

# Contact

## Cheers Dolly!

Tenant marks 100<sup>th</sup> birthday

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**Mansfield**  
District Council

[www.mansfield.gov.uk/housing](http://www.mansfield.gov.uk/housing)

# Tenants' Annual Report 2017/2018

Number of properties managed

**6,508**

Number of employees

**241**

Rental income

**£25.6m**

Other income

**£2.6m**

## Main items of expenditure

General repairs and maintenance

**20%**

Building new properties

**18%**

Improvements, including bathrooms, kitchens, property adaptations and improving energy efficiency of properties

**12%**

Borrowing and loans

**10%**

Repairing properties when tenancies end, getting them ready for new tenants

**6%**

The remainder (**44%**) was spent on general running costs, including staffing for support services, housing allocations, tenancy services and tackling anti-social behaviour.

# Another successful year!

Welcome to this latest edition of Contact which features the results of Mansfield District Council's Annual Report for tenants.

**This is something we produce every year to enable our tenants to hold the council's housing services to account and shows how well we performed as a landlord during 2017/2018.**

I'm happy to report that the authority achieved encouraging results again, delivered, at times, under testing circumstances.

The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act and the roll-out of Universal Credit have meant some new challenges in the way we work and to help meet those challenges, we have restructured relevant services within the Housing department to enable it to focus on managing rental income from our properties and preventing homelessness more effectively.

Having the Department of Work and Pensions now based in the Civic Centre means that we are able to have a closer relationship with the Government department behind many of the changes in benefit claims that we are facing.



**Cllr Barry Answer**

Portfolio Holder for Housing

One of the ways we have been helping to improve our tenants' financial circumstances is the ongoing work to remove the old and inefficient district heating schemes from our neighbourhoods and install modern and efficient individual heating systems in your homes, wherever we can.

The council remains committed to helping tenants affected by any reductions in their incomes and now has more staff who can offer advice on debt and benefit claims. It is vital you let us know early if you are facing difficulties in paying your rent so we can put in place help to avoid you losing your home.

Taking on more financial inclusion officers was one of the recommendations from the Housing Services Panel that we implemented, and we are working on other improvements to our processes and procedures. We recognise that it is important to listen to and involve our tenants and greatly value the support and feedback from the panel in this respect. Tenants who wish to join the panel, please do get in touch.

## Meeting your needs

We may be able to provide this information in larger print, in Braille, on audio tape, on CD or in another language. If you'd like to find out more please contact **01623 463463**, minicom **01623 463444** or email [mdc@mansfield.gov.uk](mailto:mdc@mansfield.gov.uk).

# Improving your homes

We continue to deliver a programme of investment in council owned properties to ensure they meet the Decent Homes Standard.

## ✔ What we installed

- 94 new kitchens
- 92 new bathrooms
- 611 external doors
- 22 properties had new roofs
- 243 gas central heating boilers
- 54 properties had new Upvc soffits and fascias

## 🏆 Our pledge

We will ensure our homes meet your standards by continuing to replace or upgrade kitchens and bathrooms.

Whilst most of the planned work has been completed, we will continue to carry out upgrades on properties where tenants have previously refused work. If you have refused work in the past and now wish to change your mind, please contact **01623 463018** to request and inspection.

We will also continue to improve the environment you live in by upgrading or removing drying areas and improving communal areas in blocks of flats.



## Did you know?

**95%**

of repairs are completed on the first visit.

The average number of repairs completed per property is **4.2**.

The current average for emergency, urgent and non-urgent repairs was **10.4 days** which continues to place Mansfield as one of the best performers nationally.

## Repairing and maintaining your homes

Our repairs and maintenance staff now carry mobile technology, including iPads, to make our working methods even more efficient and we are continuing to refine our working practises.

Our staff now receive appointments, order parts and sign off repair jobs on their mobile device which cuts down on costly and time consuming paperwork. This helps the council carry our more repairs in less time.

## ✔ What we did

- 9,902 emergency repairs
- 4,510 urgent repairs
- 12,392 routine repairs

## 🏆 Our pledge

We will ensure our repair and maintenance service meets your standards by continuing to improve the quality of repairs and the time it takes to carry out those repairs.

# Your tenancy



Did you know?

We own  
**6,508**  
 properties and the average re-let time to bring a property back into use is **23.31 days** and **88%** of properties are accepted on their first offer.

## How we let our homes

When we let our properties we ensure that we house those people who are deemed at the time to be in housing need.

We aim to make the best use of our housing stock, including reducing overcrowding, tackling under occupation and making the best use of adapted properties for those with a disability.

The council has an agreed standard that all of its properties should meet when we let them to new tenants and we continually check to ensure that the standard is being achieved.

**There are currently 6,304 households on the housing register. This is 980 more than in 2016/17.**

Number of properties by bedrooms	Average weekly Social rent	Average weekly Affordable rent
47 bedsits	£56.96	N/A
2,378 one-bedroom properties	£66.72	£82.23
2,064 two-bedroom properties	£74.00	£92.54
1,899 three-bedroom properties	£79.92	£108.20
118 four-bedroom properties	£85.42	N/A
2 five-bedroom properties	£88.42	N/A

### What we did

We let **468 properties**, of which **350** were let to new households in housing need; and **118** existing council tenants were transferred into more suitable housing, either downsizing into smaller properties or moving from overcrowded homes.





### Our pledge

We aim to regularly refresh our housing list to ensure that it is more accurate and removes people who no longer require a home, and that housing is allocated to those in most need. We will also ensure that those on the list are in the correct band according to their need.

We will also ensure that it reflects the requirements of the new Homelessness Reduction Act to help those people who are either homeless or threatened with homelessness.

## How we manage your tenancy

The money we get from renting our properties is used to pay for the management and maintenance of your homes and neighbourhoods. It is therefore important that we collect all the rent that is due.

The Government told us that we had to reduce the amount of rents people pay by 1% each year from 2016/17 – 2019/20.

This means we will have less money to spend on the management and maintenance of your home.

Our Housing Income Officers are available to discuss with you any financial difficulties you may be having, it is important you contact them straight away if you are having problems paying your rent.

We now also have three Financial Inclusion Officers who can help you if you are experiencing difficulties in paying your rent. They can also check if you are accessing all the benefits you are entitled to claim.

### What we did

We have restructured Landlord Services and Housing Needs so that the emphasis of work is on income collection, income maximisation and the prevention of homelessness.

### Our pledge

We will work with you to try to make sure you do not fall into financial debt and will continually check to ensure that properties are affordable for the incoming tenant.

Modern energy efficient gas boilers will continue to be installed to replace the old and inefficient district heating system.

### Did you know?

We collected over **99%** of all rent that was due and evicted **40 people** from their homes who did not pay.



Maintaining safe communities where people are able to enjoy their homes is a key priority for the council – and it is never it is never a one-size-fits-all approach.

 What we did

The council works closely with the Community Police teams, Community Safety Officers and partners from other agencies based at the Civic Centre in the Community Partnership Hub to achieve solutions to a variety of problems by using a full range of legal powers.

# Your area

Did you know?

During 2017/18 the Housing department dealt with

# 378

reports of anti-social behaviour, of which more than **80%** were resolved.

The council has state-of-the-art noise monitoring equipment to help resolve noise nuisance issues. It allows us to gather essential evidence, rather than having situations where it is one person's word against another.

 Our pledge

We will continue to improve your neighbourhoods by, for example, removing unused drying areas, which often attract fly-tipping, and by upgrading communal entrance areas to blocks of flats.

We aim to continue to make these areas open plan and reduce crime and the fear of crime for our tenants.

We will use all available enforcement actions, mediation options and support packages to reduce crime and disorder and help you to feel safer in your homes.

  
See page 10 to find out more about the work of our Anti-social Behaviour Officers.





# Working with you

## Tenant Scrutiny

The Housing Services Panel is our tenant led scrutiny scheme and is made up of a group of volunteers who work together to challenge and improve the services delivered by the council in its role as landlord.



### The Panel looked at:

1. Performance information and costs
2. Service standards and other information relating to the repairs service
3. Customer feedback.

The Panel members were impressed with the feedback from customers regarding their satisfaction with the repairs and the attitude of the employees carrying out repairs.

They also identified areas for concern, including an above average number of repairs being carried out on council properties compared with other similar organisations.

If you are interested in serving on the Housing Services Panel or would like more information, check out [www.mansfield.gov.uk/getinvolved](http://www.mansfield.gov.uk/getinvolved) to complete an application form.

### Did you know?

The Panel recommendations were to:

- Include an article in the tenants' Contact magazine on tenant/landlord repairing obligations.
- Develop a series of "How to" videos to show tenants how to carry out simple repairs.
- Publish a copy of the service standards on the website.
- Review the tenants' handbook and make it available in a more user-friendly electronic format, printing paper copies only on request.
- Encourage all council repairs staff to leave satisfaction cards when they have completed a job.

Following a meeting of the Housing Services Panel held on **27 February 2018** **Repairs and Maintenance** was agreed as an area for scrutiny.

### Result

Ensuring that Mansfield District Council is providing customer satisfaction as well as effective and efficient value-for-money repairs and maintenance.

### Our pledge

We will continue to work closely with the Housing Services Panel and other community groups that work to improve the neighbourhoods that they live in.

# Housing services shake-up

**Mansfield District Council has restructured its Housing department to enable it to meet the challenges of the rollout of Universal Credit in the district plus new legislation aimed at reducing homelessness.**

**T**he new structure for Landlord services came into effect in August, in time for the Universal Credit rollout in September.

It followed a restructure of the council's Housing Needs services earlier this year to put more emphasis on the prevention of homelessness and supporting people to enable them to remain in their existing homes.

The restructure of Landlord services supports this strategy by also promoting early intervention in cases of rent arrears while, at the same time, maximising tenant incomes.

Neil Turton, Tenancy Services Manager (01623 463741), is responsible for all the day-to-day running of Tenancy Services

and the two teams in it: Income Management and Tenancy Management.

The Income Management Team is led by Jill Kirkpatrick (01623 463359) and focuses on the early intervention in cases of rent arrears, and income maximisation, as well as right to buy and leasehold services.

The Tenancy Management Team, led by Ruth Smith (01623 463363), concentrates on all other non-income related tenancy management issues such as breach of tenancy conditions, anti-social behaviour, property inspections, permissions to undertake work, and new tenancy sign-ups.

These teams are supported by Housing Management Officers

(Specialist Support) Lee Betts (01623 463915) and Jeanette Samways (01623 463296) who help people who may be having specific problems with their tenancies due to vulnerability issues.

Also supporting the teams is Financial Inclusion Officer Maria Griffin (01623 463147) who specialises in welfare benefits and debt advice.

Finally, there are two Anti-social Behaviour and Tenancy Enforcement Officers, Geoff Lomas (01623 463082) and Helen Howis (01623 463377) who deal with the more complex and more serious breaches of tenancy conditions.

Find out more about their work on page 10.

## Cheers Dolly! Tenant marks 100<sup>th</sup> birthday

**Congratulations to Dorothy 'Dolly' Smith who, at 100, has become one of the council's oldest tenants!**

Dolly still lives independently at the Beech Court sheltered housing complex in Cox's Lane in Mansfield Woodhouse where she enjoys a full and active social life.

Supported by Mansfield District Council's ASSIST Response Officers and Carers at Beech Court, Dolly moved about two years ago into sheltered housing from a bungalow at Northfield Lane where she had lived for 34 years.

A former Harwood Cash cotton mills worker, she thought she

would be less lonely in sheltered housing and is now a regular at the complex's community centre, where staff organised a special party to mark her centenary.

Dolly, who has a son, four grandchildren, seven great grandchildren and nine great great grandchildren, still plays bingo regularly and gets across the road to the Sunnysdale Inn for a glass of her beloved Mansfield bitter which, she attributes to her long and healthy life - along with walking the dog. "I only have one



glass now," she said. "I don't go boozing anymore - but I wish I could!"

## Income Team



**Emma Dabell**

Warsop,  
Church Warsop,  
Meden Vale

📞 01623 463916



**Jayne Parsley**

Mansfield  
Woodhouse,  
Peafield Lane and the  
Burlington Drive area

📞 01623 463356



**Sarah Dalby**

Ravensdale, Forest  
Town, Eakring  
Road and Central  
Mansfield areas

📞 01623 463274



**Hayley Jackson**

Oak Tree Lane and  
Bellamy Road

📞 01623 463354



**Kim Wilkinson**

Ladybrook and  
Bull Farm

📞 01623 463307

## Tenancy Management Team



**Sue Jackson**

Warsop,  
Church Warsop,  
Meden Vale

📞 01623 463916



**Ian Aspinall**

Mansfield  
Woodhouse and  
Peafield Lane

📞 01623 463060



**Richard Dawes**

Ravensdale,  
Forest Town and  
Eakring Road

📞 01623 463392



**Kerry Chapman**

Oak Tree Lane and  
Bellamy Road

📞 01623 463353



**Mark Wreghitt**

Ladybrook and  
Bull Farm

📞 01623 463127



**Lorraine Spalding**

Central Mansfield and  
Burlington Drive area

📞 01623 463357

# Have you prepared for Universal Credit?

**The roll-out of Universal Credit (UC) to working age claimants began in Mansfield in September.**

UC combines various benefits into one single benefit, paid directly to the claimant.

This means that whereas under the old benefits system, Housing Benefit would have been paid separately - and directly to the council as your landlord - with UC, an amount to cover your rent is paid instead to you, instead, and you then have to pay your rent to the council. If you do not, your tenancy is at risk.

### How to claim

- UC must be paid into a bank account in your name. Contact local banks to set up a "basic bank account".



- UC claims have to be made on a computer and you need an email address. Computers and people to help you make your claim are available at the Civic Centre. For help with your digital skills, you can also visit [www.learnmyway.com](http://www.learnmyway.com).
- You must have proof of your identity. If you are unable to verify your identity online, you will be asked to provide three forms of ID, including photo ID (current passport or driving licence).
- You must provide a tenancy agreement, plus proof of how much you pay in rent. Rent statements and copies of tenancy agreements can be provided, free, by the Housing department.

You may be asked to provide details of people who live with you; details of any work you do, and any earnings, savings and capital you have; details of any health condition (you may need a 'Fit Note' from your doctor); and details of people you care for.

More information can be found at [www.gov.uk/universal-credit](http://www.gov.uk/universal-credit).



# Anti-social behaviour – how we can help

**No one wants to live next to neighbours from hell – and people who live in rented council homes will be breaching their tenancy agreements if they engage in anti-social behaviour (ASB).**

**I**n extreme cases it could lead to tenants losing their home. This is not something we want to see which is why we have two Anti-social Behaviour Response Officers to help resolve the most difficult cases.

Geoff Lomas and Helen Howis investigate, resolve and enforce tenancy conditions on ASB complaints against council tenants.

Often these problems can be sorted out with mediation between neighbours. A bit of communication, empathy and understanding on both sides can go a long way to resolving many disputes.

At other times it can mean the council has to pursue legal action to resolve matters.

“Our aim is to try to deal with any issue without it needing court action,” says Geoff. “Our advice is, if there’s a problem, get in touch with us before it escalates. If our warning letters and visits don’t bring results, we’ve other

actions we can follow, such as enforcement notices and community protection notices.”

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**“A bit of communication, empathy and understanding on both sides can go a long way to resolving many disputes”**

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## Recording equipment

The council also has hi-tech sound recording equipment to investigate noise complaints. Complainants are often asked to keep a diary of events to build a case.

Helen adds: “Sometimes we are asked to intervene on issues that are really not anti-social behaviour, such as children playing in their gardens and babies crying. Unfortunately this is normal behaviour.”

However, if noises from a family home signal possible child protection worries, council



officers do have a safeguarding duty to inform social services at Nottinghamshire County Council of their concerns.

If criminal activities figure in complaints against tenants, such as drug dealing or domestic abuse, the matter will be referred to the police.

Geoff says: “We work closely with the police, social care and the community mental health team to resolve cases. No two cases are the same, so we use a number of different methods to resolve disputes.”

Geoff and Helen deal specifically with ASB complaints against council tenants. The council’s Community Safety team take on ASB complaints against homeowners or tenants in privately rented accommodation.

Contact Geoff or Helen on **01623 463082** or **463377** or email **asb@mansfield.gov.uk**.

# Home maintenance: What are your duties?

**As council tenants, you are responsible for all internal decorations and keeping your home, yard or garden clean and well maintained.**

**Y**ou are also responsible for repairing, or replacing, or meeting the cost of replacement of any items that are damaged by you, your friends, relatives or anyone else living in or visiting your property.

Unless you are elderly, disabled or otherwise vulnerable, you are responsible for repairing or replacing:

- inside door handles
- tiling in kitchens, bathrooms and on fireplaces
- toilet chains, toilet seats, plugs for sinks, basins and baths
- blocked inlets to drains
- catches and hinges on cupboards
- front door furniture (inc. number, letterbox and chain)
- fine cracks in plaster work
- ash pans for open fires and
- insulation and draught proofing.

**More details about repairing responsibilities can be found in the Tenants' Repair Handbook, available on the council's website at [www.mansfield.gov.uk/repairs](http://www.mansfield.gov.uk/repairs)**

## New recycling scheme tested

**A new recycling scheme is being tried out at New England Way complex and a block of six flats at Saundby Avenue in Mansfield.**

Mansfield District Council has not so far offered a recycling service in social housing complexes or blocks of flats across the district due to the increased risk of recycling waste being contaminated with general waste.

However, we have come up with a new method of collecting waste which we hope will resolve the issues.

Residents taking part have received a sturdy hessian sack

to collect recycling waste in their flats.

They can then carry the sack to a communal recycling bin on the ground floor.

Residents at the New England Way complex and Saundby Avenue flats had a presentation about the new scheme when they were given the opportunity to ask questions about what could and could not be recycled.

If the trial proves successful, the council will phase in the scheme across the district.



**For further details about the scheme, contact Ruth Smith on [ruthsmith@mansfield.gov.uk](mailto:ruthsmith@mansfield.gov.uk) or call 01623 463363**

## Improvement works until March 2019

Replacement of soffits, fascias, external doors and outhouses at:

**Westfield Lane 12 properties**

**Devon Drive 10 properties**

**Wilcox Avenue 5 properties**

**Sherwood Street, Mansfield Woodhouse 16 properties**

**Annesley Way 5 properties**

**Stockwell Court 36 properties** – plus replacement of main entrance doors, communal bin store doors and redecoration of communal areas.

**Bull Farm Estate**

New doors for properties that have already had their roofs, soffits and fascias replaced.

# Top quality housing for over-55s set to open

**The residents of Mansfield District Council's flagship £8.5m housing project, Town View, will soon be moving into their new homes.**



**A** total of 54 apartments and bungalows for the over-55s have been built on the site of the former General Hospital in Mansfield which was derelict for about 20 years before the council bought it for redevelopment.

Six of the 12 two-bedroom bungalows that have been built already have potential buyers in a shared ownership scheme.

Tenants for the other six bungalows and the 42 one-bedroom and two-bedroom apartments have already been allocated through the council's Homefinder services and through Nottinghamshire County Council for tenants with extra care needs.

As Contact went to print, work was due to start on landscaping

**“ It has transformed this derelict piece of land, providing much-needed specialist housing for older residents ”**

the site around a village green complete with outdoor fitness equipment.

The apartments will also offer communal facilities, such as a lounge, a dining room and an outdoor terraced area.

Sarah Troman, Director of Communities, said: “We are very excited that this project will soon be complete.

“It really has transformed this derelict piece of land, providing much-needed specialist housing for older residents.”

## £21.4m pledge for 100+ new council homes



**We recently pledged £21.4m to build more than 100 new council homes over the next five years.**

Council-owned land and buildings suitable for conversion into homes have been identified and work will start subject to approvals.

The overall cost of the schemes includes providing vital infrastructure, such as drainage, roads, footpaths, lighting and landscaping, as well as cleaning any contaminated land.

All potential suppliers go through a strict competitive process to ensure that the council achieves the best price and quality.

The proposed schemes comprise ten homes in Rosemary Avenue, 22 at Newark Way, Newark Close and Newark Drive; 36 at Bellamy Road, 12 apartments at Rock Court, 30 apartments for over-55s in Sandy Lane and 18 affordable homes for rent in Centenary Road.

This is in addition to refurbishing eight flats on Shireoaks to bring them back into use, and the conversion of two tenant meeting rooms to provide family accommodation and a specially adapted property for a disabled tenant.