



# Newsletter

*"for tenants by tenants"* 

[www.ospreyhousing.org.uk](http://www.ospreyhousing.org.uk)



## Rent Harmonisation

why are we doing it  
and what it means  
for our tenants



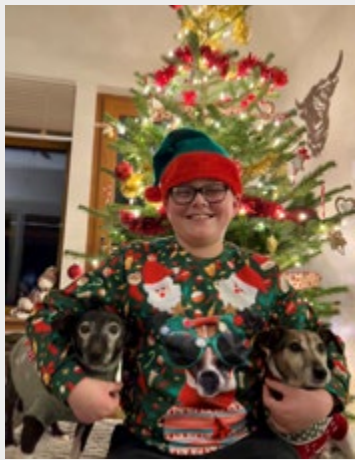
### Making a difference every day



## From our Chief Executive, Stacy Angus

Welcome to the Osprey Winter newsletter. Since the last newsletter there has been a number of tenant engagement events and I would like to thank all tenants who have participated and shared their views with us. The tenant voice is really important when we are shaping services and proposing change. The key consultation project has been the proposed rent harmonisation, and this project has now been approved to proceed from 1st April 2025. More detailed information is below in this newsletter and you will also receive individual letters.

In October 2024 Osprey Housing held its 25th Annual General Meeting (AGM) and with this saw a change of Chair for our Board of Directors. We are delighted to have Brian Watson, an existing Board member take up this role.



Brian has a wealth of experience in the housing sector and is passionate about putting tenants at the heart of our decision making. With this I would also like to extend appreciation to Mike Scott for his commitment over the last 5 years serving as Chair. Mike has led the organisation through some challenging times during these 5 years and we are pleased that he has decided to remain as a Board member going forward.

Our commitment to continually improve is a key strategic priority across all areas of the business. I would like to extend a personal thank you to the tenants who are part of Osprey Tenants and Residents Association (OTRA) as your dedication to supporting us in our continual improvement journey is invaluable.

Wishing you all the best for 2025.

*Stacy Angus* Chief Executive



## Rent harmonisation project

Osprey undertook eleven consultation events in September and October both in person and online to allow tenants to share their views in relation to the Rent Harmonisation Proposal. Whilst the number of tenants who engaged was limited, we remain confident that the unanimous support by those who did engage is relevant to the new proposals being fairer, transparent and meets the needs of both tenants and the organisation.

The Osprey Board met on 27th November 2024 and considered all tenant feedback and subsequently took the decision to proceed with the recommendation to implement the Rent Harmonisation. This change to the way in which we charge rents will be implemented in April 2025. This will change the rent pointing system from this date onwards.

For anyone that was unable to attend the in person or online consultation events, a video was created to explain the key aspects of the Rent Harmonisation Proposal and why we consider this to be a much fairer and

more consistent way in which to charge rents. The video can still be accessed by following this link: [Rent Harmonisation](#) - Osprey Housing or found in the news feed of our website.

The revised rent pointing system will be based on the three key aspects applicable to your property;

- **Location** – both taking into account the geographic location and local amenities.
- **The size of your property** – factoring in both bedroom and bedspaces
- **The type of your property** – this will differentiate between the varying types of flats and houses for example.

By simplifying the system to set our rents, we will be relying on a smaller number of key property components to enable us to determine the correct level of rent for each property.

Individual letters will be sent out to all tenants confirming the any impact of the Rent Harmonisation on your rental charge, the points applicable to your property and how this will affect you.



# Scrutiny project – Lettable standard



As reported in the summer newsletter Osprey Tenants and Residents Association (OTRA)

have chosen to review the 'Lettable Standard' which is the condition that we let our properties to prospective tenants, and work has been on-going by the group to understand the challenges faced in delivering a quality and efficient service.

OTRA requested that members of Osprey staff presented the current process and how Osprey try to ensure that a consistent level of service is provided across all our vacant properties to deliver a good 'lettable standard'. Following this presentation and discussion members of OTRA contributed ideas for improvement and areas that they wish to scrutinise further.

The next steps are for OTRA to visit some vacant properties early in the new year to better understand the differences in meeting the lettable standard across a variety of stock, both in terms of age, location and the level of work required. After this stage OTRA will decide on the next steps before completing their report and presenting this to the senior management team and board with any suggestions for improvements to the process.

we want your input. From the level of decoration, cleanliness, electrical checks and number of other areas, we are asking our current tenants to help us to understand what is important when we prepare a vacant property for a new tenant. There is a fine balance between the cost of improvements and ensuring that we are delivering a high-quality service.

The group will decide on the most important aspects to consider but potential options will include visiting void properties, discussing proposed works, considering the

level of rechargeable repairs and speaking with applicants and new tenants to understand their experience. There are a range of other aspects to investigate but it is key to the scrutiny project that it is led by tenants, Osprey will provide the information that is requested to enable its success.

We are inviting current tenants to register their interest and to tell us the type of skills that you can bring to the project.

If you are interested in getting involved in this scrutiny project, then please complete the following application [HERE](#) and select the tick box 'participate in OTRA scrutiny projects' and we will get back in touch with you to discuss the project further. Full training and support will be provided from members of OTRA and staff from Osprey.

OTRA is also actively recruiting new members. If you wish to volunteer to become an OTRA member then please follow this link [HERE](#). OTRA have been involved in a number of projects in recent months including the following;

- The introduction of welcome packs for new tenants
- New members have joined OTRA
- Having a member of the national tenancy participation panel through the Scottish Housing Regulator
- Recruitment of the Director of assets – members of OTRA sat on the panel
- Signing off the ARC report for 22/23
- Estate walkabouts and tenant satisfaction survey exercise
- Signing off annual rent increase
- Involvement with NETRALT
- Endorsed the Annual Return of Charter for 23/24

For an informal discussion please contact Leisha Bishop on 07485 378081 or [LBishop@ospreyhousing.org.uk](mailto:LBishop@ospreyhousing.org.uk)

## Housing Perks

The mobile app is free to use for tenants and gives them access to over 100 national retailers. Tenants typically save £6-£12 per week on their essentials. Over a year those weekly savings add up significantly. For example, a housing association in the West Midlands with a group of 1,200 users has saved over £10,000 in 4 months. The bulk of the savings being on everyday essentials. Discounts range between 4% - 18%.

The discounts available are not available to the general public and we have negotiated special discounts which are only available to housing association tenants. Tenants download the app from the Apple App Store or the Google Play store, they enter a code unique to each housing association and they get access to discounts, cashback and free items instantly. The mobile app enables tenants to use their discount while they're on the go.

### How does this work for Osprey Tenants

1. Go to this link: <https://www.yourhousingperks.com/download-the-app>
2. Download the Housing Perks app
3. Go to sign up
4. Enter the phone number you wish to use,
5. Enter "OSPREY" into the organisation ID
6. You will need to know your tenancy reference number as part of the verification process. If you are unsure of this, contact a member of staff. (Please note that if you are a new tenant, it can take up to a week for your tenancy number to be added to the system to enable you to register)
7. You're good to go!

# Winter Home Safety

## LOCK THE DOOR



Obvious isn't it? But some people don't do it. Lock the door even if you're only out for a short time. If you have window locks, lock those too. Keep the door locked when you are at home. This stops criminals coming in if you are in another part of the house or garden.

Don't leave your keys on the inside of locks or just inside the door. If you have a spare key, don't leave it under a mat, plant-pot or other easy to spot place at home.

Never keep house keys and car keys on the same ring.

## SAFES AND SECURITY BOXES



Don't keep large amounts of gold, jewellery and cash at home. Bedrooms and lofts are routinely searched during housebreakings, particularly if the occupants are celebrating a cultural festival.

Consider storing valuable items at your bank. Private companies offer similar services. If this option is unavailable consider an insurance rated safe. Safes should be securely attached to the solid fabric of the building not just to a plasterboard wall or left sitting on the floor. Ideally get an insurance approved installer to fit a safe in your home.

## LIGHTING AND CCTV



House alarms and CCTV are a great visual deterrent. Modern Wi-Fi enabled CCTV systems can be combined with bright LED lighting. Any movement detected outside your home can trigger an

alert to a number of mobile devices. If considering CCTV look to cover every aspect of your home. Small discreet cameras can also be used inside. Use signage to advise that CCTV is in use. Remember, if you plan on installing CCTV, then you will need to complete a permission request form.

When you're away use timers to turn on lights, radios, or TVs to put off unwanted visitors. Smart plugs allow times to be changed even whilst away.

## VEHICLES



High value cars are particularly vulnerable to theft and criminals will commit a housebreaking to obtain the true key of the vehicle. Where possible park vehicles inside a garage. Secure the keys inside your property out of sight. Avoid leaving them in obvious locations such as the hallway table or kitchen. Never leave valuables in your car.

Keyless Theft or Relay Theft involves criminals using hand held technology to identify whether a parked car has keyless entry. If the car 'key' is close enough the criminals can amplify the signal and send it to a transmitter which acts as the true key and opens the car allowing it to be driven off. Keep keys and fobs well away from doors and windows and purchase a signal blocker wallet to keep them in.

## PROPERTY MARKING AND INSURANCE



There are a number of products you can buy which contain a unique code like DNA. This code is registered to your address.

They are usually clear liquids which

can be applied onto your possessions.

Check you have adequate insurance cover. Photograph and record your valuables to assist any insurance claim or Police report. This will assist police in identifying any items recovered.

## GENERAL MAINTENANCE



Never leave anything that can be used by a thief to gain entry lying around the garden. Overgrown bushes prevent neighbours seeing into your garden and allow criminals to go unseen.

## SOCIAL MEDIA



Consider what you are putting on social media, especially if you are going on holiday or attending weddings, functions or posting pictures with jewellery. Criminals search for this information to create a list of empty houses. Your social media accounts should be set to friends only.

## UNUSUAL ACTIVITY



Report any unusual activity to Police. Criminals will often call offering to carry out work. This can be used as a method to identify vulnerable targets.



## Office opening hours over the Festive period



Please be aware that the Osprey office in Westhill will be closed from 13:00 on 24th December 2024 and reopen 09:00 on Monday 6th January 2025. For emergency issues during this period please call our out of hours service on 01224 548030.

