

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

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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 it 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 now dissolved Tenant Services Authority and continued by the Homes and Communities Agency has become a part of everyday life for tenants and the Council alike.

This report explains what we have been working on over the last 12 months. It shows you what we have achieved and details 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?

- Held regular Resident' Joint Liaison Group meetings with the Leader of the Council, Council Members and the DBRF)
- 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 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 through the Link and through the DBRF as a monitoring body on issues you raised
- Provided performance information on our services to tenants and leaseholders on a regular basis in an easy to read, clear and standardised format
- Consulted with you on major changes to our services and on new housing policies and procedures
- Provided training to help develop residents' skills, for example Assertiveness, Professional Boundaries, Effective Meetings, Minute Taking Skills, and provided speakers to DBRF meetings on a diverse range of topics including Universal Credit, Waste and Recycling etc.
- Delivered a Kent-wide Tenants' Conference in partnership with the Kent Engagement Group in November 2015
- Awarded Community Grants to enhance the lives of local people by supporting events and activities including equipment for an internet café in a supported housing scheme and cultural awareness events.

Our promises to you:

We will:

- Continue to hold regular Joint Liaison Group meetings
- Continue to carry out resident satisfaction surveys to improve the service
- Send you the Link newsletter during the year
- Continue to inform you about events, services and Council news by a variety of methods, e.g. via the website, post, email or text
- Continue to support appropriate residents' groups and the DBRF by providing training and speakers to develop their skills and knowledge
- 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
- Continue to award Community Grants

Neighbourhood and Community

What have we done?

- Introduced a HERO (Housing Energy, Retraining, Options) service to support tenants claiming Universal Credit and assist in minimising welfare benefit, reform impacts and maximising tenant income.
- Implemented the corporate Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Policy, adopted last year, using the new tools and powers included in the 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
- Implemented a new labelling system/scheme to reduce health and safety risks in communal areas.
- Reviewed the Estate Inspection Policy with the DBRF. This has led to a reduction in estate inspections thus freeing up resources to enable more targeted visits to areas where they are needed and a more focused approach to dealing with estate ASB and tenancy issues etc.
- Carried out regular customer satisfaction surveys across the service including repairs, housing management, leasehold, Right to Buy and community centre administration.
- Invested in energy efficiency works
- Continued to provide a Handyman service
- Explained the Government's Pay to Stay Proposals to tenants who may be affected

Our promises to you:

We will:

- Strive to ensure that the new homes we are building connect well with the local community and surrounding area
- Continue to use and develop the 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 Homeless exit surveys to assess satisfaction with the service provided to homeless clients
- Continue to analyse data from the ASB software to assess where underlying issues emerge, enabling us to work better with other Council teams and external agencies, such as Kent Police, for a more targeted response
- Continue to provide a HERO resource to tenants

Home and Tenancy

What have we done?

- Obtained planning permission to deliver 86 new Council homes for rent. The first development at Temple Hill Square (To be known as Hill View) is due for completion in April 2017.
- Converted the Oast House in Swanscombe into 4 two bedroom flats
- Invited the DBRF to attend contractor meetings to discuss performance levels and service improvements
- Invested in excess of £6m into the housing stock in 2015/2016 for capital repairs including £1,000,000 for communal area improvements such as decorating, paving, communal lighting upgrades and roof replacement.
- Delivered over 10,000 repairs to residents' homes
- Improved and re-let 242 properties
- Maintained our good performance by reducing our re-let times from 20.06 days in 2014/15 to 19.45 days in 2015/16
- Delivered energy saving measures to over 800 privately owned and DBC properties through the Warmer Streets project
- Introduced relaxation classes for our supported housing tenants

Our promises to you:

We will:

- Strive to build new homes or convert buildings to create more council housing for local people
- Deliver 6 new one bedroom flats on Temple Hill Square cash office site
- Start construction of the Council's new build development at Coleridge Road following the procurement of a suitable builder in 2017. The development will provide 51 units of much needed affordable rented housing for local people
- Provide new flooring in communal areas across all our supported housing schemes
- Once again, invest in excess of £6m into the housing stock in 2016/17 for capital repairs including £1,000,000 for communal areas
- Be part of the Kent and Medway Sustainable Energy Partnership
- Continue to work with the DBRF and other Residents to improve maintenance services across the stock and ensure delivery is customer focussed
- Strive to improve contract performance from the previous year in all key performance areas
- Complete a Customer Access Review on the repairs service and implement any necessary actions
- Provide flexible tenancies for the majority of new tenants and keep them under review

- Continue to review housing policies to ensure they are fit for purpose
- Carry out a review of the Council's Allocations' Policy
- Prepare and implement a new Homelessness Strategy

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
- Used the text service to make savings when contacting residents about campaigns, events and services and to support the energy switching and rent arrears campaigns
- Continued to create opportunities for local young people as apprentices to assist in delivering the housing service; many of whom have gone on to full time employment
- The HERO service achieved a significant number of back dated benefits with tenants also being assisted into work and given advice leading to energy savings

Our promises to you:

We will:

- Continue to deliver energy efficiency and other measures that save you money
- Monitor our performance and report it
- Involve the DBRF in our decision making processes
- Be responsive to our customers' needs to improve the service
- Strive to meet housing need for local people as efficiently as possible
- Consult on the big issues with those that may be affected
- Continue to provide a HERO resource to tenants

5. Our Performance



The table below shows our performance across a range of services for 2015/2016. It uses a symbol system which highlights if we are meeting our targets or if we need to make some improvements (see key below). Some targets are for monitoring purposes only.

Status v's 2013/14 target	Performance indicator	Target 2015/16	2015/16 Performance	Target 2016/17
	Number of households on the housing register.	Monitor only.	963	Monitor only.
	No of households where homelessness prevented.	Monitor only.	54	Monitor only.
	No of households living in temporary accommodation.	25	88	25
	% of repeat homelessness within 2 years	2%	1.2%	2%
	% of lettings made to households already residing within the Borough.	95%	93.38%	97%
	No of private sector vacant dwellings that are returned into occupation or demolished.	115	100	100
	No of service requests completed related to Private Sector Housing condition and advice.	240	282	250
	% rents collected as a proportion of rents owed.	98.1%	97.67%	98.1%
	Rent Collection and Arrears Recovery: Evictions.	Monitor only.	13	Monitor only.
	% rent lost through local authority dwellings becoming vacant (voids).	0.60%	0.54%	0.60%
	Average time taken to re-let local authority housing voids (in calendar days).	21	19.45	20
	Number of Voids re-serviced and re-let.	Monitor only.	242	Monitor only.

	% Urgent repairs completed on time.	98%	95.42%	98%
	% Non- urgent repairs completed on time.	98%	91.91%	98%
	% Emergency repairs completed on time.	100%	99.9%	100%
	% non-decent council homes.	5%	4.5%	3%
	No of non-decent homes.	Monitor only.	193	Monitor only.
	Energy Efficiency of Housing Stock (SAP energy rating).	73	71.38	73
	Number of affordable homes delivered.	100	103	120

PI Status	
	Alert
	Warning
	OK
	Monitor Only

6. Additional information

The housing service can be accessed in a variety of ways including visiting, phoning or writing to us, live chat, texting 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