over 20 Leaseholders attended the meeting which included a buffet and presentations from different departments and agencies. The meeting was opened by Blackpool Coastal Housings' Chief Executive Peter Jefferson who highlighted improvements to the service over the last 12 months, some as a result of suggestions from Leaseholders.

There were presentations from Connaught Environmental regarding the new grounds maintenance and cleaning contracts (see Contracts Update for further details), and Mike Glennon discussed the opportunities available to Leaseholders in becoming involved with reviewing and improving the services provided by Blackpool Coastal Housing. Home Ownership Staff, Maureen Olley and Gail Moyle, also brought attendees up to date with ongoing issues such as the Buildings Insurance re-valuation exercise and benchmarking exercise.

Date for your Diary!

The next Leaseholders Forum has been organised to take place on Monday 20th July, at 5pm at Bostonway Community Centre. If you would like to attend please contact the Home Ownership Team on 01253 477984. Transport can also be provided upon request. We hope to see you there!



Gas Safety and You

As a Leaseholder you are responsible for ensuring that all legal requirements with regards to gas safety are fulfilled. Here is some important information on gas safety and your responsibility:

- CORGI has now been replaced by the Gas Safe Register, please ensure that any gas servicing is undertaken by a properly certified engineer.
- You must provide us with a copy of your annual gas safety certificate—you can use your own engineer but if you decide to use our contractors, Read and Errington, remember to tell them that you are a BCH Leaseholder.
- You can buy into the annual Blackpool Council Gas Care & Safety Scheme which is managed by BCH working in partnership with Read and Errington. Details of this Scheme are available upon request from the Home Ownership Team.
- All Leaseholders whose accounts do not have a current certificate will be contacted during the next few months to request a copy of the certificate. It is important for your own safety and that of the other residents in your block that all gas appliances are safe. Tenants have annual gas safety checks and their refusal to allow access can result in the Landlord going to Court to obtain an injunction.
- If you sub-let your property there is a legal requirement to obtain an annual gas safety certificate.
- It is now a legal requirement that all new gas cookers installed in flats have a safety device fitted. All stores selling gas cookers should indicate if a gas cooker is suitable for use in a flat.

If you have any queries or would like further information, please contact the Gas Services Manager, Mark Shepley, on 01253 477903.

Update on Grounds Maintenance and Cleaning Contracts

By now you should have received a notice telling you that the new contracts have been awarded for:

Grounds Maintenance, Block Cleaning, Window Cleaning, Caretaking and Security Services

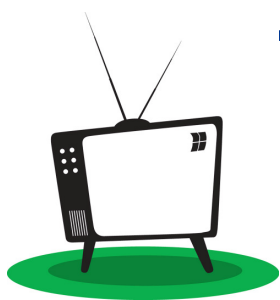
Blackpool Council has the contract to provide security services and Connaught Environmental has been awarded the contract for Grounds Maintenance, Block Cleaning, Window Cleaning and Caretaking Services. These services will be grouped under the title of Environmental Cleaning and the contract commenced on 1st June 2009. If you have access to the internet you can find out more about Connaught from their website www.connaught.plc.uk/environmental. Danny Watson, the Contract Manager for Connaught, and Ian Herbert, the BCH Estate Contracts Manager, are producing the new rota of works. Connaught are also currently inspecting a number of blocks and estates to identify areas which require deep cleaning before the weekly or monthly cycle of environmental cleaning commences.



BCH will be monitoring the services provided and will be in regular contact with Connaught to ensure that any reports of work required by BCH staff or residents is passed to Connaught. There is a target for any complaints to be investigated within 5 working days of it having been referred to the contractor. If you have any queries or complaints regarding these services, please contact your local Estate Office; Mereside on 477968; Queens Park on 477971 or; Grange Park on 477969.

If you are interested in becoming a Green Warden to assist us in monitoring your local area by reporting on aspects such as grass cutting, litter and maintenance of paths, please contact Suzanne Tomlinson, Customer Involvement and Projects Officer, on 01253 477472.

Digital Switchover



Are you ready?

The Integrated Reception System (IRS) is the aerial equipment in place which is required to receive the digital TV signal. However, if you have an older TV you may still need a digital box in order to view programmes when the switchover takes place in November this year. Digital boxes are widely available and automatically update older television sets.

You are not allowed to put up your own dishes/aerials on the external walls or roof of any blocks of flats. The external walls and roof are the property of Blackpool Council—Leaseholders and Tenants are not allowed to trespass on, or cause any damage to, these parts of the building. Internal aerials are allowed within your home.

If you need any help or further information please contact Mr Bob Wolstencroft, BCH Mechanical & Electrical Engineer, on 01253 477473.

The service charge for IRS is for the use and maintenance of the system and is a standard charge for both tenants and leaseholders.

Leasehold Service Charges and Accounts

There are currently 404 Leaseholder Accounts. In April 2009, the average invoice was £226.95 which is a reduction of 1.4% compared to April 2008.

Service charge elements which remained unchanged from 2008 to 2009 were Grounds Maintenance, Block Cleaning, Window Cleaning and Caretaking Elements. These will soon be reviewed and any adjustments will appear in the October invoices.

Collection Information for the period 1st April 2008 to 31st March 2009:

The total amount due to be collected was £152,728.20 (including Ground Rent & Buildings Insurance Premiums). From the accounts in this period:

- 86.14% are fully paid or in credit.
- 3.71% are in arrears of less than £25 and have payment arrangements.
- 10.4% are in arrears of more than £25. Of these 5.94% have payment arrangements.
- 4.46% are in arrears of more than £25 with no payments or insufficient payments made and recovery action being taken.

The total value of outstanding arrears is £6,804.72

It is a legal requirement in your Lease to pay Leasehold Invoices. We have a standard arrears procedure with automatic reminder letters despatched when the accounts are reviewed each month. Continued non-payment or no contact from the Leaseholder will result in hand delivered letters, referral to a debt collection agency, and traces via Land Registry for Mortgage providers. We can and have passed accounts to Blackpool Council for a Money Judgement Order to be granted by the Court.

At all times during the process we stress that Leaseholders who may have financial difficulties should contact us and we invite people in for face to face interviews. We can also arrange a referral for free confidential, independent advice to Advice Link.

How to Pay details are provided with every invoice and Leaseholders included in any major works will also receive information about the Statutory Loans Policy.

The preferred method of making a payment arrangement is by Direct Debit and 35.5% of all accounts are paid this way. If you would like more information, please contact us using the details below.

Contact Us...



Write to: Homeownership, Blackpool Coastal Housing,
Progress House, Clifton Road, Blackpool, FY4 4US.



Telephone: 01253 477984
Fax: 01253 477950



Email: homeownership@bch.co.uk

