Children and families reclaim the streets for a day of fun in the sun

On Saturday the 23rd of June Elrig Road was closed to traffic to allow families a day of fun and old fashioned play time during the Merrylee street play event. Elrig Road was one of 27 roads closed across the city as part of the Street Play Glasgow weekend.

Children played in the street and enjoyed a range of old fashioned activities such as hopscotch and hula hoop. The Merrylee residents and tenants organisation brought along connect four, noughts and crosses as well as sweet treats which proved particularly popular.

The afternoon was well attended with the whole community out in force enjoying the sun.
Meet John Quinn: incoming Director shares his hopes and first impressions

We interviewed John Quinn who shared his first thoughts and first impressions after 3 months in the role of Director.

**Why did you want to work for Govanhill Housing Association?**

The main attraction of the job is the fact that it’s a community based organisation. Its very reason for existence as an organisation is to help specific communities grow, develop and deal with its challenges. I was well aware of Govanhill having worked in Gorbals and Castlemilk previously. The fact that the Association is rooted in the communities in which it works, was a real draw.

**What are your first impressions of the area after 3 months?**

My first impressions of the Association are that it is a well structured, well run organisation with a commendable legacy left by my predecessor. It has the people of Govanhill and Merrylee at its heart. The staff who work here do so for the right reasons; to help the community. Above and beyond that, the Committee do a fantastic job of upholding the principles of community empowerment.

The neighbourhoods of Govanhill and Merrylee are both unique and diverse; you just need to walk around to see this. There is a real feeling of vibrancy and of community, and a great mix of different people which is terrific.

**What positive changes would you like to see for the neighbourhood of Merrylee?**

Merrylee has a real sense of community spirit, which is particularly evident in the very active residents group. As an association, we want to continue to foster and support this. My hope for Merrylee is that this sense of community continues to grow.

As ‘Govanhill’ Housing Association, it might seem that Merrylee is overlooked as so much of our work takes place elsewhere. My hope for the future of Merrylee is that the community feels as involved, and connected to the Association as Govanhill itself.
You are invited to our Open Evening: meet your neighbours and the Association

Wednesday 29th August
4:00-7:30pm, Samaritan House,
79 Coplaw Street

On Wednesday the 29th of August the Association will be holding an open evening at Samaritan House.

The evening will include workshops, stalls from a variety of organisations as well as the opportunity to meet other tenants and staff from different parts of the Association. Food will be provided, and presentations will be made for community award winners.

You are invited to attend the whole event, or drop in for a cup of tea, visit the different stalls and fill in a survey to be entered into a free prize draw.

Workshops

Rents and Value for Money
Hear the results of our tenants survey around value for money, look at the services we provide and which ones are paid for through your rent, consider ways we could deliver better value for money to our tenants.

Communications Review
Following the launch of our Facebook Page and the results of our customer survey, the Association is reviewing how we communicate.

This workshop will give you the chance to feedback your ideas and get involved with future communications work.

Each workshop will run twice at 4:30pm and 6:15pm. Each workshop will have a maximum of 15 participants and must be signed up for in advance.

To sign up for a workshop please email jferguson@govanhillha.org with the time and name of the workshop you wish to attend or phone 0141 636 3646.

The MerryLee Newsletter needs you

Do you have a keen eye for detail? Are you interested in journalism or looking to gain skills in writing, editing or photography?

Govanhill Housing Association is looking for volunteers who are interested in supporting the development of this newsletter, our websites and social media.

For more information or to register your interest in this opportunity contact Liz at lely@govanhill.org.
As of September 2018, Universal Credit will be rolled out in the Govanhill and Merrylee areas. Universal Credit is a means-tested benefit which will replace the following six existing benefits:

- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income Support
- Working Tax Credits
- Child Tax Credits
- Housing Benefit

If you are currently in receipt of one or more of these benefits, the introduction of Universal Credit may affect you. There are three ways in which this could happen:

If you are not on any benefit at present and make a new claim for any of the above benefits, you will instead be directed to claim Universal Credit.

If you are currently on one of the above benefits and have a ‘change in circumstances’, it may well be that you will be transferred over to Universal Credit at this point.

From 2019, the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP) will start transferring anyone in receipt of any of the above benefits over to Universal Credit. The DWP will notify you when this is due to happen.

How is Universal Credit different from existing benefits?

Universal Credit is different from existing benefits in a number of ways.

Claims are required to be made online in most cases.

If you are one of a couple, both of you are required to claim. Your claims will then be linked as part of the same claim.

Payments are made on a monthly basis rather than fortnightly, as is currently the case with payments of jobseekers allowance, employment and support allowance and income support.

There is no longer a separate ‘Housing Benefit’ to cover rent costs. You will receive an amount within your monthly Universal Credit payment to

TENANTS AFFECTED ARE URGED TO SEEK ADVICE
assist you with “housing costs”. This payment will be made to you. The Association will no longer receive payments of housing benefit from Glasgow City Council once you become a Universal Credit recipient.

Those tenants who remain on their existing benefits will continue to have their Housing Benefit paid to the Association by Glasgow City Council until such times as their case is transferred over to Universal Credit. Universal Credit is administered by DWP, not by the Local Authority.

Scottish Choices

In Scotland, there are alternative payment methods available to those tenants who wish to have their Universal Credit housing costs paid directly to the Association. This is known as an “alternative payment arrangement”.

There is also the opportunity to have your Universal Credit paid to you on a twice monthly basis as opposed to one payment per month. These options are called “Scottish Choices”.

Impact on Council Tax Reduction

Under the current system, a claim for Housing Benefit made to Glasgow City Council is also treated as a claim for Council Tax Reduction, formerly known as council tax rebate. Under Universal Credit this will no longer be the case. Those tenants wishing to claim for help with council tax will now be required to make a separate claim for council tax reduction to Glasgow City Council once their case is transferred over to Universal Credit.

The Association is here to Help

If you are currently in receipt of benefits, or likely to be, and you are concerned that Universal Credit may have an impact on you, please get in touch. To access our advice phone 0141 636 3636 and ask to speak to our Welfare Rights or Rents teams who will arrange an appointment.

Complaints: Latest Figures

We dealt with 62 complaints during the period April 2017 to March 2018. This is one less than in the previous year. We try to deliver a high quality service to our customers but we don’t always get it right. Complaints offer us an opportunity to put things right and to improve our processes as a result.

Of these complaints, 43 were dealt with at stage 1 and 19 at stage 2. Stage 1 complaints are relatively straightforward, while stage 2 complaints involve more complex issues. Many more of the complaints we received were resolved at the 1st stage of the process, usually within 5 working days.

Of the 60 complaints received during the year, all but one (a stage 1 complaint) were responded to on time. The average time to respond was 4.7 working days for stage 1 complaints and 13.3 days for those at stage 2. Both figures are within the standards of 5 and 20 days respectively. Of the complaints received in 2017/18, 53.2% were upheld (53% at stage 1 and 53% at stage 2), an increase on the 47.5% upheld in the previous year.
The day will feature all sorts of exciting activities as well as community information, and the Garden and Good Neighbour Awards. Everybody is welcome and entry is free. There will be tea, coffee, scones and pancakes as well as juice and sweets, fun and games for the young and young at heart.

The programme includes:
- Owl Magic
- Tommy Tricks magic show
- Welfare rights: Universal Credit update
- Games & quizzes
- Face painting
- Nail painting
- Community information
- Free raffle
- Garden & Good Neighbour Awards

South West Govanhill properties now available for let

We are actively seeking new applications for Annette Street, Westmoreland Street and the South West Govanhill area and for certain property types within Govanhill as a whole. The flats that we have purchased through the Acquisition & Repair programme are being substantially upgraded and modernised, and they are now beginning to be available for let. If you have friends or family who are looking for one or two bedroom accommodation in the Govanhill area, please encourage them to apply to us. Waiting times may not be as long as you expect for these kinds of properties.

New Guide to applying for a home answers frequently asked questions

We have recently launched new information to assist those wishing to apply for housing with the Association. This tries to answer many of the questions that we are regularly asked by customers at our waiting list surgeries.

The information is available in our reception and on our website and is also sent out with every application pack. The leaflet also gives information about the kinds of properties we have available. We usually have about 900 applicants on our housing list at any one time. However, some lists move much more quickly than others. For example, the list for 3 bedroom or larger properties moves very slowly. However, the list for certain one and two bedroom properties can move quite rapidly, for example, for 3rd floor tenement properties or for properties which have single bedrooms rather than double bedrooms. The guide will also soon be available in community languages.

Nominate your Neighbour:

Do you have a neighbour who goes above and beyond, adds value to the community and makes Merrylee a great place to be? Then why not nominate them for a good Neighbour award!

You can nominate any adult or child living in Merrylee (you can choose as many people as you wish to nominate). Nomination forms are available at the housing office, 53 Ashmore Road as well as on the back of this newsletter.

The deadline for nominations is Friday 24th August, completed forms can be handed in on Ashmore Road. Prize giving will take place at the Open Day on 8th September.

Nominate your Neighbour:

This year’s open day will take place on Saturday 8th September 2018 between 1.00 – 3.30 p.m. at Merrylee Primary School, 50 Friarton Road, Glasgow.
The results are in: survey shows satisfaction with the Association is up

An independent survey completed by an external company on behalf of the Association has shown rising levels of customer satisfaction.

Govanhill Housing Association undertakes a large scale customer satisfaction survey every three years and has recently received results from 1050 interviews carried out with tenants between November 2017 and January 2018.

All the data we receive is completely anonymous; tenants and owners cannot be identified by their responses. We use this information to inform our plans for future service delivery and to benchmark our performance with that of other landlords who carry out similar surveys.

The vast majority of those who responded were satisfied with the overall service provided by the Association and there was a significant increase in the perception of value for money.

Govanhill Housing Association Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2018

What did we do?
We spoke to 1050 Govanhill tenants to find out how satisfied they were with Govanhill Housing Association as their landlord and the services they provide. This is done to report back to the Scottish Housing Regulator and allows the Association to improve their services for customers.

What did you tell us?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied overall with service</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rated Govanhill Housing Association</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as good at keeping you informed</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>satisfied with the opportunities to</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participate</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>satisfied with repairs and maintenance</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>satisfied with the quality of your</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>rated rent as good value for money</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td>6%</td>
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<td>neighbourhood</td>
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</table>

Research Resource is an independent research agency. All our work is carried out in line with the Market Research Society Code of Conduct. If you would like to find out more about the survey, please contact Govanhill Housing Association.
Merrylee Good Neighbour Award nomination form 2018

(Please use CAPITAL LETTERS)

Your name: __________________________________________________________

Your address: _________________________________________________________

Telephone no: ________________________________________________________

Who would you like to nominate? Please provide their name and address below, and their telephone number if you can:

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

Are they aware that you are making a nomination?

☐ Yes     ☐ No     ☐ Don’t know

Why do you think this person deserves an award?

________________________________________________________________________

Your signature: ___________________________ Date: _______________________