



March 1997

"A Community with Commitment"

News

HOUSING LOSES OUT - AGAIN

Criticism of cuts in spending on housing continues to grow.

Last week John Ward, Chair of Scottish Homes, warned of the effects of cuts in housing. Speaking at the Institute of Housing Conference he revealed a 50% cut in housing investment over the past seven years. This year alone Scottish Homes investment programme was cut by 25%.

Mr Ward spelled out the links between cuts in housing and increased welfare spending. These are well known to the Co-operative and its members. Poor quality housing leads to health problems, pressure on families and breakdown in communities. Lack of choice means that families break up as members move away to find suitable housing.

Solving these problems takes investment. Some will come from the private sector, but public investment is also vital.

What can you do?

We would ask members not to sit back and hope it won't affect you - sooner or later it will! You can play a part in arguing for greater priority for housing.

Members can help in a number of ways.

Raise the issue of housing cuts during the election. The Co-op will examine the possibility of having a forum for local candidates to explain their party's housing policies. Support the campaigns being run by Shelter, the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations and others.

On the 21st of March the Transport and General Workers Union, which represents most of the Co-op's staff, is holding a rally against the cuts. The Union have asked that the Co-op's office close that afternoon to allow staff to attend. Members of the Co-operative will also be welcome at the rally.

AND AGAIN!

The Co-operative also needs funds available to manage and maintain its properties.

As a result of changes introduced by Scottish Homes we are having to set more of our funds aside to deal with future major repairs to our properties.

From April, this year we will have 10% less to

spend on managing and maintaining our properties, (a cut of almost £100 per improved property). The Committee has to take this into account in setting the budget.

Even more than before it is in every members interests that we don't waste money on dealing with vandalism and graffiti. Please help us to stamp this out.

NEW ALLOCATIONS POLICY

In February, 1997 the Co-op reviewed its Allocations Policy i.e. a review of the way it decides who gets which house.

The main concerns of the Co-op were: To ensure there is best use of the Co-op's housing stock; to meet the needs of the people applying for it's houses; to ensure there is equal access for all applicants; to ensure there is consistency in decision making and to take account of all of those situations which have arisen in the past year which the old policy did not cater for.

The changes imposed will affect both Internal Transfer, Waiting List and Nomination applications. Tenants rights which are included in the Tenancy Agreement remain unchanged e.g. Rights of Succession, to apply for a mutual exchange.

Some of the main changes, are as follows:

Number of Offers

Applicants shall only be entitled to two reasonable offers of accommodation in any twelve month period. If two such offers are refused, the application shall be cancelled for a six month period.

Housing Need

First offers of accommodation shall be made in accordance with the applicants housing need. Preferences shall only be taken into account for the second offer.

Difficult to Let Offers

Additional offers of accommodation may be made within a 12 month period, if any of the first two offers have been for difficult to let accommodation.

Proof of Medical Condition

If the Co-op requires additional medical information in order to assess an application, the Co-op will not meet any costs the applicant may incur for obtaining this information.

Harassment

The Co-op reserves the right to refuse applications from anyone who physically or verbally harasses any member of staff, Management Committee or representative of the Co-op.

Cut - Off Points

The Co-op shall adopt a cut-off point for the external waiting lists for each property size, such that applicants with points below this, will not be accepted onto the waiting list. This cut-off point shall be variable, as required. The aim of this change is to avoid raising the hopes / expectations of applicants who do not have any realistic chance of securing re-housing from the Co-operative.

This will not apply to Internal Transfers.

Size of House Required

To help reduce the density in the area, the Co-op has changed its rules on the number of bedrooms a household will require. The new criteria is:

One bedroom for tenant (and spouse / co-habitee / partner)

One bedroom for each 2 children of the same gender under 10 years of age.

One bedroom for each 2 children over 1 year old and under 5 years of age (irrespective of gender).

One bedroom for each of the remaining members of the household (couples etc).

This new policy was implemented on 1st March, 1997, however it will take the staff some time to update all of the application forms. Please do not contact the office before the end of April 1997 to find out how your application has been affected.

Copies of the new policy are available free of charge from the office.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON - TREATMENT OF STAFF

On several occasions recently, staff of the Co-op have had to suffer abuse and threats of violence from people calling into the office. The Co-op is unprepared to let it's staff be subjected to such behaviour and will report all incidents to the police.

Please remember that each member of staff only deals with specific issues and cannot therefore answer all queries, if any, that you may have. It is also very difficult for the staff to help you if you shout at them and do not calmly tell them what your problem is. **Shouting louder doesn't make your problem any clearer.**

Please also remember that the staff cannot deal with police matters, or matters which are the responsibility of another department. They will give you as much advice and assistance as possible, but may be unable to solve your problem.

Please be reasonable towards the staff. It may even enable you to get your problem sorted out quicker.

Tam Kay
Chairperson

HOUSING BENEFIT REVIEW

The review is still on-going. If you have still to return a form, do so before it is too late. Forms available from the office for anyone who has mislaid theirs.

MAINTENANCE UPDATE

VANDALISM

A large amount of graffiti has appeared over the past week to closes in the Co-op area.

This is costing the Co-op a considerable amount of money to rectify. This money could be better spent in other areas of work.

The Co-op is aware of who some of the culprits of this graffiti are. They will shortly be receiving bills for the cost of rectifying this damage.

PREPARING YOUR GARDEN

March is the month that you should start preparing your garden. Start off by pruning your roses and any shrubs you may have.

Clear any dead plants out of flower beds. Fork over areas you intend to plant in.

If you are lucky enough to get real manure, fork this in to the soil. By doing this you will get rich rewards from your garden over the summer months.

SERVICING HEATING SYSTEMS (GAS)

If your heating system has not been serviced since last August, please contact Tracy at the office to arrange for this to be carried out.

YOUTH & COMMUNITY WORKER - SHARON MOONEY

I have recently been employed as Youth & Community Development Worker for Calvay Co-op.

My primary task will be to start up a Youth Group for 11 - 16 year olds (long overdue), and hopefully extending this to our younger children in the future. I will also be closely involved with other community issues and developments.

I am currently involved with a weekly Youth Group in Easterhouse. Over the years this has been a great success and a growing number of youths attend weekly (but - it has not all been plain sailing).

To start up, organise and run a youth group is no easy task! It involves much hard work, committed volunteers / workers, 'car loads of patience' and of course the dreaded word - money!! However, the rewards do far outweigh the costs! We get the kids off the

street, they learn to have a good time (without the drink and drugs), and the parents get that much needed 'peace'. In short, we give our youth a chance - they not only deserve that chance, they need it!

I would welcome any comments / suggestions (the good and bad) and will be happy to discuss any concerns or issues you may have. Everyone's opinion counts - but we need to hear them first, before we can make a difference!

We are also keen to hear from anyone who would like to work with the youth, even the smallest contribution would be of the greatest help at this stage.

Anyone wishing to join the Youth Project Committee, please give details into the office.

Please contact me at the office for further details.



TENANTS INCENTIVE SCHEME

The co-operative participates in the Tenants Incentive Scheme (TIS).

If you have been a tenant for more than 2 years you may be eligible for a grant of £10,000 towards the purchase of a property.

The number of grants is strictly limited. Should you want to find out more, please contact Mark at the office.

YOUTH GROUP UPDATE

The Tuesday night Youth Group will not be on until further notice.

We are presently trying to obtain funding and equipment for the Group (some of you may have heard our appeal on Radio Clyde for a pool table etc.)

Any offers of help

or suggestions (however small) would be most welcomed (any pool tables, etc going "free" - would also be welcomed!)

Further updates on the Youth Group will be through the newsletter.

Contact Lisa / Sharon at the office for further details.