



Tenant and Leaseholder Annual Report 2020/21

Introduction by Jim Gibson, Chair of the Tenant Board

As the current chair of the Tenant Board I am pleased to have been part of the preparation of this report – after a very challenging 18 months. As a Board we have been unable to continue to undertake the usual level of engagement with services during the pandemic – but have taken this opportunity to learn skills to improve the way we work – even holding our first virtual meetings. We hope that these new approaches will help to enable more people to become involved in improving services for tenants in the future.

We continue to support the City Council to listen to and work with tenants and have been working to improve the tenant engagement function through an external review of the service undertaken over winter 2020/21. As Tenant Board our priority is to help ensure as many tenants as possible can have a say on the services they receive.

We hope that over the next twelve months we can encourage more people to become involved in supporting ongoing improvements through new and exciting opportunities. If you would like to know more about our work or opportunities for you to be involved please call a member of the Communities team on 235916, 238969 or 238515, or email communities@stoke.gov.uk.

Introduction by Councillor Carl Edwards, Cabinet Member for Housing and Environment

As the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environment I am pleased to be able to present the Annual Report for Tenants and Leaseholders, providing a comparison to performance in 2019-20. The last 18 months have been strange and difficult times for everyone but I am very proud of the way in which our Housing Services Teams have responded to ensure that tenants continue to receive excellent services despite the restrictions placed on us by the Pandemic, at a time when the housing service relocated into a wider directorate of Housing, Development and Growth.

Throughout the Pandemic, Housing Services have led the way in ensuring that services continue to support the most vulnerable in our communities. We have seen Housing Officers making proactive calls to tenants to ensure that they are well and managing within the restrictions, Neighbourhood Improvement Officers have supported the delivery of essential items and our partners at Unitas coordinated the purchase, storing and delivery of emergency food parcels for people isolating or shielding.

As a landlord we have had to adapt quickly to ensure that we continue to meet the needs of our tenants – moving from office based to home working, restricting visits and providing only emergency repairs at times. Despite the speed at which we adapted we have found new and innovative ways of working which is helping us to shape the way we will deliver services in the future, providing improved and flexible service to all of our tenants and leaseholders.

We will continue to improve access to services online, while also increasing contact with tenants within the community. Our developing approach to recovery will see Housing Teams co-located with other city council services and partners, and bringing these closer to communities. We are also reviewing the way we work with tenants to improve our services and will be provided more opportunities for tenants and leaseholders to have their say about improvements to services that they would like to see.

While the last 18 months has been challenging, we have taken the opportunity to learn and develop – and I look forward to supporting our teams to continue to deliver excellence over the coming year.

Engaging with our Customers

We want to hear from you

Recently we have asked for your feedback on our draft Housing Customer Engagement Strategy. This closed in September 2021 and we have considered your responses, and will be presenting the final strategy for approval by Cabinet later this year. We will let our customers know when this is published.

This strategy sets out the council's commitment to actively listen and engage with customers in a meaningful and productive way. The Adults and Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee are currently seeking tenants' views on electrical safety in respect to council housing, particularly the electrical safety inspections process.

Please forward any observations or comments on electrical safety by **14th January, 2022** to Housing.Strategy@stoke.gov.uk.

More consultation opportunities

Over the next few months we are looking to gather views and opinions on a number of new strategies and policies, which may be of interest to you. As these are drafted, we will let you know when the opportunity to give your views becomes available, either by contacting you directly (if we have your up-to-date information), advertising on social media or sending an information alert via an email.

Consultation is now open until **14th January, 2022**, for the following:

- **Housing Revenue Account Asset Management Strategy** - sets out our approach to asset management in terms of maintaining and investing in the council's housing stock to a high standard, and meeting legislative requirements.
- **Housing Revenue Account Business Plan** – a refreshed plan setting out our ambitions for the next 30 years, underpinned by the regulatory change through the Building Safety Bill, Fire Safety Act and the Social Housing White Paper 2020.

See the link to have your say www.stoke.gov.uk/councilhousingconsultation

Customer Satisfaction

Progress comparison between Survey of Tenants and Residents (STaR) 2017 and Tenant Satisfaction (Proactive Calling)

The STaR survey of 2017 was a postal survey sent to a random sample of 4,702 tenants and all 298 leaseholders. 1008 questionnaires were returned. The current tenant satisfaction survey was started in November 2020. The plan is to contact all our tenants annually. 925 calls have been made up to the end of March 2021 with 695 surveys completed. This work aligns with the charter for social housing

residents: social housing white paper, concerned with improving landlord engagements and resident empowerment.

- 82% of residents satisfied with the quality of their home compared to 77% in 2017.
- 86% of residents satisfied with rent providing value for money compared to 80% in 2017.
- 84% of residents satisfied with the overall service compared to 76% in 2017.
- 28% of residents satisfied with service charges providing value for money compared to 69% in 2017.
- 84% of residents satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live compared to 79% in 2017.
- 58% of residents satisfied with the way the City Council deals with anti-social behaviour compared to 58% in 2017.
- 56% of residents are satisfied with the way that the council deals with moves and swaps compared to 41% in 2017.
- 80% of residents are satisfied with how enquiries are handled compared to 73% in 2017.

Complaints and Customer Feedback

- We had 705 complaints in 2020/21 (46.7% of 1,509 received council wide).
- This compares to 1,621 in 2019/20 which was 59.9% of 2,704 received council wide.
- 'Service Delay' (missed appointments) was the highest category of complaints received at 91 (12.9%) for 2020/21.
- This compares to 28.2% in 2019/20 where Service Delivery was the highest category of complaints with 429.
- 401 (56.9%) of complaints in 2020/21 were partially upheld or upheld, compared to 56.9% of 922 complaints in 2019/20.
- 27 (3.8%) of the complaints received in 2020/21 progressed to stage 2 complaints (55.6% of the stage 2 complaints were either partially upheld or upheld).
- This compares to 56 (3.5%) of the 1,621 complaints in 2019/20 that progressed to stage 2, of which 46.4% were partially upheld or upheld.
- 4 complaints went to the Local Government Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman of which 1 was upheld.
- This compares to 8 complaints in 2019/20 where 3 were upheld.
- 42 comments were received by Housing and Customer Services in 2020/21. (A comment is defined as contact that has been made to the City Council which doesn't express satisfaction, but, may for example, make a suggestion as to how a service can be improved).
- This compares to 38 in 2019/20.
- 467 compliments were received in 2020/21.
- This compares to 443 compliments in 2019/20.

Stock Profile

As at 31st March 2021, we manage 17,717 homes which are made up of the following:

- 2,848 Flats comprising of:
1 bed - 799, 2 bed - 2031, 3 bed - 18
- 11,229 Houses comprising of:
1 bed - 9, 2 bed - 4823, 3 bed - 6227, 4 bed - 150, 5 bed - 1, 6 bed - 9
- 3,640 Bungalows comprising of:
1 bed - 3324, 2 bed - 303, 3 bed - 12, 4 bed = 1

We also have 400 leaseholder properties.

There were 83 right to buy sales in 2020/21. This compares to 195 right to buy sales in 2019/20.

Tenant profile

Number of tenants

Based on Main Tenant/Head Household in March 21 there are 17,357 tenants.

Age Profile

Number of tenants per age group is as follows:

- Aged 18 to 24 - 558 tenants (3.2% of the total tenants).
- Aged 25 to 34 - 706 tenants (15.6% of the total tenants).
- Aged 35 to 44 - 3,157 tenants (18.2% of the total tenants).
- Aged 45 to 54 - 3,219 tenants (18.6% of the total tenants).
- Aged 55 to 64 - 2,931 tenants (16.9% of the total tenants).
- Over 65 - 4,709 tenants (27.1% of the total tenants).
- There are 77 tenants with no age recorded (0.4% of the total tenants).

Disability Profile

- Out of the 17,357 tenants, 638 tenants said that they had a disability, 16,678 said they did not have a disability, 41 did not answer the question.

Repairs

In 2020/21

- We have achieved an average of 95% satisfaction with responsive repairs.
- 252 is the average number of repair jobs logged per day.
- 2.9 days is the average number of days to complete a repair.

Compliance Information

- 100% of properties have valid gas safety certificate in 2020/21 compared to 100% of properties in 2019/20.
- 100% of properties have an electrical test certificate that is less than 10 years old in 2020/21 compared to 100% in 2019/20.
- 97.95% of properties have an electrical test certificate that is less than 5 years old in 2020/21 compared to 99.33% in 2019/20.

Voids, Allocations and Lettings

- The average annual re-let time for a standard void in 2020/21 is 27 days compared to 26 days in 2019/20.
- The average annual re-let time for a non-standard void in 2020/21 was 67 days compared to 52 days in 2019/20.
- 332 voids as at 31st March 2021 compared to 202 as at 31st March 2020.
- 1,960 Households on the Housing Register at the end of March 2021 compared to 2,136 in March 2020.
- 971 properties let during 2020/21 compared to 1,108 2019/20.
- 1,028 tenancies terminated in 2020/21 compared to 1,126 in 2019/20.
- £1,236,212 cumulative rent loss in 2020/21 compared to £629,856 in 2019/20.

Rents

- Current rent arrears as at March 2021 £1,819,353 compared to £1,619,453 in March 2020.
- Arrears are 2.79% of the annual debit as at March 2021 compared to 2.45% as at March 2020.
- 94.53% of all tenants have either a clear account or owe less than £500.

Tenant Support

- 1,514 Income Advice Team referrals for 2020/21 compared to 2019/20.
- £997,721 additional income identified since April for tenants.

Formal Action

- 0 Evictions carried out in 2020/21 compared to 77 in 2019/20.
- 20 cases entered to court in 2020/21 compared to 291 in 2019/20.
- 1,017 Notices seeking possession in 2020/21 compared to 2,806 in 2019/20.

Customer Access

Contact Centre

- 489,476 calls were handled by the Contact Centre in 2020/21 which was 64.6% of all contacts. The most popular service was revenues.
- This compares to 403,085 calls that were handled in 2019/20, which was 46.4% of all contacts with most popular service being repairs.
- 13% of calls were abandoned in 2020/21 compared to 25% in 2019/20
- Average wait time in 2020/21 was 3 minutes and 19 seconds compared to 5 minutes and 9 seconds in 2020/21.
- The longest waiting call was 1 hour 5 minutes and 24 seconds in 2020/21 compared to 1 hour 2 minutes and 47 seconds in 2019/20.

Local Centres

- There were 393 visits to Local Centres in 2020/21 which was 0.1% of all contacts compared to 250,355 visits in 2019/20 which was 28.8% of all contacts.
- In 2020/21 343 visits were for payments and 50 were for service requests compared to 178,944 visits for payments and 71,411 for service requests in 2019/20.
- Revenue of £40,869 was collected at Local Centres in 2020/21 compared to £14,907,882 in 2019/20.

Website

- There were 267,569 transactions in 2020/21 which was 35.3% of all contacts.
- This compares to 215,894 transactions in 2019/20 which was 24.8% of all contacts.
- The most popular service in both years was payments.
- There were 6,597,711 page views in 2020/21 compared to 7,441,715 page views in 2019/20.
- In 2020/21 there were 63,085 Mystoke accounts compared to 38,991 accounts in 2019/20.
- In 2020/21 there were 785 Housing online accounts compared to 266 in 2019/20.

How we spend the Housing Income received

For example £100 would be split down as follows:

- £8.82 per £100 was spent on Capital Financing Costs (£6,569,021) down from £10.23 (£6,506,893).
- £29.53 per £100 was spent on Capital Programme (£21,986,947) up from £14.30 (£9,098,667).
- £10.25 per £100 was spent on Employees (£7,633,822) down from £12.21 (£8,399,951).
- £4.24 per £100 was spent on Premises Related Expenditure (£3,159,073) down from £5.52 (£3,511,677).

- £41.16 per £100 was spent on Supplies and Services (£32,159,760) down from £51.52 (£32,768,115).
- £3.20 per £100 was spent on Support Services (£2,381,109) down from £3.60 (£2,290,218).
- £0.60 per £100 was spent on Third Party Payments (£444,653) down from £1.34 (£850,692).
- £0.19 per £100 was spent on Transport Related Expenditure (£142,979) down from £0.29 (£181,982).

Coronavirus Pandemic – Support and Services Provided

Did you know that the council provided the following support and services across the city during the Coronavirus Pandemic?

Partnership Working

The council worked really closely with organisations such as the foodbank, the Hubb Foundation, Brighter Futures, Concrete and community volunteers to set up and deliver the Stoke-on-Trent Together website.

Unitas

We worked with Unitas to deliver over 4,000 food parcels across the City and collect prescriptions and deliver medicines.

Financial Support

We have seen around 1,700 new universal credit claims and everything that is associated with this. The Income Advice team have identified just short of £1m in unclaimed benefits for our tenants. Our collection rate has been brilliant and is actually slightly higher than this time last year. Over the past 12 months we have attempted over 82,000 contacts with tenants to discuss rent accounts.

Council-wide Working

Along with colleagues from Adult Care, Children's Services, staff from libraries, leisure and museums we have made over 105,000 welfare calls to our most vulnerable residents. Over 16,000 calls were made by our teams.

We received some really positive feedback:

“It’s really nice that you have called, honestly I really appreciate this type of call and when I go out to clap on Thursday I’ll clap for you also,”

Quote from resident.

“I have just spoken to a resident of ours who has thanked me for my call again today. She said she really appreciated it more than I knew...she has no family and lost touch with her friends over the years so my call is the only call she is getting and it meant the world to her”

Quote from welfare caller.

Services provided to tenants and leaseholders

Did you know that the council provides the following services to tenants and leaseholders?

- **Cleaning**

Our Facilities Team provides the cleaning service to apartment blocks with communal areas. The service covers general cleaning of the shared areas inside the building.

- **Grounds Maintenance**

The council's Streetcare and Greenspace Team maintain the green spaces on the housing estates, including communal and shared gardens.

- **CCTV**

We have installed CCTV cameras around our sheltered schemes and apartment blocks to help increase safety and act as a deterrent to anti-social behaviour.

- **Lifts – servicing**

We regular service and maintain the lifts within our apartment blocks and sheltered schemes.

- **Caretaking**

Our staff carry out regular fire and health and safety inspections in apartment blocks with communal areas, on a weekly or twice weekly basis. They also attend to general maintenance, removing vandalism, graffiti and small amounts of fly tipped rubbish.

- **Communal Water Usage**

The communal water supply to common spaces in apartment blocks provides water for cleaning. Within sheltered schemes it services the laundry rooms, guest rooms, bathrooms and toilets.

- **Door entry systems servicing**

Access to the internal communal areas is usually through a secure door entry system in order to provide reassurance to tenants living in the blocks. Door entry systems are serviced twice a year to keep them in good working order.

- **Communal electricity**

Where there are communal spaces within apartment blocks, we provide electricity to power these areas for heating, lighting, door entry and security systems.

- **Health and Safety testing**

Safety is a priority and we ensure that all the appropriate checks and tests are done including the fire alarm, fire-fighting equipment, water hygiene and sprinkler systems.

- **Fixed electrical and emergency lighting testing**

The council is committed to ensuring its properties are fully safety compliant and exceed current fire safety regulations. We regularly service and test these.

- **Communal TV aerials**

The council provides communal aerial systems to apartment blocks as well as some houses and bungalows. These are serviced and maintained by the council through our repairs and maintenance company, Unitas.

Service Charges

Last year we consulted with our tenants living in accommodation with communal spaces such as apartment blocks and gated bungalows, what they thought about the services they received and to understand tenants' opinion on introducing a charge for a range of services already delivered as part of the day-to-day running of the buildings and upkeep of the communal areas.

Taking on board the feedback received through the consultation and listening to views, it has been recommended not to take forward any proposals to levy new charges for services that are currently delivered to council owned blocks and gated bungalows but not currently charged for. We are setting out an action plan to undertake detailed service reviews over the next eighteen months, looking at how we improve these services. As part of this, we are looking for tenants to get involved in helping to shape services and have their say about standards and what these should look like. Please get in touch if this is something that you are interested in. You can get involved at different levels to suit yourself and your commitments so there should be ways on offer to anyone that would like to take part.

To register your interest please email housing.strategy@stoke.gov.uk