

I'm writing to give you advance notice of the commencement of the service charge consultation with Home customers (including Copeland Homes) and would appreciate your help in sharing this information with Members should any of our customers make contact with them direct to discuss the matter.

We had originally planned to undertake the consultation in the autumn; however, service charges became a national project for Home which started with the development of a Service Charge policy. 4,000 customers were consulted nationally during September/October to get their views on service charges and their feedback was used to develop the policy. This new policy has been used to ensure a consistent and equitable calculation of service charges across all regions.

The review of all services nationally is now complete and consultation letters will be posted to customers on Monday, 10 January 2011, a copy of the letter is attached for information but this is a mail merge letter so has blank spaces where the customer's details and specific services will appear. A list of frequently asked questions will accompany the letter and a copy is also attached. The consultation will close on 28 January 2011.

All services have been reviewed at a neighbourhood level and the letters sent to customers will detail those services and the charges which are directly linked to the actual services and expenditure within their neighbourhood. A list of the different types of services which are included in the consultation are detailed on the attached list 'service charge descriptions' and individual customer letters will include the relevant service information for their property.

The consultation letter will ask customers to ring our Contact Centre with feedback, comments and questions. The teams have been briefed and will be able to deal with general enquiries at the point of contact but will escalate more detailed enquiries to Customer Service colleagues. All enquiries will be logged and all feedback will be considered. The Contact Centre numbers are:

- 0845 606 3033 - Home
- 0845 155 0980 – Copeland Homes

We will be supplementing the consultation letter with a series of drop-in sessions across Copeland between 12th and 21st January. The schedule, including dates, times and venues, is detailed below. Officer's and Members are welcome to join these events.

Neighbourhood	Venue	Day / Date	Time
Egremont	Rugby League Club	Wednesday 12th January	3.30 - 5.30
Distington	Community Centre	Thursday 13 th January	10.00 - 12.00
Parton / Lowca	Parton Village	Thursday 13 th January	1.00 - 3.00
Hensingham	Sneckyeat Community Centre	Thursday 13 th January	4.00 - 6.00
Cleator Moor	Indoor Bowling Club	Friday 14 th January	10.00 - 12.00
Woodhouse / Kells	St Peters Hall	Monday 17 th January	1.00 - 3.00
Bransty	Primary School	Monday 17 th January	4.30 - 6.30
Millom	Guide Hall	Tuesday 18 th January	10.30 - 12.30
Mirehouse	Community Centre	Wednesday 19 th January	2.00 - 4.00
Whitehaven Town Centre	Civic Hall	Thursday 20 th January	1.00 - 3.00

As the Service Charge policy has been developed to ensure an equitable calculation of service charges, Home tenants will only be charged a proportion of the cost for the whole neighbourhood and we plan to open up consultation with freeholders living on our estates later in the year.

If you or Members have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards

Andrea Thorn
Head of Customer Service (NW)
Home Group

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January 2011

«Cor_Nane_1»
«Cor_Addr_1»
«Cor_Addr_2»
«Cor_Addr_3»
«Cor_Addr_4»
«Cor_Addr_5»
«cor_addr_postcode»

Home Group Ltd
«Mgt_Address_1»
«Mgt_Address_2»
«Mgt_Address_3»
«Mgt_Address_4»
Tel: «Mgt_Address_5»

E-mail: HGLRentAccounts@homegroup.org.uk
www.homegroup.org.uk

Dear «Cor_Nane_1»

CONSULTATION ON SERVICE AND SUPPORT CHARGES

Re: «Property_Address_1», «Property_Address_2», «Property_Address_3»,

Home has developed a new policy for service charges. This policy has been developed with help from customers and is designed to ensure that customers will only be charged for services which are actually provided, and that we will charge for those services in a fair and consistent way.

We have carried out our annual review of the cost of providing services and heating/electricity/support (where applicable) to your home, with reference to the principles and guidance within this new policy. As a result, the amount that we collect with your rent for these services will change.

We are proposing that from «Increase_Date» **April 2011**, the service charge you will be required to pay will be:

a) Service Charge £

The attached schedule gives a breakdown of how the charges have been calculated and the services they cover.

The purpose of this letter is to consult with you on the proposed charges and the services you receive. The costs involved in providing these services to you should be reasonable and all services provided must be to a suitable standard.

If you have any comments or questions about the services provided to you, or the related costs, then please make them known to us before **28th January 2011** by writing to us, or by calling us on the address or telephone number at the top of this letter. We will write to you again in February to inform you of your new service charge.

Yours sincerely



Gillian Campbell
Finance Manager
Home Group Ltd

Frequently Asked Question – Service Charges

What is a Service Charge?

A Service Charge is a payment to Home for the services that we provide.

Can you give an example?

We charge to look after shared areas around your home such as gardens, play-areas and the upkeep of flats where there are communal areas.

Does everyone get the same services?

No. The services we provide will depend on where you live and the services that are needed.

How will I know what I am paying for?

Your Service Charge will be calculated separately from your rent. It will then be added as a separate charge to your weekly/monthly payment.

What services will I be paying for?

You will be asked to pay for a number of services provided on your estate. This will include, gardening, cleaning and lighting, for example. A full list of the services and how much they cost is included on the enclosed schedule.

How does Home set the charge?

The charge is based upon the cost of providing services in your area.

What is the Management Fee and why is it 15%

The Management Fee is what it costs Home to administer the Service Charge, paying the invoices and checking that the work you are being charged for is done. The figure is set at 15% and is in line with other housing associations.

There is a service listed that I don't think you provide for me. What can I do about it?

If you believe that you are being charged for a service that you are not receiving, please tell us. You may write to us, telephone your area office or speak to your housing services adviser. It is very important that your Service Charge is correct.

How can I influence the services on my estate?

You can talk to your housing services adviser or Residents Association about the services on your estate. We provide information about the Service Charge every year so you will be able to see what we are providing in your area. You may want an improved service and after consulting with other residents, we may be able to provide it. But this improved service could cost more.

What do I do now?

If you have a view about our proposed Services Charges and would like to let us know, please call or email using the details on the enclosed letter.

Service Charge Descriptions

Communal Carpets
Communal Cleaning
Communal Cleaning – Windows
Communal Redecoration
Door Entry System
Electrical Testing
Electricity (for communal areas)
Emergency Lighting
Door Entryphone
Door Entryphone Maintenance
Fire Alarm System
Floor Covering
Grounds Maintenance/Gardening
Gas
Landscaping items
Lifts and Associated Parts
Maintenance – Fire Equipment
Maintenance – Gas Equipment
Maintenance – Lifts
Maintenance – Service Equipment
Maintenance of Laundry Equipment
Replacement Equipment
Resident Manager
Sewage Pumps
TV Aerials / Satellite System
Water and Sewage - Other