

Tenants Today



Welcome to the 2017 edition of Tenants Today, the newsletter for tenants and housing applicants of Midlothian Council.

This edition includes:

- An invite to our annual Tenants Day
- Information on how we are performing
- The Incentive to Move Scheme
- Homeswapper
- An update on new housing development
- Fire safety information
- Midlothian Tenant Panel
- Useful contacts

Come to Midlothian Tenants Day!

All Council tenants are invited to our annual Tenants Day, being held at **Dalkeith Arts Centre** on Friday 8th September 2017 from 1pm – 3.30pm.

Why not come along and find out more about the Housing Service and give us your views. There are also prizes to be won on the day, a crèche for the kids and a buffet lunch.

This event is only for Midlothian Council tenants. Numbers are limited at this event and we need you to reserve a place in advance to be sure of entry. Please contact our Tenant Participation Officer on **0131 271 3611** to book a place or find out more.

What is a Local Lettings Initiative?

All of Midlothian Council's new build developments are let in accordance with a specific Local Lettings Initiative for that specific development. Local Lettings Initiatives still need to take into account Housing Applicants points to ensure that new homes are being allocated to households at the top of the list. However, sometimes we have limited allocations to only people who are resident in the town or village where the new development is being built or prioritised people who are overcrowded. We consult with the Midlothian Tenant Panel before publishing a Local Letting Initiative and are happy to consider feedback from tenants and housing applicants about Local Letting Initiatives for future developments. You can also find copies of previous Local Letting Initiatives online at www.midlothian.gov.uk or contact the Housing Service if you want to request a paper copy.

Midlothian Council

FREE
'Old Midlothian'
fun and games
(suitable for all ages)

Midlothian

Tenants' Day

It's Fun, it's FREE, it's for all the family!

Keep in touch...

Online: Our website at www.midlothian.gov.uk is packed with news and information.

Facebook: Like us at www.facebook.com/MidlothianCouncil

Twitter: Follow us at www.twitter.com/midgov

Communicating Clearly: We are happy to translate on request and provide information and publications in other formats, including Braille, tape or large print.



New Affordable Housing Developments in Midlothian

Since 2006 Midlothian Council has built over 1,000 new homes across the county. However, the need for new housing continues to increase, with around 4,800 applicants on the Housing List. To help address this need Midlothian Council, in partnership with other housing developers, are planning to develop at least 1,441 new affordable homes during the next 5 years to help meet housing need.

In 2017 we have completed 3 developments:

- Polton Street, Bonnyrigg
- Robert Franks Gardens and Robert Franks Avenue, Gorebridge
- Teviot Grove, Penicuik

Teviot Grove (pictured) is an innovative housing development for people with a range of complex care needs. The development represents a redesign of services for people with a learning disability in Midlothian that allows them to live independently in their own communities.

The new scheme in Penicuik is in the heart of the town close to all local amenities. It consists of twelve single storey properties built around a courtyard with a bedroom,

lounge, kitchen, bathroom and a patio area. The properties are all wheelchair accessible and were designed using the most up to date research and best practice in building design. In addition, this development of council houses was built with the Scottish Government contributing funding of £552,000 towards the construction costs.

The tenants are a diverse group of people who will benefit from individually tailored support to set up home and become involved in what's going on locally. The Richmond Fellowship, a charity which supports people with a broad range of needs to live as independently as possible in their own homes, has been appointed to provide support to all tenants living in the development. They will provide support in a number of areas including personal finance, education and skills development.

Cllr Stephen Curran, Cabinet Member for Customer and Housing Services said: "These new homes have been built to fill the need for housing options for people with complex needs who would find it more difficult to live in more mainstream accommodation. They will provide the best environment to support people whilst ensuring they can live in their own tenancy with dignity and privacy."

More new developments due for completion are shown in the table below.

Location	Provider	Type of Housing	Completion Date
Stobhill Road, Gorebridge	Midlothian Council	Council Housing	September 2017
Millerhill	Castle Rock Edinvar	Social Rent	2018
Thornybank, Dalkeith	Castle Rock Edinvar	Social Rent	2018
Harvieston, Gorebridge	Melville Housing	Social Rent	2018
Dewar Park, Gorebridge	Dunedin Canmore	Social Rent and Mid Market Rent	2018
Gorton Loan, Rosewell	Dunedin Canmore	Social Rent	2018

Council tenant? Looking to move home?

Homeswapper is an easy to use website which automatically matches you with tenants who are interested in your home and have a home that you may be interested in.

Midlothian Council tenants are able to use this service for **FREE** to help you find a new home. There are almost 500 Midlothian Council tenants signed up to homeswapper so take a look! All you need to do is register at www.homeswapper.co.uk then once your registration has been approved by us you will be able to find a potential mutual exchange. You can also search using the homeswapper smartphone app. If you do not have internet access why not pop into your local library where you can use the internet for free?

Downsize and get £1,500!

Are you in a council property that is larger than you need? Did you know that Midlothian Council provides an Incentive to Move grant if a council tenant moves to a home that is at least two bedroom sizes smaller? For example if you live in a three bedroom council house and move to a 1 bedroom flat or house Midlothian Council will pay you **£1500**.

This applies both to council tenants who are on the Housing List and also for tenants who find a mutual exchange through homeswapper.

Tenant Survey Prize Draw

Midlothian Council has recently completed a Tenant Satisfaction Survey. Approximately 10% of council tenants were interviewed in their own home regarding their views on the Housing Services provided by Midlothian Council. We would like to thank all tenants who took part in this for taking the time to tell us their views and we are delighted to report an improved level of tenant satisfaction since our last survey! See the performance information later in the newsletter for more detail on this and you can also read the full results at www.midlothian.gov.uk

We also undertook a prize draw for those who took part in the Survey and the winner was Mr Laird, a tenant in Penicuik, pictured with his daughter.



Do you have an opinion on housing but don't have the time to attend meetings...The Midlothian Tenant Panel might be just for you!

The panel is made up of Midlothian Council tenants who want to help us improve our service without leaving the comfort of their own homes.

Sheila lives in Newtongrange, is a member of the panel and gave us her thoughts on why it works for her...

Housing:

"Sheila, the feedback you provide the council is incredibly valuable to us but do you enjoy it?"

Sheila:

"You get a chance to put your opinion forward. I think it's terribly important. I think it's great. I'm on my own now and it gives me an interest. If a friend asks me questions about the council it's 'tell me and I can pass it on!'"

Housing:

"What sort of things have you been involved in since joining the panel?"

Sheila:

"Oh my goodness me...loads! I've met other members, judged the garden competition and just kept my eyes and ears open to what's been said. The council bounce an idea round and ask your opinion e.g. Is it a good time? Should we wait longer? We always come to an agreement."

Housing:

"How much time do you think you spend on each subject we ask for your feedback on?"

Sheila:

"I have a good read through them then go back and read again to pick up all the points. Maybe an hour or an hour or two spread out over a wee while."

Housing:

"And lastly, what would you say to anyone thinking about joining the panel?"

Sheila:

"Please do, we need more members. You have an opportunity to speak to council officials that you wouldn't always have. I think the Tenant's Panel is great; I like to know what's going on. I just love it, I think it's fantastic."

If you would like more information on joining the Midlothian Tenant Panel or want to join or set up a local tenant

group in your area please phone **0131 271 3611** or email tenantparticipation@midlothian.gov.uk or see our Facebook page – ‘Midlothian Council Housing Information’

Update from Midlothian Council’s Tenants and Residents Groups

Bonnyrigg North Residents Group

The last meeting was held on 24th May 2017 at the Pitcairn Centre, Bonnyrigg High Street.

Ongoing issues include the consultation on new schools in Midlothian, parking issues around Lasswade primary school, potholes in Pendreich Avenue, mess from pigeons in Bonnyrigg High Street and concerns regarding parking in Bonnyrigg Medical centre.

Next meeting – Wednesday 23 August 2017 at 6.30pm in the Pitcairn Centre.

Cowan Court Tenants Group

The last meeting was held on Tuesday 9th May in Cowan Court.

Ongoing issues discussed included internal repairs, the communal garden, in-house catering and road traffic issues.

Next meeting – Tuesday 12th September at 11am in Cowan Court. (residents only).

Esk Place Registered Tenants Association

The last meeting was held on Tuesday 13th June in Esk Place.

Ongoing issues discussed included the constitution of Esk Place Tenants Association, social events within Esk Place, repairs issues and internal issues.



Residents of Esk Place partaking in a game of boccia

Next meeting – Tuesday 5th September at 6pm in Esk Place (residents of Esk Place only)

Poltonhall Residents Group

The last meeting was held on 2nd August in Lasswade Rugby Club.

Ongoing issues discussed included recycling, dog fouling, parking issues, council window replacement scheme, and environmental issues.

The group are holding a community litter pick on Wednesday 27 September at 12 noon. All local residents are invited to take part. Phone 0131 271 3611 for more information.

Next meeting – Wednesday 4th October at 2pm in Lasswade Rugby Club

Woodburn Tenants Group

The last meeting was held on 22nd June in Woodburn Miners Club.

Ongoing issues discussed included motor cycles driven on footpaths and fly tipping.

Next meeting – Thursday 31st August at 6.30pm in Woodburn Miners Club.



Wetherby's EpsiTherm (EPS)

We have followed recommended practice

The standard recommends that for all applications, the material should be protected by either a laminated facing layer, or fully enclosed by the form of construction, which is the case with our system.

A note about cladding on our council low rise buildings

In our low rise properties with cladding, we are not carrying out invasive inspections. We do not have high rise affordable homes.

Further information about cladding materials

We use Wetherby's EpsiTherm (EPS) for the low rise cladding and, in common with all organic materials, EPS is combustible.

If installed correctly, it will not be an undue fire hazard

Provided it is specified and installed correctly, in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and BS 6203 guidance, it will not present any undue fire hazard.

Scottish Social Housing Charter – How Midlothian Council is Performing 2016/17

Every year Midlothian Council publishes performance information in relation to the Housing Services that we provide. We also compare this to other landlords to help tenants and other service users understand how we compare. We also tell you about how we feel about our performance and what we are focusing on for improvement.

How we compare our performance to other landlords

To ensure a realistic comparison between Councils the Scottish Housing Regulator has developed a 'peer group' system which groups councils of similar size together for ease of comparison. This is because comparing larger and smaller councils may be less useful although we do report the average results for all Councils too.

How we show Midlothian Council's performance

	If we are performing better than other councils among those that we are comparing ourselves to we will attach a green smiley face to the indicator.
	If we are performing similarly to the average councils among those that we are comparing ourselves to, we will attach a yellow smiley face to the indicator.
	If we are doing less well than our peer group Councils we will attach a red unhappy face to the indicator.
	If we have improved our performance since the previous year we attach a green arrow pointing upwards to the measure.
	If we have performed similarly to the previous year we will indicate this by placing a grey horizontal arrow next to the measure.
	If our performance is not as good as last year we will indicate this by placing a red downward facing arrow next to the measure.

Money Matters

During the financial year 2015/16 you paid £21.7 Million in rent payments for council housing and lock up garages. The pie chart shows that just over half the income is used on managing and maintaining the stock. Spend on loan charges account for 40p in every pound collected. These charges are used to fund the development of new council housing and major investment plans such as reharing properties.

On average, Midlothian Council tenants pay lower rent than the Scottish average for councils. In 2015 tenants and applicants voted on future rent plans. A 5% increase for the three years was agreed. This is higher than other councils with the average rent increase being 2% in Scotland.

Midlothian Council will be consulting on future rent charges in 2018 so look out for information about this next year.

How every pound was spent



Measure	Midlothian	Peer Group	Scottish Average	How do we compare?	Compared to last year
Rent and rent collection					
The total number of council homes	6766	5386	13,187	😊	↓
Total rent due in the year	£22.04 M	£17.2M	£45.4M	😊	↑
Average rent charge for 1 bedroom property	£59.40	£58.70	£70.10	😊	n/a
Average rent charge for 2 bedroom property	£65.10	£62.70	£71.20	😊	n/a
Average rent charge for 3 bedroom property	£72.20	£68.40	£77.30	😊	n/a
Average rent charge for 4+ bedroom property	£76.30	£73.60	£81.10	😊	n/a
Average rent charge for all properties	£66.90	£63.20	£72.50	😊	n/a
Annual rent increase	5%	3%	2%	😞	↔
The length of time it takes to repair and re-let houses that become empty.	47 days	36 days	35 days	😞	↓
The percentage of rent lost through properties being empty in the last year.	0.8%	0.8%	1%	😊	↔
The percentage of rent due collected.	99.7%	99.4%	99.6%	😊	↑
The amount of rent in arrears at the end of the year.	6.4%	7.0%	5.3%	😊	↑
The percentage of properties abandoned in the year.	0.1%	0.5%	0.7%	😊	↔
The percentage of new tenancies that are still in place a year later.	94%	89.7%	88.3%	😊	↑

Measure	Midlothian	Peer Group	Scottish Average	How do we compare?	Compared to last year
Repairs and Maintenance					
The percentage of your homes that are meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.	96%	95%	92.8%	😊	↑
The average length of time to complete emergency repairs.	7 hours	5 hours	5 hours	😞	↔
The average length of time to complete non-emergency repairs.	13 days	9 days	8 days	😞	↑
The percentage of repairs appointments kept.	79.6%	94.7%	94.4%	😞	↓

Measure	Midlothian	Peer Group	Scottish Average	How do we compare?	Compared to last year
Homeless households					
The percentage of new council tenancies given to homeless households.	41.4%	44.6%	30.6%	😞	↔
The average time that homeless households stay in council managed temporary accommodation.	292 days	122 days	90 days	😞	↓

Measure	Midlothian	Peer Group	Scottish Average	How do we compare?	Compared to last year
Customer Satisfaction					
The percentage of tenants who feel Midlothian Council is good at keeping them informed about services and their outcomes.	82.7%	80.9%	90.6%	😊	↑
The percentage of tenants satisfied with the quality of their property.	84.9%	84.6%	86.5%	😊	↑
The percentage of tenants satisfied with a repair that has been carried out in the last 12 months.	80.9%	84.3%	89.9%	😞	↓
The percentage of new tenants satisfied with the quality of their property when moving in.	97.4%	83%	87.7%	😊	↑
The percentage of homeless people satisfied with the quality of their temporary accommodation.	70.5%	84.5%	85.2%	😞	↓
The percentage of tenants satisfied that their rent offers value for money.	81.7%	79.3%	79%	😊	↑
The percentage of tenants satisfied with overall service of the council.	83%	81.6%	89%	😊	↑

Key Points

- Our rents are cheaper than many other landlords but we are increasing our rent charges to help pay for investment in new and existing housing.
- There has been an overall increase in tenant satisfaction with the Housing Service which are provided by Midlothian Council – this has been recorded following a tenant satisfaction survey of 10% of Midlothian Council tenants.
- 14 smiley faces and 13 unhappy faces show that there are many areas where the Housing Service performs well in comparison to our peers – notably in areas such as housing quality and tenancy sustainment. In most areas where we are not performing as well as our peers we are not far away from the average. The Council's performance has improved or stayed at similar levels for 16 indicators while only 6 indicators have seen a decline in performance.

If you want to find out more about our performance, you can get detailed information from the Scottish Housing Regulator's website: www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk. We would also be happy to talk to you if there are specific things you want to know about our performance. We are able to discuss performance information in more detail at tenants groups or you could join our tenant panel if you want to help identify ways we can improve. You could also just contact us for a chat about the report.

For more information call us on **0131 271 6698** or email housingstrategy@midlothian.gov.uk

Useful contact numbers

Housing **0131 270 7500**
Housing repairs **0131 663 7211**
Rents and payments **0131 271 3201**
Pay for it (Payments can be made online) **0131 660 1845**
Rent arrears **0131 271 3499**
Antisocial behaviour **0131 271 6677**
Mediation **0131 271 3617**
Housing Benefit **0131 271 3201**
Council Tax **0131 271 3201**
Welfare rights **0131 271 3781** or **0131 270 8922**
Scottish Welfare Fund **0131 270 5600**
Rubbish and recycling **0131 561 5284**
Dog fouling **0131 561 5284** (Dog fouling can be reported online)
Animal welfare and pest control **0131 561 5284**
Environmental health **0131 271 3345**
Roads and pavements **0131 270 7500**
Adult and Social Care **0131 271 3900**
Children and Families **0131 271 3860** N/A **0800 731 6969**
Homelessness **0131 271 3397** or **0131 663 7211**

Interested in being part of a Tenants group in your area?

Why not contact Lesley Connell or Greig Henderson to find out about the groups that are running or we can talk to you about setting one up in your own area.

Contact us at tenantparticipation@midlothian.gov.uk or on **0131 271 3611**

Current Groups:

Bonnyrigg North Residents Group
Cowan Court Tenants Group
Esk Place Registered Tenants Association
Poltonhall Residents Group
Woodburn Tenants Group

Other useful contact numbers

Police Scotland	Non – Emergency 101 Emergency 999
Scottish Water Emergencies	0845 600 8855
Scottish Water Enquiries	0845 601 8855
Gas Emergencies	0800 111 999
Electric (power cut) Landline	0800 092 9290
Mobile	0330 101 0222
Citizens Advice Bureau (Penicuik)	01968 675259
(Dalkeith)	0131 660 1636
Home Energy Advice Scotland	0808 808 2282

The common stair is your only means of escape in the event of a fire.



Have you ever thought what you would do if fire were to break out in your stair? It may not necessarily be in your flat! A fire started in a common stair could kill you and your family. Even a small bag of rubbish can create enough smoke to fill a whole stair. Items left in a common stair are often deliberately set on fire.

Keep it clear

- Get rubbish, old furniture, etc out of the building
- Make sure storage areas are kept locked
- For advice on uplifting items contact your local Council

If fire does start

- Keep doors closed to prevent smoke filling your house
- Dial 999 and ask for the Fire and Rescue Service, giving as much information as you can

For free home fire safety advice
CALL 0800 0731 999
or visit our website at
www.firescotland.gov.uk



SCOTTISH
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE
Working together for a safer Scotland

National Fraud Initiative

Midlothian Council is under a duty to protect the public funds it administers, and to this end may use your information for the prevention and detection of fraud. It may also share this information with other bodies responsible for auditing or administering public funds for these purposes. For further information please visit www.midlothian.gov.uk/NFI