

**Coronavirus information exchange for GWSF members**

Update 7, 31/3/20

Please feel free to get in touch on any of the issues raised below, and where appropriate we’ll share views and information with members, non-attributably.

**Maintenance contracts – who’s paying what to the contractors?**

For those associations who’ve come under pressure not to reduce the monthly contract sums paid to contractors, there are real dilemmas. Some may be worried about the risk of their contractor going out of business and no longer being able to provide any service. On the other hand the principle of paying now for services which will be rendered at some point in the future is pretty alien.

We might have hoped that the UK Government’s furlough scheme would have reduced the likelihood of this pressure from contractors, but clearly in some cases this is not providing sufficient comfort to contractors about their short/medium term security.

Some associations in this position have suggested that they might be more willing to pay the requested amounts if they felt confident that other associations would do likewise and not leave them feeling exposed.

Is there any sense out there that a consistent approach might be adopted across the sector? All views, experiences welcome.

**Close cleaning**

Seems like a mixed picture on whether close cleaning is continuing: some have stopped whilst others are trying to keep it going, not least where it is part of the (HB-eligible) service charge.

We would note that whatever decisions are being made on this, associations should not be led by the keyworker ‘framework- issued last week by SHR/SFHA: some took this to be some kind of official statement on what were or were not essential services but the document (which is to be re-issued soon with clearer messaging) had no such status.

**Allocations**

Thanks to those who provided feedback on this. The picture is that pretty much all traditional allocations have ceased. Only where it may be possible for the local authority to take the property as leased temporary furnished accommodation is there any chance of a longer term void being prevented.

**Installation of smoke/heat/CO detectors**

We have raised with the Scottish Government the case for extending the February 2021 deadline for installing fire safety measures and are awaiting a response. This also raises some issues around the loan scheme some associations have taken up.

**Evictions**

The Coronavirus (Scotland) Bill was published today, will go through all of its stages tomorrow and be in force next week. As noted previously, whilst it is not technically a ban on evictions ii will effectively suspend most cases as it extends the Notice period to six months for social housing arrears-related eviction cases where no written notice has yet been served. It will be three months for ASB/criminal cases, and no change for abandonments.

We have made representations in relation to cases where decree has already been obtained. Where, as seems likely, associations choose not to progress these to eviction, decree falls after six months. The Bill has no provision to address this, regrettably.

**Governance issues**

Two governance-related issues have been raised with us in the last couple of days. One is about associations whose recruitment plans for new committee/board members have had to be put on hold, leaving them near to the minimum number. We have asked SHR if there are any plans for greater flexibility on this in the current circumstances.

The other issue is about how any delegated authority is being sought where the committee/board is not meeting in person to give its approval.

Any comments you might have on these or any other governance challenges would be welcome.