

Tenant Services Annual Report 2014/15

Welcome



Councillor Mattie Ross, Chair of Housing Committee

It's been another busy year for Tenant Services. I'm delighted the first new homes in our 200-strong building programme are finished in Minchinhampton and Dursley. Plans are in hand to complete many more this year on smaller sites, and several shared ownership sales have been completed with more in the pipeline.



The service has maintained high satisfaction rates for repairs, and grant aid has helped us improve over 1,000 homes to Decent Homes Standard in our continuing programme of replacement of windows, bathrooms and kitchens. Nearly 800 homes have been improved with new heating systems or solar panels and re-let time on empty properties has fallen, so people in need can be housed sooner.

The new sheltered housing service is fully operational with all support workers, site officers and weekend support workers in place. All schemes have been visited by team leaders, the tenant satisfaction survey results discussed and more resident consultation is ongoing. More groups and agencies are being engaged with and the upcoming asset review will ensure properties are fit for purpose.

A key focus this year has been work to combat the impact of welfare reform on some residents. We have a friendly, dedicated team with a Welfare & Benefits Officer to help ensure Universal Credit does not impact negatively on your finances.

Resident involvement continues to grow, including good responses to 'Question of the Month', enthusiastic participation of the new Tenant Repairs Inspectors and more involvement of young people, something we want to build on.

This summer we will roll out local events, going to the heart of the community rather than meeting more formally at Ebley Mill, with times to suit you. This is your housing service and it's important it is shaped by you, so please come along, have your say and raise any concerns you may have. There will undoubtedly be more challenges ahead but working together we are stronger.

Ian Allan, Tenant Chair of Stroud Council Housing Forum

Halfway into year one as Chair of SCHF and the Tenant Voice is loud and clear, improving the services you use – and I want to hear as many tenant voices as possible!



Your views can also be brought to us by your tenant rep and your voice will be at the centre of every meeting. This is real local accountability – you can come along to meetings or watch your reps online from the comfort of your own home! It's democracy at work.

I am also delighted a number of you are enjoying working on a project to return gas servicing and maintenance in-house, to improve quality and save money. You have helped design the service from the tenants' point of view.

Watch out for information on tenant involvement opportunities in Keynotes or, to join in, contact Christine Welsh at Christine.Welsh@stroud.gov.uk or on 01453 754164.

Working together Improving services



2014/15 improvements:

- ✓ 10 times more of you giving your views through our 'Question of the Month' than through formal involvement.
- ✓ 18-35 year old tenants are now giving us their views.
- ✓ 352 of our sheltered residents replied to our satisfaction survey.
- ✓ Carried out an annual review of our Service Development Groups.

What we are doing now:

- ✓ Hosting Stroud Tenant Voice events in your area to develop our services together in the heart of your community (see page 6).
- ✓ Asking for your views in our tenant satisfaction survey this autumn.
- ✓ Working to help new tenants settle in and build community cohesion around our new homes.
- ✓ Creating a new vibrant residents association at The Tynings, Forest Green.
- ✓ Working with our Tenant Inspectors to follow up on issues from their fuel poverty inspection in 2013.
- ✓ Continuing with our regular scheme meetings.

815 tenants and residents

came along to community development events and activities.



To find out more, contact:
Christine.Welsh@stroud.gov.uk
or 01453 754164

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Repairs – peace of mind



-  93% of repairs are fixed first time.
-  99% of tenants are satisfied with repairs and maintenance service.
-  98% of emergency and urgent repairs are completed on time.

2014/15 improvements:

- ✓ Empowered our Tenant Repairs Inspectors to work with you to check the quality of repairs in your home. They attend contract partnering meetings and play an active role in improving services to you.

What we are doing now:

- ✓ Appointing a new contractor to provide our repairs and maintenance service.
- ✓ Asking how you want to feed back to us on your satisfaction with repair and improvement works.
- ✓ Extending a Tenant Challenge to you to tell us what you think of our repairs service following work.

To find out more email: housing.repairs@stroud.gov.uk or 01453 754852

You and your home



-  **83%** of tenants are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live.
-  **77%** of leaseholders are satisfied with the service.
-  **93%** joint rating of estate inspections, that's you and us together.

2014/15 improvements:

- ✓ Completed the Sheltered Housing Review and following extensive consultation with tenants, introduced a new look service.
- ✓ Rolled out the Pet Policy across our general needs flats with communal areas.
- ✓ Introducing Tenancy Audits to MOT your property and tenancy in an annual visit making our estates better places to live.

What we are doing now:

- ✓ Celebrating the silver jubilee of our garden competition and inviting you to take an active part in making it blossom next season.
- ✓ Working with The Tynings Area Residents Group to realise your dream for a new play area.
- ✓ Continuing a programme of tenancy audits prioritising those of you most likely to be affected by Universal Credit.



Putting you first

2014/15 improvements:

- ✓ Complaints Learning Zone workshops rolled out to officers and managers, to improve the quality of our service.
- ✓ Reviewed the complaints information available to tenants.
- ✓ Tenant Inspectors; complaints handling report found lots of positives in the way we handle complaints and we have worked together to improve the service.

What we are doing now:

- ✓ Improving the information available to tenants on our website.
- ✓ Refreshing your online Tenant Handbook.
- ✓ Annual report presented here in Keynotes, saving £6,000 as voted for by you, the Stroud Tenant Voice.

-  **95%** of household data collected.
-  **144** of you wrote in to say thank you.
-  **98%** of complaints replied to within 10 working days.
-  **86%** of you are satisfied with how we handled your complaint. **Up from 70% last year.**

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On the move

2014/15 improvements:


- ✓ Reduced our empty home re-let times from 22 to **16** days, shaving nearly a week off waiting times.
- ✓ Tenant Inspectors are quality checking the work carried out on our empty homes.


What we are doing now:


- ✓ Letting our newly built homes.
- ✓ Carrying out a review of our sheltered housing schemes to improve their fitness for purpose and facilities.

 **60** - average number of applications waiting to be processed (target is less than 100).

 **21%** of lettings made to transferring tenants who decided to stay with us (target is 25%).

 **15.5%** of lettings made to bronze band applicants (target is 10%).

 **16.08** days - empty home re-let time, 6 days less than 2013-14.

 **70%** of our homes let at first offer.

 **89%** of new tenants satisfied with the service received.



Interested in renting one of our properties? Visit:
www.gloshomeseeker.co.uk

Building a brighter future

2014/15 improvements:

- ✓ Cut the ribbon on the first new homes let to tenants at Minchinhampton.
- ✓ Sold our first shared ownership house at Littlecombe.
- ✓ **43** new homes started at Top of Town and **4** smaller sites.

What we are doing now:


- ✓ Completing our first flagship homes, **35** at Minchinhampton and **18** at Littlecombe.
- ✓ Signed contracts for **51** new homes at Mankley Road.
- ✓ Planning to start building **21** new homes in Wharfdale and Chapel Street.
- ✓ Starting to build **35** new homes in phase 2 of the regeneration of Top of Town.



7 new homes let to tenants. 

4  shared ownership houses sold.

Continuing to build up to

200  council homes in our new build and regeneration programme.

Interested in shared ownership? Visit
www.helptobuysouth.co.uk

Value for money rent

Think before it's spent!




2014/15 improvements:

- ✓ Introduced 52 week rent charges, so you know exactly what you are being charged and helping you to manage your money.
- ✓ Introduced Tenants Online so you can look up your rent account and make payments at any time.
- ✓ Walking your estates with you to make sure you get value for money and community well being from the services you pay for.

What we are doing now:

- ✓ Working with you to prepare for Universal Credit and plan how to avoid rent and council tax debts (see page 3).
- ✓ Advising you to set up a Direct Debit for your rent and get a bank account if you don't have one.
- ✓ Working with partnering agencies to increase your access to financial advice and services (see page 3).
- ✓ Implementing new measures to collect former tenant arrears.

 **98.81%** of rent collected.

 **1,190** tenants supported with additional welfare benefits advice and financial inclusion support.

 **100** tenants signed up to Tenants Online.

 **5** tenants evicted due to rent arrears.

To set up a Direct Debit or talk to us about your payments call: 01453 754876

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Safe happy communities

2014/15 improvements:

- ✓ Increased the play areas at Elm Road, Cashes Green and Archway Gardens Paganhill with 2 extra pieces of play equipment.
- ✓ Installed and refurbished a disused Youth Centre behind Queens Court for local children's enjoyment.

What we are doing now:

- ✓ Introducing a guest speaker slot at sheltered scheme meetings to follow up on concerns raised in the October 2014 satisfaction survey about anti-social behaviour and the way it is managed.
- ✓ Giving you the chance to tell us what you expect from this service if you have to report anti-social behaviour to us at our Stroud Tenant Voice events this summer.

 **3** tenancy fraud cases handled, resulting in formal action.

 **99** anti-social behaviour cases reported.



 **83** anti-social behaviour cases successfully resolved.

90% of complainants are satisfied with how we handled their anti-social behaviour case.


Concerned about anti-social behaviour? Talk to us on 01453 754168 or email housing.management@stroud.gov.uk

Keeping you warm

2014/15 improvements:

- ✓ 496 gas central heating systems installed, with SEDBUK highest energy rated boilers, to heat homes more efficiently.
- ✓ 292 properties installed with photo-voltaic systems, giving tenants cheaper electricity in the daytime.
- ✓ Introduced a Tenant Education Officer to make sure you know how to get the best from your heating system.

 **100%**  of gas safety checks passed.
98% tenant satisfaction with heating installation.

What we are doing now:

- ✓ Bringing the gas servicing and maintenance in-house to improve the service to you and provide jobs locally. The new team will be called Stroud District Council Heating Services and will be phased in during the autumn.
- ✓ Installing up to 8 photo-voltaic commercial systems on sheltered schemes. Grange View, Hazelwood, Springfields and Walter Preston were amongst the first to be done this year.
- ✓ Installing up to 500 gas central heating systems.
- ✓ Installing up to 60 more properties with photo-voltaic panels.
- ✓ Installing up to 20 air-source heat pumps and renewable energy central heating.



Looking ahead



2014/15 improvements:

- ✓ Improved 1,043 properties to decent home standard.
- ✓ Secured Homes and Community Agency funding of £5.9m to make these improvements possible.

We installed:

- ✓ 242 bathroom and shower rooms
- ✓ 238 kitchens
- ✓ 200 external doors
- ✓ 45 roofs
- ✓ 207 sets of new windows.


We refurbished:

- ✓ All of the exterior of 1-8 The Long Ground.

What we are doing now:

- ✓ Major external refurbishment to properties in Orchard Road.
- ✓ Continuing to install replacement kitchens, bathrooms, external doors, windows and roofs to achieve the Stroud Standard by 2017.
- ✓ Continuing to install aids and adaptations to enable you to live independently in your home.

 **99.7%** of tenants are satisfied with our planned maintenance service.

 **100%** of tenants are satisfied with our aids and adaptations service.

Talk to us about planned maintenance on 01453 754077

Spending to improve homes: We are still finalising our end of year accounts and will report on these in the next edition of Keynotes.