

Factoring News March/April 2018

Landscape Maintenance New Contract 2017-2019

Last year, we re-tendered the landscape maintenance contract. Six contractors were invited to tender for the works with 3 returning tenders. The tenders were checked by OTHA's Quantity Surveyor and subjected to a quality (30%) and price (70%) assessment. At the end of this process, McDermott Contract Services (MCS) were appointed to undertake the contract for landscape maintenance. MCS subsequently started on site on 1st August 2017. The contract is scheduled to run until 31st July 2019.

Unfortunately, the new contract means an overall increase in costs although each area has been priced slightly differently. Many customers will see an increase in their individual costs. Some of this increase is due to an improvement in specification, but the main reason for the increase is due to a rise in tender costs. We recognise that increased costs are rarely welcomed. However, we think performance has improved. We hope that the disappointment of any cost increase incurred by you is offset by some obvious improvements in quality.

In order to achieve and maintain this improvement in quality, performance is monitored on the Associations behalf by HG Couper Landscape Consultants (HGC). HGC carry out monthly inspections of all properties included within the landscape maintenance contract and where any works are identified as falling below the standards expected, these are recorded and brought to the attention of MCS to make good.

Generally speaking, the scope of works for factored properties includes the following: -

- Grass cutting (usually between April and October);
- Litter picking of external common areas;
- The removal of moss and weeds from hard landscaped areas; and
- Shrub pruning, where required.

The Association recognises how important quality landscape maintenance is to its customers. We would like to hear your feedback to help us monitor standards. If you have any queries or complaints, or even if you want to compliment MCS or our staff on the work done, our contact details are given below at the end of this newsletter.

Landlords Supply Bills

You may have noticed on your last bill, there were no charges relating to landlords supply of electricity to the close lighting system. We have now included these costs for most closes that missed out on charges last time. Please note that the landlord electrical supply bill covers a longer period than the billing period on this invoice, (01/07/2017 to 31/12/2017). OTHA pays all these invoices prior to billing the owners.

We will only bill for charges that we have paid in the period hence the reason there may not always be a charge in the billing period for Landlords Supply. We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause.

Factoring Survey Results

Thanks to everyone who completed our Factoring Survey in November last year. OTHA's Management Committee considered the results as part of a report on the factoring service in

December. As a result of the feedback received, over the next year, we are looking at some improvements or changes to your service – see details below.

The headline news is that the percentage of customers satisfied with our factoring service has increased to 74%. This is a big improvement and we hope to keep working to improve. Here are some areas we are working on this year.

Discounts for payment by direct debit and switching to electronic communication were both supported by the majority of owners replying to the survey. A report about implementation is being taken to Committee.	June 2018
Review of charges for changes of ownership. We think that charges should be higher where notice is reduced to avoid lawyers asking for balance for outgoing owner on or just before the day of the sale. Your written statement of services would need to be amended if charges are introduced.	November 2018
PR review; review of letters leaflets and information; review of welcome information for new customers.	April – June 2018
Extension of online customer portal to allow log in for factored customers to view statements, make payments and report repairs.	September 2018
Review of our written statement of services after the completion of the governmental review of the Code of Conduct for Property Factors.	After Scottish Government finishes review.

Customer Feedback

Are you interested in working more closely with OTHA and its tenants on issues of common interest. We are looking for people who are interested in working with us on a working party, community group, or focus group to invite them to discuss ways they can do this. For example, in helping to set standards, or monitoring services delivered to their neighbourhood.

We want to get as much feedback as possible so that we make the right decisions going forward and identify people who can help us on the journey towards improvement. Please speak to Kate Dahlstrom or any member of our maintenance team to comment on any aspect of your service or to chat about being more involved.

- Phone us on 01475 807000;
- E-mail us at info@oaktreeha.org.uk;
- Call into our office at 41 High Street, Greenock; or
- Tweet us at @OakTreeHA

Building Insurance

Letters have already been sent out about renewal of our excellent value for money building insurance offer. It is your decision if you choose to take up this option, but remember, as factor, we have the right to ask for proof of insurance if you choose a different insurance product. We will be in touch if we don't hear from you.