

OVHA NEWSLETTER



December 2022

Coffee Morning Event

We hosted a tenants' coffee morning on Thursday 23rd November at the Auchterderran Church Hall. The morning was organised as part of our series of tenant-focused events running throughout the month including the 'Cosy Corner' drop-ins held in the Hub at our Cardenden Office every Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday (11am until 3pm).

Everyone who attended the Coffee Morning enjoyed hot drinks, cake and conversation as well as participating in discussions and themed games. The aim was to outline where the Association spends its money and determine what our tenants want our priorities to be for the future. The cost of living crisis was a recurring theme.

The morning concluded with a raffle prize draw and the insights and opinions offered by those in attendance were incredibly useful in helping shape our services in response to the challenge that we are all facing with high energy bills and the cost of living.

If you need help with managing your costs and your energy bills over the winter months, please contact Daneille Porteous on 01592 721917 or email housing@orevalleyha.org.uk.



Rent Review Consultation 2023/24



With the October CPI inflation rate at 11.1% and with a further increase anticipated in our overall costs for 2023/24, social landlords are now having to carefully consider their budgets while still taking account of the needs and priorities of their tenants by ensuring our rents remain affordable, and value for money when compared with other housing costs.

This review of our budgets is also taking place at a time when, due to the cost of living crisis, the Scottish Government has introduced emergency legislation that gives them the power to freeze or cap rent levels for both private and social housing tenants from 1st April 2023 for an extended period of 6 months or more.

It is anticipated that the Scottish Government will make an formal announcement on or before 14th January to confirm if they intend to freeze rents or introduce a cap on any proposed rent increases being considered by social landlords.

In the meantime, we still have a duty to consult our tenants about any proposed change to our rents and we have already started this process with events held at the Benarty Centre on 3rd November 2022, and a our more informal coffee morning event held in Auchterderran Church Hall on 23 November 2022.

Given the current financial climate, and the inflationary increases announced by the UK government for welfare benefits and State Retirement Pension (SRP), a number of social landlords are now proposing rent increases of between 5% to 11%.

It is our intention to begin our formal consultation with tenants in January with proposed rent increase options of 5%, 6% or 7% to be applied from 1st April 2023.

You will be sent a consultation letter in the post, and everyone will also have the opportunity to reply either by returning their consultation form or by using your My Home account on our website. In addition to this and following a recommendation made by a tenant at one of our tenant participation events, for the first time we are going to phone a small representative sample of tenants to ask them for their feedback about the rent increase options that we are proposing.

Proposed Rent Increase

We are consulting on the following options:

Option 1

5.0% 6.1% less than CPI figure for October 2022

Option 2

6.0% 5.1% less than CPI figure for October 2022

Option 3

7.0% 4.1% less than CPI figure for October 2022

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Tenant consultation is an important part of our rent review and must take place whenever we are proposing an increase to the rent you pay, and for this reason we would encourage you to complete and return the consultation form that will be sent to you early in the new year.

Rent Affordability

We have tested our rent against the SFHA rent affordability model and the rent levels we are proposing continue to pass the affordability test for those with a modest household income.

An affordable rent is considered to be between 25-30% of your net income and in most cases we anticipate that even with a 7.0% increase the majority of our tenants will still be paying no more than 25% of their net income on rent.

The UK Government has already introduced a limit on rent increases of 7% in England, and Wales has introduced a cap of 6.5%.

State Pension and Benefit Rates for 2023/24 will be increased by 10.1% from 1st April 2023, although the Institute for Fiscal Studies has reported that rising costs are hitting low-income households hardest.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has found that rising energy and food costs, which low-income households spend a greater proportion of their income on, have driven higher inflation for low-income households. The Institute for Fiscal Studies predicted that inflation in October 2022 was 14% for the poorest UK households compared to 10% for the richest households - see figure 1.

How can you help us to look at Value for Money and Affordability?

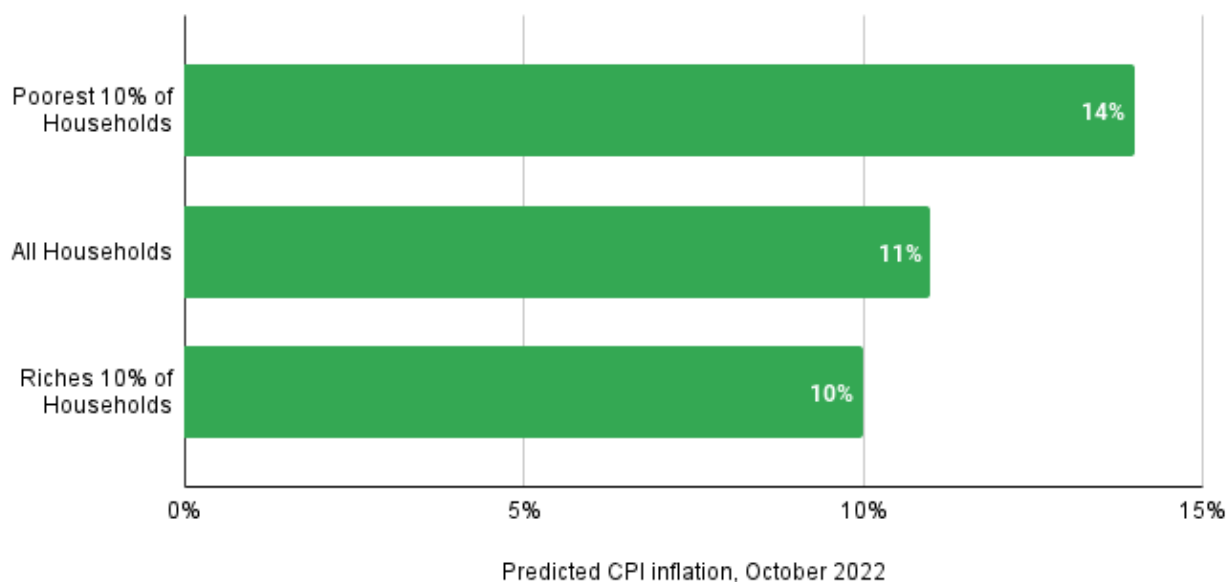
Regardless of the outcome of our proposed rent increase and the Scottish Government decision on a rent freeze or rent cap, we still need to constantly review our service to ensure it is providing value for money for our tenants.

In accordance with the aims and priorities of our Tenant Participation Strategy (2022-2025) we are looking to establish a small tenant group to help us monitor and report on the following areas:

1. Information and Communication
2. Customer Care
3. Tenant Participation
4. Repairs and Housing Quality
5. Value for Money
6. Your Neighbourhood

If you would be interested in joining one of our tenant groups, please contact Vicky Murdoch on 01592 721 917 or email housing@orevalleyha.org.uk.

Figure 1: Predicted inflation in October 2022 (rounded to nearest %)



Foodbank & Community Support News

<p>Cardenden Community Fridge Bowhill Community Centre, 145 Station Road, Cardenden, KY5 0BW</p> <p>Opening hours: Monday 1.00pm -3.00pm and Friday 2.00pm-4.00pm.</p> <p>Holiday Period The festive opening times will be the Friday 23rd & 30th December before reopening as usual after the holidays starting Friday 6th January.</p>	<p>Benarty Food Bank BRAG Centre, Main Street, Crosshill, Lochgelly, KY5 8BJ</p> <p>Opening hours: Monday, Wednesday and Friday 4.00pm-6.00pm</p> <p>Phone: 07580 231286</p>	<p>Benarty Food Angels Benarty Centre, Ballingry Road, Ballingry, KY5 8JH</p> <p>Open every Monday from 1pm-2pm</p> <p>Email: benartyfoodangels@gmail.com</p>
<p>The Forty Twa Cafe, open on Christmas Day for heat and eat: Drop in between 11am - 1pm on 25 December at 241-243 High St, Cowdenbeath, KY4 9QF.</p>	<p>Lo'gelly Lunches - Community Larder - will operate on Friday 23rd & 30th December as normal between 10.00am- 1.00pm offering food provision.</p>	<p>Auchterderran Drop In - Open Tuesday 27th December and Tuesday 3rd January 11am-1pm</p>
<p>Warm spaces at Auchterderran Church: will open on Sunday 1st January 2023 between 11.00am - 3.00pm</p>	<p>Ore Valley Cosy Corner - will close for the holiday period at 4.00pm, Wednesday 21st December and reopen on Monday 9th January 2023 from 11.00am.</p>	

If you are interested in more information on these services or for other similar services in other areas, please follow the link below:
<https://www.fife.gov.uk/kb/docs/articles/benefits-and-money-advice/food-banks/access-to-food-locations#>

And if you wish to speak with our Tenant & Community Development Officer, Vicky Murdoch, for further help and advice please call 01592 721917.



How to unfreeze your condensate pipe

What is a boiler condensate?

The condensate is a waste water that runs from your boiler. The water is produced when the gas is burning at a lower temperature, this water vapour is collected inside the boiler in a trap and gets discharged to a drain via a pipe.

How do I know if my condensate pipe is frozen?

If your pipe is frozen your boiler is likely to be showing a fault of flame failure or an ignition problem or you may hear a loud gurgling coming from your boiler. This is the condensate water backing up and not allowing your boiler to fire up. If you are unsure what fault represents these failures, phone our office on 01592 721917 and select from the options given.

How to locate your condensate pipe

If you look underneath your boiler there will be a number of pipes most of them being copper pipes. however there should be one 22mm(3/4") white plastic pipe. This is your boiler condensate. The condensate pipe will terminate outside your property.



Hot / warm water

If the pipe is at low level (you can reach it) then fill the kettle (you won't have any hot water if you have a combi boiler) and warm it up. take the hot-water outside, clear the snow off the pipe and pour it on the full length of pipe defrosting the water inside. if it works you should see/hear chunks of ice come out of the end of the pipe and run into the drain.

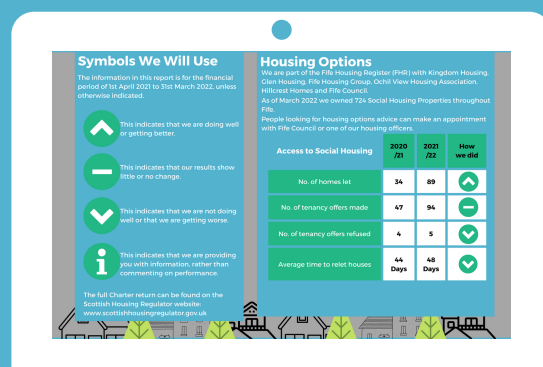
Please don't attempt to defrost the condensate pipe if this is at high level

For further information and tips on basic maintenance, including information about how to identify and reduce the **causes of dampness, condensation and mould growth** in your home please visit the tenant safety section of our website.

Performance Reporting

We are always looking at ways to improve our service for our tenants and performance monitoring is essential to ensure that we meet the standards we have set ourselves and are able to identify potential problems at an early stage. We monitor performance internally on a monthly basis and we report to our Board quarterly on how well we are meeting performance targets. To check out how we are doing why not have a read through our latest annual Performance Report (just copy and paste the following link to your browser).

https://www.orevalleyha.org.uk/uploaded/portal/secure_files/2021_22_performance_report.pdf



Useful Information

OFFICE CLOSURE

Over the holiday period we will be closed from Friday 23rd December from 16.00 hours until Thursday 4th January 2023 at 09.00 hours.

If you need to report an emergency repair during this period, phone our office number on 01592 721 917 at any time, day or night, and follow the instructions provided.

If you would like to see anything included in our newsletters that isn't already you can phone us on 01592 721 917 or email: comms@orevalleyha.org.uk.

Ore Valley Online

Facebook /orevalleyha
Twitter
@orevalleygroup
www.orevalleyha.org.uk

Important Contacts

Fife Council
Switchboard- 03451 55 0000
Environmental Health (Rubbish collection, dog fouling etc)- 03451 55 0022
Antisocial Behaviour- 03451 55 0033
Fife Council Welfare Fund Team- 0300 555 0265 or email: welfare.fund@fife.gov.uk

Advice and Help
National Grid- 0800 111 999
Scottish Water - 08000 778 778
NHS 24-111
Homeless Emergency Number (Free)- 0800 028 6231
Citizens advice & Rights Fife- 0345 1400 095

Contact Details

114-116 Station Road
Cardenden, Fife
KY5 0BW
Tel: 01592 721 917
Mon-Fri
09:00 to 17:00