

## Welcome

Welcome to this edition of 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 get in touch with the Homeownership Team and give us your views. Contact details are provided on the last page of this newsletter.

## Leaseholders Conference August 2008



The 3rd annual Leaseholders Conference was held on 12th August at Blackpool Football Club. This years Conference was a combination of the popular market place format with representatives from Blackpool Coastal Housings' contractors, Blackpool Council Care & Repair, Advice Link and members of various Blackpool Coastal Housing teams.

The feedback from the Leaseholders who attended shows that the majority enjoyed the conference and found it informative and useful. However, the event

was unfortunately not well attended, with a total of only 30 people (7.5%). We would really like to hear your views and suggestions on what we can do to improve next years event and want as many people as possible to come and enjoy the next conference. This is a chance for you to have your say!

Listed overleaf are some options for you to consider and a reply coupon is enclosed for you to return to us.

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To ensure all 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.

## Your Conference—Your Options

**Option 1** - Continue with the same style of conference as this year with presentations on topics suggested by you but have only one session instead of an afternoon and an evening session. The session would probably commence at 4pm as a compromise between those who prefer an afternoon start and those who prefer an evening. Conferences have been held at Blackpool Football Club in the past but please let us know if you would like a different venue.

**Option 2** - Combine the conference with the Tenant and Leasehold Conference which already takes place on an annual basis. Different departments including Homeownership would be present and Leasehold specific presentations could be arranged at various times throughout the day

**Option 3** - Have a combination of private surgeries, where Leaseholders could book an individual appointment to discuss any concerns or issues, and group presentations on topics suggested by you which would be advertised.

**Option 4** - To continue holding quarterly Leasehold Forum Meetings instead of having a separate Leaseholders Conference.



## Your conference - your options

Please return the tear-off coupon with your preferred choice marked with a ✓ to the Homeownership Team

**Option 1** One Leasehold Conference Session at 4pm

**Option 2** At same time and venue as annual Tenant & Leaseholder Conference

**Option 3** Combination of private surgery and group presentation/s

**Option 4** To cancel the Leasehold Conference in favour of the quarterly Forum

Alternatively you can write your own comments or suggestions below. This can be anonymous, but if you require a reply please supply your name and address.

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## Update on Grounds Maintenance and Cleaning Contracts

The recent Satisfaction survey told us that some Leaseholders thought the Grounds Maintenance and Block and/or Communal Window cleaning service they received needed to be improved. In June 2007 we wrote to all Leaseholders with a formal Notice of Intention to let you know that the contracts for Grounds Maintenance and Cleaning were to be advertised in the European Journal.



### What stage are we at?

Tenders have been received from invited parties and their submissions are in the process of being evaluated on a cost and quality basis, after which those that have made the short list will be invited to an interview and reality checking will be undertaken.

There are 3 resident representatives who have been involved in the process from the earliest stages and they are working closely with Blackpool Coastal Housing to ensure the procurement process is fair and good value.

When agreements with contractors have been reached, Blackpool Coastal Housing will write to all Leaseholders with another formal Notice informing you of the names of the successful contractors.

In the meantime we are going to trial having notice boards up in some blocks and community centres on which we can display details of the timetable of grounds maintenance and cleaning and give contact details for any issues residents may have.

If you want more information about the procurement of the contracts please write to the Contracts Manager, Mr I Herbert, Grange Park Estate Office, 67 Chepstow Road, Blackpool, FY3 7PH or phone 01253 777969 or email [enquiries@bch.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@bch.co.uk)

**If you wish to become a Green Warden please contact Suzanne Tomlinson at the Customer Involvement Team on 01253 477472 or email [customerinvolvement@bch.co.uk](mailto:customerinvolvement@bch.co.uk)**

## Cash Payments at Customer First

**Do you pay your Service Charges in cash at the Blackpool Town Hall's Customer First Office?**

As from 22<sup>nd</sup> December, Blackpool Council are introducing self service payment kiosks, one of which is Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant. You will need your account reference number to use the kiosks and the kiosks will take cash, cheques and debit/credit cards and give receipts plus change if necessary. They also show a balance on screen.

If you are unsure how to use the kiosks there will be staff from Customer First available to help.

If you want to discuss the other various payment methods available please phone Homeownership on 01253 477984

## Leaseholders Handbook

Enclosed with this Newsletter is the latest update to your Handbook with details on amendments to the information on pages 13, 14 & 15. The updates are also available on our website <http://www.bch.co.uk/leaseholdersRIB/Leaseholdershandbooknewsletter.htm>

If you have any comments or suggestions which you would like to be considered for the next review of the Handbook, or at the next review of the web site pages, please let the Homeownership Team know.

## Paying Leasehold Invoices

**As a Leaseholder you are legally responsible for the payment of Service Charge invoices.**

There are a variety of ways to pay and the Homeownership Team can offer help and advice. **Invoices are dispatched in April and October of each year and are payable within 14 days.**

The April invoice for the period of 1st April—30th September is for;

- Annual ground rent
- Annual Buildings Insurance premium
- 6 months Service Charges (this is an estimated amount)

The October invoice for the period of 1st October—31st March is for;

- 6 months Service Charges (this is the finalised amount and may be different to the April amount)

Monthly payment by Direct Debit or Standing Order can be arranged by contacting the Homeownership Team. You may be entitled to help paying your Service Charges through Pensioners Credit or Income Support. Details of who you can contact are included in the Leaseholders Handbook, on our web site and with arrears letters.

**If you are experiencing any financial difficulties paying your invoices please contact us immediately to discuss the options which are available to you. We can offer a free referral to an independent financial advisor.**

### Leasehold Service Charge Arrears Policy

If no payments are received, or the payments received is not enough, or we do not have any contact from you we will take arrears action. There are 3 main stages in the arrears process:

**Stage 1** - If no payments are received or the amount received is not enough we will take arrears recovery action. This is usually a letter, which is automatically produced from the computer system.

**Stage 2** - We will write inviting you in for an interview to discuss reasons for non payment.

**Stage 3** - If you do not respond we will write giving you 7 days to pay your invoice or we will forward the debt to a Debt Recovery Agency.

We will deal with all accounts that are in arrears on an individual basis and may also take the following actions:

- Deliver letters by hand
- Contact you by telephone
- We may also contact your Mortgage provider to inform them of the arrears and ask them to pay the outstanding amount.

**Continued non-payment means you are breaking the terms of your lease and will result in referral to Court and extra costs to you.**

If you sub-let or if for any reason you leave the flat empty you are still legally responsible for the payment of the Invoices.

**Disputing Service Charges** - If you have any questions or dispute any element of your Service Charges you must inform us in writing within 14 days of the invoice of the exact element and the reason why you are questioning the charge and we will investigate. You must pay the undisputed part of the invoice. Disputing the Service Charge invoice as a method of non-payment is breaking the terms of the lease.

## 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](mailto:homeownership@bch.co.uk)

