



## 07 | Rent Consultation

Thanks to everyone who provided us with their views and comments regarding our rent consultation for the financial year 2024/25.

After taking into account the feedback received, our Management Committee approved a 6% rent increase commencing on 1st April 2024.

If you pay your rent by **Direct Debit** you need take no further action as we will automatically update the amount. If you pay by **Standing Order** you will need to **contact your bank immediately** and inform them of the new amount and effective date. **If you wish to change to Direct Debit please contact us for a form.**

If you are in receipt of the **housing cost element of Universal Credit**, you must inform the UC Claimant Helpline or update your online claim after the 1st April 2024.

If you need any help with your rent payments, please contact the **Housing Management Team** for support and advice on **01595 694986**.

## 08 | New Face at the Office

We were delighted to welcome Jennifer Tait to our team back in January. Jennifer joins us as our new **Housing Administration assistant** and joins Mark at the front desk to support all customers visiting the office and over the phone.

Having previously worked for the local authority in their housing department, Jennifer brings a wide range of experience and knowledge to her new role here at the Association.



## Get involved with our Tenant Focus Group



Hjaltland Housing Association understands the importance of customer feedback, both positive and negative, in helping us improve the services we deliver. We are always looking for new members to join our Tenant Focus Group to help review our services, approve our policies and have a genuine voice in our decision making. If you have never done anything like this before, don't worry - this is a friendly, informal group where new ideas and new members are always welcome.

- ◆ You will have an opportunity to expand your existing skills
- ◆ You can decide how much or little time you want to spend helping us
- ◆ You will have guidance from a professional team
- ◆ We will try to make it easy for you to select the services you want to scrutinise

**If you would like to find out more about the Tenant Focus Group, please contact the office.**



SPRING EDITION 2024

## 01 | Supporting Our Tenants

**To support tenants with the cost-of-living crisis, we have been successful in distributing funds sourced through external grants.**

Over 250 Households who have struggled with either the cost of living, or more specifically, the cost of energy (those in fuel poverty) have been supported to the tune of £75,000 over the last six months.

Recipients were identified in a number of ways, including surveys, feedback on the rent consultation process and discussions with Officers when dealing with day-to-day housing management issues.

In addition to the financial support, tenants have been reminded of the support we can offer in terms of efficient operation of heating systems and the ability to request a home visit for technical advice. Unfortunately, all funds have now closed, but we are grateful to the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations and Shetland Islands Council, who administer Community Local Led Initiatives, for their grant funding.

*Jennifer Laurenson and Ali Morris have been busy supporting tenants in distributing the funds over the last few months.*

## 02 | Help us to help you!

**It is important that we have up-to-date and correct information about you so that you have access to the right services.**

If there have been any updates to your information or information about other members of your household (e.g. change of phone number or e-mail address or of household members) or any change in circumstances (e.g. employment or income), please let us know.

### Inside this issue

P1	01	Supporting Our Tenants
P1	02	Help us to help you!
P2	03	The Common Stairwell
P2	04	Blank screens on your prepayment meter?
P3	05	The Dangerous Dogs (Designated Types) (Scotland) Order 2024
P3	06	New Housing Developments
P4	07	Rent Consultation
P4	08	New Face at the Office



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[www.hjaltland.org.uk](http://www.hjaltland.org.uk)

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## 03 | The Common Stairwell

Have you ever thought what you would do if fire were to break out in the common stairwell? 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.



### Keep it Clear

- ◆ Get rubbish, old furniture, etc out of the building.
- ◆ Make sure storage areas are kept locked.
- ◆ For advice on uplifting items, please contact the local authority on 01595 744891.

The Shetland Islands Council offers a collection for unwanted bulky items.

They will collect up to 6 items for £40. If you need more than 6 items collected there will be an additional charge of £40 for an additional 6 items (ie for 1 to 6 items the charge would be £40, for 7 to 12 items the charge would be £80).

They do offer a concession of £16 for 6 items if you are on any of the following means tested benefits:

- ✓ Housing Benefit
- ✓ Income Based Job Seekers Allowance
- ✓ Income Related Employment and Support Allowance
- ✓ Income Support
- ✓ Pension Credit (guarantee element)
- ✓ Universal Credit

When they come to collect your items, items must be outside your property in your garden, drive or on the pavement, by 7.30am on your collection day.

### If fire does start in the stair

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

For free home fire safety advice phone **0800 0731 999** or visit [www.firescotland.gov.uk](http://www.firescotland.gov.uk)



## 05 | The Dangerous Dogs (Designated Types) (Scotland) Order 2024

The Scottish Government is implementing new legislation, in two stages, in relation to the ownership of XL Bully dogs.

The Order came into force on Friday 23 February 2024.

This first stage of new rules on XL Bully dogs means owners of XL Bully dogs must ensure their dogs are muzzled and on a lead when in a public place. Selling, gifting or exchanging XL Bully dogs will also be prohibited. It will remain legal to own an XL Bully dog after 23 February.

The second stage of the new rules will mean that from 1 August 2024, it will be an offence to own a XL Bully dog without an exemption. Owners of an XL Bully dog will need to apply for an exemption on or before 31 July 2024 to be able to continue owning their dog. The details of the exemption scheme, as well as arrangements for compensation for any XL Bully dog owners not wishing to retain their dogs, will be included in further secondary legislation.

### What does this mean for owners of XL Bully dogs

The designation of the XL Bully dog through the Order means that from 23 February 2024, it will be an offence under Scots law for a person in Scotland to:

- ◆ allow an XL Bully dog owned by the person or of which they for the first time being in charge to be without a muzzle and lead in a public place.
- ◆ breed, or breed from, an XL Bully dog.
- ◆ sell or exchange an XL Bully dog, or offer, advertise or expose an XL Bully dog for sale or exchange.
- ◆ make or offer to make a gift of such a dog or advertise or expose an XL Bully dog as a gift.
- ◆ where an owner, abandon an XL Bully dog or where either an owner or for the time being in charge, allow an XL Bully to stray.

For more information, please visit **XL Bully dogs in Scotland - gov.scot** ([www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot))



## 04 | Blank screens on your prepayment meter?

### What do I do if I have a blank screen on a prepayment meter?

We are aware that some tenants have blank screens on their pre-payment meters. If this has happened in your property, you need to report this to your energy supplier as soon as possible so they can arrange for the meter to be replaced or repaired. This may take some time as there are no meter engineers in Shetland, although if you have no power they must fix the meter as an emergency.

### Do I still have to pay for electricity when my meter is blank?

You will still have to pay for your electricity even if the screen is blank. The meter has gone into credit mode if your electricity power supply is working. Ask your energy supplier for advice about how you pay for your electricity until the meter is repaired. If you are continuing to top up your meter key/card keep all your receipts.

Your energy company will estimate your energy use based on previous energy use if the meter is not still recording actual energy use. If your supplier doesn't take appropriate action to fix your meter you should speak to Hjaltland Housing Association to find out about further support.



## 06 | New Housing Developments

We are delighted that in addition to our ongoing large scale development at Staney Hill, Lerwick, we have started on the construction of our new properties in Walls on the west side of Shetland.

This development will provide:

- ◆ 4 two bedroom, 3 person houses
- in the centre of Walls and will supplement the Associations existing scheme at Vagaland. Work is expected to be completed in the Autumn of this year.

