

**Tamworth Borough Council
Neighbourhood Services (Draft)**

Annual Report to Tenants

2020 – 2021

DRAFT

(Different design to last year please)

Tenant Approved Stamp

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If you require this information in another format or language,
please call 01827 709709 or email: enquiries@tamworth.gov.uk

Welcome to your Annual Report

Welcome to the 2020-2021 Annual Report for Tenants and Leaseholders. This report is designed to show how we are performing and what we have achieved over the last 12 months.

Over the last 12 months we have faced unprecedented challenges in the face of a global pandemic. Despite this Tamworth Borough Council has worked tirelessly to ensure the safety of its tenants and staff and to ensure continuity of service for the residents of Tamworth where possible.

Customers remain at the heart of Neighbourhood Services and we continue to lead 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 some of the things we have worked on this year to make your homes and estates more than just a place to live.

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 Neighbourhood service.

We would encourage everyone to get involved in any way that they can – even something as simple as filling in an online survey can make sure that your views are heard and that the council know what is important to you.

We would like to acknowledge the valuable contribution made by tenants to all of our work and encourage you not to just read this report, but take part in improving services in the future.

We continue to send out the Annual Report by email. However, the report is also available to download via the website. As ever, we welcome any feedback you have on the report and its contents, so please do get in touch if you would like to.

If you find yourself interested and would like to get involved or simply require further information please contact the Tenant Regulatory & Involvement Team on 01827 709709 or email tenantparticipation@tamworth.gov.uk

Who We Are



Area	Total Properties
Amington	409
Belgrave	294
Bolehall	348
Borough Road	38
Coton Green	65
Dosthill	79
Fazeley	111
Gillway	218
Glasgote	571
Hockley	149
Kettlebrook	205
Leyfields	451
Stonydelph	707
The Leys	62
Town Centre	390
Two Gates	21
Wilnecote	204
Grand Total	4322

Total number of properties: 4322

Type of properties available to tenants

Property Type	0 Bed	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4+ Bed	Total
BEDSIT	1					1
BUNGALOW		203	32			235
FLAT/MAISONETTE		703	529	20		1252
HOUSE			560	1754	155	2469
SHELTERED		324	38	3		365
Total	1	1230	1159	1777	155	4322

A Year in Pictures 2020/21

pics of an outdoor theatre event and the drive-in in the Castle Grounds and of staff who were covid marshalls. Also picks of cleaning/renovations and new exhibit being built at the castle.

litter pick photos from community groups and planting of trees by street scene.

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment

This section looks at how we communicate and involve our tenants and how well we know and respond to tenants needs.

<p>Tenant Inspector Communal Cleaning Audits</p> <p>Tenant inspectors monitor the quality of service delivery against defined standards and undertake on-site inspections</p>	<p>Estate Inspection programme</p> <p>To help ensure estates are kept clean and in good condition, regular inspections are carried out by neighbourhood services and tenants.</p>	<p>Tenant Consultative Group</p> <p>This group discusses a range of issues and is involved in the decision making process to improve neighbourhood services for all. This group is consulted on all tenant related policies, practices and procedures and current issues affecting Tamworth Borough Council and its tenants.</p>	<p>Complaints Review Panel</p> <p>The Panel reviews anonymised information relating to the Tell Us Policy. The Panel looks for key trends and emerging common themes and will make recommendations for service improvements.</p>
<p>ASB Service Improvement Group</p> <p>This is a forum that looks at the delivery of service improvements, considers and discusses best practice, self-assesses neighbourhood service ASB for compliance against national standards and establishes and monitors action plans and key performance data.</p>	<p>Tenants Voice Editorial Panel</p> <p>Is a working group who review publications produced by Neighbourhood Services. These include Tamworth Matters (tenant's newsletter), Annual Report to tenants, information leaflets, surveys, standard letters and any document intended for tenants.</p> <p>Any document showing the 'Tenant Approved' stamp has been reviewed by the Editorial Panel to ensure the content and design meet their high standards, is clear, helpful and in plain language.</p>	<p>Tenant Involvement Group</p> <p>Oversees the implementation of actions and performance targets set out in the Tenant Involvement Strategy action plan. In addition to this, the group closely monitors all customer intelligence and performance.</p>	<p>Surveys/ Questionnaires/ Focus Groups/ Consultation Drop in sessions</p> <p>This provides customers with an opportunity to give their views and opinions on the services they receive.</p>

<p>Seniors United</p> <p>This is a forum for sheltered housing tenants to get together, share ideas and experiences and discuss issues relevant to their needs with the support of their Independent Living Manager and Tenant Regulatory & Involvement Team.</p>	<p>Neighbourhood Improvement Programme</p> <p>This initiative gives tenants the opportunity to make recommendations to improve the environment in their local area, subject to budget availability.</p>	<p>Police Community Engagement Days</p> <p>Engagement days address local area issues through community contact, address-parking issues and abandoned properties and give residents the opportunity to get involved and have their say in local issues that affect or are of interest to them.</p>	<p>Estate Based Events</p> <p>Various events may be held throughout the year for tenants to come along and find out about changes or improvements to services, such as rent levels, repairs or any other housing or environmental issues. These events are normally publicised in the tenants newsletter Tamworth Matters, Marmion House and on the Council's website</p>
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Get Involved!

Tamworth Borough Council is committed to involving, consulting and informing our customers on a wide range of issues. We believe that involving customers improves the effectiveness of our housing services and can help you to develop new skills.

Tenant involvement is about giving you the opportunity to have a say in the way we provide housing services. It means that you will be able to influence the decisions that affect you, your homes and communities. We provide a wide range of involvement opportunities to enable people of all backgrounds, ages and minority groups to participate.

How we kept the service going throughout the pandemic!

The Council has a long history of positive tenant involvement to ensure views are always considered and feedback has continued to prove invaluable in shaping policies, strategies and service delivery over many years. Due to lock down and ongoing restrictions we had to pause our ordinary face to face meetings and scheduled yearly events. Tenant engagement was needed more than ever in respect of COVID-19 and the Tenant Regulatory & Involvement Team continued to successfully engage with all TCG (Tenant Consultative Group) members through calls, email, and conference call facility and more recently through Teams meetings which also assisted our involvement groups to reach out to those residents that most needed our support. The Tenant Consultative Group embraced this new way of working which will continue to develop as we now explore other options as part of a new programme of digital engagement. In addition, the Tenant Regulatory Team have continued all through Covid to engage with some of our more

vulnerable tenants to check on their wellbeing and avoid social isolation through what has been a difficult time.

The Tenant Regulation & Involvement Team was also instrumental in developing a programme of communication and engagement with all Tamworth residents as part of the National COVID-19 Shielding Scheme. The programme consisted of calls, sign posting to other services and organisations, registering residents on the shielding scheme, updating critical resident information and liaising with the Councils Community Wardens to undertake door step calls where other engagement options had proved unsuccessful.

We have developed and improved partnerships with other organisations in order to support residents of Tamworth throughout the pandemic. We support Staffordshire County Council with information gathering and reaching out to vulnerable tenants and we partnered with the charity Community Together who delivered food parcels to vulnerable residents unable to travel to shops.

We have continually monitored and adapted our services to ensure that we have followed government guidance. This has meant that some services have been provided differently during this time, to ensure we keep residents and our employees. As restrictions have eased, services that were paused during lockdown have restarted where possible.

A total of 935 High Rise welfare calls were made to vulnerable tenants during the Pandemic to offer support and assistance

Graphics can these quotes go into speech bubbles please

'Thank you so very much for taking the time to check on me and that I have been ok during the pandemic, it has been much appreciated. I don't get out much and these calls have helped me not feel quite so lonely during these strange times' Tenant at Townshend House.

'I have really enjoyed our weekly chats and I have looked forward to them as time has gone by during the last 12 months or so. I am going to miss not speaking to you and thanks again for checking to see that I have been ok over the last year' Tenant at Peel House.

'It's been so nice speaking to you over the last year and it has really helped my mental health knowing that you would be calling. You have helped me through a difficult time and I'm going to miss not talking to you every week' Tenant at Weymouth House.

'The weekly calls have been a lifesaver throughout the pandemic and I have been given useful information and support' – Strode House resident

'It's been wonderful to have a phone call every fortnight' – Harcourt House resident

Customer feedback

Complaints, Compliments and Service Requests

We value all feedback about services we deliver to tenants and we understand that at times we do not always get things right. We want to hear from you if you do not feel that you have received the level of service you expect from us. This will enable us to learn and make improvements to our services.

A total of **472** complaints, compliments and service requests were received within Neighbourhood Services during 2020/2021. Of the total received, **50%** were classified as complaints, **43%** service requests and **7%** compliments

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Complaints	195	174	238
Compliments	55	36	32
Service requests	315	222	202
Total	565	432	472

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Number of stage 1 complaints	179	159	223
Number of stage 2 complaints	16	15	15
Number of complaints upheld	23	22	79
Number of compliments	55	36	32

Across the total number of 238 complaints:

- **158** relate to repairs contractors Wates & Engie (inclusive of Engie Gas)
- **29** relate to Housing Solutions
- **9** relate to Tenancy/ASB issues
- **10** relate to TBC Repairs
- **12** relate to Property Services
- **20** relate to Housing Services

Across the total number of 32 compliments:

- **7** relate to repairs contractors Wates & Engie (including Engie Gas)
- **3** relate to Housing Solutions
- **5** relate to Tenancy/ASB issues
- **17** relate to other housing services

In summary, 238 complaints were received within Neighbourhood Services during 2020/2019. This is a significantly small proportion in relation to **4322** household tenancies.

Complaints upheld

During 2020/2021 there was a total of **79** complaints, that following investigation, were classified as upheld. All of which were associated with Wates & Engie the Council's repairs contractor. Engie's contract with the council commenced in April 2020 during the first national lock down and took on additional duties such as health and safety inspections for multiple departments across the council who were unable to carry out site visits due to lockdown. During this difficult transition there was a small increase in complaints relating to contractors which were upheld, however since Engie have become more established with the service standards have increased and the number of complaints reduced.

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 this 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.

Picture here graphics to provide " Have your say" from 2018/2019 Annual Report

Have your say either by going on line at www.tamworth.gov.uk/do-it-online or telephone 01827 709709.

Home

This section looks at how we provide homes that are safe, of good quality and well maintained

	2019/20	2020/21
Percentage of repairs completed on first visit	88.58%	85.44
Customer satisfaction for responsive repairs	95%	94%
Percentage of appointments made and kept	88.27%	87.33
Percentage of complaints relating to the repairs service	35%	30%
Percentage of complaints relating to the gas service	1%	0.54%

Average number of calendar days to complete a repair 11.56 days	Number of Roofing Jobs 47	Number of Gas Services 3,678	Number of Void properties 323	Number of responsive repairs 15,744
Number of Electrical tests/Inspections 619	Number of Boiler replacements 108	Percentage of repairs completed at first visit 85.44%	Average spend on an empty property £4,276	Total cost to carry out responsive repairs £1.4m

Gas servicing

Tenant satisfaction with gas servicing arrangements

2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
86%	88%	90%

Planned maintenance

In 2020/2021, we spent approximately **£3,384,556** on planned home improvements

Improvement Programme	How Many	Total spend
Kitchens	206	£991,288
Bathrooms	202	£480,000
Roofing	209-Properties	£1,004,499
Windows and Doors	177	£648,819
Disabled Adaptations (Major and Minor)	47	£112,620
Heating installations	121	£147,330

<p>Disabled adaptations This year a total of 47 disabled adaptations were completed in tenants' homes, making them more suitable for the householder.</p>	<p>Picture/image to be included - Graphics (perhaps a picture of a stair lift?)</p>
<p>Regeneration Sites Despite delays caused by Covid-19 both the Tinkers Green sites were completed and are now fully occupied.</p>	<p>Picture/image to be included - Graphics</p>
<p>New Fire Doors in High Rise Blocks The programme of fire door replacements in the high-rise blocks aimed at further improving fire safety standards has commenced and will continue through into 2022.</p>	<p>Picture/image to be included - Graphics</p>

How we kept the service going through the Pandemic!

Despite mobilising the new repairs and investment contracts during the initial COVID lockdown period both contracts were able to implement safe systems of work that allowed them to continue delivering services largely unaffected. Essential safety works such as Gas Servicing, Fire Safety Checks, Electrical Checks, etc. were all completed; emergency repairs were completed as normal and other repairs along with planned improvement works were able to continue slightly later in the year. Additional PPE measures were implemented by contractors in order to protect operatives and residents.

Looking Forward 2021/2022

- We hope to be able to renew the aging drainage within 6 high-rise blocks.
- A programme of works around the Councils garage sites has been agreed and works will commence in 2021.
- We will continue to undertake gas safety checks but alongside these we will be striving to undertake a higher number of electrical safety checks using similar methods to ensure building safety.
- We will continue to deliver programmes of work across the Borough to maintain high standards in our housing.
- We aim to acquire new housing stock in the form of new-build houses and property bought on the open market to replace properties sold under the Right To Buy.

Tenancy

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

Number of active housing applicants on the housing waiting list, by band, as at 31 March 2021 was **449**

Band 1+	1
Band 1	60
Band 2	194
Band 3	143
Band 4	51
Total	449

Did you know?

<p>Optional welfare benefit checks Customers are given an optional welfare benefit check at the start of their tenancy which also includes referrals to support agencies</p>	<p>Average time between lettings 36.2 days on average to let properties</p>	<p>Total number of properties for re-letting 347 of council properties became available for re-letting; approximately 28 per month, 47 of these were refused</p>
<p>Finding a Home Customer Satisfaction This was paused during Covid-19 as Finding a Home was not operational for several months. This was re-instated in May 2021</p>	<p>Housing Choices Housing Solutions offer interviews to all applicants to ensure that customers are aware of all housing choices available to them</p>	<p>Early intervention to prevent homelessness Early intervention prevented or relieved 211 households becoming homeless which is an increase of 30% compared to 162 households in 2019/20</p>
<p>Length of Bed & Breakfast stay The average length of stay in Bed & Breakfast was 22 nights. This was within the 42 night limit set out by government legislation</p>	<p>Temporary accommodation On 31st March 2021 there were 22 households in temporary accommodation, 8 in Bed & Breakfast, 3 in Private sector leasing temporary accommodation units and 11 in council owned temporary accommodation units</p>	<p>Incentive to Move Delivered the incentive to move programme, which is designed to release larger family accommodation</p>

New Allocations Policy

During 2020/21 extensive work was undertaken in preparation for the implementation of the new Housing Allocations Policy. This was approved by Councillors during November 2019 and was implemented in June 2020.

The new Allocations policy included the biggest change to Councils register since it first implemented choice based lettings and these changes reduced the housing register substantially from 1333 in May 2020 to 665 after its implementation.

Supported Housing – Now Known as Homeless Services

Our aim is to provide high quality short-term accommodation together with a dedicated team who provide a visiting support service for people who are faced with homelessness. Our support is to help people through the crisis they face and to prepare them to successfully move on to their own independent tenancies.

We have 20 self-contained flats in total across 2 sites, both of which are both near to local amenities and good public transport links.

We offer help, guidance and advice such as:

- Claiming welfare benefits
- Help in sorting out debt problems and budgeting
- Support and encouragement in career choices and gaining qualifications (e.g. keeping you up to date with where and what courses are available, help with forms, and CVs and accompanying you to appointments)
- Keeping you motivated and involved in decision making
- Contact other services/ agencies on your behalf

Graphics could these be presented in bubbles or a table? Something different to a list of bullet points so it looks different to the last list. Or pop the first list into a table, whichever is easier as long as there aren't 2 lists of bullet points

- **100%** of lettings turned around within 10 days from tenancy end date
- **100%** of support plans agreed within 4 weeks
- **100%** of successful move-on

Sheltered Housing

What is Sheltered Housing?

Sheltered housing provides people aged 55 and over with another housing choice in Tamworth.

Sheltered housing can be flats, studios or bungalows and are let unfurnished.

- Each property has its own front door, bedroom(s), lounge, kitchen and bathroom;
- An emergency intercom alarm system with pull cords in each room available 24 hours per day to give you peace of mind when you need help; and

- Scheme Manager on site Monday to Friday from 8.45am to 5.00pm, although these times may vary (excludes bank holidays).

<p>100% of monitoring sheets completed in relation to Legionella</p>	<p>100% of Needs Assessments carried out at all sheltered schemes for potential applicants – A total of 52 where completed</p> <p>Due to Covid-19 all assessments were carried out over the phone</p>
<p>We aim for all sheltered schemes to have a bi monthly residents meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to ensure tenants are involved with the running of their scheme and what is going on, which helps combat social isolation and tenants are left feeling involved</p> <p>These have been temporarily suspended due to Covid-19. Scheme managers have conducted daily phone calls to residents to ensure their wellbeing and help combat isolation</p>	<p>All properties and communal areas throughout our schemes that are answered 24/7. Outside of office hours calls are answered by Eldercare</p> <p>Of the 11174 alarm calls Eldercare received on average 97.24% of alarm calls answered within 60 seconds maintaining telecare services association standard.</p>
<p>We visit all new sheltered housing tenants within 24 hours of moving in to help people settle in, show where communal facilities are, demonstrate how to use the door entry system, community alarm equipment and explain what to do in the event of a fire</p> <p>100% of new tenants were visited with 24hrs of moving in</p> <p>During national and regional lockdowns these were conducted over the phone</p>	<p>We aim to carry out a Tenancy Sustainment Plan (TSP) (previously a Support Plan) with all new tenants within 4 weeks of their tenancy start date. A TSP is an action plan agreed with the customer(s) to look at how individuals needs can be met.</p> <p>100% of new tenants complete Tenancy management plans with their scheme manager within 4 weeks of moving in</p> <p>During national and regional lockdowns these were conducted over the phone</p>

How we kept the service going throughout the pandemic!

We successfully adapted our working methods to keep both our staff and residents safe throughout this pandemic

Sheltered Housing:

- We worked in partnership with Engie to ensure all building and safety checks continued to be carried out
- We worked proactively with Eldercare to develop a new process for pull cord testing while staff were working remotely
- Welfare daily visit sheets were updated to reflect residents as part of the national shielding list/disabilities/extremely clinically vulnerable/essential visitor information and contact information

- We made hundreds of welfare telephone calls on a daily basis, taking on the critical role of contacting the most vulnerable residents during the pandemic
- Residents were kept informed with monthly letters to all sheltered residents in accordance with Government guidance and updates in respect of COVID-19
- Posters for main entrance areas/communal lounges/corridors and landings/lifts/laundry room/garden areas were updated and installed around all sheltered schemes – This continues to be up-dated on a frequent basis as guidance changes. Posters and communication refer to social distancing/ hand washing /hand sanitiser/wearing face coverings/general hygiene to restrict spread of virus/non-use of some communal rooms
- Tenancy Sustainment Plans reviewed every 3 months or as appropriate

Housing Solutions:

- We created an online, editable Housing Register Application e- form
- We created an editable change of circumstances e- form
- Introduced a new digital agenda and platform for delivering services
- Team mailboxes created to support demand and ensure staff and residents could communicate effectively while working from home
- We supported customers with providing digital copies of documents required to support their housing applications
- Virtual Video created and online for changes to our allocations policy

Homelessness:

- A free phone number was set up for rough sleepers to ensure the service is accessible to all
- We supported partners in the third sector (Night shelter, Home start, Tamworth Cornerstone Housing Association (TCHA), DV refuge)
- Night shelter guests were accommodated at the point the country went into lock down and the shelter was closed due to COVID - 19. In total, accommodation was sought for 7 rough sleepers. No one returned to Rough Sleeping, a bed was secured for all.
- Dynamic purchased 5 rooms in local B&B's for 16 weeks, with unoccupied and occupied nightly rates negotiated in order to save money.
- All placements into B&B and Temporary Accommodation (TA) were completed remotely and virtually
- The Supported Housing Team provided support to those in TA stock as well as their own clients
- Online data protection statement was completed (S214 under HA 1996 Part VII)
- We continued to work with key partners such as Social Services and Ministry of Justice to support vulnerable care leavers and prisoners due for early release to ensure no one returns to rough sleeping.
- We created a COVID-19 secure checklist, thorough risk assessments and offered Personal protective equipment (PPE) to those in B&B and had self-contained units available for those clients with high risk.
- We continued to provide Out Of Hours (OOH) service 24/7.

Voids and allocations:

- To support the demand for additional temporary accommodation units, 6 properties were secured. These were properties with electric to ensure no turn on and test required, reducing the risk of COVID-19 exposure to residents and contractors.
- We paused Choice Based Lettings (CBL) between 20th April 2020 and 31st May 2020 in response to the Government's restrictions around lockdown measures on non-essential moves. However direct matches for homeless cases and essential moves continued
- Despite pausing CBL all pre-COVID-19 allocations were honoured
- We ensured all communications, website and FAQ's were updated regularly including on the 'finding a home' site
- Key safes were purchased for void properties through Engie, our contractors, to ensure contactless sign-up's on all properties
- All allocations are now completed virtually, with e-sign up's, emailed tenancy agreements and instant access to accommodation via key safes.
- We offered virtual tours of properties being offered to tenants
- Our contractors Engie completed exit inspections via reports and photographs instead of our Allocations Officers to reduce risk of exposure to Tamworth Borough Council staff and contractors
- E-decoration vouchers were introduced to replace the paper ones issued from Marmion House
- A virtual "how to move" video was completed and is now online for tenants

Rent

In section we will show you how we keep rent at an affordable amount for our tenants and work with tenants to ensure they can maintain their tenancy.

New online digital platform

Tamworth Borough Council housing tenants can now manage aspects of their tenancy online, in real-time, through the brand new MyHousing website.

By registering with MyHousing, tenants create their own safe and secure personal account where they can access services 24/7

Functions of MyHousing include:

- Live access to rent account balances and transactions, including the ability to make online payments, set up direct debits and print statements
- Update personal details, including who's living in a property
- Check the status of any ongoing repairs, as well as planned works to an individual home or communal building
- View a repairs history
- Report incidents of anti-social behaviour
- Send direct messages to members of the housing team.

Registering for MyHousing is simple. You just need an email address.

Get started now by going to <https://myhousing.tamworth.gov.uk/>

Tenants can choose to play a quick demo to see how the website works upon registering.

If you need help to register, and do not have a friend or family member who can assist you, please call our Customer Services team on 01827 709709, webchat, or email enquiries@tamworth.gov.uk.

	As at 31st at March 2020	As at 31 st March 2021
Number of Council Tenants on Universal Credit	1072	1449
Number of Council Tenants on Universal Credit in Rent Arrears	663	680
Percentage of Council Tenants on Universal Credit in Rent Arrears	61.85%	46.93%
Number of Council Tenants on Universal Credit not in Rent Arrears	409	769
Percentage of Council Tenants on Universal Credit not in Rent Arrears	38.15%	53.07%

Average rent (excluding service charges)

Property Type	Weekly	Monthly
1 Bedroom Flat/Maisonette	77.26	309.04
2 Bedroom Flat/ Maisonette	87.41	349.64
1 Bedroom Bungalow	86.10	344.40
2 Bedroom Bungalow	97.69	390.76
2 Bedroom House	96.00	384.00
3 Bedroom House	98.22	392.88
4 bedroom House	110.66	442.64

<p>Reduction in evictions</p> <p>The number of evictions carried out for 2020/2021 was 0 compared to 9 in 2019/2020</p> <p>Eviction is always the last resort</p>	<p>Notices of seeking Possession</p> <p>The number of NSP's Issued for rent arrears in 2020/2021 was 712 compared to 698 in 2019/2020</p>	<p>Rent Incentive Draw</p> <p>Our quarterly rent incentive draw continues with a prize of £250 to encourage tenants to keep a clear rent account</p>
<p>Rent collected as a % of annual debit</p> <p>Rent collected as a % of annual debit was 101.92% for 2019/2020 and 100.14% for 2020/2021</p>	<p>HQN (Housing Quality Network) Review of TBC's rent against government rent policy</p> <p>Current rents that are being charged are accurate and in accordance with guidelines.</p>	<p>Early Intervention</p> <p>Emphasis continues to be placed on early intervention whilst arrears are at a low level in order to prevent the escalation of arrears</p>

Hardship Fund

Housing introduced a revised £20,000 hardship fund, funded by the HRA, in the summer of 2020 in response to the impact of Covid-19. Tenants could apply for an award of up to £400 or in some exceptional cases more. Examples of what funding was awarded for included:

- Essential kitchen white goods
- Vehicle repairs, for vehicles that were essential for work purposes.
- Tenants where the family income had reduced due to Covid-19 and were struggling to pay the rent.

The scheme at first had limited publicity and a limited take up but the terms were improved, it was given more publicity and consequently more applications were received, and awards

granted during the end of the 20-21 financial year. It is a useful tool for tenancy sustainment officers to target financial help to those tenants in greatest need, helping them to retain their tenancy. During the 2020/21 financial year a total of £7,354 was awarded to 19 tenants.

Universal Credit

Many of our tenants are now receiving regular monthly payments of universal credit and we can advise you on how to apply. We can help you by setting up an alternative payment arrangement where universal credit is paid direct to your rent account, to pay the standard weeks rent, plus an additional sum towards any arrears if this applies. Many customers have found this to be the easiest way to pay their rent and / or arrears.

Customers seeking help or advice about Universal Credit can contact the UC help line 0800 328 5644, which is a free call, Mon to Fri, 8.00am to 6pm. Alternatively queries regarding UC can be directed to the Citizens advice Mid Mercia helpline

Tel: 08082 787972, open Monday to Friday 10am to 4.00pm

Contents Insurance

Tamworth Borough Council has negotiated a home contents insurance scheme for its tenants and leaseholders. The prices are competitive and contents insurance is worth considering. It is important to protect your personal contents in your property against loss or damage caused by fire, flood and burglary. The council's insurance policy only covers the building not your personal contents. Further information is available at:

<http://www.tamworth.gov.uk/contents-insurance>

Tamworth Advice Centre (TAC) Help with Benefits and Debt advice

The Tamworth Advice Centre (TAC) will check you are getting all the benefits you are entitled to and help you apply for them. Assist you in setting up your own bank account, help you deal with debts and to learn to budget within your means. They can assist with employment issues and with specialist debt advice such as bankruptcy, debt relief orders, breathing space applications and if you are being taken to court.

There are various ways to contact the TAC:

- **Online:** Quick instant [Online Self Referral Form](#). We will then arrange for an advisor to call you.
- **Phone:** For advice and booking appointments - (Free phone) **0808 82787972** 10.00am to 4.00pm Monday to Friday (quoting you live in Tamworth)
- **Email:** tamworthadvice@citizensadvicemidmercia.org.uk
- **Website:** www.citizensadvice.org.uk/local/mid-mercia

How we kept the service going throughout the pandemic!

The pandemic restricted Tenancy Sustainment Officers (TSO) to working from home and where unable to carry out their usual tenancy visits to support tenants who were struggling to maintain their tenancy. Despite this they still maintained a full support service by adapting their working methods.

Letters, phone calls emails and texts became the principle means of communication with tenants. TSO continued to provide tenants with rent and benefit advice, sign posting them to other specialist organisations such as the Tamworth Advice Centre, social services, drug and alcohol support services, and other relevant TBC departments.

A digital approach to communication has proven to be more time effective and was even preferred by some tenants who otherwise might have had to take time from work or travel into town with young children to attend appointments at Marmion House.

There were significant restrictions imposed by the County Courts during the year preventing tenants being taken to court. The constant changes to legislation were closely monitored by management and implemented with immediate effect to ensure Tamworth Borough Council always complied with the law. Despite the lack of court intervention the Income Team was successful in agreeing more voluntary payment arrangements with tenants.

Here are a few examples of how our TSO's have supported tenants through the pandemic to ensure they can maintain their tenancy

Graphics can these be speech bubbles or have a pretty box of some kind

A Tenant living in a three-bed house with two adult sons. One son worked full time and the other had limited agency work. The tenant had severe depression, anxiety and other health issues meaning they were unable to work. The tenant was claiming employment support allowance and housing benefit. The TSO advised the tenant to move to Universal credit which would be a better financial option for the tenant's circumstances. The tenant had concerns about the eight-week delay before they would receive the first payment, which they worried would leave them in more debt. The tenant was referred to Tamworth Advice Centre (TAC) for a full benefit check. They advised the tenant to claim Universal credit (UC) and Personal Independent Payment (PIP) and was awarded both. The tenant thanked TSO for their support and advice, and is now £107 per week better off. The tenant informed us their stress had reduced and mental health had improved dramatically as a result.

A Tenant had four family members affected by Covid-19, including themselves and one child in hospital, which as a result meant they were unable to work for a period of time. This understandably contributed to their anxiety and their rent account went into rent arrears. Once the tenant returned to work they were only able to do a limited number of hours and where struggling to maintain their rent account and clear their arrears. Their TSO applied for alternative payment arrangement (APA) for the tenant's Universal Credit and managed payments (MP) for direct payments to cover the full rent and arrears. TSO also referred the case to Tamworth Advice Centre to see if any additional support was available for the tenant. The tenant pleased with outcome has stated they can now afford payments and will be able to sustain their tenancy moving forward.

A Tenant contacted their TSO seeking support to avoid possession action. The TSO completed an assessment and identified that tenant does not have the financial means to cover 2 bed under occupation charge and arrears payments. The TSO referred case to TAC and applied for discretionary housing payment (DHP). They also advised the tenant to downsize to a smaller property suitable for their current needs which would remove the under occupation charge. The TSO applied for new rent card and food bank vouchers to support the tenant. The tenant has stated since the receiving the support of their TSO they can manage to pay the under occupation charge in the interim so arrears are static and the problem will not escalate. The TSO is continuing to support the tenant's application for a transfer to a smaller property as a sustainable long-term solution.

Neighbourhood and community

In this section we talk about how we work with tenants 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.

Estate Inspection Programme

Estate inspections are carried out to assess the standards of service we are delivering, identify areas for improvement and generally identify any action needed to be taken to address tenancy breaches. We are committed to inspecting our housing areas on a regular basis.

The estate inspection team will aim to identify issues such as;

- Vandalism
- Abandoned vehicles / illegally parked vehicles
- Graffiti
- Litter and fly-tipping
- Dog fouling
- Problems with highway maintenance and street lighting
- Health and safety issues
- Neglected homes and gardens, tenancy issues
- Hot spots for anti-social behaviour
- The condition of hard landscape (e.g. fences, walls and paving)
- The condition of soft landscape (e.g. trees, grass, shrubs in communal areas)

Estate Inspections will;

- Provide a high profile presence on our estates
- Ensure cleaner, more attractive and safer neighbourhoods
- Improve the physical condition of estates through quick responses to residents' concerns and by identifying potential improvements
- Clear communal areas of fly-tipping/graffiti and rubbish
- Identify overgrown gardens/shrubbery
- Identify defective street lighting and estate furniture
- Ensure agencies take responsibility for issues identified within their remit
- Identify potholes and surface perishing to hard surfaces and uneven and broken paving.

Unfortunately due to Covid-19 restrictions, national and regional lockdowns it was not possible to conduct estate inspections with residents in 2020/21. Our team of street wardens conducted estate inspections on behalf of the tenant participation team in order to ensure standards or service where maintained.

CCTV

The new shared service

Tamworth Borough Councils CCTV system was historically based in the Ankerside carpark. The system consisted of 78 cameras monitoring areas across the Tamworth Borough area. Registered with the Office of the Information Commissioner, the purpose of the system is to deter and detect crime as well as support the good operational management of the borough.

The system was first installed in the mid 90's and had a general CCTV life expectancy of 8 to 10 years. It was technically obsolete and was becoming a substantial financial commitment to the council.

A full service review was carried out in 2018/19, commissioned with identifying a long term sustainable strategy in relation to the service. The primary focus of the review was to ensure that the system was fit for purpose, continued to meet the needs of the Council and its residents, but also affordable in the long term.

Having explored multiple options it was determined that the best option to pursue, meeting the objectives of the review, was to enter into a shared service agreement with West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). The option was ratified by Committee within both organisations and legally agreed in 2019, for delivery of the service transfer by 30th March 2020. The benefits of the shared service agreement are well documented, but include continued 24/7/365 monitoring, the upgrade of every component of the CCTV system as well as savings in the order of £500k over a 5 year period.

How it benefits us

WMCA monitor circa 2500 CCTV cameras 24/7 365 days of the year in their state of the art control centre. The control centre is externally audited and compliant with the Surveillance Camera Commissioners Code of Practice, BS7958 and is supported by a resilient ISO27001 data centre. Tamworth have joined East Staffs BC, Walsall and Solihull Councils in entering into such an agreement. The agreement has also encapsulated out of hours call handling for Tamworth BC.

An initial concern by Police partners about the shared service was the need to go to Birmingham for evidence collection. Following discussion with Staffordshire Police, it was agreed that a remote viewing client and evidence management system would be installed in Burton Police Station. This investment has been made to save police time and to ensure that all data provided is secure. It has been a highly beneficial investment and provides value for money and support that the police always require.

The transfer of the service away from Tamworth has included the transfer of access to both the Town Safe radio system and radio system for the Wardens service. Recent developments has seen the installation of the Police airwave radio by Staffordshire Police which will speed up all future, real time communications between the control room and Police colleagues.

The WMCA CCTV system is continuously developing its technology meaning that Tamworth Boroughs CCTV system will be at the forefront of CCTV within Staffordshire. The

ongoing commitment to improvement has meant that the Tamworth service has been embraced by the operators who have shown a real commitment to high quality provision. The CCTV operatives have proactively caught many incidents and used the new upgraded system to support Police colleagues in compiling high quality evidence packs.

Within the Shared Service Agreement the CCTV operators also have the responsibility to manage the Council Out of Hour (OOH). They are required to act as first point of contact for emergency calls outside of normal office hours. They manage and prioritise calls, according to documented procedure, escalating to Assistant Directors as required. They have in the first 12 months, managed calls regarding flooding, fallen trees, travellers and many others. As well as documented procedures, all OOH calls are recorded, and random reviews are carried out to support continuous improvement.

How we made sure operatives know the area they're monitoring

Each operator has undergone a familiarisation and training programme developed and overseen by the Tamworth BC employed Shared Service Lead. Familiarisation consists of utilising the mapping, alongside the camera selection interface to learn how camera locations relate to each other. This then progresses into initial test exercises, which culminates in operators having to locate and follow the Shared Service Lead around the town centre, ensuring that they do not lose sight at any time. This is very beneficial for the operators local knowledge. The training gradually increases in pace and then complexity with a mock dual location incident management being required. Operators are then required to map the route they have monitored and produce an evidence package as would be the case in a genuine incident.

Anti-Social Behaviour

The team continued to work hard over the last 12 months, achieving a number of successful outcomes, all of which help towards making your neighbourhood safe.

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Number of complaints received	299	252	162
Percentage of customers satisfied that they were kept informed throughout their ASB case	64%	66%	64%
Percentage of customers satisfied with the support given to them during their ASB case	66%	60%	66%
Percentage of customers satisfied with the outcome of their ASB complaint	47%	47%	66%
Successfully closed ASB cases (resolved)	100%	99%	98%

Percentage of customers who have already made a complaint of ASB, and who would be willing to report ASB in the future	71%	79%	87%
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Number of ASB cases: **162**

Number of Civil Injunctions: **1**

Number of Notice Seeking Possession/Demotion: **6**

Number of possessions: **0- Courts closed due to lockdown**

Nature of incident	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Noise	76	87	76
Pets/animals	24	25	20
Harassment/threats	42	46	35
Garden nuisance	48	70	24*
Other	109	63	7
Total	299	252	162

*The garden figure has now been amended this year, as community wardens now monitor front gardens so the figure reflects housing rear gardens only.

Intervention remains a key factor in how we deal with ASB cases. The team intervene as early as possible where evidence is provided. This often prevents enforcement action from being taken. In 2020/21 early intervention was carried out with **201 cases** to successfully resolve them

162 incidents were recorded during 2020/2021 compared to 252 incidents in 2019/2020. Some of the environmental ASB matters, such as maintaining front gardens, have been transferred over to Community Wardens to monitor and record separately and so are no longer included in these ASB records.

The Neighbourhood Services ASB and Estate Management Team merged with the Corporate ASB Team to include CCTV, Community wardens and multi tenure ASB service as one centralised service in order to streamline a more efficient approach to dealing with ASB and environmental crime. While the courts have been closed due to Covid-19 we have been successful in securing an injunction for severe ongoing ASB.

10 Community protection warnings were served, 7 of those proceeded Community protection notices due to non-compliance, to resolve the matter by the tenancy sustainment officers. The community wardens now deal with enforcement of front gardens on a tenure neutral basis.

How we kept the service going throughout the Pandemic!

The wardens have supported sheltered housing and the clinically extremely vulnerable through the first part of the pandemic. They have also maintained Covid-19 posters throughout out schemes and communal areas. In Eringden we have adopted remote

working with checks on residents, customer profiling to offer appropriate support and an emergency escalation process for any tenant unaccounted for.

The estates team have had to modify their services from office and site to home and digital working. We have adapted forms and accepted documents via scan and email to allow services to continue as normal throughout the pandemic. There has been no significant dip in satisfaction despite the changes in working practice.

10 Community protection warnings were served, 7 of those proceeded Community protection notices due to non-compliance, to resolve the matter by the tenancy sustainment officers. The community wardens now deal with enforcement of front gardens on a tenure neutral basis.

For more information about ASB see web link <http://www.tamworth.gov.uk/asb-zone>

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:

- Comparing costs and performance with other similar housing providers. Assess value for money (VFM), by using an independent organisation called HouseMark. This organisation compares our services to other councils and registered social landlords. HouseMark also produces an annual report which identifies areas for improvement
- Monitoring 'tenant satisfaction that rent is providing value for money'. We check this by carrying out regular tenant satisfaction surveys
- Continue to remove old inefficient gas appliances and install new 'A' rated appliances, reducing heating and hot water energy costs for tenants across the borough
- Purchasing existing properties has enabled an efficient and effective use of capital receipts funding, one element of the Housing Revenue Account capital business programme to increase its stock
- Senior managers regularly review budgets and the highest areas of spending
- Spent more than **£3,384,556** on improvements to homes ensuring that our core business of providing affordable homes to those in need continues to expand

Did you know?

The following indicators have been agreed with tenants

	2018/2019	2019/20	2020/21	Estimated top quartile*
Overall satisfaction with Neighbourhood services	78%	78%	Unable to complete	82%
Average time between lettings	15 days	22.6 days	36.2 days	18.53 Days
Estate Inspections	10	6	Unable to complete	Not benchmarked
Tenant satisfaction with communal cleaning	87%	76%	Unable to complete	Not benchmarked
Number of tenants on the database of involvement	479	479	479	Not benchmarked
% of repairs appointments made and kept	93.30%	89%	87.33	97.06%
Gas servicing CP 12	100%	98%	99.05%	100%
% of repairs completed at first visit	87.80%	88%	88.58%	93.59%
Customer satisfaction with responsive repairs	90.80%	95%	95%	91.23%
Arrears as a % of rent due	2.83%	2.87%	2.66%	1.55%
Number of Evictions	13 (0.31%)	9 (0.21%)	0	0.17%

- Figures based on estimated top quartile range when benchmarked nationally

Top performance indicators as voted for by tenants as at 31 March 2020

Performance Indicator	Target	Current Value	Are we on target	Trend
Average number of calendar days to complete repairs	-	11.56		↓

Percentage of appointments made and kept	93%	87.33%		↓
Percentage of repairs completed at first visit	85%	88.58%		↑
Percentage of properties with a valid Gas Safety Certificate	100%	99.05%		↑
Average re-let times (in days)	16 days	36.2 days		↓
Percentage of closed resolved anti-social - behaviour cases	-	98%	-	-
Number of close unresolved anti-social behaviour cases	-	0	-	-
Current rent arrears as a percentage of annual debit	3%	2.66%		↑
Number of complaints since 1st April 2020	-	238	-	-
Number of complaints upheld since 1st April 2019	-	79	-	-
Number of compliments since 1st April 2019	-	32	-	-