

AUTUMN 2015

# Contact

THE QUARTERLY MAGAZINE FOR MANSFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL TENANTS

## Annual Report 2014/15

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



**Mansfield**  
District Council



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## WE WORK TO THE FOLLOWING STANDARDS:

## ✓ YOUR HOME

- the overall quality of your home
- how we repair, maintain and improve your home

## ✓ YOUR TENANCY

- how we let our homes
- how we manage your tenancy

## ✓ YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY

- how we invest in your neighbourhood to keep it clean, tidy and safe
- how we work with other partners in your neighbourhood
- how we tackle anti-social behaviour

## ✓ WORKING WITH YOU

- how we get tenants involved in making decisions about our services
- how we deal with your complaints and feedback
- how we recognise and respond to the diverse needs of tenants

Welcome to Mansfield District Council's Annual Report for tenants which provides you with information about how we performed as your landlord during 2014/2015.

## Foreword



Hayley Barsby

Head of Housing,  
Mansfield District Council

**It's been a busy year and we have again been set the challenge to improve services, respond to increasing demands and all under the banner of reduced budgets**

With the dedication of our tenant representatives and staff we have delivered against these challenges. This report sets out the excellent work that has been done to improve the services we offer.

I am pleased to say we are building across the district and looking at all the land available to increase social housing. We are working with partners to finance new homes and on the Poppy Fields site we have worked with

Nottinghamshire County Council to develop an extra care scheme which also has provision for people with dementia.

We are working with colleagues in social care and health to form a hospital discharge scheme, which helps people to move out of hospital into suitable accommodation. This is a scheme that is being recognised nationally as Healthwatch England has been working to raise the importance of suitable accommodation and support for people when leaving hospital.

We know that the challenges continue with universal credit being introduced and welfare changes being proposed. We are looking at the impact of these on our customers and identifying ways in which we can support those most affected.

Our team has recently welcomed Cllr Barry Answer, who joins us as portfolio holder for housing. Keep in touch with all our latest news by following us on Facebook and Twitter and don't forget to look out for the next issue of Contact in January.

In the meantime, thank you for taking the time to read our Annual Report.

To keep up to date with all the news follow us on Twitter: **@MDC\_News** and Facebook: **www.facebook.com/mymansfielduk**



# YOUR HOME

In 2014/2015  
we improved  
**548**  
bathrooms at  
an average  
cost of  
£1,500

## WHAT YOU SAID

To develop the improvement programme you asked us to:

- improve communication between the council, contractor and tenant before and during any improvement work
- take less time to complete the work
- improve the quality of the work provided

### Investing in your homes

Continued investment in your homes has ensured that all Mansfield District Council properties continue to meet the Decent Homes standard. As a result 81% of our tenants told us they were satisfied with the overall quality of their home.



## WHAT WE DID



## DID YOU KNOW?



## OUR PLEDGE



In 2014/2015 we improved:

- 548 bathrooms at an average cost of £1,500
- 173 kitchens at an average cost of £3,300
- 439 doors at an average cost of £667
- 101 soffits and fascias at an average cost of £2,337
- 222 boilers at an average cost of £3,000



- Tenants who have had improvement works expressed high levels of satisfaction with the work carried out - 87.2% stated they were very satisfied.
- We converted 22 bedsits at The Willows into one and two bed flats and replaced the heating in those properties.



We will ensure our homes meet your standards by:

- Continuing to invest £4.9million on improvements to properties over the next year (2015/2016)
- Improving how we communicate with tenants before and during improvement works
- Working with contractors to cut the time it takes to carry out improvements
- Asking tenant inspectors to do quality assurance checks on works taking place on your homes



# REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

We completed  
**85%**  
of all repairs  
on the first  
visit

## WHAT YOU SAID

To make our repairs service more efficient you want us to

- Complete routine repairs quicker
- Have more specific appointment times



In 2014/2015 we completed 27,752 repairs on properties across the district at an average cost of £598 per property. More than 95% of tenants that had repairs completed on their homes told us they were satisfied with the service they had received.



## WHAT WE DID



- Reduced the time it takes to complete a routine repair to seven working days
- Of our 5,500 homes that have gas, all gas services were completed apart from 46 properties
- The average time taken to re-let a property when it became vacant was 23 days
- Completed 85% of all repairs on the first visit



## DID YOU KNOW?



- 99% of all those who responded to the gas servicing questionnaire were completely satisfied with the service they received.
- Appointments were made for almost 80% of repairs carried out.
- 38% of all repairs carried out were emergency repairs (completed within 24 hours).



## OUR PLEDGE



In order to improve the service we offer in 2015/16 we will:

- Introduce mobile working technology for all our repairs' operatives to help complete repairs more quickly
- Introduce a texting service to let you know that our operatives are on their way to complete the repair
- Provide an online service for reporting your repairs



# LETTING OUR PROPERTIES

We let  
**637**  
properties to  
households  
in housing  
need

## When we let our properties we will:

- Ensure that we continue to house those households that are deemed, at the time, to be in housing need
- Make the best use of our housing stock including reducing overcrowding, tackling under occupation and making best use of adapted housing for those with a disability
- Provide support to tenants in a way and at a time when they need it to ensure they are able to sustain their tenancies

## WHAT YOU SAID

Those applicants that completed the satisfaction survey stated they would like:

- A quicker registration service
- An improvement in the information provided by the Homefinder service
- Better communication between the Homefinder service and the applicants



## WHAT WE DID



During 2014/2015 we have:

- Let 637 properties to households in housing need. Of those properties, 470 were let to new tenants
- Reviewed our lettings policy to make sure that homes go to people with a local connection to the area
- Introduced home visits to elderly and vulnerable tenants
- Changed our mutual exchange provider to **Swapandmove.co.uk**



## DID YOU KNOW?



- In 2014/2015 we owned 6,514 properties, this is 27 less than the number in 2013/2014 (6,541).
- There are currently 6,826 households on the housing register. This is 718 less than in 2013/2014.
- 38% of those households on the housing register are considered to be in urgent housing need and are given reasonable preference over all other applicants.



## OUR PLEDGE



During 2015/2016 we will:

- Continue to reduce the amount of rental income we lose each year by letting our properties quicker when they become vacant
- Work with the Housing Services Panel to improve communication between the Homefinder service and its applicants
- Increase the number of affordable homes available for rent across the district.



# YOUR TENANCY

We collected over  
**99%**  
of all the rent  
that was  
owed  
to us

The money we get from rent is used to pay for the management and maintenance of homes and neighbourhoods.

Many of our tenants though have been affected by changes introduced by central Government and through welfare changes as well as rises in food costs.

More and more of our tenants are struggling to make ends meet. We have been working to ease problems, helping tenants manage their finances and meet rent payments.



## WHAT WE DID



- Introduced checks to make sure properties are affordable before an applicant signs up for the property

We provided support to:

- 169 tenants, who experiencing rent arrears, received specialist money advice
- 202 tenants who received advice and help from our specialist Welfare Reform Advisor



## DID YOU KNOW?

In 2014/2015 we:

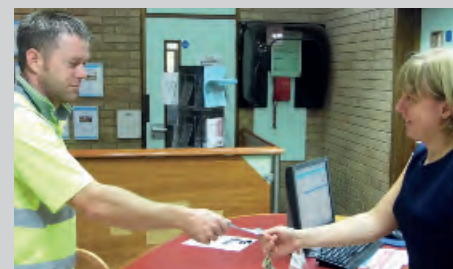
- Collected over 99% of all the rent that was owed to us leaving a shortfall of £569,070 outstanding at the end of the year
- Evicted 37 tenants as a result of rent arrears
- Introduced a "fast track" service for tenants awaiting housing benefit claims where there is an application for court action for outstanding arrears

As a result we:

- Carried out 11 less evictions than we did in the previous year
- Helped over 99% of our tenants to sustain their tenancies over 12 months
- Generated more than £500,000 in income as a result of direct welfare rights intervention.



## OUR PLEDGE



In order to ensure we continue to help our tenants to sustain their tenancies and manage their finances we will:

- Maximise our income by looking at reducing the number of tenancies that are terminated each year and directing resources to ensure all rent payments due are collected
- Increase and target the resources available to directly support tenants who are experiencing difficulties in paying their rent



# YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

# 72%

of you were satisfied with the overall estate service



In 2013 71.9% of you told us you were satisfied with the appearance of your neighbourhood with 72% of you stating you were satisfied with the overall estate service provided by Mansfield District Council.

## WHAT YOU SAID

Feedback provided through the tenants' satisfaction (STAR) survey carried out in 2013 told us that the main issues you were most concerned with in your neighbourhoods were:

- Rubbish and litter
- Car parking and parking areas
- Anti-social behaviour



## WHAT WE DID



- Spent £157,875 on environmental improvements including landscaping on Sandy Lane and restricting vehicle access to public land
- Cut back the plantation area and cleared the overgrowth on the Sandy Lane estate
- Cleared the undergrowth on the Ravensdale plantation area
- Repaired and decorated garages in Montague Street
- Carried out repairs to public footpaths on Peafield Estate.



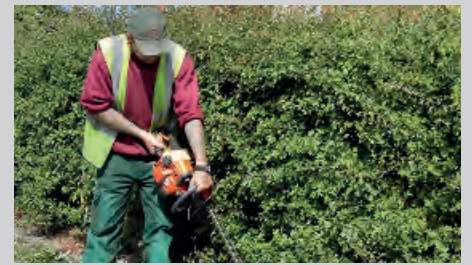
## DID YOU KNOW?



- Housing Officers undertake an estate walkabout in their area every three months. Dates of the estate walkabouts are publicised in Contact newsletter and on our website.
- We are continuing to look at garage sites and areas of land with a view to improving the appearance of estates and provide additional land for housebuilding.



## OUR PLEDGE



- We will continue to carry out estate walkabouts in order to identify priority areas for improvement
- We will commit a further £250,000 in 2015/2016 to be used for environmental improvements
- We will upgrade the flats at Charlesworth Court
- We will convert a grassed area on Newcastle Street into a car park to address car parking problems in the area
- We will demolish long term empty flats on the Bellamy Road estate



# SAFE NEIGHBOURHOODS

**75%**

of tenants said they were satisfied with the way their anti-social behaviour complaint had been dealt with

## WHAT YOU SAID

75% of tenants said they were satisfied with the way their anti-social behaviour complaint had been dealt with. We have noted though that we need to improve the way in which we keep tenants updated on the progress and outcome of complaints.

The housing department has its own anti-social behaviour officers dealing with tenants causing anti-social behaviour. During 2014/15 we worked in partnership with the housing officers, the police and neighbourhood wardens to reduce many incidents of anti-social behaviour.



## WHAT WE DID



Actions taken on tenants on reported ASB has included:

- Evicting tenants from their homes
- Serving notices to seeking possession
- Obtaining instructions for access for both property and outstanding gas service
- Asking tenants to sign acceptable behaviour contracts



## DID YOU KNOW?



We have an information sharing protocol with the police. Any criminal offence you may be charged with can affect your tenancy with us.

The anti-social behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 gives the council and police more powers to tackle ASB.

These include:

- Criminal behaviour orders
- Civil injunctions to stop ASB escalating
- Community protection notice to stop a person committing ASB which spoils the community's quality of life.



## OUR PLEDGE



To ensure your neighbourhood is safe we will:

- Continue to work in partnership with other agencies to deliver a range of prevention, intervention and enforcement measures
- Review our policy and procedure to ensure we take advantage of the powers provided by the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Provide the support you need and keep in contact with you during investigations into your complaint.



# WORKING WITH YOU

# 65%

of complaints were dealt with within the agreed timescales



## Complaints and feedback

**Mansfield District Council welcomes all feedback good or bad. In 2014/2015 we received 104 formal complaints. 65% of those complaints were dealt with within the agreed timescales.**

## WHAT YOU SAID

- 54.2% of tenants are aware that we have a formal complaints procedure
- 62% of tenants that have made a complaint were satisfied with the way their complaint was dealt with

## Helping you to pay your rent

Some tenants struggle to pay their rent on time. Credit Union accounts are a good way of ensuring rents and bills are paid on time. The account works in the following way:

- Some or all of your benefits are transferred into your Credit Union account
- Your rent and bills are paid from this account

For more details please call **01623 463129**.

**nottingham**  
CREDIT UNION



## WHAT WE DID

- Reviewed our complaints policy and procedure to ensure our approach is clear, simple and accessible
- Provided training for all our staff in dealing with complaints effectively and efficiently
- Identified dedicated officers to deal with the various stages of the complaint process to ensure a more consistent and customer focused approach to resolving your complaints



## OUR PLEDGE

We are committed to providing services that our tenants want at a standard that has been agreed by them. When we don't meet that standard then we want you to tell us so we can:

- Learn from your feedback and improve our services
- Tell you what we have changed as a result of your feedback



# TENANT INVOLVEMENT



**WHAT YOU SAID**

The Housing Services Panel checked out two services during 2014-2015.

The first one was on supporting people and the second was on how we deal with complaints. As a result we now have more trained officers able to advice on money and welfare rights.


We also now have a dedicated officer to investigate and respond to complaints. We record all complaints and follow the trail so we can learn from the experience.

**Tenant involvement is important to help us understand the needs, and experiences of our tenants so we can improve services.**

**WHAT WE DID**


**DID YOU KNOW?**

**OUR PLEDGE**



- Improved our support and complaints service based on what the Housing Services Panel said
- Reviewed our tenant involvement service after a test project with the Chartered Institute of Housing
- Installed new technology system so we can record customer experiences

- Members of the Housing Services Panel get training so they are able to challenge the service
- Training courses such as how to use a computer, budgeting and food hygiene are provided for tenants who are interested in training
- There are other ways to get involved, for example, tenant and resident associations, improvement groups and mystery shoppers



- To develop the tenant involvement service so we provide meaningful and varied ways for our tenants to feedback or get involved
- To continue to find out from our tenants how to improve our services.



# OUR HOUSING PANEL



Over the last year tenants and residents on our housing panel have looked at the Tenancy Support Service and focused on checking the advice and support given to tenants for claiming housing and welfare benefits, managing finances and the support given to new tenants. The panel made recommendations to make improvements to the service.



**T**he panel also looked carefully at the complaints service and made a number of recommendations

As a result the housing department has acted on those recommendations and provided progress reports on what has been done to make improvements.

A full copy of these reports is available from the Tenant Involvement Officer on **01623 463485**.



## HOUSING PANEL MEETINGS

Our housing panel meet between 10am and noon on the third Tuesday of every month in the Meden Room in the Civic Centre on Chesterfield Road South, Mansfield.

They will be meeting on 20 October, 17 November and 15 December. If you'd like to join them please call the tenant involvement office on **01623 463485** for details.





Do you have an opinion about our housing? Would you like to make a difference? Then why not join our Housing Services Panel?

**O**ur group of tenants and residents meet once a month to look at our services and how we're working.

They keep us on our toes, challenge processes and have their say on how the services are delivered to you.

The panel, which is made up of people from all over the district of Mansfield, work closely with the Housing Department to raise performance on housing services.

As well as getting the chance to have your say, you also have the

**THEY KEEP US ON OUR TOES, CHALLENGE PROCESSES AND HAVE THEIR SAY ON HOW THE SERVICES ARE DELIVERED TO YOU.**

opportunity to learn new things, meet people, socialise and make friends.

If you have some spare time and want to join us then we'd

love to hear from you. All you need is a little enthusiasm and we'll provide the rest. You'll be given some training to help you understand the services.

### Want to know more?

Then please call Milly Alonso, Tenant Involvement Officer, on **01623 463485**.

### Here's what some of our panel members said:

“I really enjoy the meetings. They are fun and productive and my views are valued and together we make a difference.”

“I joined the panel because I wanted to get more involved and help make Mansfield a better place to live.”

“Being on the panel helps me to understand the working of the council and how it operates.”

“I gained confidence in meeting people again and it gave me a purpose in life and a goal to help others.”

“There's great satisfaction knowing I have done my bit.”

“I joined because I wanted to meet people and make new friends.”

## GET IN TOUCH

→ Mansfield Housing Office	01623 463129
→ Housing Repairs Contact Centre	01623 463463
→ Out of hours Emergency Contact (repairs)	01623 463050
→ Ashfield and Mansfield Homefinder	01623 463402
→ Central Control	01623 463341
→ Housing Advice Service	01623 463125
→ Money Advice Officer	01623 463451
→ Welfare Rights Officer	01623 463450
→ Right to Buy/Leaseholders Officer	01623 463062
→ Tenant Involvement Officer	01623 463485

