

HOUSING Annual Report

2014-2015



Welcome to the Annual Report which sets out how well the housing service has performed over the last year.

Our commitment is to provide good quality housing and community services to our residents that meet the agreed service standards and provide value for money. I believe this year we have again achieved

this goal and continue to learn from resident feedback to improve services.

From our emergency to housing management services we have maintained a high level of customer care. Your satisfaction with these services is reflected in the satisfaction surveys we have undertaken. Our rent service has continued to perform well against a backdrop of welfare reform expanding its financial inclusion service to provide extra help and money advice.

High demand for housing in the borough has led to the council assisting more households by providing temporary accommodation. We have managed this increase in demand and sought to reduce use of bed and breakfast where possible.

We launched the new Wandsworth Housing Strategy with a commitment to increase housing supply by a minimum of 18,000 new homes over the next 10 years. These homes will meet local demand for housing both to buy and rent including looking to significantly increase low cost rent and shared ownership housing.

We have also looked to improve our services and reviewed our Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) policies so we can take full advantage of the streamlined powers as set out in the new ASB, Crime and Policing Act 2014. We have also committed to continue our Housing Community Champions and Resident Reward schemes given the importance we place on recognising residents who contribute to making their estates and homes better places to live. This report has been produced in partnership with the resident's focus group. I'd like to thank them for their assistance.

Brian Reilly
Director of Housing and
Community Services

The Annual Report on performance tells you how well we have done in five key areas:

- Tenancy
- Neighbourhood and community
- Home
- Value for money
- Tenant involvement

Council residents mean council tenants, council leaseholders and people living in properties managed by a Resident Management Organisation (RMO).

Annual report

A traffic light system is used to assess how well we have performed.



- standard met



- some work to do to meet the quality standard



- a lot of work to do to meet the quality standard

Priorities for 2014-2015 were:

- **Improve** the way anti-social behaviour cases are processed
- Review **resident satisfaction** results and identify any actions required to address inconsistent lower levels of satisfaction with areas of service delivery.
- Review the **Resident Repair and Reward Plan**.
- Review the **Housing into Work** project and consider how the scheme can be expanded.
- Review the **Housing Strategy**.
- Deal with the **increased demand** of households presenting as homeless.
- Identify new **Housing Community Champions**.

A full copy of our annual report (known as the Annual Quality Performance Review) is available at:
www.wandsworth.gov.uk/housingaqpr

Tenancy

We will

- Make the best use of the available housing stock
- Be clear with residents about how properties are allocated
- Provide support to residents to enable them to maintain their tenancy

Allocations



Provide information on how we allocate properties and how to apply for housing.

Make sure we are making the best use of the housing available to meet a range of housing needs.

How have we met the standard?

- We housed **906** (1,117) households as fewer council homes become vacant for reletting than the previous year.
- We reduced the amount of time it takes to relet an empty property from 22.04 days to **21.21** days.
- We moved **53** (113) under occupying households to smaller more suitable accommodation.
- Despite higher demand, we managed to keep the number of households in temporary accommodation to **1,057**, which is below the forecast of 1,120.
- Kept the average number of weeks a household stays in bed and breakfast to **15** weeks (11), despite increased demand.

Rents



To provide an efficient, effective and responsive rent collection service.

Review rents and service charges each year and provide information on how we calculate them.

How have we met the standard?

- There has been a decrease in the total arrears at year end from £3.71m to **£3.48m**. This equates to 2.76% of the total rent collected against a target of 3.3%. This is a significant achievement given welfare reforms.
- Reduced the number of tenants with more than seven weeks of arrears from 6.04% to **5.49%**.
- After the successful launch of the council's 'self-serve' system last year, the number of callers using the service has increased by an additional **14,208**.
- The financial inclusion team was expanded last year, meaning even more tenants can access money advice and get the support and advice they need to pay their rent and other bills.

Tenure



Provide either introductory, flexible fixed term or secure tenancies.

Give new residents a copy of their tenancy or lease agreements and explain the content.

Check our homes are occupied legally and take action where they are not.

How have we met the standard?

- All tenants received a written tenancy agreement which was explained to them.
- **2,405** occupancy checks were carried out and staff will receive training to ensure these checks are carried out effectively in 2015/2016.
- **76** illegally occupied properties were recovered by the council.
- **171** (217) tenants were helped by the tenancy support team during 2014/2015. This team works with tenants who are in danger of losing their tenancies.

Neighbourhood and community

We will

- Work with partners to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour
- Work with residents to improve local facilities and the environment
- Respond to emergencies in a timely manner and work to keep our estates clean and safe

Local area co-operation



Tackling anti-social behaviour and crime



Work with residents to improve local facilities and the environment.

Work with other agencies and residents to protect them from risk and prevent harm to children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Work to achieve wider borough objectives including improving employment opportunities and prospects.

How have we met the standard?

- The council's Housing Into Work scheme for young people helped seven people into work with three tenancies allocated. The pilot scheme was expanded in 2014/15 to include those out of work or training up to the age of 30 years.
- The Family Recovery Project is working with **33** (48) families in the borough with complex needs to improve their future prospects. They have successfully completed work with **113** families to date.
- Our safeguarding procedures were fully reviewed to comply with changes in legislation, including the Care Act 2014.
- Development of a new online Safeguarding Refresher Training package for staff commenced.

Work with other services and the police to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB).

Take action against offenders and tell residents about outcomes.

How have we met the standard?

- We served **50** (49) Notices Seeking Possession for ASB and five evictions for ASB.
- Dealt with **372** (653) new cases of ASB.
- The new Anti-social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 provides streamlined and improved powers to tackle ASB. The council made changes to bring in these new powers.
- Staff in the area teams received legal training to implement the new powers.
- The housing service continues to support the Kicks diversionary project through the provision of pitches at Ashburton and Henry Prince estates and also contributed £20,000 towards running costs.
- Continued to attend regular meetings with local Safer Neighbourhood Teams.

Neighbourhood management



Ensure estates are maintained to a good standard and improved where possible.

Respond to emergencies in target times.

Work with other services and the police to keep your communities and estates clean and safe.

How have we met the standard?

- **44,617** (41,090) emergency calls were handled.
- Improved on the percentage of emergency calls to Wandsworth Emergency Control (WEC) responded to within 30 minutes from 66.9% to **77.4%**. The definition of an emergency requiring a response within 30 minutes was also refined last year.*

- Removed **18,797msq** of graffiti at a cost of £100,700.
- 98% of graffiti was removed within target time.
- Awarded **£276,488** from the small improvement budget for residents' associations' community projects, such as work to communal gardens, improved security and lighting.
- Plans to regenerate three estates in Wandsworth; Alton (Roehampton), Winstanley and York Road (Latchmere) are now going forward. Residents continue to be closely involved in the development of plans in both areas.
- Residents of Carey, Patmore and Savona estates will be asked their views on their homes, estates and neighbourhoods as part of the Nine Elms Improvement Area.
- A weekly waste collection service was provided with performance targets met.



* In 2013-14 the figure included all out of hours calls to WEC. In 2014-15, it was refined to include only emergency calls such as lift trappings, fire related incidents and lock outs.

Home

We will

- Provide a value for money, timely and good quality repairs and maintenance service for residents and at all times ensure that necessary health and safety checks are undertaken
- Maintain all homes to the decent homes standard* as a minimum
- Undertake a programme of decent homes plus** work to improve blocks and estates
- Monitor and report our performance for emergency, urgent and routine repairs and take action where contractors do not meet standards set.

Quality of accommodation



Repairs and maintenance



Meet the decent homes standard and undertake a programme of decent homes plus works.

Provide an efficient and cost effective repairs service, which gets the job done right the first time.

Carry out health and safety checks.

How have we met the standard?

- Continued to meet the decent homes standard and invested **£24.5m** (£22.2m) to maintain the council's housing stock.
- Started **53**(33) major works projects including roof renewals, window renewals and external decoration schemes.
- Continued to exceed our target for the number of repairs post-inspected to ensure our properties are maintained to a good standard.
- Undertook **£1.1 million** of environmental works to entrances and external communal areas.

How have we met the standard?

- **£25.12m** (£27.01m) spent on repairs.
- **92.4%** (95.7%) of repairs were completed within target time.
- Achieved a slight increase in satisfaction levels on completed repairs from 92.1% to **92.4%**
- Plans are underway to introduce a new online post inspection system, to collect satisfaction levels from a greater number of residents and achieve more effective contractor monitoring.
- **23** residents rewards were paid to tenants leaving their homes in good condition at the end of their tenancy.
- Carried out annual gas servicing in **99.93%** (99.95%) of tenanted properties that have gas appliances.
- **7,048** health and safety inspections were carried out in council owned blocks.
- In line with one of our priorities on Fire Risk Assessment, we began procurement of specialist agencies.



*The decent homes standard is set by the Government and outlines specific criteria that social housing must meet to be considered decent. For more information www.gov.uk (search Decent Homes)

**Decent Homes Plus standard is Wandsworth Council's own higher standard based on Government guidelines.

Value for money

We will

- Provide frontline services in the most cost effective manner
- Take action to prevent fraudulent use of council owned and managed properties
- Monitor the use of services to ensure they are fully utilised and they are providing value for money

Value for money



Consult residents on major works projects and inform them of smaller works, which do not require statutory consultation.

Aim to achieve value for money by tendering services where, for instance, contracts have come to an end.

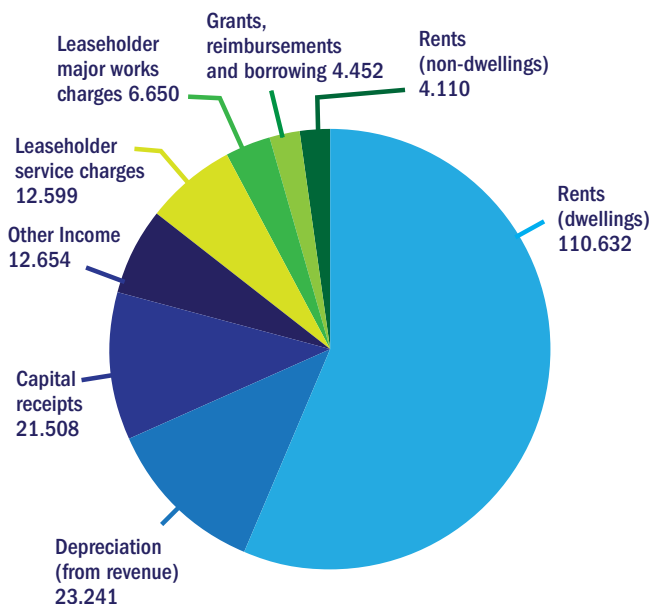
Each year look at our thirty year business plan to check it remains financially viable.

How have we met the standard?

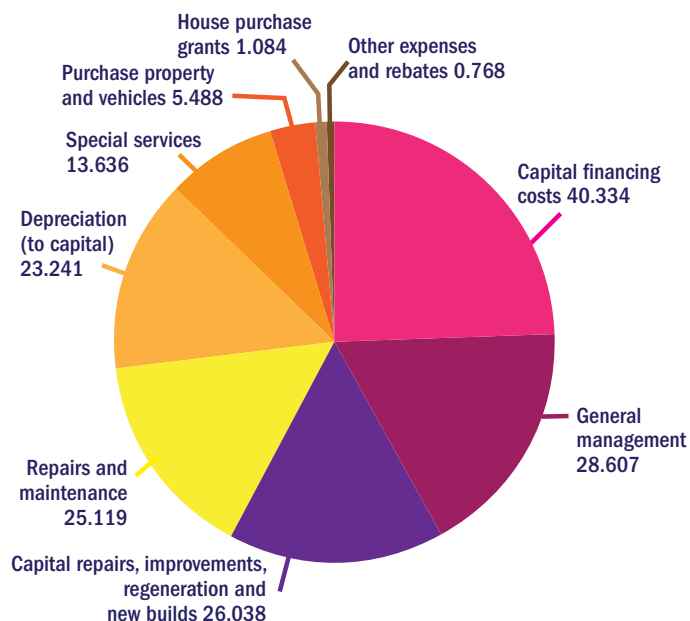
- Continued to effectively manage the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), demonstrated by a current reserve level of **£266m** (£234.5m) and have in place a financially viable business plan for the next thirty years including provision to maintain and improve our stock as we are required to do.
- In respect of consulting on major works and external redecoration works, we served:
 - 1,235* Notices of Intention and
 - 1,559* Section 20 Notices on leaseholders.
- The average weekly management cost reduced to **£17.45** (£18.73) as a result of efficiencies achieved.
- Re-tendered **9** (14) contracts resulting in savings for the HRA.
- The average weekly maintenance cost reduced to **£29.66** (£32.12).
- Average weekly rent was **£124.55** (£123.55).

* These are a statutory requirement to consult leaseholders on schemes of major works costing more than £250 per leaseholder.

Housing Revenue Account Income 2014-15 £000's



Housing Revenue Account Spend 2014-15 £000's



Tenant involvement

We will

- Involve residents in decision-making processes that affect them
- Support the development of accredited residents' associations
- Provide residents with a variety of methods to tell us what they think of the services
- Learn from complaints and make use of them to improve services

Customer service, choice and complaints



Give residents good quality, up to date information.

Make sure residents know how to complain.

Learn from comments and complaints.

How have we met the standard?

Due to restructuring of two departments into the new Housing and Community Services Department, direct comparisons are difficult to report in this area of the service. Our commitment is to deal with complaints in a thorough manner, which sometimes means our target times will not always be met.

- Dealt with **711** complaints (both housing service and contractor).
- **76.4%** of complaints were responded to within the target time of 10 working days.
- **85.79%** of complaints were successfully dealt with at stage one of the complaints procedure.
- A mystery shopping exercise, using a range of council residents, was completed and the results were used to review our services.
- Four independent surveys were carried out. These were;
 - estates and neighbourhood services
 - the repairs survey
 - housing management STAR (Survey of Tenants and Residents) lite and
 - resident management organisation STAR lite
- Overall satisfaction with services increased to **69%** (65%) for all council residents with good ratings for customer care reported.



We welcomed our newest Housing Community Champions



Carey Gardens residents celebrated the success of their communal garden arts project

Involvement



Encourage resident involvement.

Inform residents about services and give them the opportunity to check and challenge how well the housing service is doing.

How have we met the standard?

- **43** (58) estate inspections were carried out with residents and councillors.
- Supported **62** accredited residents' associations in the borough to ensure residents can make their views known.
- We now have **13** housing community champions, **seven** of which were welcomed in 2014/15. These are resident volunteers who we support and recognise for the community work they do.
- Allocated **£6,930** from the Community Fund to carry out projects identified by the Housing Community Champions.
- Wimbledon Park estate Co-op signed a new management agreement with the support of the council. They are also the first resident managed organisation in the borough to be awarded a national governance kitemark.



Understanding more and responding to diverse needs



Treat residents with fairness and respect.

Make sure services meet a range of needs and are easily accessible to all residents.

How have we met the standard?

- The housing service standards provide clear and concise information to residents about our commitment to equal opportunities and service delivery. These were updated last year.
- Met the demand for disabled adaptations for council and private residents, delivering **152** adaptations to enable people to remain independent in their home.
- **21** (18) people requiring adapted housing were allocated accessible homes.
- Increased the number of 'Stay Put Stay Safe' (SPSS*) applicants assisted during the year from 34 to **70** this year.
- The council is part of 'Homefinder UK' which enables social housing tenants to move around the country through mutual exchanges (www.homefinder.org).
- To promote wider involvement of your community we held a Residents' Working Group to review residents' associations constitutions and guidelines for accreditation.
- The Housing Strategy was launched in 2014/15. It sets out how we will support the delivery of more low cost housing including extra care housing and other forms of supported housing.
- **2,376** (2,341) residents use WATCH Lifeline service which helps older residents and those with disabilities to remain independent, an increase on last year.

Priorities for 2015-2016

- **Take forward** the council's plans to build **more homes**.
- **Establish** the Wandsworth **Moves** and **Mobility Team**.
- **Improve** Wandsworth's homes and blocks to **decent homes plus standard**.
- Review and **refresh fire risk assessments** on purpose built blocks.
- Review the **resident repair and reward plan**

- **Further develop** regeneration plans for **Winstanley/York Road** and **Alton** estates.
- Provide **high speed broadband** provision in council-owned residential properties.
- **Improve** the **online housing systems** including repairs and registering a **housing application** and how we communicate with you.
- Produce an **ASB Policy statement**.

* SPSS - is for people affected by domestic violence and victims of hate crime so they can stay safe.