

# Leasehold News December 2010



**Seasonal Greetings to our Lease Holders from all at  
Dales Housing**



## SERVICE CHARGES

Enclosed with this newsletter you will find your invoice for service charges for the period April 2010 to March 2011. We apologise for the delay in sending this to you but unfortunately due to other pressures we were unable to issue these earlier.

During the course of this year we have been carrying out a review of service charges for both leaseholders and tenants. The aim of the review is to ensure that we can clearly identify exactly what services residents receive and also identify costs for these services. A similar review was carried out in 2006 that identified some services but we needed to make sure that we could identify all services and also establish clear procedures and timetables for accounting for service charges. These will include procedures for estimating charges for the forthcoming year, and producing service charge accounts for each year.

One of the outcomes of the review will be to ensure that leaseholders receive requests for service charge payments at the same time each year. We are proposing that we will be sending these out at the end of February each year for charges due from April in the same year. This means that we will be writing to you in February 2011 to advise you of the charges due from April 2011 to March 2012. We appreciate that as a result of the late invoices for 2010/2011 you will receive requests for payment closely together. If you think this will cause you any problems please contact us.

I have also enclosed a question and answer sheet regarding service charges which hopefully will answer any queries you may have about the service charge

review. However if you do have any further queries please contact us on 01639592200 and ask to speak to Ruth Fantom or Sue Dowell.

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## DALES HOUSING - REVIEW OF SERVICE CHARGES:



### What you need to know

Q. What are service charges?

A. A service charge is a payment made by a tenant or leaseholder for services that Dales Housing provides. These are costs for the services and facilities that are provided communally to the block or estate where you live

Q. What can be included in service charges?

A. The services that can be included in a service charge are

Grounds and tree maintenance. The cost of cutting grass, maintenance of shrub beds, hedges and trees, as well as looking after some tarmac/paved areas. The cost of keeping neighbourhoods and other land owned by Dales Housing clear of dumped rubbish and the cost of pest control to communal areas

Cleaning. The cost of cleaning the common parts of a block of flats (entrances, corridors, windows and stairwells), shared between all of the homes in that block

Security services. The cost of providing and maintaining electronic door entry systems and security cameras

Electricity and communal lighting. The fuel cost for lighting and other electrical equipment in communal areas.

Communal TV aerials. The installation, upgrade and maintenance costs of communal TV aerials

Lifts. The costs of providing and maintaining each lift.



Fire Safety. The cost of providing and maintaining fire fighting equipment

Repairs to common areas. The cost of repairs to common parts of a block of flats

Buildings insurance: The costs of buildings insurance



Q Why are Dales Housing carrying out a review of service charges?

A. We want to be in a position where we can identify what services each tenant and leaseholder receives and what those services cost. We started to do this in 2006 when some services were identified. We now need to make sure that we can identify all services for individual tenants and leaseholders and what they cost.

We also want to ensure that we have in place clear procedures and timetables to enable us to account properly for service charges. These will include how we calculate charges, when we ask for them and producing information on actual costs for each scheme

Q. Will I be paying for services I did not pay for previously?

A. In the past leaseholders have only been charged for the costs of grass cutting, electricity in communal areas and insurance costs. You have also been charged for the cost of ground rent where appropriate. If you receive other services you may therefore be asked to pay for them. We are in the process of finalising the charges for 2011/2012 and until we have finished this work it is difficult to say definitely whether you will be charged for services you have not paid for in the past. We will let you have further information once we have finalised the costs.

Q. How are service charges worked out?

A. Some services are for everyone living on an estate such as grounds maintenance, while others are only for those living in a particular block, or sharing certain areas such as a garden or common entrance.

We calculate the cost for each service and then split the cost between everyone that service is available to.

Your service charge will be a share of the costs for the estate around your home. In addition if you live in a block of flats and services are provided to the block, you will be charged your share of the cost of providing the service to the block.



Q. When will any changes take place?

A. We have carried out a lot of work to identify exactly what services we think you receive. We will be writing to you early next year to tell you what services we think you receive so that you can let us know if you have any comments. We are also carrying out a lot of work to identify what services cost to provide last year. This will help us to estimate what your service charges will be from April 2011.

Q. Who can I talk to about this further?

A. If you have any questions or comments about the information in this leaflet please contact our customer services team on 01629 593200 and ask for Sue Dowell or Ruth Fantom.

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## Dales Housing has been 'Going Local' in an area near you



Thank you to everyone that joined in our going local events. We wanted to find out what services are most important to you, how we can improve and what you want us to focus on in the future.

We also wanted you to have a bit of fun whilst you were telling us. During October we organised three local events in Darley Dale, Bakewell and Ashbourne with a free buffet and Magic Max the Magician to entertain. We are now in the process of looking at all your feedback and your ideas and suggestions will go into a set of 'local offers'. These local offers will set out what we will do to improve services for you. **Look out for more information in the next newsletter.**

The information that you gave us over all the events was great. You were very honest and told us what we do well and what we don't do so well. You also had lots of suggestions on how we can improve and these will also be used to draft Service Standards that we will have to work to. All comments from the events

that needed action have been passed to appropriate service managers to deal with.



Pictured above: Workshops at one of the Going Local events

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**Tenants' Annual Report 2010.** All our tenants received a report earlier this year. The report looked back at the previous year and brought tenants up to date with how we are performing now and our plans for the future. If you would like a copy please contact our Customer Service Team on 01629 593200



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### Christmas Office Closing Times

We close at 4pm on Christmas Eve Friday 24<sup>th</sup> December  
Christmas Day and Boxing Day fall on Saturday and Sunday therefore we are  
CLOSED: Monday 27<sup>th</sup> December  
CLOSED: Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> December  
New Years Day falls on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> January therefore we are  
CLOSED: Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2011

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### Useful Numbers for you

**TO REPORT A REPAIR ONLY**  
0800 294 1335  
Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm

**Out of Hours Emergencies Only**

0800 294 1335

Income & Leasehold Manager – Sue Dowell  
01629 593222  
Dales Housing Headquarters - 01629 593200