

SUMMER 2014

Contact

THE QUARTERLY MAGAZINE FOR MANSFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL TENANTS

Annual Report 2013/14



www.mansfield.gov.uk



**Mansfield
District Council**

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NEWS

Important changes to the way you pay

You should have recently received a letter to say that all your housing charges have been merged into one single account from 30 June 2014. This has replaced the separate accounts for rent, heating, insurance and any other charges you are currently paying.

This does not affect garage rents, which will remain separate. Any payments that you make to the Council will be prioritised in the following order – rent, heating and insurance. This means that you cannot opt to pay your heating or insurance if you still need to pay your rent.

From April 2015 you will be provided with payment cards, which you will be able to use at the Post Office or PayPoint outlets. In the meantime you can continue to use the cards you already have.

For more information please call Tenancy Services on **01623 463 358** or **463 842**.

WELCOME

Welcome to Mansfield District Council's Annual Report for tenants which gives you information about how we performed as your landlord during 2013/14.



Hayley Barsby
Head of Housing, Mansfield District Council



Joe Bonser
Chair of the Housing Services Panel

Keeping our tenants up-to-date about the services we provide is a key priority for the Council. This report shows how we are performing against the standards of service we have previously set. We have met many of our service targets this year and have recognised areas where we need to improve.

This past year has been challenging for both the Housing Service and our tenants that have been affected by the Government's Welfare Reform changes. These changes have driven much of our work during 2013/2014 and we have put measures in place to protect those who are vulnerable. We have made sure that ongoing information has been available to all tenants affected by Welfare Reform and have trained our staff to provide basic budgeting and money advice. We have prioritised our resources and reviewed our policies to ensure that those affected receive the support they need. In the coming year our goal is to continue to help all tenants while maintaining a high quality service.

I am proud to say that we are the first Council in the country to be awarded the Tenant Scrutiny accreditation and would like to thank the Housing Services Panel for their dedication to improving services for our tenants.

I would also like to thank the Housing staff at the Council for their hard work and support over the past year.

The Housing Services Panel had an eventful and rewarding year in 2013/14. We have seen many changes to the panel as old members have left and new members have joined.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the new members and look forward to working with them. I would also like to thank previous panel members for their hard work and commitment, which resulted in the panel achieving Tenant Scrutiny accreditation.

The accreditation and this report demonstrate that Mansfield District Council is committed to listening to its tenants and working with the Housing Services Panel to continue to improve its services. I am sure 2014/2015 will see further improvements.

YOUR HOME

81%

OF OUR TENANTS STATED THAT THEY WERE SATISFIED WITH THE OVERALL CONDITION OF THEIR HOME

WHAT YOU SAID

In order to make your homes better places to live, you have asked us to:

- Improve communication between you, the Council and contractors before and during any improvement work on your home.
- Take less time to complete the work.
- Continue to help reduce the cost of District heating.

We have continued to invest in your homes to ensure that all of Mansfield District Council's properties continue to meet the Decent Homes Standard. As a result of this investment 81% of our tenants said that they were satisfied with the overall condition of their home compared to 79% in 2011.



WHAT WE DID



We replaced:

- 1,179 bathrooms at an average cost of £1,629 per property.
- 257 kitchens at an average cost of £3,700 per property.
- 416 doors at an average cost of £618 per property.
- 101 soffits and fascias at an average cost of £2,337 per property.
- 198 boilers at an average cost of £3,000 per property.



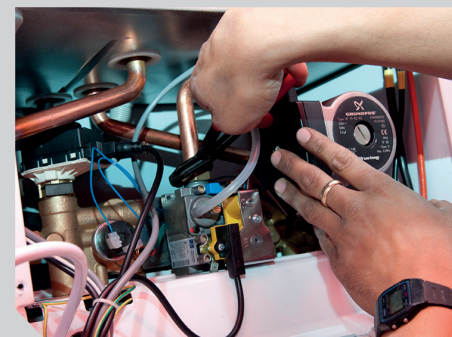
DID YOU KNOW?



- Tenants who have had improvement works completed expressed high levels of satisfaction with the work carried out - 90% said they were very satisfied.
- We replaced all three coal-fired District heating schemes on the Oak Tree Lane estate, which had previously heated 1,097 homes.
- We have started work on the District heating replacement programme at The Willows and River View in Warsop.



OUR PLEDGE



We will ensure that our homes meet your standards by:

- Starting work on the the District heating scheme on Sandy Lane, which services approximately 350 properties.
- Investing £4.5m on improvements to our properties over the next year (2014/2015).
- Working with the Housing Services Panel to improve how we communicate with tenants both before and during improvement works.

REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

OVER **95%**
OF TENANTS SAID THAT THEY
WERE SATISFIED WITH
THE REPAIRS AND
MAINTENANCE
SERVICE

WHAT YOU SAID

To make our Housing Repairs Service more efficient, you wanted:

- Routine repairs to be completed quicker.
- More specific appointment times.
- To increase the number of ways you can report a repair.

In 2013/2014 we completed 32,512 repairs on properties across the District at an average cost of £598 per property. Over 95% of tenants said that they were satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service they had received.



WHAT WE DID

We have:

- Reduced the time it takes to complete a routine repair to ten working days.
- Completed all annual gas safety checks that were due during 2013/2014, with the exception of 34 which we are currently pursuing.
- Completed 93% of all repairs on the first visit.



DID YOU KNOW?



- 100% of tenants that responded to the gas servicing questionnaire were completely satisfied with the service they received.
- We carried out 32,512 repairs to our properties in 2013/14 compared to 22,955 in 2012/13.



OUR PLEDGE



In order to improve the service we offer we will:

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

Performance measure	Target	Performance 2013/14
Average time taken to complete a non-urgent repair	10 days	9.69 days
% of all urgent repairs completed within the set timescale	97%	94.54%
% of internal repair appointments made and kept	96.59%	95.57%

ALLOCATING OUR PROPERTIES

42%

OF HOUSEHOLDS ON THE HOUSING REGISTER ARE CONSIDERED TO BE IN URGENT HOUSING NEED

When we let our properties we will:

- Continue to house people that are deemed to be in housing need.
- Make the best use of our housing stock by reducing overcrowding, tackling under occupation and adapting housing for those with a disability.
- Provide support to tenants to ensure they are able to sustain their tenancies.

WHAT YOU SAID

You would like:

- A quicker registration service.
- More information to be provided by the Homefinder Service.
- Improved access to the internet for completing applications online.



WHAT WE DID



In 2013/14 we:

- Let 695 properties to households in housing need, 470 of which were let to new tenants.
- Reduced the time it takes to re-let a property once it becomes empty from 29 days in 2011/12 to 25 days.
- Reviewed our Lettings Policy to help those affected by the under occupancy charge to downsize to a smaller property or exchange with another tenant.
- Provided additional support and advice to those affected by the under occupancy charge.



DID YOU KNOW?

- In 2013/14 we owned 6,541 properties.
- There are currently 7,544 households on the housing register.
- 42% of households on the housing register are considered to be in urgent housing need.
- The longer our properties are left empty, the more we lose in rental income, which could be reinvested in your homes.

Performance measure	Target	Performance 2013/14
Number of empty properties	75	97
Average length of time to re-let an empty property	25 days	25 days
% of applicants satisfied with the Allocation and Lettings Service	94%	92%
Average length of time taken to register a housing application	5 days	5 days



OUR PLEDGE



During 2014/2015 we will:

- Reduce the length of time it takes to re-let a property when it becomes vacant.
- Review the Homefinder Service to ensure it is providing an efficient and informative service.
- Look at how we can increase access to internet facilities and support, either directly or through working in partnership with other agencies.

YOUR TENANCY

IN 2013/14 WE GAVE
178
TENANTS SPECIALIST
MONEY ADVICE

WHAT YOU SAID

The 2013 tenants and residents' satisfaction survey asked for feedback on the Advice and Support Service that we provide. Results indicated there had been a decline in levels of satisfaction since the last survey was carried out in 2011.

Performance measure	% satisfied 2011	% satisfied 2013	Improvement status
Advice and support with claiming housing and welfare benefits	80.40%	66.40%	↓
Help with managing finances and paying rent	74.80%	59.80%	↓
Support for new tenants	N/A	42.60%	N/A

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 rent that is due to us.

We have been working hard to put measures in place to deal with Welfare Reform changes and help tenants manage their finances including the payment of their rent.



WHAT WE DID



We have:

- Provided ongoing information to all tenants affected by the Welfare Reform changes about the help we can offer them.
- Reviewed our Rent Arrears Policy and Procedure to take account of Welfare Reform.
- Redirected resources such as tenancy support to work with those affected.
- Trained staff to advise tenants on the changes and provide basic budgeting and money advice.



DID YOU KNOW?

In 2013/14 we:

- Gave 178 tenants money advice and 133 tenants welfare advice.
- Carried out 16 fewer evictions than last year.
- Helped 96% of our tenants to sustain their tenancies.
- Collected 99% of all the rent that was owed, which meant there was a £502,176 shortfall at the end of the year.

However despite providing this support we:

- Served 862 repossession notices to tenants who were in arrears with their rent payments.
- Evicted 48 tenants as a result of rent arrears.



OUR PLEDGE



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

- Provide budgeting and money advice workshops across the District.
- Review staff resources and structures as part of the development of the new housing IT system, which will help us provide a more efficient service.

YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

71.9%

OF YOU SAID THAT YOU WERE SATISFIED WITH THE APPEARANCE OF YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD



In 2013, 71.9% of you said that you were satisfied with the appearance of your neighbourhood and 72% were satisfied with the overall service provided by Mansfield District Council.

WHAT YOU SAID

Feedback from the 2013 tenants and residents' satisfaction survey told us that the main issues you were most concerned with in your neighbourhoods were:

- rubbish and litter
- car parking and parking areas, and
- antisocial behaviour (ASB).



WHAT WE DID

- We launched International Clean Up Mansfield Day, which encourages communities to take part in environmental activities to improve the District.
- We improved the way we carry out, record and communicate issues identified on estate walkabouts.
- Disposed of a number of garage sites to improve the appearance of the estates and provide additional land for house building.
- We spent £157,875 on environmental improvements. This included improving the clothes drying areas on the Sandy Lane estate, putting up fencing and bollards to restrict vehicle access to public land and re-surfacing roads at The Woodlands.



DID YOU KNOW?



- More than 306 bags of rubbish were collected by 45 groups in just one day as part of International Clean Up Mansfield Day - that's 130 more bags this year than at the first event in 2013.
- Housing Officers carry out estate walkabouts in their area every three months. Dates of the walkabouts are published in Contact.
- Further garage sites have been approved for disposal.
- 37.9% of tenants believe their neighbourhood has improved over the last three years.



OUR PLEDGE



We will:

- Continue to carry out estate walkabouts in order to identify priority areas for improvement.
- Commit a further £250,000 in 2014/2015 for environmental improvements.

SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS

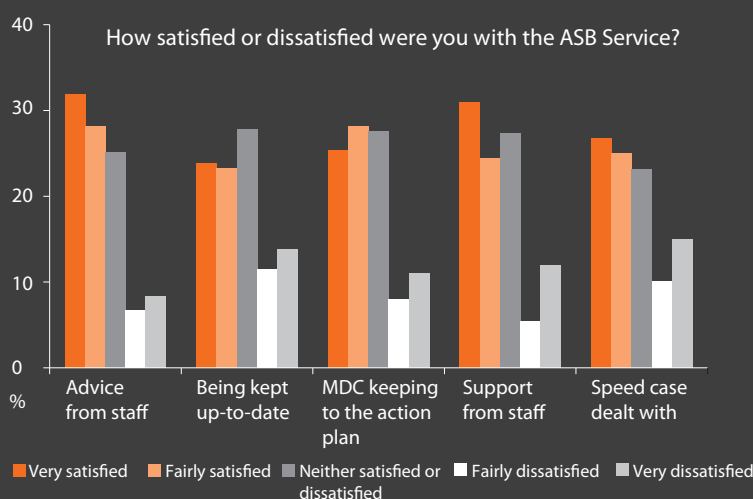
90%

OF ALL ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (ASB) CASES REPORTED BY OUR TENANTS WERE RESOLVED

WHAT YOU SAID

- 48.7% of you were satisfied with the way your ASB complaint was dealt with.

The 2013 Tenants and Residents' Satisfaction survey asked a series of questions regarding ASB.



In 2013/14, 90% of all antisocial behaviour (ASB) cases reported by our tenants were resolved.



WHAT WE DID

During 2013/14 we continued to work in partnership with a range of agencies in the crime hotspots to deliver a range of activities aimed at reducing incidents of ASB including:

- Operation Animism, which targets ASB and open space violence and disorder with the emphasis on young people and street drinking.
- Introducing Designated Public Places Orders (DPPO) in Carr Bank Park and Mansfield town centre which gives police officers discretionary powers to stop a person drinking and confiscate alcohol or containers of alcohol in public places.
- Introducing Street Marshalls for Mansfield town centre on Saturday evenings between 11:45pm and 3:45am.



DID YOU KNOW?



- Between January and April 2014, police reported incidents of ASB in Mansfield reduced by 14.57%.
- The Antisocial Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 gives social landlords new powers against tenants causing nuisance or ASB.



OUR PLEDGE



In order to ensure your neighbourhoods are safer we will:

- Continue to work in partnership with other agencies to deliver a range of prevention, intervention and enforcement measures.
- Review our policies and procedures to ensure we take full advantage of the powers provided by the new Antisocial Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK

62%

OF COMPLAINANTS WERE SATISFIED WITH HOW THEIR COMPLAINT WAS DEALT WITH

We are committed to providing services that our tenants want to a standard that has been agreed by you. The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing sets out guidelines for registered housing providers. As a registered housing provider the Council has to ensure that we:

- Have an approach to complaints, which is clear, simple and accessible and ensures complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly.
- Offer a range of ways for tenants to make a complaint.
- Set out clear standards for dealing with complaints, which should include details of what tenants should do if they are unhappy with the outcome of the complaint.
- Publish information about complaints every year including the nature and outcome of the complaint.

WHAT YOU SAID

- 54.2% of you are aware that we have a formal complaints procedure.
- 62% of complainants were satisfied with how their complaint was dealt with.



WHAT WE DID

We have:

- Reviewed our Complaints Policy and Procedure to ensure our approach to complaints is clear, simple and accessible.
- Responded to the new requirements for dealing with complaints introduced through the Localism Act 2011.
- Provided training for all our staff in dealing with complaints effectively and efficiently.
- Developed a new IT system to capture and record complaints by service area and type in order to enable us to analyse complaints and respond appropriately.



DID YOU KNOW?



- In 2013/2014 we received 86 complaints and 75.47% of those were dealt with within the agreed timescales.



OUR PLEDGE



When we don't meet your standards, 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

61%

OF YOU ARE SATISFIED
THAT WE LISTEN TO
YOUR VIEWS AND
TAKE THEM INTO
ACCOUNT



WHAT YOU SAID

- 61% of you are satisfied that we listen to your views and take them into account.
- 28% of you are aware of our service standards.
- 16% of you know how to challenge these service standards.

The aim of tenant involvement is to help the Council understand the needs, expectations, aspirations, achievements and experiences of our tenants so we can improve our services.



WHAT WE DID



To ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to be involved in our decisions we offer different levels of involvement. These range from receiving and looking at information to being directly involved in making decisions about our services.

To ensure that our involvement activities are effective and provide value for money we have carried out an assessment and the results will inform future improvements to our involvement activities.



DID YOU KNOW?

- We send out a quarterly magazine to all our tenants and leaseholders.
- We have eight Tenant and Resident Associations (TRAs) across the District.
- North Oak Tree TRA has recently opened an internet café.
- Bellamy Road TRA has improved the garden area of a community centre on the estate.
- Bull Farm and North Sherwood TRA held a community awareness day for residents.
- In 2013/14, the Housing Services Panel scrutinised our approach to dealing with empty properties, Welfare Reform and estate walkabouts.



OUR PLEDGE

The Housing Services Panel used your feedback to scrutinise our services and as a result made several recommendations for improvements in 2013/14. These have formed the basis of our pledges. We will:

- Publish the results of estate walkabouts more widely.
- Investigate the costs and feasibility of improving all communal areas in flats and external outbuildings.
- Review our moving in (re-let) standard and develop a moving out standard.
- Carry out a review of our support services.
- Set up and deliver money advice and budgeting courses for tenants.
- Offer tenants help in accessing bank accounts and Credit Union accounts.



TENANT SCRUTINY ACCREDITATION



Mansfield District Council is the first local Council in the country to be given Tenant Scrutiny accreditation.

We were given the accreditation on 19 June 2014 by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS), the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) and Housemark.

The award recognises the hard work of the Housing Services Panel and their dedication and commitment to working with the Council to improve services for customers.

The Housing Services Panel is made up of tenants and residents, who challenge and influence how our Housing Services are delivered.

We have been working very closely with the Housing Services Panel as part of our ongoing commitment to tenant involvement.

We are leading the way in scrutiny

processes and decision making initiatives. The award is also a great way to thank our tenants for their commitment and work, which is all voluntary.

The Housing Services Panel gives tenants the ability to shape services as well as developing their personal skills, knowledge and confidence.

The award ceremony was attended by Housing staff and members of the Housing Panel. If you would like to be part of the Housing Services Panel please contact the Tenant Involvement Officer on **01623 463 485** or email **malonso@mansfield.gov.uk**



GET IN TOUCH

➔ Mansfield Housing Office	01623 463 129
➔ Housing Repairs Contact Centre	01623 463 500
➔ Out-of-hours Emergency Contact (repairs)	01623 463 050
➔ Ashfield and Mansfield Homefinder	01623 463 402
➔ Central Control	01623 463 341
➔ Housing Advice Service	01623 463 125
➔ Money Advice Officer	01623 463 451
➔ Welfare Rights Officer	01623 463 450
➔ Right to Buy/Leaseholders Officer	01623 463 062
➔ Tenant Involvement Officer	01623 463 485



HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF MANSFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL'S HOUSING SERVICE



We are looking for people to join our Housing Service Panel, which is a voluntary group of tenants and residents who scrutinise our performance and give their views on the way the Council runs its Housing Service.

To become a panel member you need:

- A basic knowledge or an interest in how housing services are delivered
- The ability to challenge opinions and be challenged
- The ability to work as part of a team, and
- To be aged 18 or over.

Full training and support will be provided.

The panel meets monthly and expenses will be paid.

For more information call Mansfield District Council's Housing Policy team on **01623 463 485**, email housing@mansfield.gov.uk or visit www.mansfield.gov.uk/hsp

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