

Housing Service Annual Report 2014/15



Introduction from Cllr Bayliss

We were very proud to complete the Decent Homes Improvement Programme by 31 March 2015. We can now say that 100% of the council's housing stock meets the decent homes standard. The last three years of work has seen us make improvements to more than 3,700 homes, spending almost £28 million to ensure our tenants have decent homes to live in.

2015 has also been a year for further involvement of our tenants in the design and shaping of our housing services. The Tenant Scrutiny Panel completed its second inspection, this time looking at how we monitor our performance and how tenants can access that performance information, and issued its findings in a report in March 2015.

Five recommendations were made to the Housing Service to make sure performance information was accessible to our tenants, and that the Housing Service was monitoring performance in service areas that were important to tenants. All of the recommendations made by the panel have been

approved by the council and are in the process of being implemented by the Housing Service.

For the first time in over 25 years the council has plans to build new homes, and I am very happy at the prospect of these exciting developments. We have identified potential sites in Coalville and Ashby, and we also approved an Acquisitions Policy to help guide us through the new build process. Our new homes will be built for rent and will be allocated through the choice based letting system, as we are conscious that we have increasing numbers of people joining our Housing Register.

As ever, thanks are due to our staff for all they do throughout the year to work with tenants and councillors to deliver the high standards of service and housing provision to which we all aspire. I could not conclude without acknowledging the invaluable contribution made by tenants to their local communities through their Tenants and Residents Associations, and also through the Tenants and Leaseholders Consultation Forum.



Councillor Roger Bayliss,
Portfolio Holder for Housing

Welcome from Glyn Jones

It gives me great pleasure to report on another year of significant achievement for the Housing Service in 2014/15. I joined the Housing Service in September 2014, and the creation of the Interim Director of Housing role was undoubtedly a positive sign of the Council investing in the future of the Housing Service.

Probably the most significant milestone for tenants has been the completion of our three year Decent Homes Improvement Programme. A total of 3,771 homes have been improved using approximately £20 million in central government funding, and almost £8 million of North West Leicestershire District Council's own resources.

We have started our Green and Decent Pilot, with 12 tenant households volunteering to try out more energy efficient means of providing heating, electricity or hot water. Technologies on trial include solar panels, biomass boilers and air source heat pumps. Preliminary results have been very positive and these findings will help to tell us how we can extend the programme to other properties from April 2016.

We put in place plans to start building new council homes for the first time in a generation. We are planning to develop empty sites or derelict garage areas within our housing estates, and also redevelop empty blocks of former sheltered accommodation. As well as improving our existing neighbourhoods, the new properties will also help meet the growing demand for rented accommodation across the District, as evidenced by a growing Housing Register.

We understand that welfare reform is an area of major change for many of our tenants. Our Housing Officers and the Housing Advice Team are available to help anyone who feels they could benefit from our support, which could mean advice on budgeting or help with moving to a smaller home.

The new Tenancy Support Service has been a success and has provided support to vulnerable tenants that need a bit of extra help in maintaining their tenancy with us. Practical help is provided by our Tenancy Support Officer on setting up a new home, and maximising entitlement to welfare benefits. This work helps to prevent homelessness and promote more stable communities.

Other service improvements that were introduced included our repair operatives using mobile technology to receive job orders, order materials and capture customer satisfaction with the work carried out. This has allowed us to develop a repairs service that is more flexible and better able to meet our tenants' needs. We also recruited a new Resident Involvement Team, and they have been instrumental in establishing positive relationships with the active tenant groups we have.

To find out more information about the Housing Service, or how we can help you, just pick up the phone and call our Housing Management Team on 01530 454660, email us at housingmgt@nwleicestershire.gov.uk or call in to reception at the Council Offices in Coalville to speak to us.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Glyn Jones', written in a cursive style.

Glyn Jones
Director of Housing

About this report

Inside our 2014/15 Housing Annual Report, you will find details about the services we provide as your landlord and how well we perform against our targets.

Sharing this information with our tenants is important as we want to be open about how we work. We hope that providing information like this helps you to understand what we do, how much the service costs, and how tenants can help improve what we do.

We would like to say a big thank you to all our tenants that have been involved in helping to shape and improve the Housing Service.

If you have any feedback about how we can improve our annual reports in future, please see page 14 for further information.

You can also let us know if you want to get involved in any aspect of the Housing Service.

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Tenant involvement and empowerment

Key facts



We provided training to
23 residents

Topics included I.T.,
recruitment, first aid and
tenant scrutiny.

In November 2014 a new Resident Involvement Team was created. Sue Ross Resident Involvement Officer and Diane Caffrey Resident Involvement Administrative Assistant joined the Team.

In March 2015, Justin O'Brien joined the team as Resident Involvement Team Leader. With a full team we have positive plans to improve Resident Involvement activities in 2015/16 which include increasing the number of tenants actively involved.

The Tenants and Leaseholders Consultation Forum (TLCF) is the main body that we use to consult with our tenants and leaseholders.

Some of the items the TLCF was consulted on in 2014/15 include the 2015/16 budget, and various Housing Management policies such as under-occupation and the use of garages.

Bob Dawe, Chair of the TLCF, said "We are a group of residents that meet regularly to discuss issues relating to our housing. We are independent of the council, but have a positive relationship with them. We manage a budget of £21,000 to support Resident



Bob Dawe, Chair of the TLCF and
Laura Quinton, Vice Chair

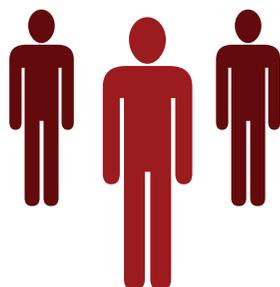
Involvement activities across the district. We were involved in forming the new Resident Involvement Staff structure and our members sat on interview panels for new staff. Being part of this process develops understanding and encourages participation by all tenants in the Housing Service. We have plans to increase the number of Tenant and

Resident Associations (TARAs) across the district in the coming year and new members are always most welcome.

We got feedback
by running

12

consultations



These have included mobile working for staff, rent
setting and the development of new decoration packs.

We met with tenants on

114

separate occasions

Tenant involvement and empowerment

Tenant scrutiny

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel was established in March 2012 in response to the Localism Act 2011. This Act has given social housing tenants stronger tools to hold their landlords to account through tenant panels.

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel carefully examines the services being offered by the Housing Service, forms judgements about the cost and quality of these services and offers recommendations to help the services improve.



Janet Higgins, Chair of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel, lives in Ashby and had this to say about the panel's second year:

“The Tenant Scrutiny Panel currently consists of five local tenants – with each individual bringing their own set of skills. We give our time voluntarily as members of the group. In 2014/15 we published our second report, which looked at how the Housing Service monitors its performance and how tenants can access this performance information.

“We’re pleased to say that 100% of our recommendations have been accepted and we’re working with the Housing Service to make sure all our recommendations are implemented. We do this by working closely with relevant managers to develop action plans and ask that managers report on their progress on a regular basis to the panel.

“We’re now planning our next inspection, which is a review of how the Housing Service supports tenants who are in arrears. We’ll also look into eviction rates and how the service can help to prevent evictions.

“The following inspection will look at responsive repairs - we know that this will be a challenging but interesting inspection!

“In October we organised a fun day at the Hermitage Hotel. The team pulled together to make the event one that appealed to everyone, offering advice and guidance on all aspects of the Housing Service. In addition a free dog chipping service was offered and we had representatives from The Citizens Advice Bureau, Trafford Hall who provides training to tenants, and some of our contractors to offer additional advice and guidance.

“Members of the panel have benefited from extensive training, which has given us all a great deal more confidence in our ability to fulfil our roles.

“As a scrutiny panel we are very grateful for the positive relationship we have with the Housing Service and the council as a whole. The work we do helps to drive up standards and improve services which can only be a good thing for council tenants.”

If you would like to find out more about the Tenant Scrutiny Panel or join the panel, please contact the Resident Involvement Team on 01530 454795 or resident.involvement@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

Tenant involvement and empowerment

Empty homes inspections



Tenants help us to drive up the standards of our empty homes!

Tenants from all across the district have been trained to carry out inspections of our empty homes before they are let to new tenants. These tenants inspect approximately 20% of our empty homes. This has resulted in real improvements to the standards of our empty homes and a review of the empty homes lettable standard. Inspectors have also reported a improvement in the quality of workmanship and standard of cleanliness that they are seeing during inspections.

Tenant and Resident Associations (TARAs)

In 2014/15 TARA members contributed more than

3,500
volunteer hours to help their local communities.



More than **16** newsletters were produced, including **4** editions of our tenants newsletter Intouch

More than

300

children accessed activities that were organised by our TARAs



Over **£16,000** was raised by the five TARAs across the district to support their local activities.



The Resident Involvement Team is already working on increasing the number of TARAs across the district.

Improving your home

Decent Homes Improvement Programme

Planned maintenance and improvement work

This includes work that we do to bring properties up to the National Decent Homes Standard and other work that needs to be done periodically to maintain your homes. This includes, for example, replacement windows, kitchens, doors or heating systems.



Mrs Smith of Ibstock

Investing in young people

Gabby Landico who worked on the DHIP programme with NWLDC and Lovell as an Apprentice Business Administrator was nominated for a national award – Apprentice of the year in the 2014 Builder and Engineer Awards.

Key facts

Percentage of customers **satisfied** with DHIP programme

96%



Decent Homes 2012 -15

On 31 March 2015 we finished our main Decent Homes Programme, bringing the three year programme to an end.

We made **3,771** of our homes decent, and installed:

- **2,094** new kitchens
- **1,584** new bathrooms
- **1,031** new heating systems
- **574** full electrical rewires
- **3,188** new doors or windows
- **452** new roofs.

Our total investment in these improvements to our homes was **£27,854,999**, broken down each year as follows:

- **2012-13** **£3,899,502**
- **2013-14** **£10,437,643**
- **2014-15** **£13,517,854**

Of those tenants who had their homes made decent, 1,182 (33%) very kindly completed a survey to provide us with feedback about the service they had received, and of these 96% expressed their satisfaction with the overall service that they had received.

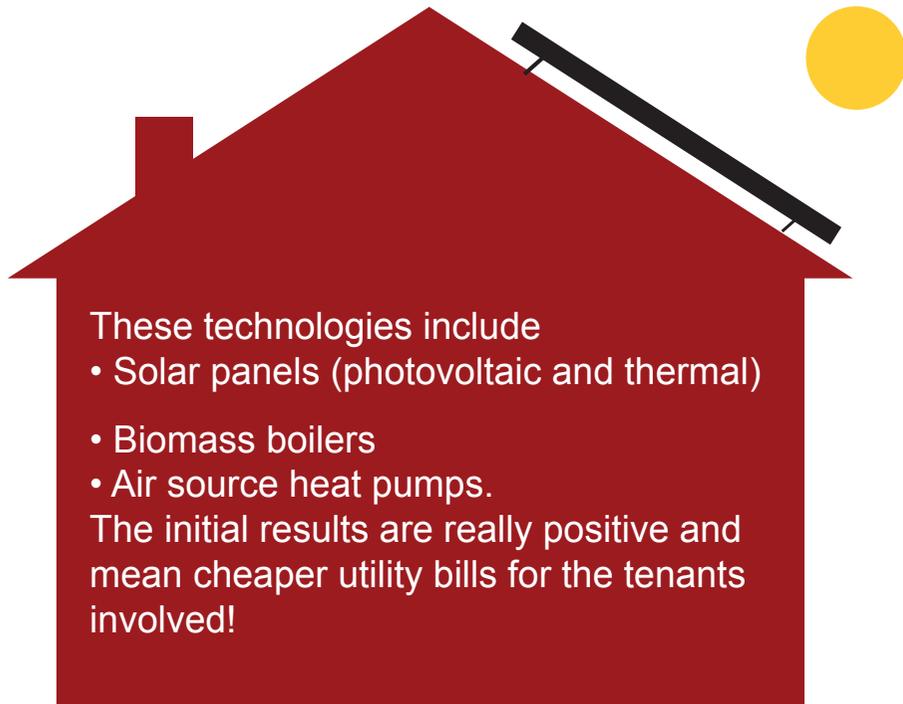
We will now make sure each one of our homes continues to achieve the decency standard year on year.

Our Green Initiatives

Green and Decent

Green and Decent Homes Pilot

During 2014, 12 families in council homes offered to volunteer as part of a trial and are testing out renewable technologies for us. We are looking at innovative ways of providing heating and hot water in tenant's homes.



Miss Cope, Donisthorpe, holding a bag of wood pellets for her bio-mass boiler and Mrs. Inett



“The council installed 12 solar panels for me and over a period of time - 12 months - we’ve noted a large drop in both gas and electrical usage which in turn has halved the utility bill for each item.”

Mr. Brooks, Coalville.

All technologies installed under the Green and Decent pilot have been performing well with some volunteers set to save over £500 a year on their energy costs.

The results will be analysed during 2015/16 and used to inform future installations of green technologies where feasible.

Repairing and maintaining your home

Responsive Repairs

Day-to-day repairs service (known as responsive repairs). This is when tenants report repairs that happen in their home from time to time

Making our appointments process more efficient

In 2014 we introduced a new computer system for managing our repairs called 'Oneserve'. The intelligent system helps us to continuously re-evaluate workloads of operatives allowing our In-House Repairs Team to work 'mobile' through the use of tablet computers. This means the team spends less time travelling and saves on fuel costs, so we can do more repairs and offer a more efficient service.



Percentage of total responsive repairs completed within target

96%

- Emergency repairs completed within time – **98%**
- Urgent repairs completed within time – **98%**
- Routine repairs completed within time – **96%**

Percentage of repairs completed correctly first time

99%

Percentage of appointments made and kept

99%

Percentage of customers satisfied with adaptations

100%

Percentage of customers satisfied with responsive repairs

95%

A total of **11,264** responsive repairs were done in 2014/15

We took on our **fourth In-House Repairs Apprentice in four years**

Helping people into new homes

Key facts



389

council homes
let in 2014/15

A total of
508

applicants were housed
into rented housing by
NWLDC and local housing
associations.

It took an average

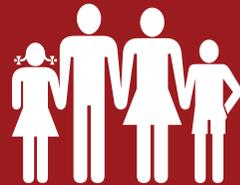
56 days

to re-let empty homes
against a target of 35 days,
so we will focus on improving
performance in this area in
the coming year.

789
people

on the Housing
Register at the end of
2014/15.

44% increase from
2013/14.



91.2%

of tenants were **satisfied**
with the decoration packs.
for their new homes.

Homefinder



The Homefinder Scheme was set up in 2013.

It is a countywide private rented sector project supported by North West Leicestershire District Council, Blaby District Council, Charnwood Borough Council, Hinckley and Bosworth District Council, Oadby and Wigston Borough Council, Melton Borough Council, Market Harborough District Council, and Leicester City Council.

The scheme supports home seekers, landlords and lettings agents. It offers home seekers an alternative choice to social

housing and a wider choice of areas without having to have a local connection to a particular district.

It also offers landlords and letting agents a free advertising portal and up to date advice, legal information and support documents.

The aim of the scheme is:

- To offer a wider choice of accommodation
- To increase access to available, affordable, good quality private rented accommodation
- To promote good practice and good tenants through the provision of training and support information

Find out more about Homefinder at www.homefinder.uk.com

Your tenancy

A review of the tenancy agreement was started. A group of tenants formed a task and finish group in November 2014 to help ensure the tenancy agreement was fit for purpose. In 2015 draft copies will be distributed to all tenants to get as much feedback as possible and to ensure as many tenants as possible are involved in shaping the new agreement.

At the end on 2014/15, outstanding arrears was 2.01% (against a target of 2.13%). This meant £341,000 in rent was owed to us from a

rental income of £17 million.



769 text messages

were sent to tenants asking if they were satisfied with with the Housing Management Service.

Satisfaction rate was

80%

Tenancy Support Service

The Tenancy Support Service offers advice and assistance in many areas, including:

- **Rent arrears**
- **Financial independence**
- **Benefits (general)**
- **Antisocial behaviour controls**
- **Tenancy matters**
- **Repairs liaison**
- **Recycling**
- **Routes to employment and training**
- **Hoarding**
- **Domestic cleaning.**

In 2014/15, 92% of tenants who used the service rated it as good or very good.

The Tenancy Support Officer has helped many tenants to gain financial independence and has helped them to access funding from a variety of different sources including Welfare Provisions and Severn Trent Trust Fund.

The service has contributed to accessing over £22,000 of benefits on behalf of tenants.

Dealing with anti-social behaviour

96.6%
of ASB cases were resolved.

Staff received training in anti-social behaviour and changes were implemented for new legislation which gave us new powers to deal with anti-social behaviour more effectively.

Your tenancy

Older Persons Service

We reviewed the service we provide to 400 older tenants at more than 1,000 locations in 2014/15.

The review began as Leicestershire County Council informed us that the grant we receive from them will come to an end in September 2015, so we will no longer receive £306,000 per year to fund the 24 hour Control Centre and the Older Persons Support Service.

We may have to reduce the number of people we visit, although we will continue to provide a visiting support service to those with the greatest support need. We will be looking at the possibility of support staff being based in schemes and this will enable the staff to support the development of various social activities for residents.

We will contact tenants who receive the service prior to any changes being implemented in 2015.

During 2015 we will commence a review of all sheltered schemes to determine the long term use of the buildings

Lifeline

At the touch of a button from your pendant, you can be connected to our Coalville based Control Centre at anytime day or night, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. If you need assistance, the Control Centre operator will contact a friend or a relative or even the emergency services for you, offering peace of mind and reassurance. Some of our properties have the link to the Control Centre hard wired in the building and others have an independent system. You don't have to live in supported or sheltered accommodation to have a lifeline, in fact you don't even need to be a council tenant. To find out more, contact Sadie Sumerton on 01530 454817. Sadie can come out and show you the equipment, how it works and what it costs.



Neighbourhoods and communities

Key facts



954 households provided with advice and assistance

Early intervention by the Housing Choices Team meant

206

households were **prevented from becoming homeless.**



Continued homeless prevention work meant we only spent 32% of the budget for bed and breakfast accommodation,

saving the council £47,513.

The total spend was £22,487. In 2012/13 the council was spending in excess of £100,000 on bed and breakfast accommodation.

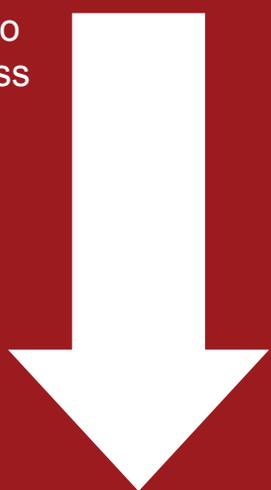
We also worked in partnership with Leicestershire County Council to help keep

83 households safe from harm.

The number of people who were declared as homeless was reduced by

20%

as a result of our early intervention work.



Partnership working successes

Through positive partnership working, 117 affordable homes were provided across eight different developments in Ashby de la Zouch, Castle Donington, Ibstock and Kegworth. A further

707 future new affordable homes have been negotiated with developers to be built across the district.



The former Pick and Shovel pub on Memorial Square in Coalville has stood empty for more than ten years. Thanks to a partnership between the council, emh group and the Homes and Communities Agency, 14 affordable apartments will now be built in place of the derelict building.

Performance

Tenants top ten

Our tenants have chosen a set of performance indicators known as the 'Tenants top ten'. These are the results for 2014/15.



Performance Indicator	Target	Actual	Status
Percentage of customers satisfied with responsive repairs	95%	95%	
Percentage of rent loss through vacant dwellings	1.8%	2.71%	
Percentage of emergency repairs completed on time – within 24 hours	99.75%	98%	
Percentage of total repairs completed within target	99.20%	96%	
All new customers to have a support plan within six weeks of tenancy start date	100%	100%	
Average number of days to resolve stage one complaint	10	11	
Percentage of dwellings vacant but unavailable	3%	2.86%	
Quality of call response by control centre	99%	99.24%	
The number of anti-social behavior cases resolved within target	95%	96.6%	
Percentage of new tenants satisfied with the allocation and letting process	90%	97%	

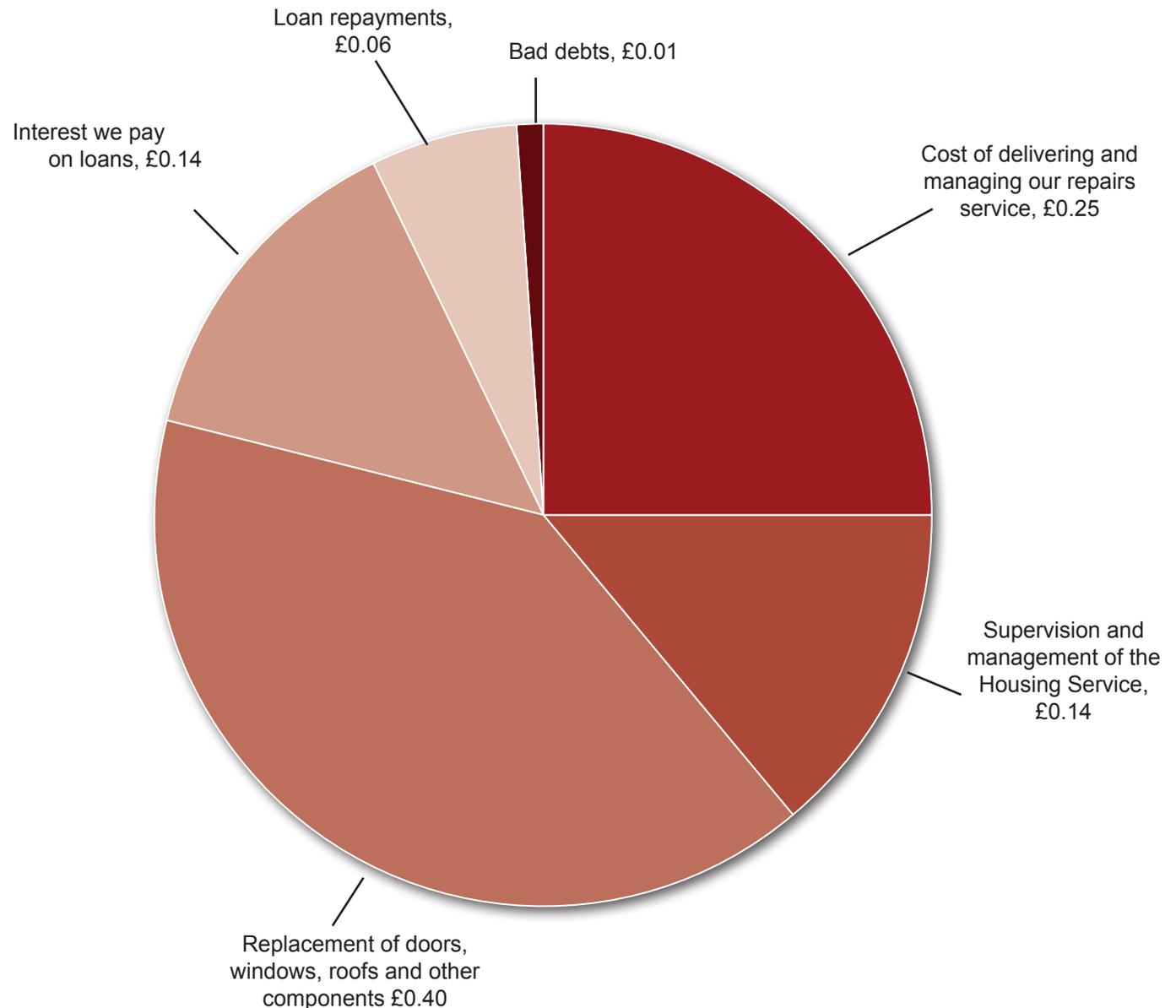
Spending your money wisely

How we spent every £1 of your rent in 2014/15

The money that you pay in rent goes into what is called the 'Housing Revenue Account' or 'HRA' for short. This is then used to pay for different parts of the service. In the pie chart opposite you will see how every £1 of rent you pay is spent on the service we provide.

We invest your money entirely in the services that we provide, and we manage our spending very carefully to deliver our services effectively.

In 2014/15 we used an additional £2.1m to supplement the Decent Homes Programme, meaning that more tenants could benefit from replacement doors, windows, roofs and other components.



Tell us what you think of the 2014/15 Annual Report

1. Do you feel that the amount of information in this report was:

About right Too much Too little

2. Did you find the report easy to understand?

Yes No

3. Would you be interested in reviewing/helping set up the 2015/16 annual report?

Yes No

4. Are you interested in getting involved with other aspects of the Housing Service? We can come and meet with you to discuss opportunities.

Yes No

5. Any other comments

Thank you for your comments, we may contact you to discuss your comments further. If you are happy for us to contact you, please provide the following details.

Your name:

Contact tel no:

Email address:

Gender: Age:

Ethnicity:

Please return to:
Housing Business Support Team
North West Leicestershire District Council, Council Offices,
Whitwick Road, Coalville, LE67 3FJ.

For more information contact North West Leicestershire District Council on 01530 454545.

This document is available in other formats on request