

What next for Newspaper?

Viewpoint has produced a newsletter for at least 20 years. (The earliest we could find was a 1997 edition!). In 2004 we called the newsletter Newspaper.

Initially this was a short document, printed in house and with a variety of tenant news. Later it became a magazine, printed externally, delivered 4 times a year and overseen by a tenant editorial team.

Despite our best efforts to keep the editorial team going, our repeated pleas for volunteers were unsuccessful. Since the end of 2015, we have had no tenant editorial team and in 2016 we cut down the editions to only 3 a year. Even though we create it with the input and content from many members of staff, and feature articles submitted

by tenants, it is very much a "corporate" newsletter now, with content from all over Viewpoint.

Each copy of Newspaper costs about £1.20 to design and print. So each tenant pays £3.60 per year (plus postage where applicable) to receive the 3 editions.

Having listened to feedback about the tone and style of the current Newspaper, we think it's time to have a wider conversation about what you want out of your Newspaper. We know we give tenants a lot of information (sometimes a bit too much!) and we would love Newspaper to be a useful tool to keep you informed. So we are looking for your help with these 2 questions about Newspaper:

What do you find most enjoyable about the newsletter?

What information is most useful to you?

Over the next few months we will speak to you about these questions – at quarterly meetings, coffee mornings, via your Housing Officer.... but you don't have to wait, you can also write to us at newspoint@viewpoint.org.uk or use the Newspaper feedback cards available in staffed complexes. We will collate all your responses and publish them in our summer edition in July.

Your Stories...

From our Fife correspondent...



Buchan Gardens had their annual visit from the children of Woodlands Nursery on Tuesday 18th December. The children sang Christmas carols to us and they were excellent. We look forward to them coming every year and very much enjoy their singing. After the carols the children had some snacks and then were treated to a visit from Santa Claus. Our chairman, John Muir, dresses up every year and hands out a Christmas bag to each child. We look forward to having them again!



Twenty one of the tenants at Buchan Gardens went on their Annual Christmas Lunch to 'The Tippy Nipper'. This restaurant is located at Fife Airport and has views of the airport itself from the dining room windows. Everyone had an excellent meal and asked if they could return here in 2019. We all returned to our communal hall for light entertainment and a couple of drinks before retiring to our own houses.



On Saturday the 26th of January, the Buchan Gardens Tenants Group held their annual Burns Supper. The event was well attended with 19 people enjoying a great night. The hall was appropriately decorated and set out, along with the preparation of the haggis and neeps and tatties by members of the group.

Poosie Nansie delivered the haggis and was played by Jennifer Wilkinson (a sasanach). A member of the band gave the toast to the haggis and Tom Noble gave the Selkirk Grace. Everyone then toasted the haggis. The haggis neeps and tatties were served followed by either trifle or gateaux.

After the meal we were entertained by 'Buttons & Bows'. Our favourite band consisted of three accordions, one violinist and a drummer. Many Scottish songs were enjoyed as well as a few humorous stories. Another great night bringing a few of our tenants together for a night of entertainment.

Stepping up to a better life at Croft an Righ

In 2018 we set up a "step up" flat at Croft an Righ. Patients who need recovery time and rehabilitation can be referred by the NHS. We hear from a former patient (and now tenant!) who has benefited from this service.

Last year, in 2018, I had my leg amputated in the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary Hospital and was then transferred to the Astley Ainslie Hospital for physiotherapy. It became apparent very quickly that I wasn't going to be able to return to my own home, due to my inability to get through the doors with my wheelchair, the room sizes being too small and the fact that my home was an up and downstairs

property.

Whilst in the Astley Ainslie I was approached by the Team Lead for the Occupational Therapy department and asked whether I would be interested in visiting a flat that had been newly set up for amputees and other people in need of rehabilitation. This flat has been set up as temporary accommodation as an alternative to hospital or other care provision.

I agreed to the visit and was brought to Croft an Righ, a place that I had never heard of before. After the initial visit, I was very impressed with the layout of the property and the fact that it had all of the amenities I required – an

adjustable hospital bed, a wet floor shower and plenty of space in all of the rooms for my wheelchair to move around. I also liked the fact that there were plenty of communal areas that I could use like the lounge, sun lounge and library. The staff and tenants that I met that day were all very welcoming and friendly, so it was an instant decision for me – Croft an Righ is where I wanted to be.

While residing in the step-down flat I visited a couple of other prospective properties, but found them disappointing. I realized that this was because I was happier and had more confidence knowing that if I had a fall etc. that I had 24 hour help at Croft an Righ and



that this was invaluable to me. I was fortunate and managed to get a permanent tenancy in another flat here at Croft an Righ, and would highly recommend that if anyone is given the opportunity to move



here, to grab it with both hands.

I can honestly say that I now enjoy and have more of a social life than I had when I had 2 legs!



Services for Tenants

Food Friends



Edinburgh Community Food are delighted to be developing an exciting partnership with Viewpoint, with a focus on maintaining good nutrition in older years. Edinburgh Community Food is a charity and social enterprise with the mission 'to get people into healthy food, and healthy food into people'.

The charity has received a grant from Eat Well, Age Well, as part of their Small Ideas, Big Impact fund, which focuses on older people living well via food. Edinburgh Community Food will be working with the tenants at Gillespie Crescent to deliver 'Food Friends'. This will be a food and health programme for people to eat healthily and make new friends. Key

aims of the project are to enable tenants to learn about a healthy balanced diet and nutrition in older years, reduce social isolation and to raise the awareness and increase knowledge of malnutrition in older adults. The project will provide an opportunity for tenants to prepare healthy balanced meals from scratch and share meals in a social setting.

The cooking groups are to take place each week and there will be a different nutritional activity incorporated into each session. These sessions will be fun and engaging and those attending will also get to take home extra portions of food that they have prepared during the sessions. In addition, the The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland's Eating Well for Older People training course will be offered to carers and staff to increase their understanding of how to help older people eat well in later years. Through the project, it is also possible to develop community shopping opportunities for tenants through either a community food shop or via a delivery service to the complex.



Did you know? Edinburgh Community Food provide a fresh

produce delivery service which includes their Take & Make meal packs. These are healthy and affordable meal kits that contain pre-measured ingredients with an easy to follow recipe. There are seven soups, seven main meals, and two side dishes to choose from and each Take & Make bag has the ingredients for four portions.

The project is due to start at the end of March and will be evaluated throughout. If it is successful there is potential for it to be expanded. This is a fantastic opportunity and it will be great to hear more the project throughout its development and as it progresses.

If you'd like to know more, Edinburgh Community Food can be contacted on 0131 467 7326.



Fern's Kitchen
Balfour House
10 Cameron Crescent
EH16 5LB
07565651031
fernskitchencatering@gmail.com

Fern's Café offers a wide range of home cooked and affordable nutritious food, as well as outside catering and social events for Viewpoint tenants. You can keep up to date with what's going on through our blog at fernskitchen.org, Facebook, Twitter @ferns_kitchen or on Instagram.

**Mon- Fri 9am – 2pm
Tues 11:30am – 2pm**

Unsure about benefits? Elaine can help!



Our Welfare Benefits Service helps tenants maximise their income and takes

the stress out of claiming benefits. Elaine Rosie is our Welfare Benefits Officer. She provides friendly, down to earth information, advice and support. Elaine will see what you're entitled to and help you through the process. Here's how she can help

Elaine tells us: "Following the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) roll out, a tenant in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) was required to claim PIP. After completing the form and following a face-to-face assessment, an award of the standard rate of care was made, which was less than the previous DLA they received. We requested a mandatory reconsideration and following a telephone call from the decision maker, the decision was revised by the Department

of Work and Pensions to include the enhanced care and mobility elements, more than the previous DLA award and £88.05 per week more than the initial PIP award.

Another tenant in their 90s was receiving a State Pension of £127 per week and a quarterly annuity of £50. Pension Credit and Housing Benefit were not payable as income, including that calculated from capital, was in excess of the amount laid down in legislation for these benefits. Following a benefit check, I successfully helped the tenant to claim Attendance Allowance. The award of Attendance Allowance changes the amount any income is measured against and as a result Pension Credit (guarantee) was payable, which in turn gives entitlement to Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction. This tenant was then £234 per week better off financially!"

Find out if Elaine can help you too. You can contact her on 0131 662 5144.

Direct Debits – and why they make your life easier!

A direct debit is an instruction from you to your bank. It authorises Viewpoint to collect payments from your account when they are due.

A direct debit is a convenient way to pay your rent and it gives you peace of mind that you won't miss a payment. We wanted to include here the most frequently asked questions to clarify how the system works.

What happens after I complete my direct debit form? We will enter your bank details into our system and an electronic file will then be sent to our bank. They will confirm that the bank details are correct and that the direct debit can be taken from the account. Viewpoint will

then write to you to confirm that the direct debit will be taken, and the date and amount of the first payment. *With direct debit your rent is payable on the 1st day of the month.*

What are the advantages for tenants?

The main advantage is that you do not need to do anything more once the direct debit is set up; Viewpoint will make sure that your direct debit amount is updated each year if rents change.

How will I know how much is being taken?

Viewpoint will write to you at least 10 working days before we take the first payment, to confirm the amount being taken. We will also write to you 10 working days before



any change is made to your direct debit amount

What happens if amounts are taken incorrectly?

We would of course make a refund as soon as possible to reimburse you. You are covered by the Direct Debit Guarantee, which means a full and immediate refund will be made if an error is made in the payment by Viewpoint.

It's easy to start paying by direct debit; please just ask your Housing Coordinator/Housing Officer for a direct debit instruction form. You can cancel your direct debit at any time.

Improving your home

Planned maintenance and investment work update

Terry Martini-Yates,
Planned Maintenance
Officer

As many of our tenants will know, these past few months have been very busy with lots of big

improvements being made both inside and out across our housing stock. Here is a summary of some of the recent work we have been delivering to tenants since our last newsletter.

Bathroom upgrades

DCL Joinery have started installing new bathrooms and showers. Work is presently underway at our Melgund Terrace, East Claremont Street and Mansion House Road developments. Our tenant led investment plans have been of a very high standard and have received general approval. This work has not only delivered essential improvements to tenants, but also helps us to maintain the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.



Window renewals and refurbishments



Our tenants at Dick Place have recently benefited from window overhauls and refurbishment work including the fitting of a revolutionary type of double glazed pane known as “solar glass”, especially designed for this type of traditional window. These have been fitted throughout the old building as part of the refurbishment work.

Our tenants at Mansionhouse Road are also due to receive similar upgrades and at the time

of writing, will have been receiving appointments for this work.

Anglian Windows have recently also delivered new double glazing windows to our developments at Ogilvie Terrace and Mill House. We have received many compliments from our tenants in connection with this work, and we are very pleased that the new windows have been met with such widespread approval. Here are just a small number of comments

received to date: *“I would like to take this opportunity to say that I am delighted with my new windows. The installation team were excellent; very courteous; very efficient. Everything was left tidy.”*

“Excellent! Very efficient, polite and tidy”

“Very pleased with the work that was carried out by the installers. Also the guys were very pleasant, polite and professional.”

News just in- New fire standards

The Scottish Government has announced new standards for fire and smoke alarms for all properties, regardless of tenure. Housing associations have until February 2021 to comply with. The new standards require that there is one smoke alarm installed in the room most frequently used for general daytime living purposes, one alarm in every circulation space on each storey, such as the hallway and a heat alarm installed in every kitchen. All alarms should be ceiling mounted and interlinked and there is a

requirement for carbon monoxide detectors to be fitted where there is a carbon-fuelled appliance. The standards will be monitored by the Scottish Housing Regulator. The standards follow the Grenfell Tower fire in London, after which the Scottish Government set up the Ministerial Working Group on Building and Fire Safety to review Scotland’s building and fire safety regulatory frameworks.

Viewpoint will comply with these standards and we are putting together a plan to ensure they are in place across all our properties.

Our repairs service and what

Viewpoint deals with approximately 6000 tenant repairs every year, a combination of emergency, urgent and routine repairs. Whether your tap is leaking or you have a faulty socket, our helpdesk logs each repair and then instructs our contractors to attend and fix the problem.

As you will be aware our main repairs contract is now being delivered via TB McKay in both Edinburgh and Fife as an interim, short-term solution. In the short time they have been working with us we have found that they are a very experienced and well organised company, providing a good quality and responsive service. We have also seen our customer satisfaction levels

with repairs increase to 92% this last quarter. We are encouraged to see these positive results and receive tenants’ positive feedback.

As mentioned above, however, the TB McKay contract is only a short term solution. In order to comply with procurement law we are obliged to retender this major contract this year. The Board has considered alternatives to ensure the next contract is awarded in a way that both offers value for money and puts our customers at the forefront of their service delivery. We understand that as our main contractor they are the customer facing representatives of Viewpoint so we want to make sure that not only do

Major roofing work

Corstophine Roofing & Building are presently completing major roofing work at our Woodthorpe development at Redford Road. This significant investment has seen all three major roofs stripped, reinsulated and recovered with modern, long lasting roofing materials, along with slate repairs being carried out to the old building. The project is in fact the largest roofing project Viewpoint has carried out to date, and confirms our commitment to making the ongoing investments required to our housing stock.

The roofing materials are some of the best on the market at the moment and produced by IKO a major roofing manufacturer. The benefits include better heat retention so will help improve on energy efficiency. Viewpoint will also receive a 20 year guarantee on the high quality materials used.

In addition, major roofing work has recently commenced at block 43 Gillespie Crescent, all to the same specification. Our tenants at this development will also see similar benefits as a result of this major work.



Brand new kitchens



Many of our tenants will also have had kitchen replacements this year. This has seen improvements being delivered to tenants far and wide, from City Park St Andrews to various developments in Edinburgh. L&D, our contractor, has worked closely with us throughout the project which has in turn, helped us to improve our service to tenants on any future kitchen plans.

Energy efficiency work - combi boiler renewals and loft insulation

A number of our tenants have benefited from full heating renewals this year. This has involved renewing the heating boiler with a new energy efficient combi boiler along with fitting new

pipework and radiators throughout.

We have also been topping up loft insulation in a number of areas throughout our housing stock - this work is now completed.

What is happening this year

We get a high quality, value for money service but that they also share our vision and values.

We expect the retendering work to take place in the coming months and as always, we are looking to engage with our tenants in this process. We understand that having your input is key in getting this new contract right and hope tenants will be willing to help us on this major piece of work. If you would like to have an initial chat about how to get involved you can contact Jake Irvine on 0131 662 5110.

How do we measure tenant satisfaction with repairs?

If you have had a repair carried out you will have received a short questionnaire asking you if you are satisfied with the repair. We collate these questionnaires and report the levels of satisfaction to our Board every quarter. We are also required to report this to the Regulator via our annual submission. And, every quarter we also have a lucky winner of a £50 Marks and Spencer voucher from those who have returned their questionnaires. Mrs Allan from Salisbury Road is our winner this quarter. Keep your repairs feedback forms coming and you too could win!

Coming up: Planned works for 2019/20

The Board has now approved the 2019/20 budget. The main focus of our planned works for this coming financial year will be to replace gas communal central heating systems with independent gas combi boilers within each dwelling across a number of our complexes. The complexes have been identified based on the age of the current systems and suitability for this type of replacement installation.

We are currently carrying out preparatory discussions with both

gas suppliers and installation contractors for the work hopefully to proceed as early as possible in the new financial year. *Once we have confirmation we will notify tenants at each of the respective complexes.*

Whilst these heating systems will account for the majority of our budgeted spend for the year we do however expect to replace some kitchens and bathrooms during the year as well. Again these will be prioritised according to age and condition.

Get Involved

Rent increase 2019- listening to tenants and changing how we consult

In November 2018, Viewpoint's Board agreed to consult tenants on a proposed 2.3% increase on rents and a freeze (no increase) of service charges. This was based on the CPIH (Consumer Price Index including Housing costs) as at July 2018, the lowest of the three inflation indicators used by the UK Government.

These proposals took into account Viewpoint's long term financial viability as well as affordability for tenants, transparency and fairness, comparability and value for money.

Our approach

You told us that you wanted us to carry out our annual consultation on setting our rent and service charges differently and we based this consultation exercise on recommendations from a tenant working group. The group, facilitated by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS), looked at how Viewpoint has carried out this consultation in the past and delivered a number of recommendations to Viewpoint. We tried to implement as many of them as possible, the most significant being bringing forward the whole organisation's budget setting process to allow us to consult with tenants earlier.

We then worked with the group to help us design an information leaflet and questionnaire. Over a couple of meetings and tasty lunches we discussed the information that is important to tenants, how to best display it and how to ask for feedback- this meant the introduction

of a mini questionnaire, rather than just one question as we had done in previous years.

The leaflet and questionnaire were sent to all tenants at the end of November. For the first time we introduced ballot boxes to our staffed complexes to make it easier for tenants to return their questionnaire. The questionnaire was also available to complete online via SurveyMonkey.



Rent increase proposal 2019/20

For 2019/20 we are proposing a **2.3% increase** in your rent.

This proposed rent increase takes into account the August 2018 CPIH (Consumer Price Index including Housing costs) which measures inflation.

For example, for a 1 bedroom shared housing property, this would mean a rent increase of £9.50 per month.

The proposed increase will enable us to continue investing in your homes, including:

- + Heating systems
- + Electrical wiring
- + Roofworks
- + Kitchens
- + Bathrooms
- + Windows

If a rent cap applies to you, you will receive further information with your rent notification letter in February 2019.

There will be no increase in service charges. We are proposing to freeze your service charges. The main costs related to your service charges have been procured for a number of years at current rates.

VIEWPOINT
providing care for people

Fast forward to January 2019

Once all ballot boxes had been emptied after the holidays and responses counted we were delighted to have received 364 feedback forms in total, a response rate of 27%. In previous years the average response rate was just under 10%.

58% of tenants agreed that 'a rent increase is necessary to maintain services and investment in our stock'. 24% disagreed.

84% agreed that 'we should prioritise investment in heating systems, electrical wiring, roofworks, kitchens, bathrooms and windows'. 5% disagreed.

47% felt their 'rent was affordable'. 38% were neutral or had no comment and 15% felt their rent was unaffordable.

After all the responses were collated, and as agreed with the working group, tenants met with Board members to discuss the outcome of the consultation. At this meeting we also had the opportunity to work together on the content of the letter sent to tenants following the Board's decision on rent and service charges for the following year.

All tenants will have received their letter about the rent increase at the end of February. We hope you found the information clear and easy to understand. If you have any queries about your rent, please contact us on 0131 668 4247 or by emailing admin@viewpoint.org.uk.

Esther Wilson, Director of People and Place, said "We are delighted with the response rate for this consultation and thank everybody who took the time to respond. This is an excellent reflection of the work undertaken with our tenants in this area and goes to show what we can achieve when we work together. Our tenant participation strategy gives everyone the chance to get involved in the way that best suits them and I would encourage tenants to find out more about the opportunities available. Your participation makes all the difference. You can find out more about all the different ways to get involved in the section below."



Technology Focus Group

At the tenants' conference last year, many of those attending took the opportunity to explore some of the technological innovations we are testing out. During those discussions we were also keen to recruit tenants to come together as a focus group to assist our development of technology solutions.

A small group of tenants from across Edinburgh and Fife joined the Innovation and Development Team and some of our colleagues from Housing to have an initial discussion about what the group could engage in.

Our first discussion focused on the new approach we are taking to identify opportunities to make service improvements.

Design Thinking is an approach that goes beyond simply writing a brief and delivering a project. It takes a couple of steps back and really seeks to understand the challenges and problems we are aiming to resolve. In this respect, having access to a focus group of tenants will be hugely beneficial to really understanding what issues you face, as well as really engaging with tenants to capture ideas about potential solutions and how they might be implemented.

If you would be interested in joining the focus group, please contact Lyn Jardine, Head of Innovation and Development for a chat on 0131 668 4247 or email lyn.jardine@viewpoint.org.uk

Consultation Volunteers

Viewpoint tenants have had a long and well known history of involvement and influence within the organisation. As part of the actions from our new Tenant Participation Strategy we recently sent out a leaflet to every tenant asking them if they would like to be a Consultation Volunteer to help shape and improve our services in areas such as performance, recruitment, communication

and event planning.

We are pleased to have had a good response and to see tenants keen to give their expertise, experience and time. We will be contacting the volunteers shortly with details of what happens next. **If you are interested in volunteering please contact us at our Head office on 0131 668 4247 option 2, or email admin@viewpoint.org.uk**

Another angle to participation: why we love tenant Board Members

The Board of Viewpoint currently consists of 12 members from a variety of backgrounds and walks of life. Robin Barnes and Jean Simpson are tenants currently sitting on the Board. Here they tell us a bit about their experience.



Robin says: *Being a Board member has provided me with a valuable insight into vital decision making*

processes, in particular those involving the difficult challenges of forward planning; of ensuring that Viewpoint is secure and fit for

purpose as we move forward into very uncertain times. I know many fellow tenants see the Board as almost disconnected from the everyday realities which face staff and tenants alike, but that truly is not so. Of course, the Board is required to think strategically, not involve itself with operational matters, but it is invariably the case that when a proposal is being

considered, the highest priority is given to the likely effect of implementation on tenants. That said, I'm sure we all realise it will never be possible to please everyone, but every effort is made to achieve the widest acceptable results. One of the aspects of membership I have most enjoyed is the relaxed atmosphere. I

have always felt welcome at Board, and my input from the tenants' point of view considered and discussed.



Jean says: *I had just retired when I was asked to think about being a Tenant Board member. I*

said no initially but now, 9 years later, I can say I have enjoyed it so much and I am so glad that I went for it in the end. Meeting and getting to know lots of people on the way, other tenants in complexes around Viewpoint, Board Members, and staff and all manner of people at training and conferences etc. I have found it a very satisfying time where I have

brought my skills from my life before Viewpoint to the table as well as the information I had learnt from being a tenant. I think it is so important that we have tenant Board Members because they bring their special knowledge to the table. Always remember that it is that knowledge that helps to inform our decision making, not that we bring individual cases to the table. I have learnt so much by being on the board which has helped me to inform other areas of my life so it is very much a two-way process.

Keep an eye for Board recruitment opportunities coming up. Both Jean and Robin are due to retire later this year and we are keen to recruit tenants to join the Board.

Fife tenants move forward

Buchan Gardens was the venue, on 28 January, for Viewpoint tenants from all over the Kingdom of Fife, to get together and agree to establishing a new tenants' group.

As part of the revised Tenant Participation Strategy agreed by the Board a tenants' group in Fife and a tenants' group in the Lothians was proposed. The Fife tenants' meeting was the first gathering considering the new arrangements which were keenly supported.

A small group of volunteers were tasked by those tenants attending to put together the tenants' ideas on:

- what's it to be called?
- what structures should there be?
- when will it get together?
- what are its priorities?

Tenants decided they should wait till it is established before considering how best it can be supported by staff. The volunteers got to work immediately and are well on the way to be able to report back to Fife's tenants.

Their first proposal was that any Fife Viewpoint Tenants should be able to take part and they're suggesting it:

- is called, the Fife Viewpoint Tenant Group,
- meets every 3 months
- has a small committee that decides what the agenda is

(but nothing will be finalised before Fife Viewpoint Tenants have their say and vote for it).

Essential to tenants taking part was ensuring local opportunities to raise local tenant issues, which tied in

with Viewpoint's desire to increase consultation done in complexes. And this is being proposed.

The group is still working to put forward a simple code of conduct together, so folks are clear what is expected of them taking part.

So if you're a Fife tenant, look out for the chance to get involved, speak to your Housing Officer and you will be very welcome.

And if you are a Lothian tenant, don't worry, you will soon have similar opportunities to develop the sort of group you think is needed.

How and why do we involve tenants in staff recruitment?

Involving tenants in the recruitment and selection processes of staff is one of the commitments of our Participation Strategy. We have recently recruited a new Housing Officer for our East "patch" and were pleased to invite 3 tenants to help us with interviews.

Our current process involves separate staff and tenant panels. The tenant panel in this case was supported by Neil McKnight, Head of Housing. Neil, alongside Elizabeth Douglas, Learning and Development Manager,

had interviewed 14 applicants in the first instance and invited 4 to a second interview. After the interview, candidates met with the tenant panel.

Grace Machirant was part of the latest interview panel. Here she tells us about her experience. *"I had been part of 3 interview panels before for property services posts, so when the opportunity came up I knew I had the appropriate experience and what would be involved.*

Along with 2 other tenants (Morag and John) we met 3 candidates who had already gone through the first round of

interviews with Viewpoint staff and got to ask 2 questions each – it felt like an informal chat more than an interview. We all took notes and at the end compared them. It was interesting to see we had the same opinion about the candidates!

And then we met Elizabeth and Neil, who had carried out the 2 rounds of interviews- and when it came to comparing notes, it was a unanimous decision. It was a very satisfying result and it's a great way to get involved. I would definitely do it again!"

Conference Planning

We are about to start planning our next tenant conference which will be happening at the end of June. We have 23 tenants who have told us they wish to be part of the Conference Planning Group. We will be holding sessions with them this spring to decide on the venue, format and focus of this year's conference. Invites for the conference will be sent out to all tenants nearer the time.

You Said We Listened

Lynedoch Place tenants asked if we would redecorate the common areas as they could do with a freshen up. As a result, we arranged a meeting with tenants to decide on the new colours and duly engaged our decorators, Spectrum Decorating who have very recently completed this work. Tenant feedback for this work has been very good.

The tenants at **West Richmond Street** were complaining that two of the washing machines in the building were not taking the softener, asking for new machine. We were pleased to get them new machines as a result.

A tenant at **Haugh Park** was finding it difficult going up and down the stairs we put in a second hand rail and she is finding it a lot easier to get up and down.

We've recently completed the conversion of little used storage space, and have fitted this out as a motorised scooter store at our **City Park, St Andrews** development following requests from tenants. This provides space for two scooters and confirms our continuing commitment in the promotion of independent living

The guest room in **St Albans** was rarely used. One of the reasons was that it doesn't have any washing facilities. It is a single room, with a toilet and hand basin only. We heard what our tenants said and a shower has recently been installed. Soft furnishings are also going to be replaced. We will soon have a renovated guest room. We hope this will encourage family and friends to visit more often.

And Finally...

12 things we didn't know about...Jean Gray, Viewpoint's new CEO



1. What are you looking forward to at Viewpoint?

Being a CEO with a voice and getting to know our customers,

residents and communities; we do good stuff and we will continue to do more. Creating new and continuing strong partnerships; developing our staff teams and succession planning to ensure we retain staff and grow our own future leaders. My vision is to create thriving communities where services are delivered with a person-centred approach from staff and in which tenants are empowered to make well-informed, supported decisions to maximise their overall control and independence within their local community. There are challenges ahead in the sector so my role is to lead the organisation in a strategic direction that will enable us to meet these challenges and

2. Why does housing matter to you?

ensure we are delivering excellent customer services; achieving customer satisfaction as well as improving the services that reach the most vulnerable people in our communities. Everyone has the right to a good quality, affordable home for life and to be helped in these difficult times. I want to make a difference, I've had personal experience where my autistic brother was poorly treated by the system as well as within the community; nobody should feel socially excluded. For me it's about getting to know our customers, understanding their issues and working together to create successful solutions.

3. What makes you angry in the sector?

The NIMBY approach (not in my back yard...) and Universal Credit which is just inhuman and immoral affecting some of the most

vulnerable people, it is appalling that people have to survive on nothing and that is apparently acceptable

4. What are you like? I'm straight forward and honest and will tell you exactly what I think to your face, not in a rude way; I'm a finisher which has sometimes meant I've taken too much on but I've learnt from that and I think it's important to have fun and a damn good laugh!

5. What are the traits you most admire in others?

Honesty, imagination and compassion

6. What do you dislike in people?

Bad manners; dishonesty; laziness and condescending behaviour

7. How do you relax?

Long walk with my husband and Charlie our Springer Spaniel followed by a nice glass of red wine and a steak preferably cooked on the barbecue sitting in the evening sun on the decking.

8. If you could share a meal with

any 4 individuals, living or dead, who would they be?

Michelle Obama; Benedict Cumberbatch; Winston Churchill and Freddie Flintoff

9. What is the most important lesson life has taught you?

Believe in yourself, work hard and always do things that make you happy. Don't follow others, be unique. Never miss opportunities in life they will not come back.

10. What is your favourite TV programme (s)?

Game of Thrones but always love a bit of Strictly Come Dancing on the weeks up to Christmas!

11. What is your favourite book?

Where Memories Go: Why Dementia Changes Everything by Sally Magnusson

12. One last word?

Learn from every good and bad experience in life, things happen for a reason, use them to your advantage

Give the Regulator your views

The National Panel is one of the ways that the Scottish Housing Regulator includes the views of users of social landlord services in their work. The Panel is an important part of the wider consultation and involvement strategy for SHR.

The Panel is open to anyone who uses social landlord services.

Members include social tenants, people who have been homeless, home owners who receive factoring or common repairs from a social landlord, and people on social rented Gypsy/Traveller sites.

Take the latest survey and join at:

bit.ly/shr-panel

or call 0800 433 7212



Allocations policy

We use our Allocations Policy to help us let our properties to those in greatest housing need and our policy helps us identify who these households are. We are currently reviewing our Allocations Policy to take into account new legislation, which we must comply with by May. This will not result in any significant change to our policy. The change in law allows us to take into account whether someone owns their own home which has not been the case until now. We are not proposing to change our policy to take this into account, at this time. There are particular circumstances where applicants must be given reasonable preference, by law, compared to other applicants.

The new legislation identifies 3 groups:

Homeless persons and persons threatened with homelessness

People who are living in unsatisfactory housing conditions

Tenants of houses which are held by a social landlord and which the social landlord considers to be under-occupied.

Our current policy reflects this already and wording will be amended, where required, to ensure legal compliance. This does not change our current policy and, in addition Viewpoint continues to specify other groups who we give reasonable preference to including those

with health and support requirements.

In due course we will be undertaking a more fundamental review of our Allocations Policy and we are keen to hear what you would like us to consider when we do this.

To tell us what you think about current changes and what you would like us to consider when undertaking a fundamental review of our Allocations Policy, please see the short survey which is available on our website www.viewpoint.org.uk and will be open until 19 April. Our housing staff will also be asking your views at our regular complex meetings and coffee mornings.