Landlord Services

Tamworth Borough Council

Annual Report

2014 - 2015

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Welcome to your Annual Report

Welcome to our latest Annual Report. Every year, we look at how well we have been performing and what we are going to do in the coming year.

Please have a look!

This is our opportunity to give you information about our services and how we have performed, highlight areas for improvement and share our plans for the future.

This year we will be sending the Annual Report by email. However, the report is still available to download via the web and is available in print for those of you who prefer this. By making these changes we are gradually reducing production and postage costs which will help us to spend more time and money on the things that are important to our tenants such as our day-to-day services.

One of our priorities is to ensure we measure how we are doing and compare ourselves with other landlords including the best in class. We have aimed to make sure the report is honest – celebrating what we do well but pointing out where we need to improve. We can only achieve this by looking at the information you give us – in surveys and meetings and when you contact us with your comments, compliments and concerns. Thank you for providing this feedback as it really helps us to improve.

We are pleased to report that despite the financial challenges that affect many of our tenants, we have maintained our rental income. We rely on this to provide the services you tell us matter most.

78% of tenants are satisfied with the overall service provided by Tamworth Borough Council Housing Service. Overall satisfaction level has improved when compared to 75% in 2011



If you would like a printed copy of this report please contact the Tenant Regulatory & Involvement Team on 01827 709260/709374 or email tenantparticpation@tamworth.gov.uk

Who We Are



Area		Total	
Amington	421	Hockley	147
Belgrave	309	Kettlebrook	206
Bolehall	350	Leyfields	457
Borough Road	43	Stonydelph	731
Coton Green	62	The Leys	66
Dosthill	73	Town Centre	397
Fazeley	118	Two Gates	14
Gillway	228	Wilnecote	192
Glascote	588	Total	4,402

Total number of properties: 4,402

Number of tenancies as at 31 March 2015

Property type	0 Bed	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed +	Total
Bedsit	2	1	1	1	1	2
Flat/Maisonette	/	665	576	99	1	1,340
House	1	1	480	1834	150	2,464
Bungalow	1	204	27	1	1	231
Sheltered	1	324	38	3	1	365
	2	1,195	1,121	1,936	150	4,402

A Year in Pictures 2014/2015

Can be found in Housing & Health/Housing/Tenant Participation/Photos/Annual Report 2014/2015

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment

It has been a busy year for tenant involvement. We continue to provide a range of opportunities for tenants to get involved, including having a say in setting our standards and making sure we meet them. If you'd like more information, please contact the Tenant Regulation & Involvement Team on 01827 709374/260, email tenantparticipation@tamworth.gov.uk or visit the website at www.tamworth.gov.uk and take a look at our **Tenant Involvement** & Consultation Strategy 2013-2016

STAR Survey 2015			
Satisfaction with keeping 2011 2015			
tenants informed	68%	80%	

There are various ways for customers to get involved

More than **100 involvement activities** have been arranged, ranging from postal surveys, estate based activities and consultation events

Three Intergenerational Cook and Healthy Eating projects carried out in partnership with Community Together CIC

Analysed more than **2,000** surveys from customers

Recruited four new tenant inspectors making a total of 21

68 tenant-led communal cleaning audits carried out across the borough

Annual programme of **Estate Inspections** completed

Reviewed Tamworth's Local Offers consulting with more than 1,200 tenants

Engagement activities – Plant a pot events at Magnolia and Bright Crescent Sheltered Schemes

497 tenants registered on the database of involvement

Looking forward - 2015/2016

- Publish the results of STAR Survey of Tenants and Residents 2015 and work with tenant groups to produce a detailed action plan in response to key service outcomes
- Work with the Head of Customer Services in the review of the corporate Tell us policy and produce a customer-friendly user guide to assist customers when making a complaint
- Continue with the Intergenerational Cook and Healthy Eating Project as a three-year project

- Develop a training programme to extend skills and knowledge of involved customers so that they are equipped to understand, challenge and make recommendations for future service delivery
- Facilitate Landlord Services third tenants conference
- Increase the number and representation of customers in the service improvement groups
- Develop a series of DIY skills and awareness workshops in partnership with our repairs contractor and Community Together CIC
- Carry out a series of service charge consultation events to contribute to the final offer documents

Customer feedback

STAR Survey 2015			
Listens to tenants' views	2011	2015	
and acts upon them	54%	59%	



We welcome all feedback as it helps us improve services. We aim to resolve all complaints as effectively and as quickly as possible. Any complaint - no matter how minor - is recorded. During 2014/25 we received a total of **213** initial reports of dissatisfaction compared to the previous year of **241**.

	2013/2014	2014/2015
Complaints	241	213
Compliments	105	68
Service Requests	159	171
Total	505	452

	2013/2014	2014/2015
Number of complaints	241	213
Number of stage 1 complaints	213	189
Number of stage 2 complaints	22	18
Number of stage 3 complaints	6	6
Number of complaints upheld	17	16
Number of compliments	105	68

The following three service areas received the most complaints during 2014/15:

48% Mears (Including Morrison Gas)14% Housing Solutions11% Tenancy ASB issues

89% customer satisfaction with complaint handling

Learning from your complaints

- When we looked at some of the formal complaints we received, some customers were unhappy with the lack of detailed information in their response letter, resulting in the complaint being escalated. The Complaints Review Panel has worked with staff to develop a number of good response template letters for all staff to access
- The Complaints Review Panel has reviewed Mears' contact and complaint closure letters. The Panel made recommendations for the letters to be more customer-friendly and free from any jargon
- The Panel highlighted the increase in service requests from Councillors. This resulted in the development of a comprehensive Staff Directory to assist Councillors to ensure enquiries are directed to the most appropriate person / team in the first instance

Customer Feedback

Have Your Say

Tamworth Borough Council wants to ensure that the services we provide meet both our published standards and the needs of our customers. All customer feedback is important to us and can be a complaint, suggestion, comment or compliment.

All feedback, including complaints, is taken seriously and we use it to learn lessons as to how things may have been done differently and to improve future services.

Where possible, we will publish information on how we have made improvements resulting from your feedback.

Home

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

STAR Survey 2015			
Satisfaction with the	2011	2015	
quality of your home	75%	79%	

Responsive repairs

	2013/2014	2014/2015
The number of repairs completed on the first visit	91%	90%
Total number of repairs carried out	12,340	12,835
Customer satisfaction for responsive repairs	93%	94%
Percentage of repairs completed on time	98%	98%
Percentage of appointments made and kept	98%	98%
Percentage of complaints relating to the repairs service	38%	38%
Percentage of complaints relating to the gas service	5%	9%

STAR Survey 2015		
Tenant satisfaction with their last reported repair		
Attitude of workers	89%	
Keeping dirt and mess to a minimum	83%	
Overall quality of work	80%	
Being able to make an appointment	76%	
Repair being done 'right first time'	66%	

Average number of calendar days to complete repairs = 10 days

Total cost to carry out repairs £1,339,886

Average spend on an empty property £2,325

- Number of gas repairs 4,429
- Number of glazing repairs 947
- Number of painting jobs 22
- Number of plumbing jobs **2,282**
- Number of roofing jobs 775
- Number of electrical jobs **2,909**
- Number of bricklaying and plastering jobs 574

STAR Survey 2015			
Satisfaction with repairs	2011	2015	
and maintenance	68%	68%	

Gas servicing

99.72% of properties were compliant with landlord safety checks. Four properties were empty and were capped off for health and safety purposes, with legal action being taken with the seven remaining properties

All of your gas appliances, including your gas boiler, gas cooker and gas fire should be safety checked and serviced once a year. If you do not have your gas appliances regularly serviced and safety checked by a Gas Safety registered engineer you could be putting you and your family at risk and in possible danger of Carbon monoxide poisoning.

84% tenant satisfaction with gas servicing arrangements

Looking forward 2015/2016

- Install replacement boilers at two retirement schemes
- Continue with the annual environmental works programme and associated consultation
- Develop an Eco Plan framework which will include energy and fuel efficient options

Health and safety

- Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service was successfully awarded the contract for Home Fire safety checks during 2014/15
- We will be working to the Health and Safety ROSPA Accreditation

Planned maintenance

In 2014/15 we spent approximately £3,148,221 on planned home improvements

Improvement Programme	How Many	Total Spend
Kitchens	251	£839,000
Bathrooms	192	£791,000
Windows & Doors	228	£317,000
Disabled Adaptations	73	£201,000
'A' rated boiler installations	441	£1,000,221

Customer satisfaction for planned works	2013/2014	2014/2015
	90.08%	93%

Disabled Facilities Adaptations (DFAs)

Over the past 12 months we have spent £201,000 providing adaptations to enable disabled people to remain in their property and live independently.

73 DFAs completed of which:

- 61 major works including lifts through floors and level access showers
- 12 minor works completed to include internal and external hand/grab rails, laying non slip flooring and widening doorways for wheelchairs

Energy efficiency

As part of the annual environmental works programme, a further number of garages in the Belgrave area, those situated under flats, have had thermal boarding installed. This has consequently reduced the 'U' value (the value of heat loss) of each property, meaning cheaper utility bills for the occupants of flats.

Looking forward 2015/2016

- Continue to remove old inefficient gas appliances and install 'A' rated appliances
- An upgrade will be undertaken for emergency lighting in the High Rise flats

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

Number of applicants on the housing waiting list, by band, as at 31 March 2015:

Band 1+ 61

Band 1 **147**

Band 2 329

Band 3 192

Band 4 902

70% of offers of accommodation accepted first time

34 people were given an optional welfare benefit check at the start of their tenancy. This is where we talk to new tenants about debt/ referrals to CAB/ referrals to support agencies/ Staffordshire scheme for help with furniture/ DWP crisis loans/ rent quote. The main queries are around what help is available with furniture.

17 days on average to let properties

1,631 active housing applications as at 31 March 2015

73 Mutual exchanges

During the year **288** council properties became available for reletting; approximately **24** per month

111 nominations to housing association properties for re-housing people from the housing waiting list

95% of customers satisfied with the Finding a Home service

32 families successfully moved on, as part of the regeneration programme at Tinkers Green

Sheltered Housing

100% (66) visits completed for sheltered schemes within 24 hours of moving in

100% of monitoring sheets completed in relation to Legionella

100% of scheme resident meetings held every other month

On average **97.5%** (**12,902**) of alarm calls answered within 60 seconds **100%** (**91**) of needs and risk assessments carried out at all sheltered schemes prior to moving in

Annual fire inspection completed

Improved heating system at Thomas Hardy Court

Annual **Health and Safety training** programme completed for all Independent Living Managers

Delivered a range of activities at the sheltered schemes to include:

- Cottage Healing Centre treatments
- Hairdressers
- Opticians
- Dementia Friends
- Eat well programme
- Olive Branch visits from the Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service
- Hearing loss events at all schemes
- 100th anniversary of WW1 event

Supported Housing

100% of lettings turned around within ten days from tenancy end date 100% of applicants involved in a needs and risk assessment prior to moving in

100% of support plans agreed within four weeks of moving in **100%** successful move ons

STAR Survey 2015		
Sheltered Housing satisfaction with		
Frequency of contact with Independent Living Manager	95%	
Overall service provided by Independent Living Manager	93%	
Facilities at scheme	86%	
Handy Person Service	81%	



Looking forward 2015/2016

- Continue to develop the range of current activities in sheltered housing schemes to enable tenants to stay well and continue to live independently
- Working with the NHS and associated partners to continue to work and deliver wellbeing sessions

Rent

Welfare Reform

The Government's welfare reforms continue to put a squeeze on people's incomes. Despite this, nationally £12 billion worth of benefit entitlement goes unclaimed every year, including £3.1 billion worth of Housing Benefit and around £2.8 billion of Pension Credit.

Part of welfare reform is to introduce Universal Credit and in preparation for this we carried out a **Digital Inclusion** survey to identify who does and does not have access to the internet.

Results from the Digital Inclusion Survey indicated:

- 56% of people did not have access to the internet
- 26.6% of 46 to 55 year olds had the greatest access to the internet
- 67.9% did not know that you can only apply for Universal Credit online

A Universal Credit countdown leaflet has been produced to ensure that tenants are fully aware of Universal Credit and the possible impact it may have. This leaflet will continue to be sent out with rent statements until all welfare reforms have been introduced

Average rent (excluding service charges)

Property Type	Average Rent £
1 Bedroom Flat/Maisonette	76.50
2 Bedroom Flat/Maisonette	85.91
1 Bedroom Bungalow	85.88
2 Bedroom Bungalow	93.72
2 Bedroom House	88.34
3 Bedroom House	96.85
4 Bedroom House	107.66

	2013/2014	2014/2015	
The rent collected as a % of annual debit	98.50%	107.70%	Top quartile
Rent loss due to empty properties	.72%	.38%	Top quartile

At the end of the financial year **12** tenants were affected by the benefit cap, although this may increase as the government considers lowering the threshold further.

Because of the bedroom sanction we assisted with the transfer of **14** families who downsized via the incentive to move scheme, **7** of which were due to the properties being under occupied

- **8** families affected by a **25%** reduction of housing benefit
- 3 families affected by a 14% reduction of housing benefit
- **5** tenants moved to sheltered accommodation
- 5 families moved as part of the regeneration programme
- 2 families either succeeded to the property or mutually exchanged

Tenancy Sustainment Officers (Income) continue to engage with customers both out on the estates and through Marmion House in an attempt to reduce arrears.

Number of attempted	Total	Successful	Unsuccessful
Telephone calls	19,318	16,874	2,444
Visits	4,192	1,402	2,790
Interviews	411	394	17
Total	23,921	18,670	5,251

Despite having fewer successful contacts this year, we have still managed to reduce the arrears by an additional **0.30%**

The number of evictions carried out was 28 in 2014/15 compared to 22 in 2013/2014. Eviction is always the last resort

The **Tenants' Portal** was successfully introduced during the year and approximately **12,154** viewings have been made. This allows tenants to look at their rent account online any time of day or night.

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

The rent campaigns continue to encourage customers to pay their rent via direct debit. This method of payment has increased from 29.65% (1,040) in 2013/2014, to 33% (1,067)

Did you know?

You can check your balance, pay your rent online, claim housing benefit or download a Direct Debit form. For further information about your account you can also contact a member of the Tenancy Sustainment Team Tel: 01827 709514

Looking forward 2015/2016

- Collect information regarding access to the internet at the sign-up stage and each time contact is made with you
- Develop an online budget planner and run a leaflet campaign on affordability, to make everyone aware of how much it costs to run a one-bed property
- Carry out a series of consultation events about the introduction of service charges

Neighbourhood and 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.

STAR Survey 2015				
Tenant satisfaction with their 2011 2015				
neighbourhood as a place to live 75% 83%				

Regeneration

The decision to redevelop Tinkers Green and Kerria estates was taken following an in-depth study of council housing in Tamworth, which found that some housing in these areas was unpopular with residents, outdated and unsuitable for current housing needs.

The first two phases at Tinkers Green have been successfully completed and the final phase is due to finish in March 2016. The regeneration of the Kerria Centre will then start from April 2016

Regeneration Statistics:

100 properties to be demolished at Tinkers Green108 new homes will be built36 properties to be demolished at the Kerria Centre44 new homes will be built

The project is anticipated to cost £21.5 million

Looking forward 2015/2016

- Aim to have a developer appointed by the end of 2015
- The first stage of demolition at Tinkers Green is due to start late 2015 with the second stage late 2016

New Development Programme

In February 2011, the Council's Cabinet agreed to either dispose of or develop 89 garage sites across the borough due to lack of demand, high levels of ASB or investment costs for maintenance:

- 12 sites have now been disposed of to two partner registered providers Waterloo Housing Group and Bromford - to deliver new affordable housing
- 4 sites have been developed, to date, by Waterloo Housing Group, to provide 17 new properties
- 5 sites providing 21 properties have been developed by Bromford

Looking forward 2015/2016

- Further sites will be transferred to registered providers. Work is due to start in April, with properties scheduled to be completed and ready to let in the autumn. There will be a total of 13 properties built, which will include wheelchair accessible flats and disabled bungalows
- It is our intention for the future to look at further sites as part of a new programme of council house building

Environmental Programme

A total of **16** projects have been completed under the continuing environmental works programme. These have included:

- The enhancement of five drying areas by replacing pathways and sheds
- External improvements to sheltered schemes to include erecting raised planters and replacing shrubs and grassed areas throughout the borough.
- Low level fencing was been erected at some bungalows, offering better security and reducing anti social behaviour for the occupants

Can we have 4 photos here of before and after which can be found in Housing & Health/Housing/Tenant Participation/Photos/Annual Report 2014/201/environmental programme

Looking forward 2015/2016

- Consideration will be given into erecting security fencing at one of the borough's sheltered schemes
- The cladding and insulating of garages, underneath properties, will continue into 2015/16
- Improvements to drying areas to continue throughout the borough

Caretaking Services

Throughout the year the Council's Caretaking Team has dealt with

- Graffiti removal (non-offensive) 14 cases
- Graffiti removal (offensive) 8 cases
- Fly tipping removal 880 cases
- Alleyway clearances 39 cases
- Garage site clearances 3 cases
- Drying area clearances 27 cases

178 tonnes of rubbish has successfully been cleared from the estates by the team

Looking forward 2015/2016

 In conjunction with the regeneration programme, the Caretaking Team will continue to ensure the estates are kept clear of any debris and rubbish through regular estate inspection checks

Tenancy Sustainment

- Introduction of the Something's not Right campaign which tackles poor tenure and tenancy conditions, with the aim to ensure homes are healthy, warm and safe
- Continue to proactively collect customer profile information and tailor services according to needs

Looking forward 2015/2016

- Develop a hoarding policy
- Look to extend the Something's Not Right to other service areas across the council

Anti - social Behaviour

This is our second year benchmarking with HouseMark, which enables us to compare our key performance with **305** other housing providers

	2013/2014	2014/2015
Number of complaints received	584	296
Percentage of customers satisfied that		
they were kept informed throughout the	57%	79%
ASB case		
Percentage of customers satisfied with		
the support given to them during their	61%	74%
ASB case		
Percentage of customers satisfied with	57%	67%
the outcome of their ASB complaint	01 70	
Successfully closed ASB cases	70%	99%
•	7070	(top quartile)
Percentage of customers who have		
already made a complaint of ASB, who	79%	85%
would be willing to report ASB in the	. 3 70	3370
future		

Number of ASB cases	296
Number of injunctions	1
Number of evictions	1

348 incidents were recorded during the year which included

Туре	Number
Noise	131
Pets/animals	50
Harassment/threats	41
Garden nuisance	40

Did you know?

- We ask every tenant who has reported an ASB case what they thought about our service.
- We will consider your suggestions to be included in future environmental programme. Please discuss with your tenancy sustainment officer
- We introduced the vulnerability risk assessment matrix and satisfaction survey for alleged perpetrators. This enables us to tailor the service to individual needs

Looking forward 2015/2016

- A review of the ASB policy and procedure will take place in conjunction with new legislation on the ASB Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Continue to work with partners in dealing with customers' complex needs.
- Prepare for a health check and Housemark re-accreditation of the ASB Respect Standard

Increasing our housing stock

We are currently launching an exciting pilot scheme to buy empty homes. This will increase the supply of affordable council housing for people on the housing register. The council will consider the re-purchase of any homes, but priority will be given to the following types of properties:

- One or two bedroom properties
- Former council homes
- Meeting the council's wider aims around preventing homelessness

So if you know of any one selling their property that is:-

- Up to the value of £100,000
- Will be vacant on completion
- In good condition and minimal repair works required

Then give us a call. The money available is limited each financial year, so you will be advised whether the scheme is open or closed when you contact us.

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 demonstrating value for money which doesn't only mean keeping costs to a minimum. Value for money is also achieved through the following:

- Senior managers regularly review budgets and the highest areas of spending.
- Tenants are involved in the choice and appointment of contractors, suppliers and consultants to help ensure we get the right balance between cost and quality.
- Spent more than £3million on improvements to homes ensuring that our core business of providing affordable homes to those in need continues to expand
- 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 also produces an annual report which identifies areas for improvement.
- In supported housing we moved from residential to commercial utilities making savings of more than £50k
- Tenants and staff have worked together to review Tamworth's Local Offers and used this feedback to ensure that our standards continue to meet the needs of customers
- Reviewing the cost of an anti-social behaviour case without reducing the service
- Continued to remove old inefficient gas appliances and install new 'A' rated appliances, reducing heating and hot water energy costs for tenants across the borough
- Continuing to clad and insulate garages, underneath properties, consequently reducing utility bills for the occupants
- The implementation of the tenant portal will reduce the number of quarterly rent statements that are posted out.
- We continue to provide and improve an easier and accessible service to customers

Did you know?

78%

Overall tenant satisfaction with landlord services

95%

Tenants satisfied with Finding a Home

94%

Customers satisfied with response repairs

89%

Customers satisfied with complaint handling

73%

Customers satisfied with the way Landlord Services deals with anti-social behaviour 100%

Customers satisfied with environmental works 87%

Customers satisfied with cleaning of internal communal areas

Other than overall satisfaction (based on 2011 STATUS), all performance indicators are either in the top quartile or reflect an improving position.

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

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Estimated Top Quartile*
Overall satisfaction with Landlord Services	75.2%	To be carried out in 2015/16	To be carried out in 2015/16	78%	84%
Average time between lettings	16 days	14 days	19 days	17 days	20 days
Walkabouts/ Estate Inspections	4	4	3	Estate Inspections = 10	Not benchmarked
Satisfaction with cleaning	86%	86%	87%	87%	86.25%
Number of tenants on the database of	373	348	428	497	Not benchmarked

involvement					
% appointments made and kept	99.13%	99.56%	97.57%	97.86%	98%
Gas servicing	99.75%	99.9%	100%	99.69%	100%
Urgent repairs completed on time	100%	95.09	98.53%	98.02%	97.0%
Customer satisfaction	87%	91.45%	93.68%	93.76%	97.0%
Arrears as a % of rent due	2.04%	2.37%	2.28%	1.96%	1.58%
Evictions	8	22	22	28	0.18%

^{*}Figures based on estimated top quartile range when benchmarked nationally

You said:	We listened:
Customers have told us that sometimes there is not enough information provided in Stage One response letters	The Complaints Review Panel has worked with staff to compile a comprehensive suite of standard response letters that are fully informative in an attempt to reduce any escalation of a complaint to Stage 2
Customers have complained that they believe that the 90 day repairs category is too long	This will be reviewed as part of the Repairs Policy 2015/16
Repair appointments are not always given out routinely and customers have reported that they are not always offered a job reference number	Mears call centre staff have been requested to routinely offer appointments and issue job reference numbers so that jobs can always be traced back to the customer Mears has also invited customers from tenant working groups to shadow call centre staff
Repair operatives requesting to use tenants' tools.	This was raised with operatives as part of Mears 'tool box talks'
Bathroom refurbishments taking longer to complete than originally advised	In reality, bathroom refurbishments are being completed within agreed timescales - it is simply that the agreed timescales are longer than some customers would like. This is further compounded by the fact that work operatives are not on site constantly, throughout the course of the works, which again gives customers the view that the work could be completed more quickly if operatives were on site more frequently. Communication between customers and the Tenant Liaison Officer has been improved

A response letter is now sent out within seven days to advise Customers having to enquire about customers that the review will take the outcome of their banding review place over forthcoming weeks and the customer will be advised accordingly. In the majority of cases the issue of damp and condensation is the result of individual lifestyle. When this is proved to be the case, staff will offer Residents believe that the time taken advice and assistance to customers to try to resolve their damp and along with supporting literature on condensation issues takes far too how they can mitigate risks of condensation and damp. When this is long not the cause, we will endeavour to work with Oaks Preservation to reduce the time taken to diagnose a

damp/condensation issue.

