

**ANNUAL REPORT
2013-2014**



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WELCOME TO YOUR ANNUAL REPORT

The Annual Report is our opportunity to tell you how we are performing, celebrate our achievements and highlight where and how we need to improve.

Our vision is to make Tamworth's homes and neighbourhoods great places to live, where good quality services are delivered right first time. In many areas of the service we do just that. We are forward thinking and are always looking for ways to improve the services that we provide to you.

However, while there are signs of economic recovery, we are still living through challenging times. Many tenants, together with their families and neighbours, are feeling the effects of wide-ranging changes to welfare benefits. Our communities are increasingly affected by cuts in public spending and personal finances are being stretched by everyday living costs.

So, how are we responding to these challenges? We are investing in people and systems to make sure that our services are excellent, modern and available online where possible – with extra support for those who need it. We are also making sure we spend money wisely and help our tenants to pay their rent promptly.

Many thanks to the tenant representatives involved in preparing this report, which covers the financial year 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014.

If you would like a printed copy of this report or require it in an alternative language or format, please contact the Tenant Regulation and Involvement Team on 01827 709 374/260 or email tenantparticipation@tamworth.gov.uk

MESSAGE FROM THE TENANT CONSULTATIVE GROUP

We consider that the past 12 months have been another successful year for Landlord Services. This is despite being faced with a number of significant challenges which are affecting all social housing providers and public sector organisations. We have marked our fourth year with some significant achievements, recognition and high customer satisfaction levels.

Customers remain at the heart of Landlord Services and we are still leading the way in tenant involvement and scrutiny across Tamworth, in the hope that other tenants will follow. We remain committed to improving people's homes.

Within the report we have included just a few of the things we have worked on this year to make your homes and estates more than just a place to live. We hope you recognise some of the improvements and please read on to see what else we have done. We have a very busy year ahead and now - more than ever - it is crucial that you, our tenants, get in touch, get involved and have a real say in the future of your housing service.

Yours,
Faith Shell, Chair Tenant Consultative Group
Eddie Rafferty, Vice Chair Tenant Consultative Group



WHO WE ARE



Area	Total
Amington	431
Belgrave	311
Bolehall	362
Borough Road	39
Coton Green	62
Dosthill	73
Fazeley	119
Gillway	219
Glasgote	595
Hockley	147
Kettlebrook	209
Leyfields	460
Stonydelph	734
The Leys	67
Town Centre	403
Two Gates	14
Wilnecote	206

Total number of properties: 4,451

Number of tenancies – 4451 as at 31 March 2014

Property type	0 Bed	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed +	Total
Bedsit	2	/	/	/	/	2
Flat/Maisonette	/	665	587	99	/	1351
House	/	/	480	1857	151	2488
Bungalow	/	204	41	/	/	245
Sheltered	/	324	38	3	/	365
	2	1193	1146	1959	151	4451

YEAR IN PICTURES 2013/2014



April 2013 - Amington Walkabout



May 2013 - Plant a Pot event at Annandale



June 2013 - ASB Focus Group



July 2013 - Kettlebrook Walkabout



August 2013 - Bolehall Walkabout



September 2013 - Swap A Book event



October 2013 - PAT Dog visits Bright Crescent



November 2013 - Tenant Inspectors visit Morrison



December 2013 - Lift Refurbishment Consultation



January 2014 - Seniors United donate toiletries to Sir Robert Peel Hospital



February 2014 - Foodbank collection



March 2014 - Tenants Conference

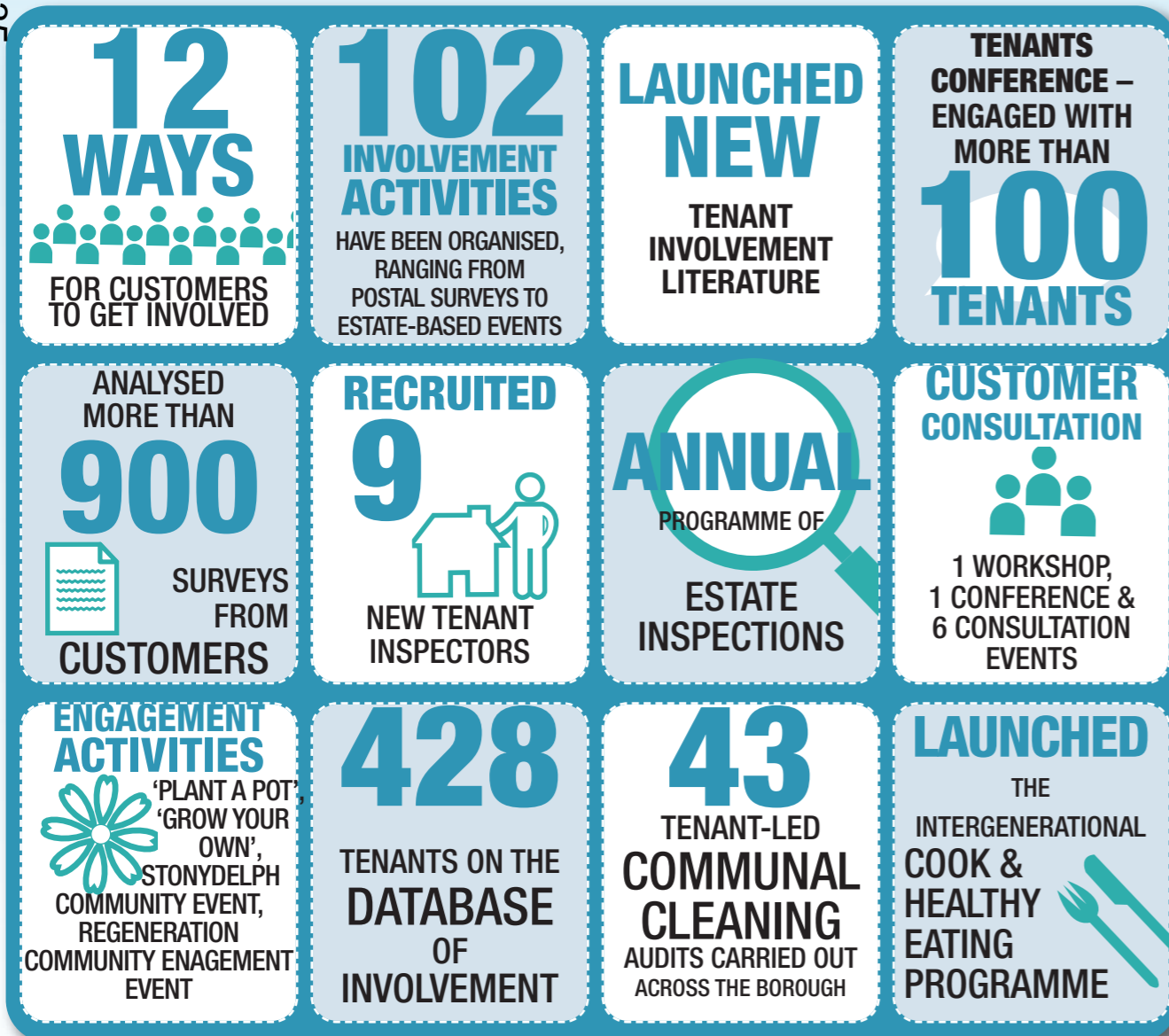
TENANT INVOLVEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

Working together is about how we communicate with you, involve you in what we do and make sure our services are suitable for those with specific needs.

Tenants who take part in the service either by filling in surveys or attending meetings and organised events help to make housing decisions about:

OUR STANDARDS OUR PRIORITIES OUR PERFORMANCE

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LOOKING FORWARD - 2014/2015

- During 2014/15 we will work with customers to review Tamworth's 'Local Offers' – our promise to tenants
- Prepare for STAR survey 2014/15. The STAR survey is a satisfaction survey which looks at tenant opinion across all housing services and is carried out nationally by the majority of all social housing providers
- Carry out stage 1 of a Quality Assured Scrutiny Assessment. This is an independent assessment tool carried out to look at our scrutiny arrangements and how we are committed to co-regulation
- Develop a training programme to extend the skills and knowledge of involved customers so that the members are equipped to understand, challenge and improve services
- Work with our repairs contractor to offer a DIY course for customers who want to learn some home improvement skills i.e. how to change a plug, put up a shelf or basic decorating
- Look to extend the 'Intergenerational Cook and Healthy Eating programme' across the borough
- Look to publish future issues of 'Open House' online, by email and on request

CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

Complaints and compliments

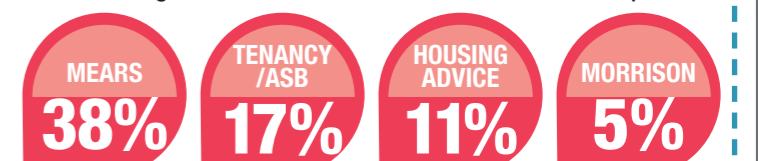
We welcome all feedback as it helps us improve our services. We aim to resolve all complaints as effectively and quickly as possible. Any complaint, no matter how minor, is recorded on our central database. This year we received a total of **241** initial reports of dissatisfaction compared to the previous year of **236**.



The majority of upheld complaints have been in relation to poor communication between the repairs contractor and the tenant. However, following a recommendation from the Complaints Review Panel, a representative from Mears now attends the quarterly complaints review meetings to look at any identified themes of dissatisfaction.

89%
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION WITH COMPLAINT HANDLING

The following **four** service areas received the most complaints:



HOME

This section shows how we work with you and our contractors to keep your home safe and well maintained.

RESPONSIVE REPAIRS

Total number of repairs carried out **12,340**

Total cost to carry out repairs **£1,395,484.61** Average cost of repair **£113.08**

During the year we increased the number of repairs completed on the first visit from **83.8%** to **91.5%**

Tenants satisfaction with the repairs contractor has increased from **87.1%** to **94.9%**



91.5%
OF REPAIRS
COMPLETED ON
FIRST VISIT

The number of complaints relating to the repairs service area has increased slightly from **37%** to **38%** and the gas contractor has reduced from **18%** to **5%**

93.7%
CUSTOMER
SATISFACTION
FOR RESPONSIVE
REPAIRS

97.9%
OF REPAIRS
COMPLETED
ON TIME

97.6%
OF
APPOINTMENTS
MADE & KEPT

GAS SERVICING



We were **99.8%** compliant with landlord safety checks, with legal action being taken for three of the remaining properties. A further four properties were empty and have been capped off for health and safety purposes.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Lift refurbishment works and an extensive consultation exercise was carried out to three of the high rise blocks.



PLANNED MAINTENANCE

Improvement	How Many	Total Spend
Kitchens	124	£733,000
Bathrooms	179	£750,000
Roofing (High rise)	2	£90,000
Windows & Doors	512	£1,100,000
Disabled Adaptations	188	£540,000

IN 2013/14 WE SPENT APPROXIMATELY
£3,113,000
ON PLANNED HOME IMPROVEMENTS.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION FOR PLANNED WORKS WAS **90.8%** AGAINST A TARGET OF **85%**

DISABLED FACILITIES ADAPTATIONS (DFAs)

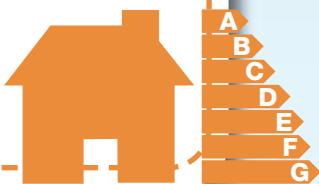
Over the past 12 months we have spent **£487,763**, providing adaptations to enable disabled people to stay in their home.

192 DFAs completed, of which 97 were level access showers. 95 minor works have been completed to include internal and external handrails, steps and lever taps.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY

As part of the annual environmental works programme, a number of garages in the Belgrave area, situated under flats, had thermal boarding installed. This will consequently reduce the 'U' value (the value of heat loss) of each property, meaning cheaper utility bills for the occupants of the flats. Also more than **£300,000** was spent on replacing old inefficient gas boilers with 'A' rated systems.



LOOKING FORWARD - 2014/2015

- A fire sprinkler suppression system will be fitted into the homes of tenants in our high rise properties
- A service improvement plan for our contractors will be carried out to look at ways to improve service delivery and bring added value
- There will be a programme of roofing works to include one of the high rise blocks.
- The lift refurbishment programme for the high rise properties is still ongoing and the remaining three blocks will be refurbished
- A major project will take place to install gas central heating in parts of Belgrave after new gas mains are installed. More than £300,000 will be spent on replacing old electric heating for new efficient systems
- Continued adaptations to the homes of disabled tenants in consultation with the Occupational Therapists from Social Services and the NHS
- Following on from the extensive stock condition survey, there will be an improvement programme for 180 properties to receive a new bathroom, 159 properties to receive a new kitchen and 25 properties to receive new doors

TENANCY

In this section we talk about how quickly we let our homes, how we can help you maintain your tenancy and how satisfied you are with our overall service

80%
OF OFFERS OF
ACCOMMODATION
**ACCEPTED
FIRST TIME**

**19
DAYS**
ON AVERAGE
TO LET HOMES

100%
WELFARE
BENEFIT CHECK
AT THE START OF
THE TENANCY

100%
CONTACT WITH
SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS
WITHIN FOUR WORKING
DAYS OF THE 'FINDING A
HOME' ADVERTISEMENT
BEING CLOSED

1881

ACTIVE HOUSING
APPLICATIONS

AS AT
31 MARCH
2014

Finding a Home
A choice based lettings service from
Tamworth Borough Council

THE PERCENTAGE OF
CUSTOMERS SATISFIED
WITH THE FINDING A
HOME SERVICE IS

94.4%

71
MUTUAL
EXCHANGES



14

SUCCESSFUL
MOVE ONS FOR
THE REGENERATION
PROGRAMME AT
COTTAGE WALK

AVERAGE SPEND
ON AN
EMPTY PROPERTY
£2,492.06

304
EMPTY PROPERTIES
APPROXIMATELY
25 PER MONTH

SHELTERED HOUSING

£90,000 has been spent across all sheltered schemes as part of the environmental programme to include block paving, fencing and footpaths

100% visits completed for sheltered schemes within 24 hours of moving in

On average **95%** of alarm calls answered within 60 seconds

100% of new tenancy visits completed at sheltered schemes within 24 hours of moving in

100% of monitoring sheets completed in relation to legionella

Reviewed all literature for sheltered and supported housing and introduced a new guide and supporting leaflets

SUPPORTED HOUSING

100%

OF LETTINGS TURNAROUND IN TEN DAYS FROM TENANCY END DATE

OF APPLICANTS INVOLVED IN A NEEDS AND RISK ASSESSMENT PRIOR TO MOVING IN

OF SUPPORT PLANS AGREED WITHIN FOUR WEEKS FROM MOVING IN

OF SUCCESSFUL MOVE ONS

LOOKING FORWARD - 2014/2015

- Develop an online Housing Options self assessment tool via the website
- Deliver a Guardianship scheme for the regeneration programme
- Continue with the decant programme for Tinkers Green as part of the wider regeneration project for Tinkers Green and Kerria estates
- Review of Sheltered Housing Services
- New Allocations Policy to go live

WELFARE REFORM

From April 1 2013, working age tenants have been classified as under occupying if they have more bedrooms than they need. These tenants will have had their Housing Benefit payments reduced.

The government has said that one bedroom is allowed for:

- A child aged 16 or under is expected to share with one other child of the same gender
- A child aged 10 or under is expected to share with one other child aged 10 or under, regardless of gender
- Those households containing a disabled adult and a non-resident carer overnight will be assessed as having a reasonable requirement for an additional bedroom, (there must be a spare bedroom available for the carer) which will reduce the number of disabled claimants affected by this measure
- An extra bedroom will **not** be allowed for those tenants who have access to children at weekends
- A disabled child where there is proven medical need for a separate bedroom
- A bedroom for approved foster carers who have fostered in the last 12 months
- Adult children who are in the armed forces but continue to live with parents. There will not be a non-dependent charge while deployed on operations and have the intention to return home

What we have been doing to help tenants cope with Welfare Reform:

- Contacted all tenants affected by the Welfare Reform and discussed what options are available to them
- Assistance to complete application forms for downsizing to smaller properties, through transfers, incentives to moves and Homeswapper
- Assistance with applying for discretionary housing benefit
- Assistance for applying for a Hardship Fund
- Working in partnership with the Citizens Advice Bureau through the Tamworth Advice Partnership referral system. This offers early intervention on every day welfare issues, developing skills and how to avoid money lenders and rogue traders
- Tamworth Primary Inclusion Partnership works with children from 5 to 11 years old to prevent them from being excluded from education
- Refer tenants to Home Energy Advice Tamworth (HEAT) to maximise their income regarding gas and electricity bills
- Promote finding employment and training by working with employment agencies - communication vacancies are then passed onto tenants
- Working with TamCan - this is for tenants who have multiple debts, debts with utilities and other financial issues



Benchmarking with local authorities and registered local landlords through HouseMark and Housing Quality Network show that we are in the **top quartile for rent collection**

Our quarterly rent incentive draw with a prize of £250 encourages tenants to keep a clear rent account

RENT COLLECTED



AS A PERCENTAGE OF ANNUAL DEBIT
98.5%

NUMBER OF EVICTIONS

22



SUCCESSFUL VISITS

1,649



SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWS

495



17,912
SUCCESSFUL TELEPHONE CALLS



OUT OF **368**
NEW TENANCIES
95%
WERE SUSTAINED IN THE FIRST YEAR

DID YOU KNOW?

You can check your balance, pay your rent or download a Direct Debit form online.
www.tamworth.gov.uk



For further information about your account you can also contact a member of the Income Team
Tel: 01827 709514

LOOKING FORWARD - 2014/2015

- Continue to launch the successful 'Rent First' campaigns over the Easter and Christmas periods. These campaigns promote the help and advice which is available for tenants struggling to pay their rent
- Introduction of agile working for housing officers so that they are more accessible for customers on the estates
- Continue the quarterly rent incentive draw for all tenants who maintain a clear or in credit rent account
- Develop a further year of focus events for supported housing
- Explore what banks have to offer including basic bank accounts, direct debit facilities and identify Credit Unions
- In preparation for universal credit identify tenants who have internet access in the home
- In response to Welfare Reform, continue to assist all affected tenants by discussing what options are available

NEIGHBOURHOOD & COMMUNITY

In this section we talk about how we work with you and our partners to keep neighbourhoods and communal areas greener, cleaner and safer, preventing and tackling incidents of anti-social behaviour and supporting tenants who experience this where they live.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMME

The second year of the environmental programme saw **37 projects completed**. These included **4** main garage sites; **2** were demolished and rebuilt and **2** sites were refurbished. In addition, enhancements to drying areas, external improvements for sheltered schemes and increasing security for some of our flats were also carried out.

CARETAKING SERVICES

THE CARETAKING TEAM REMOVED **170 tonnes of rubbish** FROM ESTATES

The improved garage sites and drying areas are now programmed in on a cleaning rota.

The caretakers removed all offensive graffiti **within 48 hours**. **56 health and safety cases** were reported by the caretakers, which included stairwells being used for storage, flytipping and fire exits being blocked.



TENANCY SUSTAINMENT

After receiving training to identify **hoarding**, Estate Management staff, the Fire Service and Mears identified **2** cases.

As well as a budget for trees where there is a Health and Safety issue, we now have a budget of **£15,000 for preventative work**. 12 cases have now been identified.

We now carry out our own possession cases for tenancy issues. We had **2 successful cases** this year, to include an illegal succession and an abandoned property.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

This is the first full year of benchmarking we have completed with HouseMark and we now have a baseline on which to make recommendations for improvement.

% of customers satisfied with the way their ASB case was dealt with:



- The Service Improvement Plan was published and a factsheet library was introduced
- An Anti-Social Behaviour zone was launched on the website
- A Tenancy Support Directory was added to the website to encourage self referrals
- A service level agreement was signed with Right Mediation for 12 months
- ASB focus groups were established for dissatisfied customers
- With the service improvement group new local offers/service standards were agreed



DID YOU KNOW?

We ask every tenant that has reported an ASB case what they thought about our service.



LOOKING FORWARD - 2014/2015

Environmental Programme

- 16 environmental works projects are planned to include other drying areas and improving access to the rear of certain sheltered properties.

Caretaking Services

- The caretaking team will be receiving Prefabricated Access Suppliers and Manufacturers Association (PASMA) training to enable them to erect scaffolding safely and correctly and to remove ivy from our properties more efficiently

Anti-social behaviour

- Targets for ASB will be set against the results from HouseMark benchmarking
- Review the mediation service to include additional services with a multi-agency membership
- Review the ASB Policy and Procedure to incorporate new legislation from ASB Crime & Policing Act 2014
- Identify victim focused support packages
- Introduce eviction consultation protocol
- Introduce the 'Something's Not Right' initiative with concern cards for the contractors and caretaking team to complete
- Work with Street Scene to develop Neighbourhood Standards

VALUE FOR MONEY



In this section we explain how we make sure that our services provide value for money.

Tamworth Borough Council recognises the importance of giving value for money and that this does not only mean keeping costs down. This is achieved through the following:

- Seniors managers regularly review budgets and the highest areas of spending.
- We involve tenants in the choice and appointment of contractors, suppliers and consultants to help make sure we get the right balance between cost and quality.
- To assess Value For Money (VFM), we use an independent organisation called HouseMark, which compares our services to other councils and registered social landlords. HouseMark prepares an annual report which identifies areas for improvement.
- By carrying out our own possession cases for tenancy issues we are saving on legal fees of around £40,000 per year.
- As part of a national campaign, Affordable Warmth Solutions are undertaking large scale projects to install mains gas supply in areas which currently do not have it. Parts of Belgrave have been identified and works will be carried out during 2014/2015. This will help to reduce the number of households in fuel poverty.
- Identified savings of approximately 16,000 per year by advertising all future editions of Open House and the tenants Annual Report on the web, be email and on request

* Please click on the following link for the Annual Review & Corporate Plan www.tamworth.gov.uk/sites/default/files/misc_docs/Annual_Review_Corporate_Plan_2014-15.pdf

We will be carrying out a STAR survey and the results will be delivered in 2014/2015.

Other than overall satisfaction (based on 2011 STATUS) all performance indicators are in either the top quartile or reflect an improving position. Targets are SMART and are alive to the national performance.

The following indicators have been agreed with tenants and will be reviewed during 2014/2015:

	2010/ 2011	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	Estimated Top Quartile*
Overall satisfaction with Landlord Services	75.2%	75.2%	To be carried out in 2014/15	To be carried out in 2014/15	86%
Average time between lettings	21 days	16 days	13.58 days	19 days	21 days
Walkabouts	4	4	4	3	Not benchmarked
Satisfaction with cleaning	85%	87%	To be carried out in 2013/14	87%	-
Number of tenants on the database of involvement	344	373	348	428	Not benchmarked
% repairs appointments made and kept	98.4%	99.1%	99.6%	97.5%	97%
Gas servicing - CP12	99.5%	99.7%	99.9%	99.8%	100%
Urgent repairs completed on time	100%	100%	95.1%	99.5%	99%
Customer satisfaction with the repairs service	86%	87%	91.5%	93.7%	90%
Rent arrears as a % of gross debit	1.5%	2.0%	2.4%	2.3%	2.9%
Evictions	15	8	22	22	-

* Figures based on estimated top quartile range when benchmarked nationally

DID YOU KNOW?

75.2%
OVERALL TENANT SATISFACTION WITH LANDLORD SERVICES

86%
OF TENANTS SATISFIED WITH 'FINDING A HOME'

91.2%
OF CUSTOMERS SATISFIED WITH RESPONSIVE REPAIRS

89%
OF CUSTOMERS SATISFIED WITH COMPLAINT HANDLING

76%
OF CUSTOMERS SATISFIED WITH THE WAY LANDLORD SERVICES DEALS WITH ASB

100%
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION WITH ENVIRONMENTAL WORKS

87%
OF CUSTOMERS SATISFIED WITH CLEANING OF INTERNAL COMMUNAL AREAS

YOU SAID, WE LISTENED

YOU SAID:

You have told us that Mears need to respond to complaints more promptly

WE LISTENED:

The Complaints Review Panel has recommended that when there is a delay in carrying out or completing a repair then the tenant should be advised accordingly. The Panel has also recommended that when a complaint is going to require further investigation, then the customer is always advised of this in writing in addition to any telephone communication.

Improve the standard of empty properties before letting to new tenants

The Tenant Consultative Group and Tenant Inspectors will be working with staff to develop a new void standard during 2014.

Why do some areas of the borough have an estate walkabout and others don't?

From April 2014 estate walkabouts have been replaced with an annual programme of estate inspections which will cover all wards of the borough from April through to December inclusive. The actions and outcomes of all inspections will be reported on the web, in 'Open House', the tenants' quarterly newsletter, and will form part of the annual impact assessment for all tenant involvement activity.

Kitchen and bathroom refurbishments are taking more than a week to complete

Kitchen refurbishments are being completed within agreed timescales - it is simply that the agreed timescales are longer than some tenants would like. This is further attributed to the fact that work operatives are not continually on site throughout the course of the works which again gives tenants the view that the work could be completed more quickly if they were on site more frequently.

Residents would like more regular updates on their anti-social behaviour complaints

An action plan is agreed between the customer and case officer. If a customer feels that they need more regular contact then this can be requested at any time and the action plan amended accordingly. We also monitor the ASB procedure by way of a quarterly telephone survey. We share the results through 'Open House', on the web and with our tenant involvement working groups.

Residents believe that the time taken to resolve their damp and condensation issues is far too long

Sometimes the issue of damp and condensation comes down to individual lifestyle. When this is not the cause we will endeavour to work with Oaks Preservation to reduce the time taken to diagnose a damp/condensation issue.

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