



# ChitChat

## CHA's 8th Tenant Conference!

Clydebank Housing Association held its 8th Tenant Conference on Friday 14 November and was delighted with the input and suggestions from the tenants who attended the 4-hour event, held in the Association's Regeneration Centre, Centre81 in Whitecrook.



*continued on page 2....*

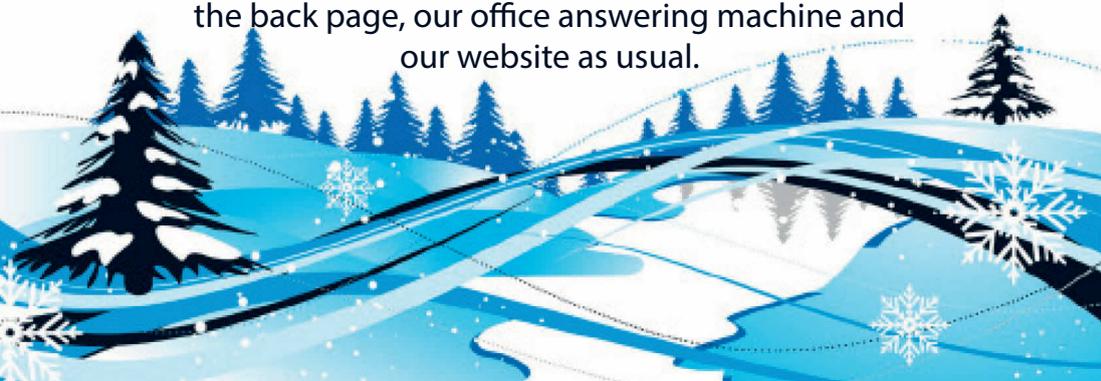
*Please let us know if you would prefer to receive CHA Newsletters or any other CHA publications by email. Sending publications in this way can help the environment and help reduce our costs.*

# We wish all our tenants and other customers a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year!

## Festive Closure

Our office will close on Wednesday 24 December 2014 at 12.30pm and re-open on Tuesday 6 January 2015 at 9.00am.

Emergency numbers are available on the calendar on the back page, our office answering machine and our website as usual.



This issue in pictures...

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*If you or someone you know would like this newsletter in any other format, please contact us.*

[www.clydebank-ha.org.uk](http://www.clydebank-ha.org.uk)  
0141 941 1044

# STAFF & COMMITTEE NEWS

Please take the time to give us your views on your first **Charter Customer Report**.

Thank you to all of you who have returned your feedback form – we are delighted with your responses! Your comments and views are very much appreciated by the Association and the Focus Group as they reassure us that the information provided and how it is presented is what you want or expect or indeed, where changes need to be made.

It's not too late to return your feedback form – remember by returning it to us, you have the opportunity to win £50 of Asda vouchers!

And remember if you wish to discuss any aspect of our performance in more detail or if you think improvements can be made in our service delivery, please also get in touch.



## Voluntary Committee members required

Would you like to volunteer your skills and experience to improve conditions for people and their communities? .....We would like to welcome you on board!

We have a long, proud history of providing good quality, affordable housing for people in housing need. In addition, we deliver a wide range of complementary services such as Centre81, which provides training and educational facilities for local residents, as well as events and activities focussing on economic development and our subsidiary, CHA Power Ltd, which provides low-cost heat and hot water to our tenants.

We are seeking to appoint new Committee members who can bring skills and experience in areas such as finance, commerce or law and who share our aspiration to make a difference. For further information, please contact Fiona Webster, tel: 0141 941 1044 or email: [fiona.webster@clydebank-ha.org.uk](mailto:fiona.webster@clydebank-ha.org.uk)

## Tenant Conference

(Continued from front page)

The purpose of the conference was for tenants to meet with CHA staff to discuss our current housing and maintenance services, in particular, in relation to rent setting; rent arrears; estate management; vacant properties and our lettable standard and rechargeable repairs and included presentations from our Maintenance Manager, Alison Macfarlane and our Housing Manager, Joe Farrell. We received lots of constructive feedback from the participants on the problems we face as a landlord, the standard and effectiveness of our services and how they think they can be improved.

Afterwards, the participants were treated to some lunch, a raffle and a game of prize Bingo and had the opportunity to browse the many information stands including Police Scotland, West Dunbartonshire Council (Waste Aware, Greenspace and Mediation Services), Scottish Fire & Rescue Service and Clydebank Independent Resource Centre.

Sharon Keenan, Depute Director said, "Although the turnout wasn't as high as we would have liked, those who did attend contributed a great deal and certainly gave us food for thought – we thank them all for their valuable contributions and we will take all the comments forward to further improve our service".



# HOUSING MANAGEMENT

## Items on common landings

During recent estate management inspections we have noted a number of common close areas within our flats where residents are storing bulk items and recycling bins, as well as ornamental items such as tables and lamps.

Under direct instruction from the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service, common close areas must be entirely free of ALL such items. Even a small item lying on the floor can cause obstruction during a fire by way of a trip hazard. Worse still this could impede a Fire Fighter preventing them in doing their job, ultimately putting lives at risk.

Tenants should remove all items from common closes without delay. Items should be stored inside flats. CHA regularly carries out estate management inspections where we reserve the right to dispose of any items found in common areas.



**Working together for a safer Scotland**



## IMPORTANT INFORMATION - Change to bin collections for all flatted properties

(excluding Radnor park MSF's)

West Dunbartonshire Council have advised us that they are changing the frequency of your bin collection in the new year.

From 2 February 2015, if you live in a flat, your bin will be collected fortnightly instead of weekly. All tenants living in flats should be prepared for this change, manage their waste and put their bins out accordingly.

Please contact West Dunbartonshire Council directly with any questions regarding this change.

## Downsizing to a smaller home

*Do you currently live in a property with extra bedrooms you do not use?*

*Do you want to try and save money on the rent you pay?*

*Do you want to avoid the spare room subsidy (bedroom tax)?*

*Do you want to live in a smaller home more suitable for your needs?*

If the answer is **yes** to any of the above then you may wish to consider downsizing through our Transfer list. We offer points to all tenants looking to transfer and there are extra points available to tenants with extra bedrooms. This could mean we may be able to offer you a smaller home.

Many tenants have benefited by moving to a smaller home through our transfer list. This also helps the Association by freeing up larger homes which can then be allocated to families who need the larger accommodation.

If you are interested in downsizing please contact your Housing Assistant for more details, or ask for a Housing Application form at the office.



# HOUSING MANAGEMENT

## Rent Setting & Service Charge Policy 2015/2016

As you will know from the review information sent to each of our tenants in early December and from the article in September's ChitChat, we are currently reviewing our Rent Policy and this will be presented to our Management Committee in January 2015 for approval. As part of this process we will also decide how much our rent will increase by on 28 March 2015.

Any proposed increase will ensure our management and maintenance costs are met. This means we will only charge tenants the rent that we need to manage and maintain their homes. We have assessed our likely costs for the next year and based on this we need to apply a rent increase of between 2% and 3%, which equates to a rise of between £5.50 and £8.25 per month based on an average rent of £275 per month. This is the minimum increase required to continue to cover our management and maintenance costs.

We are also reviewing our Service Charge Policy. We currently provide services for common electricity in flats, common grounds maintenance across our estates and common area window cleaning at certain flats. The charges for these services match the costs to deliver these services. All costs are agreed in advance and monitored by us to ensure value for money and ensure you only ever pay for the services you receive. For the next year, no tenant will have to pay more than £12.65 per month for the services they receive, with most tenants paying an average of £10 per month, which represents excellent value for money and a small increase of only £2 per month on last year.

As always, we are keen to involve tenants in these policy reviews. If you have views (good or bad) on how we set our rents or service charges or have any ideas that you feel would be useful to this exercise, we urge you to contact us by Friday 16 January 2015 and get involved if you have not already done so. You can use the comment slip and reply paid envelope that was enclosed with your review information in early December or call, visit or email us. Your views are important to us. For example, you may feel that tenants should be charged more rent if they live closer to the shopping centre, transport links or similar or you may feel that your close could benefit from common close or window cleaning or even a service we haven't thought of!

## Welfare Reform Update Occupancy Charge (Bedroom Tax)

This applies to tenants under the current pension credit age (62), with an extra bedroom who are claiming and receiving housing benefit.

The Scottish Government recently announced increased funding to combat the occupancy charge in Scotland.

Several tenants have contacted us under the impression that the occupancy charge has been scrapped. This is incorrect. All that has happened is that the Government has set aside money to cover the charge. To qualify for this money you must apply for discretionary housing benefit (DHP). No automatic payment of DHP will be made to you or CHA. The charge continues to be applied and tenants failing to make payments or who do not apply and be awarded discretionary housing benefit will fall into arrears and face action being taken against them.

We are able to assist all our tenants with the application process, please contact Catherine Banks or Joan Craig as a matter of urgency to ensure your application is made.



## Housing Management Service - How have we performed? April to October 2014

The table below shows our performance in various Housing Management functions to 31 October 2014.

As can be seen, we are within our targets for the year. We always try to find ways to continually improve and ensure that the services we offer provide maximum benefit, as well as value for money to our tenants and customers alike.

Indicator	Performance to 31 October 2014	Year end Target	Previous years performance	What this means for you!
Maximum rent loss on vacant properties	0.25% 	0.9% of annual rental income	0.39% of annual rental income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We can keep rent increases as low as possible</li> </ul>
Current Tenant Rent Arrears (as % of the total annual rent receivable)	0.80% 	1.1%	0.88%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We offer support/ advice to help tenants remain in their homes</li> <li>Keeps our costs low and therefore rent increases as low as possible</li> </ul>
Number of calendar days to let a property	13.3 calendar days 	15 calendar days	15.2 calendar days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We can keep rent increases low</li> <li>Properties become available quickly which benefits the area</li> <li>No problems with empty properties e.g. vandalism</li> </ul>
Processing of housing application forms	6.9 calendar days 	15 calendar days	6.3 calendar days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your transfer housing application form will be dealt with quickly</li> <li>Applicants are aware of their prospects for housing</li> </ul>
Investigating neighbour complaints	Cat A No complaints received Cat B 100% within timescale Cat C 100% within timescale  Overall 100% investigated within timescale, 100% resolved/concluded within timescale. 	Cat A (Extreme) 1 working days Cat B (Serious) 10 working days Cat C (Dispute) 15 working days	No complaints received 100% within timescale (16)  100% within timescale (51)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We manage your area in a sensitive manner</li> <li>Better place to live if ASB issues dealt with promptly</li> <li>Happier within your community</li> <li>Getting on with your neighbours</li> </ul>

# HOUSING MANAGEMENT



## Pay your rent this Christmas

We want all of our tenants to have a wonderful festive holiday. However, we would remind everyone that we do not operate any rent free period over Christmas and rent is due to be paid on the 28 December 2014 as normal. Please ensure you budget for your rent this Christmas as non-payment could result in action being taken against you. Please contact your Housing Assistant without fail if you have any concerns regarding your rent account.

## Universal credit

This information is crucial for anyone in receipt of Housing Benefit.

Universal Credit will include the following benefits: -

- Jobseeker's Allowance
- Housing Benefit
- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit
- Employment and Support Allowance
- Income Support

At the end of September the Government announced the start of a country wide roll out of Universal Credit starting February 2015. Initially this will be only for new benefit claimants or those whose circumstances change. Moving to Universal Credit will have a massive implication on how you receive your benefit and also how your rent is paid. Under the current system most tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit have their rent paid directly to Clydebank Housing Association.

Under the new Universal Credit system the benefit is paid directly to the tenant (alongside all other applicable benefits) making them solely responsible for managing this money and paying their rent in full and on time. This could result in tenants falling into arrears if tenants do not pay. We can ensure this need not happen and that tenants are prepared in advance.

Further to this, to enable the payment of Universal Credit, claimants must have a bank account capable of electronic payments. We can help tenants with this.

The Government's current plan is to roll the system out on an area by area basis. Unfortunately we have, as yet, received no indication as to when West Dunbartonshire Council will be rolled out, however it makes sense for us all to be prepared.

We will shortly be writing to all tenants on Housing Benefit advising them what they must have in place to enable them to pay their rent following the introduction of Universal Credit. We also urge any tenants who are concerned or require further information to contact us as soon as possible. We will ensure that all tenants will have the help needed to be ready for this change.

# CENTRE81 UPDATE



## IT Classes

In partnership with West College Scotland we regularly run IT/computer classes. There will be new blocks of courses starting after Christmas. If you would like to attend, please call reception to book your place. See below for more details.



### IT Classes with West College Scotland

(Crèche facilities are available with some of our courses, please ask at reception for more information.)

#### Getting Started in IT (SCQF Level 3) –

If you have minimal or no experience of working with a computer then this is the course for you. You will get the opportunity to develop a basic understanding of computer terminology, finding your way around the keyboard and you will receive an introduction to Microsoft Word, Excel and email. This course is flexible so you will be allowed to learn at your own pace.

#### Moving on in IT (SCQF Level 4) –

In this course you will learn how to do more advanced searches on the internet, saving information onto word and printing and saving your documents in different formats. It's a perfect follow on from the Getting Started in IT course.

#### Developing Further in IT (SCQF Level 5) –

Feeling a bit more confident about using a computer? This course aims to cover the basics of word processing, spreadsheets and databases using Microsoft Office for Windows on PC's. This course is very flexible and will run on the needs of the majority of students.

## Gym81 Update

**\*\*NEW PRICE\*\***

Memberships now cost only £10 per month!\*

**NO** Joining Fee - **NO** Contracts - **NO** Hassle - **LIFETIME** Membership

The main gym area consists of cardio machines; treadmills, bikes and cross trainers as well as weight machines. There is also a weights room with free weights, dumbbells, more bikes, abs crunchers and yoga balls.

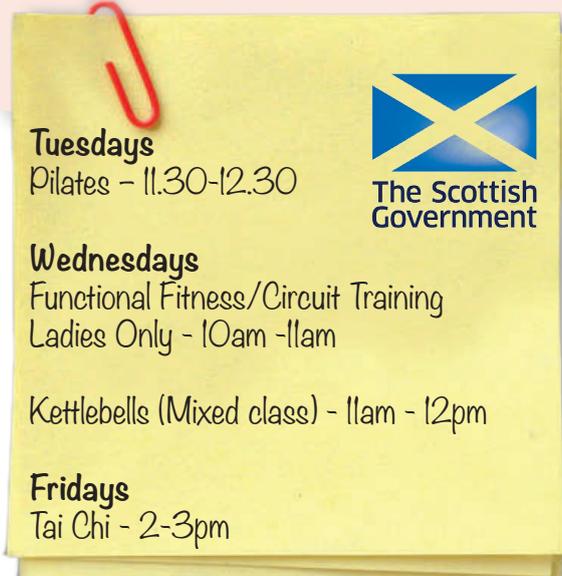
We pride ourselves on having a relaxed and chilled gym where you can make a start on your first steps to fitness! If you would like a tour, please pop in and one of our friendly Centre staff will be more than happy to show you around and give you further details.



\*limited time only

## Free Fitness Classes

As well as Gym81, we also provide free Fitness Classes (funded by the Scottish Government's People & Communities Fund), see below for details:



**Tuesdays**  
Pilates - 11.30-12.30

**Wednesdays**  
Functional Fitness/Circuit Training  
Ladies Only - 10am -11am

Kettlebells (Mixed class) - 11am - 12pm

**Fridays**  
Tai Chi - 2-3pm

## ISARO Social Integration Network

On Wednesday 15th October ISARO Social Integration Network held an event at Centre81 to celebrate Black History Month. This fantastic diversity event featured an exhibition on the life of Scottish explorer David Livingstone, multicultural performances and an international buffet.



# MAINTENANCE UPDATE

## How we performed over the last 6 months

1st April – 30th September 2014

Category of Repair (target timescales)	No. of repairs	Completed within Target
Date specific - (by appointment)	918	99.46%
Emergency - (within 4 hours)	157	98.73%
Right to Repair - (1 day)	14	100%
Urgent - (3 days)	472	100%
Routine - (10 days)	482	96.68%
Void works - major (15 days)	10	100%
Void works - routine (10 days)	55	100%
Void works - rechargeable (10 days)	226	99.56%



*“We set targets for different categories of repairs. This table shows how well we have met those targets.”*

We're working to improve on these targets because it's important that if we set a target date for completing a repair we must make sure this target is met.

## Action for Children Challenge

We are pleased to be involved in our 4th Challenge. This four week programme helps unemployed young people (16-24 year olds) from West Dunbartonshire to gain work experience.

This year the youngsters are involved in some landscaping works at Bon Accord Square, Ian Smith Court and Glasgow Road/Hume Streets. They will be removing old shrubs/plants and preparing the ground for some new planting in the spring.



## Annual Gutter Cleaning & Roof Condition Surveys

The annual gutter cleaning contract is underway. Our contractor, GG Bros, also reports on the condition of each roof and any repairs which are required will be carried out in January 2015, weather permitting.



## Community Clear-Out Day at Radnor Park

The 6th community clear-out day at Radnor Park took place on 23 October. This is always a great opportunity for tenants to get rid of any unwanted items and this year 18.5 tonnes were disposed of and 45% of this was recycled by WDC's Waste Services Department.

Radnor Park Multis Tenants and Residents Association paid all the costs for the clear-out day and also provided delicious food for the staff and contractors who helped out on the day.



## Emergency call outs

– removal of bodily fluids (blood, vomit etc.)

We had an instance recently when vomit was found in a common area and the office was not open to report this. Fortunately this is a rare occurrence and we would expect the individual responsible to clear any mess. However, if this is not done and it is found out with office hours, we would class it as an emergency and tenants should report this to West Dunbartonshire Council on 0800 197 1004 who will arrange a clean-up.

## Winter Advice

Ready Scotland ([www.readyscotland.org](http://www.readyscotland.org)) is a Scottish Government website providing advice on what to do to prepare for and deal with emergencies.

It provides advice on winter weather, utilities, flooding, flu and much more. You can also contact them on 08457 741 741 or 0131 556 8400.

## Major Repairs Consultation meetings

We were delighted with the response from tenants at Glasgow Road to our request for them to meet with us to give us their views on the planned renewals of their kitchens, bathrooms, central heating systems and close painting colour choices. Consultation meetings took place in November and it is anticipated that the works will start early in the New Year.

Consultation meetings will be arranged soon relating to the other planned major repairs i.e. foyer upgrades at multi-storey flats, bathroom and central heating upgrades in Linnvale and renewal of close doors in tenemental properties.



## Laundries at multi-storey flats

We want to ensure that we are providing you with the services you need and would like to hear from you if you think we should increase the opening times of the laundries. At present the laundries are open till 9 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursday. Are these operating times sufficient for your needs? If not, please let us know.

You can contact us by completing the Feedback/ Comment Slip at the back of this newsletter and popping it in the red letter box in the laundry. You can also email us at [maintenance@clydebank-ha.org.uk](mailto:maintenance@clydebank-ha.org.uk) or by phone us on 0141-941 1044.



# COMPLAINTS

## Complaints

01 July - 30 September 2014

	1st stage complaints		2nd stage complaints		All Complaints
	Number	% age	Number	% age	Total
Equalities related Issues	0		0		0
Other Issues	16		0		16
<b>Total number of complaints</b>	16		0		16
Responded to in full	16	100%	0	0	16
Upheld	6	30.75%	0	0	6
Responded within SPSO timescales	16	100%	0	0	16

### Definitions

**Responded to in full** - where we either met the service user's expectations or, where this is not appropriate, provided a full explanation of our position.

**Upheld** - where we consider the case put to us and decide in favour of the complainant (apology communicated to customer, we accepted failure and then rectified).

**Responded within Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) timescales** - 1st stage (frontline) within 5 working days and 2nd stage (investigation) within 20 working days.

### Improvements made as a result of your complaints

- Contractor performance
- Estate management service monitoring procedures
- Communication with tenants/customers
- Increased number of property inspections



"We value your complaints and use feedback from them to help improve our service to you."

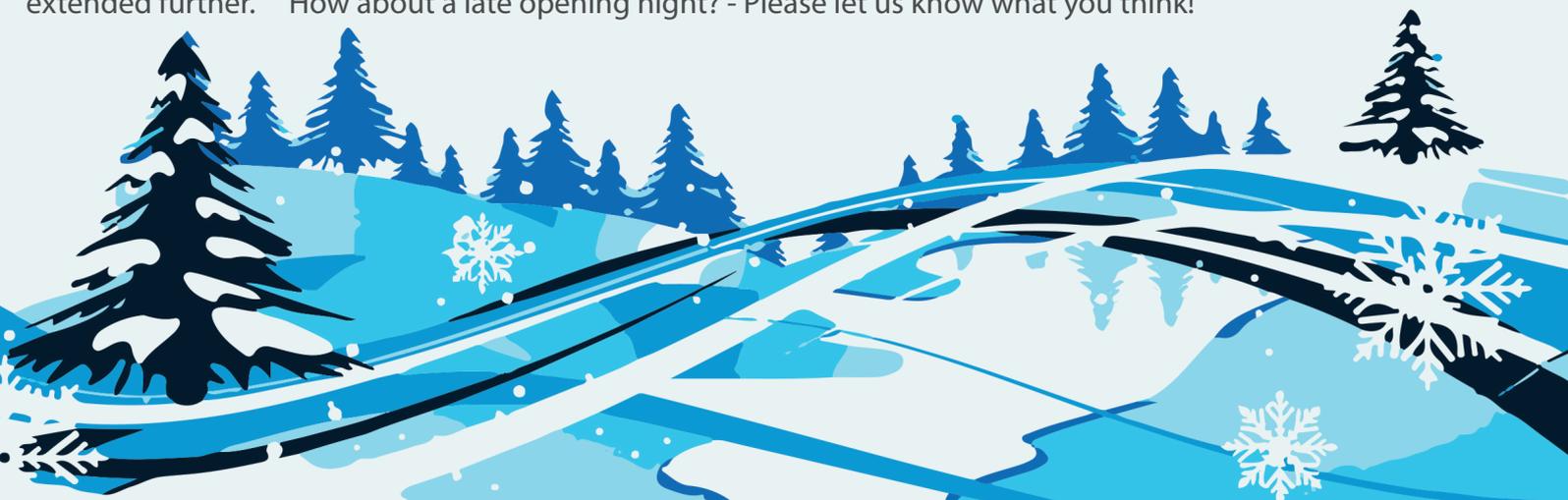
Sharon Keenan,  
Depute Director

## Review of office opening hours

### CHA's office will remain open through lunchtimes – Monday to Wednesday from Tuesday 06 January 2015!

We are aware that our current office opening hours may not be convenient for all our tenants and other customers so we have decided to keep our offices open through lunchtime, 3 days per week on a trial basis.

The new opening hours will commence on Tuesday, 06 January 2015 and we will monitor the effectiveness of the arrangement and consider your feedback to determine whether it is welcomed and/or whether the times should be extended further. How about a late opening night? - Please let us know what you think!



# INFORMATION

## Our Ethical Standards

"We aim to implement a code of ethical practice, which meets the expectations of our customers, our funders and other stakeholders."

- Our work will be carried out in an open and sensitive manner, taking the needs of all stakeholders into account.
- We will treat our staff, our customers and our associates with courtesy and respect, maintaining confidentiality where appropriate.
- We will vigorously defend the good name of the Association when necessary and will not tolerate or condone abusive, threatening or anti-social behaviour of any kind towards our committee members, our employees, our associates or our customers and will ensure that even seemingly minor complaints are investigated and acted upon.
- We will encourage diversity. We will not discriminate on any such basis as Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage, and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy & Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, and Sexual Orientation.
- We will ensure that equal access to all of our services is enjoyed by everyone.
- We will invest in our people, encouraging development on both professional and personal levels, in line with the "Investors in People" standard.
- Members of staff have the opportunity to make an annual donation towards the relief of homelessness, by means of an annual donation, through "Homeless International", to the "Hours Pay Campaign"
- We are committed to following environmental best practice in all of our activities and the provision of all services and to this end, adopted our own sustainability policy in November 2010.
- In all developments, where practicable, we will adopt the design requirements of the "Secured by Design" accreditation from Strathclyde Police.
- We aim to procure goods and services from those who share similar values.
- We will encourage the development of the social economy in Clydebank. Specifically, we will provide affordable, quality accommodation for third sector businesses, which aim to deliver services in the town.
- We will ensure that the community we serve is at the heart of decision-making and has the opportunity to contribute to all aspects of service planning and delivery in a rational, constructive and co-operative manner.
- We will strive to provide fully inclusive facilities, services and activities to the residents of Clydebank to enhance quality of life, economic and social inclusion, reduce inequalities, address deprivation, develop individual social capital and act as a catalyst to progress the wider regeneration of the area.

## COMPETITION TIME!

For your chance to win 2 x **Strictly Come Dancing Tickets** for Saturday 31st January at 7.30pm in Glasgow's SSE Hydro, simply find the answer to the question below in this newsletter, put your details and your answer on the feedback/comment slip (below) and return to the office by **Friday 16 January 2015**.

**Question:** How much is a monthly membership at Gym81?

**Rule:** you must live in the house you put down as your address.



## Feedback/Comment Slip

Please let us know if you have comments or suggestions for future editions of ChitChat or our service in general. We value your views. Radnor Park tenants can place slips in our laundry letterbox.

Name: .....(Optional)

Address: .....(Optional)

Email: .....(Optional)

Would you like a response? Yes No

I have a comment(s) about (please circle):

- Competition
- Opening Hours
- Complaints
- Rent Setting Policy
- ChitChat
- Other

Comments (please use a separate sheet if necessary):

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# CALENDAR 2015

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Public Holiday/Office Closure  
Staff Training Closure (am)

## EMERGENCY NUMBERS

The number to telephone City Technical for out of hours gas central heating emergencies, including CHP breakdowns in Radnor Park, is:

 **0844 579 6493**

All other out of hours emergency repairs (fire, flood, break-in), should be reported to our contractors, West Dunbartonshire Council:

 **0800 197 1004**

These numbers are also available on our website and office answering machine.

## OFFICE HOURS

Our usual opening hours:  
Monday to Thursday 9.00am to 5.00pm,

Friday 9.00am to 4.00pm

On Thursdays and Fridays we close for lunch between 1.00pm and 2.00pm

We also close on the first Wednesday morning of each month for staff training.

To the best of our knowledge all information contained in this newsletter is correct at the time of going to print.

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