

Housing Service Annual Report 2015/16



Welcome to the NWLDC Housing Service

Annual Report 2015/16

Following the completion of our decent homes backlog programme in March 2015, I am very happy that we are continuing with this initiative and have made a commitment to maintain the decent homes standard for all of our tenants' homes. This year we spent over £2.8 million to ensure our tenants have decent homes to live in.

Our tenants continue to help shape and design our Housing Service and this year saw the Tenant Scrutiny Panel publish its third inspection report, which looked at how we deal with arrears and evictions. Thirteen recommendations were made that I'm confident will help us to improve how we deal with these important issues and support our tenants to help prevent homelessness.

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel is working on its fourth inspection, this time looking at our responsive repairs service, and I eagerly await the publication of this report.



Councillor Roger Bayliss,
Portfolio Holder for Housing

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Roger Bayliss'.

I am very excited that in 2015/16 we will start building new council homes again in North West Leicestershire for the first time in more than 30 years. These new homes are very much needed in our communities and this is evidenced by the increasing numbers of people on our housing register. All the new properties that we build will be for rent and will be allocated through the choice-based letting system.

As ever, thanks are due to our staff for all they do throughout the year, working with tenants and councillors to provide 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 and associated working groups.

Welcome from Glyn Jones

I am very happy to be able to report on another successful year for the Housing Service. My role of Director of Housing was made permanent this year, and I am looking forward to the years ahead and continuing to develop the Housing Service for the benefit of all our tenants.

We spent £2.8 million maintaining the decency of our homes in 2015/16. This follows on from the three year Decent Homes Programme that ended in 2015, and highlights our ongoing commitment to ensuring our tenants have decent homes to live in.

We have also significantly improved our performance with empty homes by reducing the numbers that are empty and making sure they are relet to new tenants more quickly. This means an increased rental income for the council and more people moving into new homes from the waiting list.

With welfare reform still high on the agenda, we have partnered with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and created the role of Universal Credit Support Officer to support our tenants, as they move over to Universal Credit. This role, coupled with our Tenancy Support Officer, provides a safety net for our most vulnerable tenants helping them to maintain their tenancy. We provide practical support with maximising entitlement to benefits, budgeting and liaising with partner agencies to ensure all possible support is in place.

We commissioned a value for money review of our repairs service in 2015/16 and as a result we will be restructuring our repairs team to make it more efficient and to ensure you receive a better service.

Our plans to build new council homes are moving forward and I am very excited about the prospect of building the first council housing for over 25 years. The first foundations will be laid in 2016/17. Our housing register and the demand for homes in our district is continuing to grow and these new properties will provide much needed high quality homes for people in need of housing. In addition, the development of empty sites and derelict garage areas will help to improve our neighbourhoods and the local environment.

To find out more information about our 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 2015/16 Housing Annual Report, you will find details about the services we provide as your landlord and how well we performed 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 us to improve what we do.

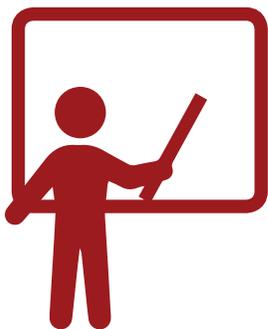
We would like to say a big thank you to all of the tenants that have been involved in helping to shape and improve the Housing Service.

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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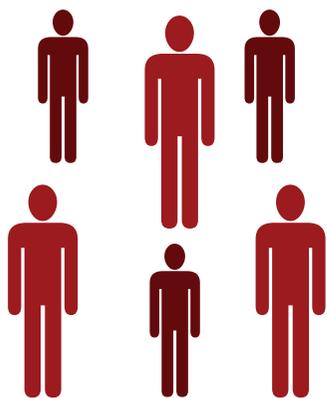
Tenant involvement and empowerment



39 residents

received training on
First aid
Food hygiene
Recruitment
Tenant scrutiny

31 consultations and surveys gave us **feedback** on the new **tenancy agreement, new build** projects and the development of the **Older Persons Service**



95 tenants attended meetings and including working groups:

- Housing Management Working Group
- Performance and Finance Working Group
- Older Person's Forum
- Tenants and Leaseholders Consultation Forum

Spotlight on: Tenants and Leaseholders Consultation Forum (TLCF)

The TLCF is the main group that we use to consult with our tenants and leaseholders.

11 meetings in 2015/16

TLCF consulted on **Housing Strategy, Older Persons Service** review, new **tenancy agreement** and **building new properties**



Laura Quinton, the new Chair of the TLCF: “The TLCF meets at least ten times each year to discuss housing issues and to offer the Housing Service our guidance and expertise as tenants.

“We are a group of approximately 40 tenants and leaseholders from across the district and we manage a budget of £21,000 to support resident involvement activities. Our members attend several housing-related working groups. Information from these working groups is fed into the TLCF to help the decision making process.

“We also support the eight Tenant and Resident Associations (TARAs) across the district and TARA members attend our meetings.

“Our members help to recruit new housing staff, inspect empty homes and to develop policies and procedures related to the Housing Service.

“We are always looking for new members so please get in touch with the Resident Involvement Team if you would like more information.”

Tenant involvement and empowerment

Spotlight on: Tenant and Resident Associations (TARAs)

We recognise the value and importance that our tenants play in improving their communities. Because of this, we support Tenant and Resident Associations (TARAs) across the district. All TARAs receive an annual grant of £600 and the support of our Resident Involvement Team which is always on hand to offer additional support.

During 2015/16 the Resident Involvement Team supported the development of three new TARAs across the district bringing the total number to eight. The new TARAs are located in Kegworth, Hugglescote and Whitwick and the existing five TARAs are in Measham, Greenhill, Coalville and Ashby.

More than
410
children accessed
activities that were
organised by our
TARAs



5,120 volunteer hours were given by TARA members to help their local communities in 2015/16

18 newsletters published including **four** editions of our tenant's newsletter **Intouch**



Over
£15,000
was raised by the eight
TARAs across the district



Tenant involvement and empowerment

Spotlight on: 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 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 2015/16 we published two reports. The first looked at how the Housing Service deals with arrears and evictions and the second was an inspection of the repairs service.

"We have now published four reports and are now beginning working on our fifth report, which will look at how the housing service deals with anti-social behaviour.

"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.

"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

Improving your home

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 (like replacement windows, kitchens, doors or heating systems).

Although we finished our main Decent Homes Programme in March 2015, we are committed to maintaining this and spent £2,898,796 maintaining decency in our homes in 2015/16.

In 2015/16 we installed:



91
new **kitchens**

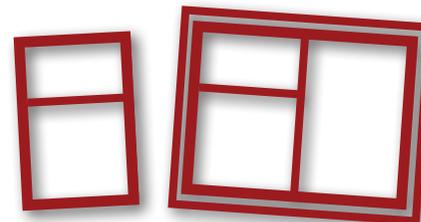
205
new **boilers**
(including 40 full
central heating
systems)

87
new **bathrooms**



73 new external
doors

343 new
windows



69
full **rewires**

80 adaptations made for elderly and disabled tenants
(costing £415,000)

This was our biggest investment in alterations to tenant's homes for 10 years. This included extensions for disabled family members, through to simple grab rails to help people get into and out of their homes more easily.

Repairing and maintaining your home

Responsive repairs

Our day-to-day repairs service is known as responsive repairs and we respond to the repairs tenants report in their home from time to time

Making our appointments process more efficient

We have introduced a new computer system called 'Oneserve' for managing our repairs. This intelligent system helps us to continuously re-evaluate workloads of our operatives, allowing our In-House Repairs Team to work 'mobile' by using 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.



12,132
responsive repairs

2,773 emergency
/ out of hours jobs

 **95.32%**
of tenants **satisfied** with
completed repair

98%
of **appointments**
made and kept

4,735
routine **repairs**


1,088
minor repairs

Helping people into new homes

126

affordable homes
delivered in 2015-16

Case study: Royal Oak Court affordable housing

Formerly a lively pub, the Pick and Shovel, Coalville stood empty for more than ten years, with various attempts to redevelop the site failing.

In July 2014, we approached emh group with a proposal to build affordable housing on the site and the promise to match fund the work (£500,000), subject to a successful funding bid to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).

This offer was accepted by emh group, and the HCA bid for £420,000 was successful.

The group completed the purchase of the site and received planning permission in February 2015.

The £2.2 million development saw the old building demolished, and 14 one-bedroom apartments built in its place, creating a landmark building at the key crossroads in Coalville and providing much needed affordable housing.

The apartments, which were officially opened in March 2016, are owned and managed by emh homes, the landlord arm of the group. Demolition and construction work was carried out by Lindum.



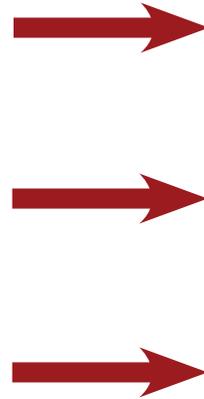
Cllr Richard Blunt Leader of North West Leicestershire District Council with Jim Patman Group Development Director at East Midlands Housing at the former Pick and Shovel site.



Helping people into new homes

Empty council homes

207
empty homes in April 2015
reduced
to 138
in March 2016 That's a
33%
reduction
76 days
– average time a home
was empty (against a
target of 40 days)



Our performance in preparing empty homes for new tenants was not as strong as we planned. We want to complete repairs to empty homes quickly so new tenants can move in and we can collect as much rent as possible.

We have changed the way we complete repair work to empty homes and now use our own In-house Repairs Team instead of contractors. Performance improved by the end of 2015/16 and we are confident that we will achieve our target of an average of 40 days empty for each property in 2016/17.

933

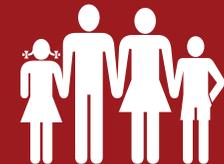
applicants **housed** into NWLDC and local housing associations accommodation



417

council properties let (including a number that had been empty for some time due to improvement works)

685



people on the **housing register**
at end of 2015/16

Your tenancy

Rent collection

£350,000

still owed to us

(out of **£18 million** due in rent)

Collecting as much rent as possible helps us pay for services like repairs and improvements to tenants' homes.

Welfare Reform means many tenants who receive benefits have less income than they did before so careful budgeting is more important than ever. Rent collection will always be a priority for us, and so will offering financial advice and support to tenants who get into difficulties.



Case study: manging money

Mr. Smith (not real name) was in real difficulty with finances and was a risk of losing his tenancy. His housing officer put in a referral to the Tenancy Support Service and a visit was arranged. The Tenancy Support Officer went through all the issues to try and solve the problems.

Mr. Smith said: "She just helped me sort everything out - my rent account, council tax and water bills. I didn't know that help like that was available, I feel much better now I know there is someone I can turn to for help."

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 **£25,000** of **benefits** on behalf of tenants.

In 2015/16 we also created a new role in partnership with the Department of Work and Pensions. This was a Universal Credit Support Worker to support tenants with the transition over to Universal Credit as it rolls out across our district.

For more information go to the following website www.gov.uk/universal-credit/overview

Your tenancy

Tenancy support service

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

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

95%

anti-social
behaviour
cases
resolved



116



tenants accessed our
tenancy support service.

Lifeline



An instant response at the touch of a button is the service you can expect when you have a piece of equipment known as a Lifeline.

The Lifeline is a home safety and personal security system that allows you to live independently in your own home. It's available for people of all ages, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

If you want to live independently and have the safety net of round-the-clock help at hand, get in touch with us.

100%

of requests for
a new Lifeline
services were
followed up
within
48 hours

100%

of responders
were **onsite**
within 60
minutes for
all out of hours
calls

100%

of new tenants
had a support
plan within
six weeks of
moving in

Neighbourhoods and communities



143 households **avoided becoming homeless** as a result of our interventions



We spent just

£17,000

(out of a budget of £53,000) on B&B accommodation for people we support - saving £36,000



Partnership with Stephenson College

We teamed up with apprentices from Stephenson College, Coalville to give Parkview Scheme in Whitwick a makeover. We hope this project will lead to an ongoing partnership providing work based placements for apprentices at Stephenson College.



Collective Switching Scheme

We launched a Collective Switching Scheme 'Switch and Save' in October 2015.

The scheme makes it easy for people to find a better deal for their gas and electricity by bidding together for a supplier.

Two Collective Switching 'auctions' took place in 2015/2016, with 225 people registering with the scheme and 91 going on to switch supplier. Those who switched are expected to make an average savings of £272 on their annual energy costs.



Performance

How is your Housing Service performing? End of year 2015/16

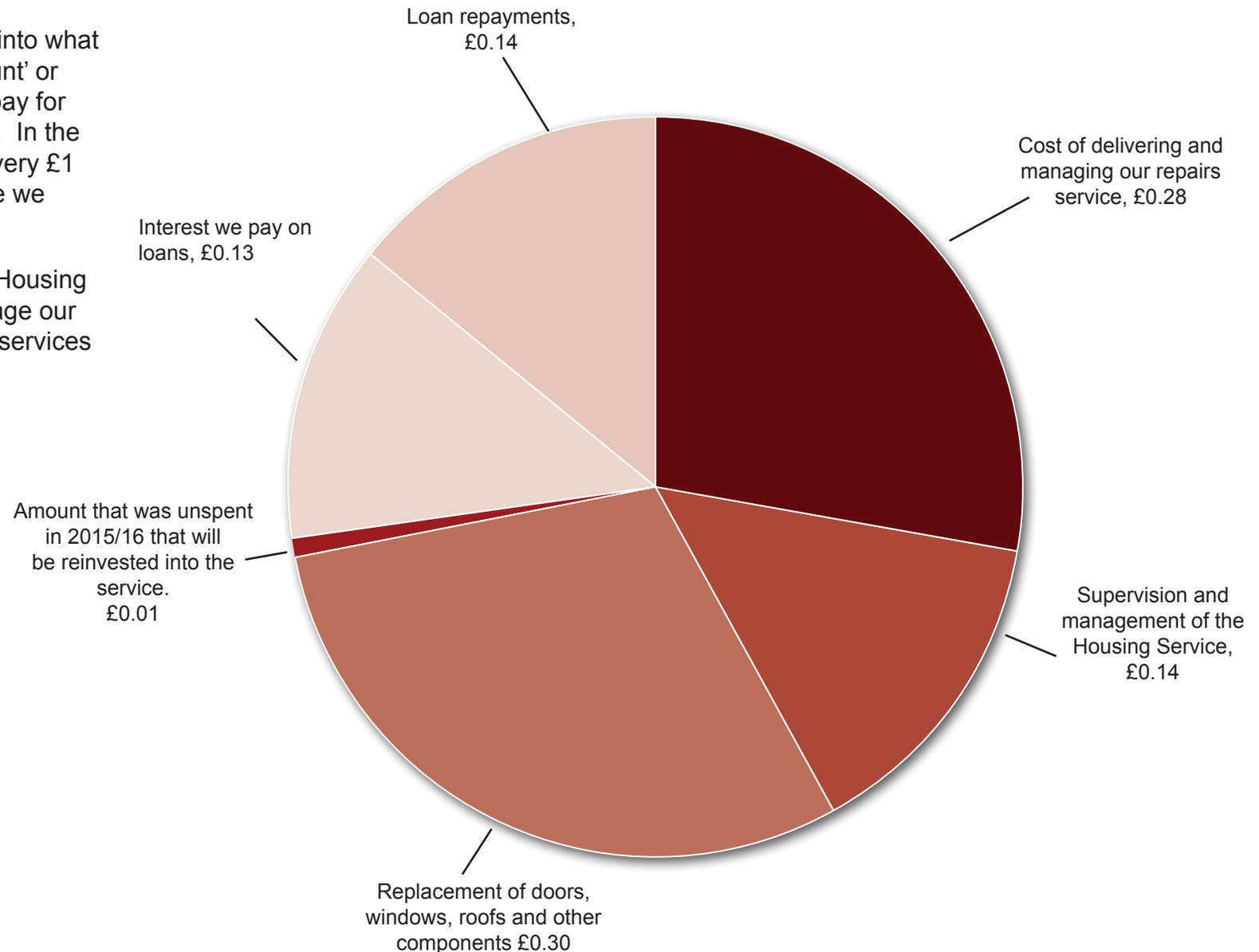
	Target	Actual
 Communities		
Anti-social behaviour cases resolved / closed successfully at the end of year	Not applicable	94.25% 82 out of 87 cases.
 Repairs		
Appointments made and kept by the repairs service	98%	98.35% (9,668 out of 9,830)
Total repairs completed within target	98%	99.48% 12,069 out of 12,131)
 Rents		
Rent loss due to empty properties	1.8% of the rent due (£324,031)	2.24% (£405,775)
Current rent owed – start of year	No target	£341,217
Current rent owed– end of year	3% of the rent due (£513,050)	1.94% of the rent due (£350,958)
Former rent owed – start of year	No target	£281,188
Former rent owed – end of year	No target	£187,100
 Empty homes		
Average re-let times	45 days	76 days
 Customer promise		
Complaints received	Not applicable	193
Complaints resolved at first contact	Not applicable	90% (173)

Spending your money wisely

How we spent every £1 of your rent in 2015/16

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 Housing 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 Housing service that we provide, and we manage our spending very carefully to deliver our services effectively.



Tell us what you think of the 2015/16 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 2016/17 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 or visit www.nwleics.gov.uk

This document is available in other formats on request