

An Update from Andrea Bell, Chairperson, Tollcross Housing Association.

Dear Tenant,

I hope everyone is well, and again our thoughts are with everyone who has been affected by this terrible virus.

Last March, when we had to close the Association's offices, I never thought for one moment that almost a year later they would still be closed to the public and we would still only be able to offer limited services to tenants.

This lockdown seems to have been even harder. Certainly the winter weather hasn't helped.

Hopefully, there's now a bit of light at the end of the tunnel with the vaccine and it looks like the roll out is really beginning to gather pace.

I would love to be able to tell you that the Association will soon be returning to providing normal services, with our offices and the Advice Centre fully open to everyone, a full repairs and maintenance service back in operation and all our community engagement stuff back underway. But I need to be honest and say that I still have no idea when all that will happen.

We are still doing all emergency repairs and our contractors are doing everything they can to work as safely as possible. External works are still going ahead at present, so gutter cleaning and winter landscaping works are progressing as far as possible within the legislation. We are still undertaking a full close cleaning service and we've asked the contractor to carry out additional anti-bacterial "wipe downs" in lots of areas.

We are still preparing void properties and letting houses. The letting process has had to be changed slightly, with "virtual" viewings being used where possible. If you are offered a new home during the lockdown I hope you will understand that these changes have been made to try to keep you and our staff as safe as possible.

We know the bulk rubbish and the refuse collection changes have caused problems.

Glasgow City Council have now completely withdrawn their free bulk uplift service. We know that the issue of bulk waste is a problem in many areas. We are doing our very best to organise our contractor to uplift bulk waste, but under the current restrictions it's almost impossible to deal with the levels of bulk being left out. We've also had problems with "fly tipping" in lots of places, and that combined with the changes to the collection of the refuse bins has only made the problem worse.

The sudden withdrawal of the free bulk uplift service has caused problems, but I can assure you we are doing everything we can to keep on top of the problem, whilst balancing the cost of removing unprecedented levels of bulk waste and trying to work within the Covid-19 restrictions.

Could I also remind everyone that Glasgow City Council will only lift refuse that has been placed in a black polythene bin bag. We know that bins are filling up quickly because of the change in collection dates, but if you leave refuse in the bin store and it's not in a black bin bag, or if it's in a shop carrier bag, then the bin men won't lift it. This rubbish then builds up and is an invitation to birds, foxes, mice and rats. Please, please put all your rubbish in black bags and if possible place it in the correct bin. Please also remember that the council will only lift cardboard if it's not been put in the recycling bin. If you leave cardboard in the bin area it won't be lifted

The cost of collecting bulk and cleaning out bin store areas is going through the roof, and we will have to look at how we pay for this service in the future.

As always, we are doing everything we can to keep rent levels as low as possible. For the first time ever the Association has frozen rents for the coming year. We realised that this continues to be a very difficult time and we are doing everything we can to help every tenant. However, please remember that your rent still has to be paid and if you need help or advice about your rent please get in contact with us right away.

Hopefully, things will now start to improve and the current lockdown restrictions will gradually be lifted. Sometime during the summer we might all get back to something like "normal" and we look forward to seeing you when all of this is over.

In the meantime, please stay safe and look after yourselves.

Regards,

**Andrea Bell**

**Chairperson**

**Tollcross Housing Association.**