

LANDLORD SERVICES annual report

2008/09

Dear Tenants,

Welcome to your 2008/09 Annual Housing Report.



Cllr Tony Coates

In this report, we have included details of how Winchester City

Council, your landlord, has performed in the year to 31 March 2009. We hope you find the information useful.



Richard Botham

Key Achievements

The year has been dominated by the Decent Homes programme, which we are committed to completing by 2010. Key achievements last year included:

- **Decent Homes** – Only 15 properties (0.3%) now remain classified as “Non Decent”. These homes will be brought up to the Government’s standard by March 2010 - a year ahead of schedule.
- **Empty Properties** – were re-let within 42 days (on average) compared with 53 days in 2007/08. “General Needs” properties were re-let within an average of 26 days, although Sheltered properties took longer, averaging 56 days. This is a significant improvement on previous years, although we plan to reduce this further.
- **Rent Arrears** – were 1.08% of all rent collected in March 2008. This excellent performance remains one of the best in the country and reflects the very good payment

records of tenants across the district – thank you!

- **Tenants Compact** – The agreement between the Council and tenants ensuring that a range of opportunities for tenants to be involved in setting service standards, agreeing priorities and monitoring performance was reviewed and updated.
- **Tenants Satisfaction** – Satisfaction with Housing services increased from 82% in 2007 to 86% in 2009. Satisfaction with Sheltered Housing was even higher, at 91%.

The Coming Year

The Council is facing significant financial pressures this year and as announced in the March edition of *on the house* a number of elements within the Repairs programme have been suspended until further notice, including internal decoration, external painting, kitchen replacements and window replacements.

Essential “Decent Homes” work will continue. Despite this pressure of services to tenants, the Council is committed to ensuring that all other Landlord Services are maintained and improved where possible. We are grateful for the understanding and support from all tenants’ groups consulted on these pressures, and are committed to lobbying Government to ensure a fair settlement for Winchester on the current review of national housing finance. Ongoing priorities for this year include:

Decent Homes – all properties will be brought up to this standard by March 2010 whilst ensuring all that are currently “Decent” are at least maintained at that standard.

Housing Options – The Council will be completing a review of future management options in light of the latest Government announcements on the future funding of Council housing and potential for Councils to build new homes once more. Further information will be published in future editions of *on the house*.

Sheltered Housing and Extra Care – The Council is currently modernising its sheltered housing provision to ensure these tenants receive a consistent level of high quality support. We are also planning to adapt one scheme to provide additional “Extra Care” homes, providing elderly residents with extra care and support whilst allowing them to maintain independent living.

Resident Involvement – As part of the Tenants’ Compact, the Council is committed to extending resident involvement to ensure there are more opportunities for tenants to get involved as and when they wish. This will include new tenant groups in areas not represented currently such as Bishops Waltham and Wickham, more estate walkabouts and focus groups on key issues important to tenants.

The next two pages contain general information on our performance over the last year which we hope will be of interest to you.

If you feel anything is missing from the report, please let us know and we will try to include it in future years.

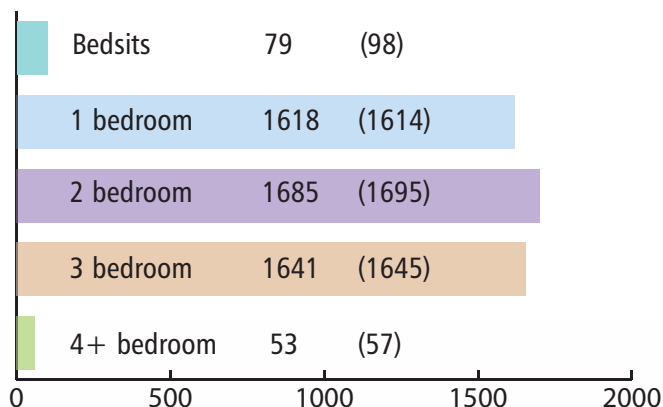
Cllr Tony Coates,
Portfolio Holder
for Housing

Richard Botham,
Head of Landlord
Services

Performance

Our housing stock

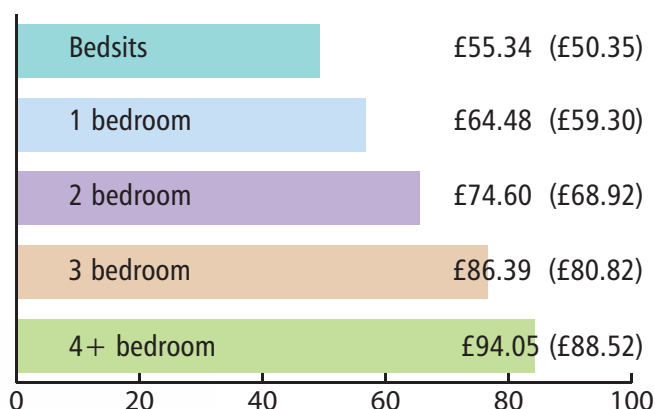
On 31st March 2009 we owned and managed 5,076 (5,109) properties for rent. The breakdown is as follows:



Last year's figures are in brackets for your interest

Rents

During the year we collected a total of £20.7 (£19.4) million in rent and service charges. The average rent increase for 2008/09 was 6.5% (5%) for existing tenants.



Note: Average rents are actual rents charged in the last chargeable week in March 2009 and include rents for tenancies which started after April 2008 where the formula rent applies. This explains the average increase being more than 6.5%

landlord services cost 2008/09

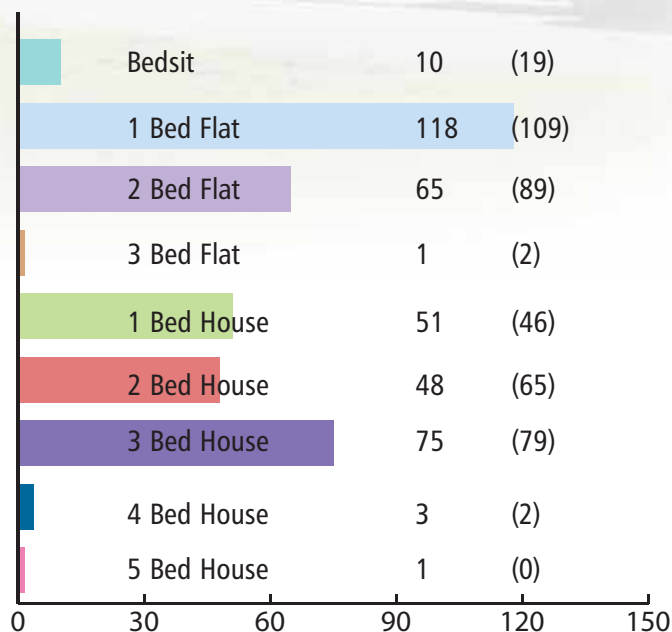
The total cost of landlord services for 2008/09 was £21,590,000 (£19,950,000) broken down as follows:

Subsidy Payment to Govt. £8,429,000

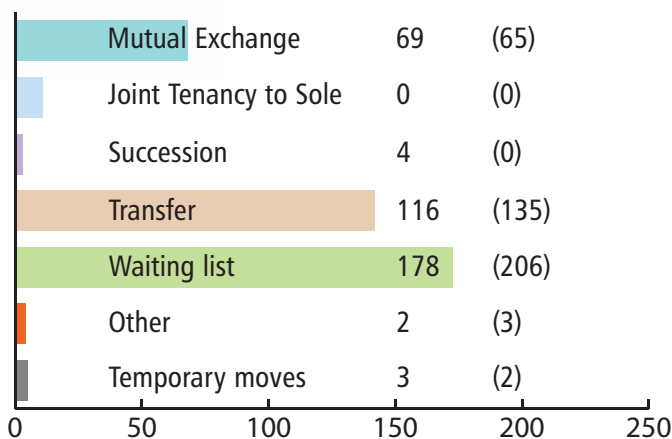
Sheltered Housing £1,191,000

Lettings

The 372 (411) lettings were made to the following types of property:



The 372 (411) lettings for the year can be broken down into the following categories:



Major works

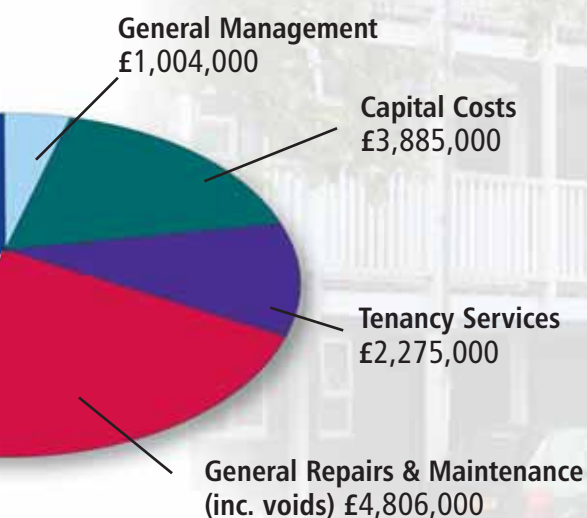
Expenditure for major works during the year was incurred on the following projects:

	Number	Cost
Kitchen and bathroom modernisations	156 (346)	£0.65m (£1.17m)
Heating and insulation upgrades	392 (372)	£0.9m (£0.57m)
Door and window replacements	218 (297)	£0.11m (£0.24m)
Other works		£2.35m (£1.82m)

Responsive Repairs

During the year 20,083 (21,545) repair orders were completed in the five main repair priorities. 93% (96%) of this work was completed within target.

PRIORITY	NUMBER
Call out	1065 (1143)
Emergency	3491 (3839)
Urgent (5 days)	5929 (5883)
Routine (12 days)	3338 (3893)
Routine (30 days)	6260 (6787)



Other Key Statistics

Statistics relating to the re-letting of empty properties and other key elements of the service are detailed below:

Proportion of non-decent council homes	0.5% (0.5%)
Tenants' satisfaction with overall service	85.7% (84.0%)
Energy Efficiency of Housing Stock	78 (78)
Proportion of repairs completed on target	93% (96%)
Proportion of repairs appointments made and kept	99% (100%)
The % of homes with current gas servicing certificate	99.7% (99.28%)
No. of tenants receiving adaptations	524 (397)
Rent lost through dwellings becoming vacant	£294,499 (£277,786)
Average re-let time for General Needs properties (days)	32.61 (37.03)
Average re-let time for Older Persons properties (days)	59.43 (67.6)

Rent Collection

Proportion of rent collected (% of total income)	98.92% (99.25%)
Proportion of tenants in arrears	1.86% (1.92%)
No. of tenants with arrears greater than £200 at March 2009	292 (225)
No. of tenants with arrears greater than £1000 at March 2009	58 (39)
Evictions due to rent arrears	9 (12)

Complaints

Between April 2008 and March 2009, the Council's Landlord Services division recorded 429 (499) formal complaints about the services it provides. Of these, 346 (421) related to the Repairs service and the remainder were in relation to general estate management and tenancy issues.

Repairs – Of the 346 (421) complaints recorded, 149 were made via returned customer care cards. The remainder were received by phone, letter or in person. The Council paid for 23,159 repair jobs in 2008/09, so the level of complaints related to less than 1.49% of all paid jobs.

The complaints were all reviewed with the contractors and have made a very positive impact on improving this service over the last year.

Other Complaints – Of the 83 (78) other formal complaints received, 4 (1) have been referred to the Local Government Ombudsman although he has yet to make a final decision on the matter.

The Council takes complaints about the services it provides very seriously. We try to deal with all complaints immediately but will otherwise respond within 10 working days and wherever possible find an acceptable remedy and strive to implement positive suggestions.

Our Pledge to You

The Council is committed to maintaining the highest standards of customer service and to involving tenants in all that we do. Last year Landlord Services was awarded the Government's Customer Service Excellence Award. Full details of our commitment are set out in the first section of your Tenants Handbook. In addition we aim to meet the following standards:

- Respond to letters, faxes and emails within 10 working days, using plain English, giving a named contact and telephone number.
- Answer telephone calls within 20 seconds or 7 rings stating clearly the name of the service and the person's name answering the call. Answer phone messages will be responded to by the end of the next working day.

- Accessibility - Strive to make services easily accessible to everyone who needs them, including access to buildings. Provide information about our services through 24-hour web access with our telephone lines and reception open from 8 am - 5pm Monday to Friday.
- Reception Areas will be well signposted, clean, tidy and comfortable, with a play area for children, including private interview facilities available on request. Reception staff will be well trained, welcoming and approachable and deal with visitors' enquiries efficiently and as quickly as possible.
- We will make an appointment when making visits to a customer's home or property, and contact you if we are delayed wherever possible. We will show an

identification card and wherever possible let you know what follow-up action you can expect.

- Putting things right - We will publicise our complaints leaflet which sets out the procedures and will try to deal with the complaint on the spot. Otherwise we will respond within 10 working days and wherever possible find an acceptable remedy and strive to implement positive suggestions.

In Return

We expect our staff to be treated with courtesy and politeness by you, your colleagues or others to whom we provide services.

Your Views

This is your housing service and your views on all matters concerning Landlord Services are always welcome. The feedback we receive helps to provide an even better service for you. If you wish to:

- Make your views known - please speak to an officer in Landlord Services, or contact your local councillor.
- Make a complaint - write initially to Richard Botham, Head of Landlord Services. If his reply is not satisfactory, contact your local councillor.
- Ask for more information on any housing matter, ring Landlord Services on 01962 840 222, or write to:

Richard Botham
Head of Landlord Services
Winchester City Council
Colebrook Street
Winchester
Hampshire. SO23 9LJ



Now turn the magazine over to read

