



YOUR HOME

THE NEWSLETTER OF ATRIUM HOMES | No 47 - Summer 2018

Make your **HERO** feel **SUPER**
this **FATHER'S DAY**

with a night out
worth £100!

Is there a 'Super Dad' in your life or someone who steps up to the role like a hero? With Father's Day just around the corner, we want to give your hero the chance to win a super night out with £100 worth of vouchers for Frankie & Benny's and the Odeon.

Your hero could be your dad, uncle, brother, grandpa, family friend, neighbour or even a coach. Maybe he taught you how to drive, helped you move house without complaining or been your chauffeur for years ("Do I look like a taxi?"). Perhaps you just love spending time with him because he makes you laugh with his cheesy jokes. Or maybe it's because he's always there for you.

Whatever the reason, give your hero the chance to be named, praised and entertained this Father's Day. To nominate your hero, all you need to do is tell us his name, the reason why you think he deserves to win, and your own name and address.

You can do this:

- by email to info@atrium-homes.co.uk
- by post at 14 Central Avenue Kilmarnock, KA1 4PS
- via a private message on our Facebook page Atrium Homes

The competition is open to all Atrium Homes' tenants and the closing date for entries is Wednesday 13th June 2018. The winner will be decided by our Management Team and announced by Friday 15th June in time for Father's Day on the 17th.



Dear Tenant

Welcome to our Summer 2018 newsletter. As well as covering a range of service related articles, we've devoted a large part of this issue to telling you about our future plans for Atrium through our new Business Plan.



Atrium's focus has changed in some very significant ways over its life. From modest beginnings, Atrium is now the largest Registered Social Landlord operating in East Ayrshire, owning almost 1200 properties. We also have a subsidiary called Atrium Initiatives which delivers factoring services to 1500 customers in mixed and private housing estates, as well as repair and maintenance services to all our properties. These changes have come about because we planned for them.

The Business Plan looks ahead to the next five years. We identify what we need to do and also do the sums so we know we've got the money in place to make it happen. We work out the detail each year through an annual Internal Management Plan.

With this new Business Plan, we've taken a closer look at the organisation, based on some of the outcomes of our most recent Customer Satisfaction Survey. To be honest, some weren't as positive as we'd have liked. So we've come up with a plan to address some of the major issues you identified with properties and services.

Now that we've set out our thoughts on how to resolve these issues, we'd really like to hear your response. So we're holding consultation events over the summer, in our office and elsewhere in our communities. We'll give you more information soon.

I look forward to seeing you at one of the events.

Best wishes

Stephen Black, Chief Executive

QUICK REMINDER

Atrium is governed by a voluntary Board who oversee how the organisation is run. This includes what services we provide and how we provide them. Our Board is led by a Chair - currently Jim O'Neill - and made up of 12 Board members. This is called our 'governance arrangements'.



All good things must come to an end and after 14 years with Atrium - including six as Convenor of the Development Sub-Group, three as Vice Chair and five as Chair - I will be stepping down from the Board at this year's Annual General Meeting in August.

The past 14 years have been a fantastic journey for both me and for Atrium. When I first came onto the Board, only a few years after Atrium had been set up, one of the founder members, Barry Allen, was Chair. I learned a lot from Barry and my fellow Board members, and I'd like to think that as new members joined after me, that I taught them in turn.

It's been a privilege to have been part of Atrium and to witness it going from strength to strength; expanding its housing stock, its areas of influence, its services to customers and all the while achieving this in a calm, controlled and steady manner. This planned and careful methodology has become something of a trademark for Atrium over the years and has allowed the organisation to steer a steady course through sometimes turbulent seas.

Through careful forward planning, during my time with Atrium we increased in size by almost a third through constructing 400 new houses, created a direct works team, relocated offices and added a Money Advice Service, to name but a few highlights. We also consolidated our finances to make sure we had a strong platform for going forward. Recently we have refocused our aims towards developing communities as well as improving our homes. I am sure this will bear further fruit in future.

My departure is another example of Atrium's forward planning - I told my fellow Board members of my plans to step down some 18 months ago, to give time to prepare for the transition. The Board will take a decision on my successor after the AGM. I offer my congratulations to whoever is elected to the role of Chair and I sincerely hope they enjoy it as much as I have.

Jim O'Neill,
Chair

HELLO AGAIN!

I'm writing this blog for the last time, both as Chair and Board member of Atrium Homes.

Time to get on Board?

GET INVOLVED

If you're interested in joining the Board or would like an informal discussion to find out more, please call Shelley Hunter on 01563 528 816.

We're keen to strengthen our Board by appointing new members. Perhaps this is something you've been thinking about for a while? Or maybe it's a new idea for you? Either way, we'd love to hear from you today.

Here's a bit more on the Board:

WHAT do Board members do?

Board members establish our overall organisational strategy and objectives. This means they make decisions on what we want to do and how we'll go about doing it. They also monitor Atrium's performance, to see how well we're doing.

WHO can become a Board member?

There's no one type of person who makes a good Board member - our Board is currently made up of people from different backgrounds,

with different skills and levels of experience. If you're committed to service excellence and continuous improvement, you'll be ideal to join the Board.

HOW much help will I get?

We'll give you a full induction to bring you up to speed, plus further training and support as required. Because all positions on the Board are voluntary, there's no salary, but we can pay you reasonable expenses, including childcare costs, to help you attend Board meetings.



Get on board the ARC

It's that time of year again when we have to complete our statistical report, the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) and send it to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR). This is a requirement for all Scottish Landlords and is based on standards and outcomes which were set in 2012 in the Scottish Social Housing Charter.

In the autumn we'll once again publish our ARC Report which will give an overview of our performance and show you how we've performed compared to other landlords across Scotland.

In last year's ARC Report we provided information on the outcomes related to the areas you expressed an interest in from our Customer Satisfaction Survey. You can still see this at www.atrium-homes.co.uk

For our 2017/18 ARC Report, we'd like to know if there are any other areas you'd like to hear about, so please get involved.

GET INVOLVED

To tell us what areas of our performance you're interested in, please call Joyce McCroskie on 01563 528 816 or email info@atrium-homes.co.uk

Your Voice Panel

Have your say from home

We're always keen to hear your views to help us improve our services to you. However, we realise attending events and meetings is just not possible for some people. So now, to make it easier, we've created 'Your Voice Panel' - a platform where you can give us your input primarily from home.

"The Panel will make sure people aren't missing out on the opportunity to have their say because they can't attend regular events," explains Atrium's Director of Operations Joyce McCroskie. "At the time of signing up to join the Panel, people can indicate which topics or areas they're keen to influence. They'll be invited to provide input on these matters in a variety of ways, including

surveys, telephone interviews, reviewing documentation and - very occasionally - attending focus groups."

In the coming 12 months, we'll be reviewing a number of key policy documents, including medical adaption and repairs. We'd really like to get tenant feedback on these key areas, so if you could help with this, please get involved.

GET INVOLVED

To join Your Voice Panel, contact Joyce McCroskie on 01563 528 816 or email info@atrium-homes.co.uk

Tenant Scrutiny Group gets to work

We're extremely grateful to those who volunteered to form a Tenant Scrutiny Group. Supported by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS), the Group has met regularly over the last 12 months and has already made its mark.

The Group chose to first look at the standard of our houses - particularly those being let. Working with Atrium staff, the Group visited some empty properties and then made their recommendations for changes to our "Minimum Lettable Standard", which takes into account things such as the decorative condition and cleanliness of a property.

We responded and made the changes. Since then the Group has been helping with our "Fit for 21st Century

Living" Standard which you can read about on page 8.

Atrium's Director of Investment Celia Taylor commented: "It's been invaluable to hear the views of our customers on the standards within our properties. The Tenant Scrutiny Group has made a real difference to our understanding of what tenants want from their homes and what's important to them."

The Group is now considering its next priority area and you're invited to get involved.

GET INVOLVED

To join the Tenant Scrutiny Group, please call Shelley Hunter on 01563 528 816 or contact info@atrium-homes.co.uk

Business Plan 2018-23

Over the last few months, Atrium's Board and senior staff have been working hard on our new Business Plan, which sets out the strategic direction of the organisation for the next five years. In this four page special report, we give you a preview of what you can expect from us - from now until 2023.

Why we need a Business Plan

It makes good business sense to plan ahead and we've done this periodically in the 20 years since we were first set up.

- ✓ It keeps us focussed and takes into account the ever-changing "operating environment" in which housing associations like ours work.
- ✓ It makes sure we're a sound and financially strong landlord, capable of delivering what we promise to you.

Our vision is for:

Quality affordable homes



Sustainable communities



Life chances for people

We want to be relevant to you and your life. So it's important we listen to you, consult with you, and are willing to change our approaches and services to better meet your requirements and aspirations. That's why it's vital you give us your views on what we do.

"We want to provide the best housing, customer care, management and maintenance services to you. We're always open to ways of improving existing services or introducing new ones."

5 key developments in recent years

1

A Shortlees Base

With almost 50% of our customers and housing in the area, we built our new office in the centre of Shortlees and relocated here in December 2015.

2

Money Advice and Tenancy Sustainment Services

We set up a Money Advice team in 2013 and are committed to keeping it at least until March 2019. So far the service has helped hundreds of tenants through difficult times.

3

Better Repairs

We brought our repairs service in-house in 2014, with a team of five multi-skilled operatives. This has improved the speed and quality of many repairs, while reducing costs.

4

Better Homes

We've built 43 new homes in Shortlees, with plans to build 28 more. We've also undertaken work in New Farm Loch to make better use of unpopular house types.

5

Customer Services and Engagement

We're doing everything we can to improve customer service and customer engagement.



The Starting Point - Customer Satisfaction Survey 2016

Some of you were contacted in late 2016 by The Knowledge Partnership, who were carrying out a customer satisfaction survey on our behalf. Nearly 500 tenants from across our houses were interviewed.

Some of the results were very good, showing improvements on the previous survey in 2014, including:

- ✓ An increase in satisfaction with the repairs service.
- ✓ An increase in satisfaction with the re-let standard of homes.
- ✓ More tenants satisfied with their opportunities to participate in decision making.

However, in some areas, customers were less satisfied than before, including:

- ✗ A reduction in satisfaction with the quality of some homes (although this differed between areas and house types).
- ✗ A reduction in satisfaction with Atrium's management of neighbourhoods.
- ✗ A reduction in satisfaction with the overall service.

Overall, the survey did show around 4 out of 5 of you are mostly happy with what we're doing, which is reasonably good.

But we cannot ignore:

- ✗ We are below the Scottish average in all the main areas.
- ✗ Only 2 out of every 3 of you think our rents against services constitutes value for money.

How are we going to develop things?



Going forward, we believe we'll achieve our vision of quality affordable homes, sustainable communities and life chances for people by focussing on four elements which are all related:

- ★ Taking care of our Customers
- ★ Taking care of our Housing
- ★ Taking care of our Communities
- ★ Taking care of the Business.

Taking care of our Customers

Customer Care

We believe, where possible, when you contact us:

- ✓ You should have your service delivered, your problem resolved or your question answered at your **first** point of contact.
- ✓ You should know the standards and timescales we work to, so your expectations are based on this.

The Customer Satisfaction Survey showed that:

- ✓ Initial contact with Atrium was positive and easy to achieve.
- ✗ We let ourselves down in our follow up and in keeping in touch to tell customers what was happening with the issue they raised.

So, amongst other things, we're putting measures in place to try to achieve this balance.

Customer Engagement

- ✓ We know that involving and consulting tenants in managing Atrium and our services helps us provide better, more effective and efficient services.
- ✗ We also know that 'one size fits all' doesn't work. When it comes to getting involved, different customers have different requirements and interests.

So, here's what we plan to do:

- ✓ We'll provide more and better information to you about what we do and how we do it.
- ✓ We'll expand the methods we use to try to get more of you interacting with us, including better use of IT, social media, Your Voice panels, focus groups, local surgeries and estate inspections.
- ✓ We'll put resources into developing scrutiny panels where we can sit face to face with customers and discuss the issues that are important to you.

Information Technology

We plan to use IT as much as possible, so:

- ✓ Staff can do their jobs more efficiently.
- ✓ You can have better access to us through online accounts.

We want to give you online access to all our services so you can:

- ✓ Pay your bills, order services, book repairs, make suggestions/complaints and track progress - any time, day or night.
- ✓ Sign up for email and text alerts for services.

By doing all this online, we can keep our most expensive contact channels (telephone and face to face) for offering support to those most in need.

Taking care of our Housing

The Customer Satisfaction Survey showed differences between how tenants in different areas perceive the quality of our houses:

- ✓ Tenants living in newer houses were more satisfied.
- ✗ Tenants living in older houses were less satisfied.
- ✗ Dissatisfaction related mainly to the internal condition of the properties.

In response, we've developed Atrium's "Fit for 21st Century Living" Standard. This covers a range of elements of a property, inside and out, and sets a standard for what we see as 'quality affordable housing'.

Not every property will require major work to reach the Standard - many are already there. But we'll use this to help plan our future investment activity, with the aim of bringing all our housing to this Standard by 2025.

So, here's the next steps:

- ✓ Over the summer we'll be running a consultation exercise for customers on the "Fit for 21st Century Living" Standard to make sure we have it right.
- ✓ We'll then begin to develop work programmes and priorities.
- ✓ We'll identify suitable contractors and start bringing homes up to the Standard.



Taking care of our Communities

Part of our vision is to create 'sustainable communities' - this means communities which are prosperous, healthy, clean, green, safe and, above all, communities where people want to live.

We can only achieve much of this through working in partnership with other agencies such as East Ayrshire Council, since they have legal responsibility for managing so many of the core services like roads, cleansing, dog warden and street lighting.

But there are still things we can do by ourselves and we're already actively progressing some of these, such as our Money Advice Service. This has supported many tenants through difficult periods in their lives and has helped many others access help and support that they wouldn't have received otherwise.

So, here's what we want to do next:

- ✓ To continue with our Money Advice Service if we can and also develop it to help vulnerable tenants keep their homes.
- ✓ To continue to provide support for local groups who already do so much for their communities, as well as new groups whose objectives for their communities are in line with our own.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Taking care of the Business

Good governance by the Board

We focus on this a lot because it's so important to the way we work.

- ✓ We know we're already good at governance because we rank highly against the Scottish Housing Regulator's standards for this.
- ✓ So we're going to keep our governance on track, as it's essential for the rest of our plans.

Getting the best from our people

We all know that people are Atrium's biggest asset. Getting the best from our people involves structuring and staffing Atrium properly and making sure our people are equipped to do the job. This can include practical equipment, but for us it's also about:

- ✓ Training our people to give them the skills and knowledge they need to carry out their role effectively.
- ✓ Developing them as individuals.
- ✓ Recognising and rewarding their contribution.

Financial management and planning

We have solid plans in place to manage our finances so we can achieve our objectives and deliver our promises to you. Here's how we do it:

- ✓ We prepare a long-term plan (up to 30 years).
- ✓ Every year we review our financial requirements through a budget - we base this on actual expenditure in previous years.
- ✓ We make sound investment plans based on well-founded knowledge.

In doing this, we look at things like projected interest rates, projected inflation rates and projected rental income and increases.

We're still developing our Business Plan based on the main proposals outlined here. We haven't reached any final outcomes as yet. We're aiming to do this to fit in with our general consultation exercise on our "Fit for 21st Century Living" Standard over the summer. This means we'll be able to show you the costs involved and potential impact on rents as well.

Look out for details on the consultation via our Facebook page and our website. We'll hold some local events in different areas and we'll also have a display in our office reception.

ACROSS OUR COMMUNITIES

At Atrium we're proud to serve a number of communities throughout East Ayrshire. Here's a quick update on some of the recent activities around the area.

NEW FARM LOCH, KILMARNOCK

Earlier this year, our staff were out and about in New Farm Loch, along with a range of local partners, to help tackle local community issues within our estates. This included fly tipping, dog fouling, abandoned vehicles and general waste in the wrong place!

It was certainly a highly productive day, with outcomes including:

- Notices served on three abandoned vehicles.
- Two gardens reported to East Ayrshire's Private Landlord team.
- Fly tipping notices issued by EAC Environmental Health.
- Green waste collected free of charge by Atrium's landscape maintenance contractor EEG.
- Council ground cleared by an East Ayrshire hit squad.
- Letters issued to residents on additional household waste.

Overall, the area is better for this one day of joint action, so we're going to do more of this wherever possible throughout our communities.



SHORTLEES, KILMARNOCK

We welcomed 43 new households into their brand new homes in the Earlston/Blacksyke development in Shortlees in the first four months of this year.

The new units, built by McTaggart Construction, include a mix of 1 and 2 bedroom flats and houses for both general needs, and older and ambulant disabled.

In April, we were delighted to help 'Our Wee Place' Fundraising Group to pay for a day trip to Blair Drummond Safari Park for 81 adults and children. Everyone had a fantastic day out and thoroughly enjoyed the animals and attractions, if not the rather chilly weather!

GET INVOLVED

If you're interested in setting up a Tenants Organisation in your area, please get in touch with Joyce McCroskie, Director of Operations on 01563 528816.

MEIKLE COURT, STEWARTON

Works at Meikle Court began at the end of January and include:

- Installing energy efficient External Wall Insulation (EWI).
- Replacing the roof, common close windows and communal entry doors.

The cost for this has been met in part through the Scottish Government's Home Energy Efficiency Programme Scotland (HEEPS) and Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding. The works were co-ordinated by Atrium Initiatives' factoring service Choice Places, in partnership with the Energy Agency, who provided Client Agent Services for the project.

The works have progressed well from the start, with the Contractor (SERS) expecting to finish ahead of schedule in May 2018.

As well as enhancing the external appearance of the flats, residents have also benefitted from the energy efficient improvements from the EWI and the new roof.

DUNLOP

We've recently been contacted by a Dunlop tenant who is keen to establish a local Residents Group in the village. We're currently looking at how we can support this. If you live in Dunlop and are interested in helping set up the group, please get in touch with us on 01563 528 816 or email info@atriumhomes.co.uk and we'll try to link you up.

Summer's COMING!

TIME TO GET OUTSIDE AND ENJOY THE GARDEN

Yes, it's that time of year again, when we start keeping our fingers crossed for a bit of summer sunshine so the kids can play outside, while the grown ups relax in the garden. As an Atrium tenant, you're obliged to keep your garden neat and tidy, but there are so many other benefits to taking care of your outdoor space. So whatever your garden is used for – playing, relaxing, socialising or growing – make sure you make the most of it this summer.

5 Reasons why gardening is good for your health

- 1 YOU CAN GROW FRESH, HEALTHY PRODUCE
- 2 IT'S GREAT EXERCISE AND BURNS CALORIES – FOR FREE!
- 3 IT CAN LOWER BLOOD PRESSURE
- 4 IT CAN EASE STRESS AND ANXIETY
- 5 IT CAN LIFT YOUR MOOD AND MAKE YOU FEEL HAPPIER!

GARDEN COMPETITION 2018

Make a good impression with your garden!


Our annual Garden Competition offers you the chance to win a prize for keeping your garden looking good!

The competition is open to all tenants, in every estate. You don't even have to enter OR have a "proper" garden to win. Our staff will be out and about looking for outdoor spaces of all shapes and sizes where they feel tenants have made a real effort - from hanging baskets and tubs, to flower beds, vegetable patches and main gardens. So whatever or wherever you grow, it could win you a prize!

If you know someone who has an exceptional garden or you simply want us to know about the efforts an individual has gone to in making a difference to their garden, please feel free to send us their name and address and we'll ensure their entry is considered.

All gardens shortlisted in the competition will be entered into a draw, with a range of prizes. We'll announce the winners by 31st August 2018, so start now and give yourself a winning chance.

Good luck!



Do your driveways and fence lines a favour!

When out and about looking for garden competition winners, one of the issues staff find is that driveways and fence lines are sometimes full of weeds, which spoils the overall appearance.

You can easily fix this by buying an inexpensive liquid weedkiller and quickly applying it via a watering can or spray gun. If your garden is one of those affected by weeds, please try and tackle the problem - ultimately it will help your street and neighbourhood look better.

FEELING SWAMPED?

It's part of your tenancy obligation to keep your garden and exterior of your property in a clean and tidy state. Over the summer months, our staff are out on site most of the working week and take note of properties where this obligation isn't being met.

Atrium Estates Office Julianne Scarlett said:

"We appreciate tackling a large garden can be daunting for someone who perhaps doesn't have the right equipment or know where to start. That's why we'll do our best to help you to address the problem and turn your garden into a place you can truly enjoy."

If you've got a problem relating to garden maintenance, please contact us for advice as soon as you can – call 01563 528 816 or email info@atrium-homes.co.uk

£100 awards to help make your garden grow

Maybe you feel you're a million miles away from winning a prize in the Garden Competition? If you're keen to improve your garden, but could do with a bit of a hand, you could apply for a Garden Improvement Award.

We're offering four awards of £100 each to individuals or groups of residents who would like to improve their garden/s but don't have the means - either financial or practical - to do so.

All you need to do is tell us a little bit more about your ideas and what help you need - it might be to buy containers or basic equipment, or for a hand to clear a bit of land or do some planting. We'll consider anything that will improve the appearance of an area.

To apply, uplift a form for a Garden Improvement Award from our office, email info@atrium-homes.co.uk or contact us via Facebook.



Easter treats for Facebook winner!

Congratulations to Anne McRoberts of Shortlees who won our fabulous Easter basket. Anne's name was picked at random after sharing our Facebook page, scooping a huge selection of Easter themed chocolate goodies – not forgetting a fluffy Easter bunny too!

To be in with a chance of winning one of our regular Facebook rewards, simply Like and Share our Facebook page at the address below.

Gas checks

– keeping you and your neighbours safe

As your landlord we have a legal requirement to have the gas appliances in your home serviced every year to make sure they're safe. That's why our contractor, City Tech, visits your home on a 10 month cycle to make sure we're complying with the legislation.

While we realise you might find this a bit of an inconvenience, we hope you'll understand it's for the safety of you, your family and your neighbours. We appreciate your co-operation in arranging access and will give you reasonable notice.

If you don't allow access to your home, we may need to force access to do the service. So please help us to keep you safe and respond to our access cards and letters in good time.

Thank you!



EMERGENCY REPAIRS SERVICE

Keep these numbers next to your phone for easy reference.

EMERGENCY REPAIRS

Atrium Property Services
01563 528 816

GAS OR HEATING EMERGENCIES

City Technical Services (UK) Ltd.
0844 579 6493

GAS LEAKS

Scotland Gas Networks
0800 111 999

GENERAL REPAIRS

Atrium Homes
01563 528 816

Please only use the out of hours emergency service when it is a REAL emergency such as:

- burst or leaking pipe
- loss of power to the house
- no heating or hot water
- storm damage which requires action to ensure the property is wind and watertight.

If the problem can wait until office hours with only minor inconvenience, it would not be classed as an emergency. If tradesmen are called out to incidents that are not emergencies or are found to have been caused by you, we will recharge the cost of the call out. The minimum cost of this is £75.

Find us on Facebook

To keep up to date with all our activities and news, Like our Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/atriumhomeskilmarnock



ATRIUM
HOMES

The Landlord of Choice

If you have any comments or questions or want to know what Atrium is doing at the moment, then please get in touch. Our contact details are:

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