

DARTFORD

BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING ANNUAL REPORT TO TENANTS AND LEASEHOLDERS for 2013-2014

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If you or anybody you know requires this or any other council information in another language please contact us and we will do our best to provide this for you. Braille, Audio tape and large print versions of this document are available upon request.

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Calls are welcome via typetalk

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1. Foreword

Welcome to our fourth annual housing report to tenants and leaseholders. It has been developed following feedback from our tenants and from measuring our performance across a range of housing services and from the development of local standards.

The work we do with the Dartford Borough Resident's Forum is invaluable in ensuring we continue to deliver housing services which make a difference to tenants and leaseholders.

We have done a lot of work over the last year to ensure that we met our targets in the action plan and we have continued to develop both our local standards and our core service standards.

We hope that you enjoy reading this report and find the information both interesting and informative.

We remain committed to working with tenants across a range of services and to make continuous improvements.

More information on the ways in which you can get involved can be found on page 8.

2. Introduction

The Regulatory Framework first developed by the Tenant Services Authority and continued by the Homes and Communities Agency has now become a part of everyday life for tenants and the Council alike.

This report will explain what we have been working on over the last 12 months and will show you what we have achieved and detail those areas where we still have work to do in order to meet our targets.

The five national standards in the regulatory framework are:

Standard	Main Areas
Tenant Involvement and Empowerment	Customer service, choice and complaints Involvement and empowerment Diversity
Neighbourhood and Community	Neighbourhood Management
Home	Quality of accommodation
Tenancy	Allocations Tenure
Value for Money	Applies to all standards to show that the landlord is achieving value for money

3. The Standards

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment

What have we done?

- Carried out resident satisfaction surveys as a matter of course and used feedback to address issues and improve the service we deliver
- Informed you about events, services and council news by newsletters, website and email
- Sent you a copy of the Link newsletter at least three times per year
- Sent information on request about how you can get involved in shaping the service
- Let you know when estate inspections took place in your area and provided feedback on previous issues through the Link and through the Dartford Borough Residents' Forum (DBRF) as a monitoring body
- Provided performance information on our services to tenants and leaseholders on a regular basis in an easy to read, clear and standardised format (following feedback from the DBRF)

- Consulted with you on major changes to our services and on new housing policies and procedures, for example the new Allocations and Tenancy Policies implemented in 2013.
- Supported residents' groups and the DBRF through the Resident Involvement Officer
- Provided training to help develop residents' skills, for example Equality and Diversity, Effective Meetings, Minute Taking Skills
- Carried out visits to tenants affected by the reductions in Housing Benefit and welfare reform to offer advice and assistance

Our promises to you:

We will:

- Continue to carry out resident satisfaction surveys to improve the service
- Send you a copy of the Link newsletter three times per year
- Inform you about events, services and Council news by a variety of methods, e.g. via the website, post or our new texting service
- Continue to support appropriate resident groups and the DBRF
- Continue to work within the Kent Engagement Group to enable awareness of regional housing issues, and provide enhanced opportunities for training and networking via partnership working.

Neighbourhood and Community

What have we done?

- Carried out further customer satisfaction surveys across all estates in 2012.
- Looked to prevent incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) occurring, for example by working with the Community Safety Unit (CSU) to help protect vulnerable people.
- Reviewed a suite of housing policies to make them fit for purpose in 2013 including the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy for housing, Assignment Policy, Mutual Exchange Policy, Demoted Tenancy Policy, Tenancy Fraud Policy, Decant Policy, Rent Arrears Policy and the Management Transfer Policy
- Involved the DBRF in more in depth monitoring of standards for estates services with training given by Pinnacle PSG, DBC Housing Service Cleaning and Grounds Maintenance contractor and the provision of online monitoring systems.
- Improvements were made to Gunn Road Community Garden by the Council's partner, Pinnacle PSG including putting in raised beds and new pathways to make it wheelchair accessible and completely landscaping the gardens.
- Provided a Handyman service across the borough for vulnerable tenants

- Made the best use of opportunities provided by community payback to get works undertaken on individual gardens for elderly and disabled tenants on Temple Hill, Sutton at Hone and Tree estate.
- The 'Pinnacle Plus' (PP) initiative, started in April 2013, has continued and developed throughout the year. Initially focusing on the DBRF's concerns regarding garage areas, PP have carried out a wide range of work including work on multi agency projects both with our enforcement, community payback and housing teams on the Temple Hill week of action to clean up one of our housing estates and a further project to clear the Enchanted Woodland with the Temple Hill Trust, Community Payback and Hyde Housing Group. PP have also decorated two supported housing scheme lounges, cleared several overgrown sheltered housing scheme gardens and followed up by putting in planters where residents have requested them.
- PP's involvement with the MWRA also provides work experience for those unemployed for between 6 – 12 months and this initiative has also led to the permanent employment of some unemployed residents.
- Reviewed the Estate Inspection process following feedback from members of the DBRF

Our promises to you:

We will:

- Continue to carry out regular customer satisfaction surveys across the service
- Carry on implementing the new Allocations Policy and ensure residents are kept abreast of any changes following any reviews of the policy
- Continue to invest time and resources into the Dartford Borough Residents' Forum and other resident associations
- Continue to provide a Handyman service
- Procure a new ASB software system that will not only be more user friendly but also enable quality feedback from victims of ASB to be obtained.

Home and Tenancy

What have we done?

- Enabled members of the Dartford Borough Residents' Forum to attend a number of void inspections to monitor quality
- Invested in excess of £7m into the housing stock in 2013/2014 for capital repairs including £1m for communal area improvements such as decorating, paving, bin store areas and communal lighting upgrades.
- Developed a new Repairs Policy in consultation with residents and the DBRF
- Delivered over 12,000 repairs to residents' homes

- Improved and re-let 276 void properties
- Continued to reduce our re-let times from 22.52 days in 2012/2013 to 19.37 in 2013/2014.
- Made a successful bid to the Government's Department of Environment and Climate Change for £4.2 million which will help local residents and businesses save money on energy costs through a range of projects.

Our promises to you:

We will:

- Work with members of the DBRF to procure a gas maintenance partner
- Invest in excess of £7m into the housing stock in 2014/15 for capital repairs including £500,000 for communal areas
- Work with our Green Deal partners E3 to deliver the Warmer Streets initiative across targeted areas in the borough.

4. Value for Money

What we have done:

- Introduced more efficient and effective ways of running services
- Carried out a benchmarking exercise for housing management with other similar authorities
- Ensured that the adaptations service achieves value for money
- Made significant improvements to Gunn Road Community Garden which have been funded by Pinnacle PSG as part of our partnership working.
- The new text service will provide on-going savings on communication with tenants. It has been already been used for rent campaigns and DBRF meetings.

Our promises to you:

We will:

- Continue to deliver energy efficiency and other measures that save you money
- Monitor our performance
- Involve the Dartford Borough Residents' Forum in our decision making processes

- Continue to make best use of Pinnacle Plus, which enables savings on decorating, clearing gardens, etc. and offers local people opportunities that enhance their employability.

5. Our Performance

The table below shows our performance across a range of services for 2014/2014. It uses a symbol system which highlights if we are meeting our targets or if we need to make some improvements (see key below).

Status v's 2013/14 target	Performance indicator	2013/14 Target	2013/14 Performance	Yearly Trend	Target 2014/15
	Number of households on the housing register.	Monitor only.	681		Monitor only.
	No of households where homelessness prevented.	Monitor only.	100		Monitor only.
	No of households living in temporary accommodation.	25	31		25
	% of repeat homelessness within 2 year.	4.0%	0%		2%
	% of lettings made to households already residing within the Borough.	95%	99.7%		95%
	No of private sector vacant dwellings that are returned into occupation or demolished.	115	86		100
	No of service requests completed related to Private Sector Housing condition and advice.	230	240		240
	% rents collected as a proportion of rents owed.	98.1%	97.1%		98.1%
	Rent Collection and Arrears Recovery: Evictions.	Monitor only.	9		Monitor only.
	% rent lost through local authority dwellings becoming vacant (voids).	0.60%	0.65%		0.60%
	Average time taken to re-let local authority housing voids (in calendar days).	21	19.37		20
	Number of Voids re-serviced and re-let.	Monitor only.	234		Monitor only.
	% Urgent repairs completed on time.	98%	96.4%		98%

	% Non- urgent repairs completed on time.	98%	90.7%		98%
	% Emergency repairs completed on time.	100%	99.6%		100%
	% non-decent council homes.	5%	2.4%		5%
	No of non-decent homes.	Monitor only.	101		Monitor only.
	Energy Efficiency of Housing Stock (SAP energy rating).	73	73.2		73
	Number of affordable homes delivered.	70	127		100

PI Status	
	Alert
	Warning
	OK
	Monitor Only

Long Term Trends	
	Improving
	No Change
	Getting Worse

6. Additional information

The housing service can be accessed in a variety of ways including visiting, phoning or writing to us, live chat, texting and estate surgeries or by visiting our website at www.dartford.gov.uk

If you would like any more information on documents mentioned in this report or any other information on the housing service or the regulatory framework please look on our website: www.dartford.gov.uk or contact us directly on 01322 343434 or look on the Homes and Communities Agency website at www.homesandcommunities.co.uk

If you have any comments on the report or would like to get more involved with how housing services are delivered in Dartford email resident.involvement@dartford.gov.uk