

DARTFORD

BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING ANNUAL REPORT TO TENANTS AND LEASEHOLDERS for 2015-2016

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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 NGT relay

ਪੰਜਾਬੀ	தமிழ்	Polski	česky	简体中文	Français
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1. Foreword

Welcome to our sixth 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 against local standards.

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

We have again done a lot of work over the last year to ensure that we met the targets in our 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. It 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, email and text
- Sent you a copy of the Link newsletter 3 times in the last 12 months
- 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 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

- Supported residents' groups and the DBRF through the Resident Involvement Officer
- Provided training to help develop residents' skills, for example Assertiveness, Professional Boundaries, Effective Meetings, Minute Taking Skills
- Delivered a Kent-wide Tenants' Conference in partnership with the Kent Engagement Group in April 2014
- Awarded Community Initiative Grants to enhance the lives of supported housing tenants by creating a more attractive outdoor living space

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 at least three times per year
- Continue to inform you about events, services and council news by a variety of methods, e.g. via the website, post, email or by our 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
- Ensure our priorities reflect the wider corporate objectives of the Council

Neighbourhood and Community

What have we done?

- Reviewed and updated the Allocations Policy
- Continued to provide a Handyman service
- Acquired a new anti social behaviour (ASB) software system which has been operational from January 2015; being used by both housing and the Community Safety Unit to enable joined up reporting of ASB across the Borough
- Prepared and implemented a corporate ASB Policy that is up to date and takes account of the new tools and powers included in the new Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Adopted the Kent Police risk assessment approach to ensure that vulnerable victims of ASB are provided with the protection they need
- Carried out regular customer satisfaction surveys across the service including for the repairs service, leasehold services, Right to Buy and community centre administration.

- Continued with the Pinnacle Plus initiative which carried out further projects, including work to clear up a recycling centre in Hawley and work on the new Open Air theatre in Dartford Park
- Invested in energy efficiency works

Our promises to you:

We will:

- Strive to build new homes or covert buildings to create more council housing for local people
- Use the new ASB Policy and all available powers and tools for the benefit of residents across the Borough.
- Continue using our new Caseworks software to survey tenants so we can improve the service
- Carry out a Homeless exit survey to assess satisfaction with the service provided to homeless clients.
- Analyse data from the ASB software to assess where underlying issues emerge and enable a more targeted response
- Review flexible tenancies to assess their impact and any emerging issues
- Continue to review housing policies to ensure they are fit for purpose

Home and Tenancy

What have we done?

- Obtained planning permission to deliver up to 76 new council homes for rent over the next two years.
- Invited members of the DBRF to attend contractor meetings to discuss performance levels & service improvements
- Invested in excess of £7m into the housing stock in 2014/2015 for capital repairs including £500,000 for communal area improvements such as decorating, paving, bin store areas and communal lighting upgrades.
- Introduced a new Repairs Policy in consultation with residents and the DBRF
- Delivered over 12,000 repairs to residents' homes
- Improved and re-let 273 void properties
- Maintained our good performance on void properties by reducing our re-let times from 22.52 days in 2012/2013 to 19.37 in 2013/2014 with a slight rise in 2014/2015 to 20.06

Our promises to you:

We will:

- Once again, invest in excess of £7m into the housing stock in 2015/16 for capital repairs including £500,000 for communal areas
- Continue to work with our Green deal partners to deliver the 'Warmer Streets' project
- Be part of the Kent and Medway Sustainable Energy Partnership
- Continue to deliver energy efficiency and other measures to our stock that save you money
- Continue to work with the DBRF and other Residents to improve maintenance services across the board and ensure delivery is customer focussed
- Strive to create more council housing for local people by building homes or converting

4. Value for Money

What we have done:

- Introduced more efficient and effective ways of running services
- Reduced repair costs by investing in the Council's capital works programme
- Reinvested income from our PV solar panel project back into the service
- 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
- Used the text service to make savings on mail outs for the DBRF open meetings and to support the energy switching and rent arrears campaigns
- Employed around 12 local apprentices to assist us in delivering the housing service; many of whom have gone on to full time employment

Our promises to you:

We will:

- Continue to deliver energy efficiency and other measures that save you money
- Monitor our performance
- Involve the DBRF in our decision making processes
- Be responsive to our customer's needs to improve the service
- Strive to meet housing need for local people as efficiently as possible

5. Our Performance

The table below shows our performance across a range of services for 2014/2015. 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	Target 2014/15	2014/15 Performance	Yearly Trend	Target 2015/16
	Number of households on the housing register.	Monitor only.	850		Monitor only.
	No of households where homelessness prevented.	Monitor only.	81		Monitor only.
	No of households living in temporary accommodation.	25	43		25
	% of repeat homelessness within 2 year.	2%	4.95%		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.	100	96		115
	No of service requests completed related to Private Sector Housing condition and advice.	240	389		240
	% rents collected as a proportion of rents owed.	98.1%	97.57%		98.1%
	Rent Collection and Arrears Recovery: Evictions.	Monitor only.	9		Monitor only.
	% rent lost through local authority dwellings becoming vacant (voids).	0.60%	0.59%		0.60%
	Average time taken to re-let local authority housing voids (in calendar days).	21	20.6		21
	Number of Voids re-serviced and re-let.	Monitor only.	295		Monitor only.
	% Urgent repairs completed on time.	98%	95.49%		98%
	% Non- urgent repairs completed on time.	98%	90.37%		98%
	% Emergency repairs completed on time.	100%	100%		100%
	% non-decent council homes.	5%	3.7%		5%

	No of non-decent homes.	Monitor only.	130		Monitor only.
	Energy Efficiency of Housing Stock (SAP energy rating).	73	71.09		73
	Number of affordable homes delivered.	60	151		60

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