

ONCHAN DISTRICT COMMISSIONERS

# Tenants Newsletter



We're on the web:  
www.onchan.org.im

## WELCOME

Welcome to the latest Tenant's Newsletter of 2013 for residents and prospective tenants of Onchan District Commissioners. As you may be aware, this has been a year of discussion and debate about how public sector housing will be provided in the future. With the agreement by Tynwald in November to policy proposals put forward by the Department of Social Care, we can confidently expect major changes in housing management over the next few years.

The most obvious change is likely to be in who actually provides the housing service. Proposals from the government are in favour of fewer but larger housing authorities. Onchan Commissioners have actively spoken against this suggestion from the beginning, as the evidence to support it has been seriously lacking, but Tynwald have now approved further investigation of this proposal by the Department.

Changes coming sooner rather than later, but perhaps not affecting everyone, are in the new fixed-term Tenancy Agreements. These are to be introduced from April 2014, and the main article in this edition covers the changes in more depth. Also introduced from January 2014 is Schedule 3 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2011 – not something likely to make the front page of any newspaper, but very important in terms of housing applications. This piece of legislation will make it a criminal offence to obtain public sector housing by misrepresenting personal circumstances, such as income, relationships or residency qualifications. If someone is found to have obtained a Commissioners property without an honest representation of their circumstances, they will be liable to both a fine and having the property taken from them by the Court.

Coming towards us for 2015 is the prospect of "means-tested rents". This is a proposal that the rent of public sector housing will be calculated by taking into account household income. Details of this policy are scarce at present, but we will let you know how this develops in the next year.

To end on a positive note, our major refurbishment of 118 houses is now nearing completion on time and within budget. Thanks are due to all tenants who have worked with us on the project, and we hope the improvements we have made will allow you to get the best from your homes in the future.

Finally, on behalf of all of the Commissioners and their staff, I would like to wish you a Merry Christmas, and a happy and healthy New Year.

Deputy Clerk



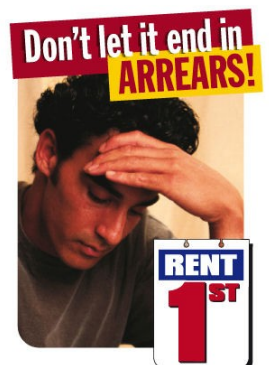
## ABOUT YOUR RENT



This is a reminder that your rent is due for the weeks in the Christmas period the same as all other times of the year. This year there are no "No Collection" weeks. If you wish to build up a credit balance before next Christmas, please contact our finance staff for details.

If you are having difficulty at any time with your rent, please get in touch with our Finance Office, as there may be ways in which we can assist you.

We realise that Christmas is an expensive time of the year but please don't make it the reason for not paying your rent. **Make paying your rent the number one priority so that you do not fall into arrears.**



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Onchan says "Keep Housing Local"

## NEW TENANCY AGREEMENTS—What they mean to you



The Government has recently taken proposals through Tynwald which will mean major changes to the way social housing operates. These cover many aspects including applications, allocations, rents and continuing tenancies. This is the first of a series of articles to give some indication of how housing authorities see the changes being implemented, and what impact they will have on our tenants. At this stage, and because some of the detail remains to be decided, the article can only put in general terms an understanding of how these changes will affect you. As the detail becomes clear, then we will update you as soon as we can. The focus of this article is on your Tenancy Agreement.

### THE LAW



Please note that this article is not an authoritative statement of the law, and should not be used as such.

The tenancy you hold from Onchan District Commissioners is a Weekly Tenancy, as defined in the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954. The Commissioners right to provide housing and determine the circumstances under which that provision is made is contained in the Housing Act 1955. Some of the conditions applying to your tenancy are contained in the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2011. There are other pieces of legislation that apply to your tenancy, but these are the main ones.

At present, once a tenancy is granted, it can be ended by either party giving one week's notice to the other. In normal circumstances, the Commissioners will not give notice, and it is usually the tenant who gives notice following a change in their circumstances. Unless the Commissioners or the tenant serves notice, the tenancy and the occupation of the property will roll over from week to week.

### THE CHANGES



From April 2014, a new tenancy agreement will be introduced for all allocations and tenancy renewals after this date. The new tenancy agreement will be a Weekly Tenancy like the one described above, but will only be for a fixed period of five years. This means that while the right to end the tenancy with a week's notice remains for either party, there will be an end date to the agreement, and the tenancy will need to be formally renewed if the tenant wishes to stay after that time.

The reason for this formal break in the tenancy is so the housing authority can review the tenant's circumstances to see if they still qualify for public sector housing. It also means that the type of property occupied by the tenant can be reviewed to ensure that it is appropriate to their circumstances if a new offer is to be made.

There may be reasons why the housing authority would choose not to renew a tenancy. These can be that a tenant's circumstances have changed and their income or assets are significantly above the limit to qualify for public sector housing; it could also be that the conduct of the current tenancy has been poor, with protracted rent arrears or significant anti-social behaviour issues. However, in most cases, circumstances will not have changed too much, and the tenancy will be renewed. If there have been significant changes to the household, the offer of renewal may be on the basis of a move to a different property.

## WHO WILL IT AFFECT?

The changes will affect anyone coming into public sector housing for the first time from April 2014. The changes will also affect anyone who is under Notice to Quit after March 2014, as their tenancy has been ended by the Commissioners. If they wish to remain in the property after the reason for Notice to Quit has been discharged (normally by clearing any rent arrears), any new tenancy offered will be a fixed term one.

If you already hold a Commissioners tenancy, and you are not under Notice to Quit, then there are no plans at present to change your current agreement.

If you already hold a Commissioners tenancy, and you wish to move to another property, the transfer may be offered under the terms of the existing tenancy provided that tenancy has been properly conducted. This will also be the case if the Commissioners ask you to move for any reason, such as to a smaller property.

## THE FUTURE



The provision of public sector housing will go through a period of significant change over the next few years, and the Commissioners will try to give you as much information and advice as they can as soon as they know what is intended. The next change likely to be introduced by government is the calculation of rent based on household income, commonly referred to as “means tested rent”, and rent will be the subject of the next article.



# Christmas Closure



## *The Office*

Hours of closing over the festive season are as follows:

**from 12.00 p.m. on Monday, 23rd December 2013 and re-opens on Friday 27th December 2013.  
Wednesday 1st January 2014 and Thursday 2nd January 2014**

## *Nursery Avenue—Phase 3 Refurbishment Project*

Over the festive season the contractor will not be working at Nursery Avenue  
**from 20th December 2013 to 6th January 2014.**

The site will be made secure prior to the contractor closing for Christmas but should you have any concerns please telephone the District Surveyor, Tel: 675564.





## SNOW CAPPED FAIRY CAKES

### Cooking time

Preparation: 25 mins Cook: 20 mins

Servings: Makes 18



### Ingredients:

#### For the cakes

175g butter  
175g golden caster sugar  
3 eggs  
200g self-raising flour  
finely grated zest 1 orange  
1 tsp vanilla extract  
4 tbsp milk



#### For the icing

1 egg white  
4 tbsp orange juice  
175g icing sugar  
fruit jellies and silver balls, to decorate

Heat oven to 190C/fan 170C/gas 5. Line 18 holes of a 2 x 12-hole bun tins with paper cake cases. Melt butter and cool for 5 mins, tip into a large bowl with all the cake ingredients, then beat together for 1-2 mins until smooth.

Spoon the cake mixture into the cake cases, filling them three-quarters full (a heaped tablespoon is about right). Bake for 15-18 mins until lightly browned and firm to the touch. Cool on a wire rack.

To make the icing, put the egg white and orange juice into a heatproof bowl, sift in the icing sugar, then set over a pan of simmering water. Using an electric hand whisk, whisk the icing for 7 mins until it is glossy and stands in soft peaks. Remove from the heat, then whisk for a further 2 mins until it is slightly cooled.

- Thinly slice the fruit jellies. Spoon the icing onto the cakes, swirling it with a knife, then decorate with slices of jelly fruits and a few silver balls. Leave to set. The cakes will keep for up to 3 days in the cake tin.

Recipe courtesy of BBCGoodFood.com



Onchan District Commissioners  
Invite you to join in with their  
**CHRISTMAS LIGHTS  
COMPETITION**

**There is no need to register.**

**This is an open competition for residential and commercial properties within Onchan .**

**The Commissioners will be touring around the district until 16th December 2013 drawing up a short list of entries.**

**The final decision will be made**

**during week commencing 23rd December 2013.**

**The winners will be presented with an engraved silver salver and glass trophy**

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