

A vibrant field of sunflowers under a blue sky with light clouds. The sunflowers are in various stages of bloom, with large green leaves and bright yellow petals. A semi-transparent green circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing text.

**Neighbourhoods
& Adult Services**

**Council Housing Tenants
and Leaseholders**

**How the Council
Housing Service
performed last
year (2012/13)**

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Introduction



This is the tenants annual report which sets out how the Council is meeting customer promises and obligations and how we intend to improve and meet them in the future.

During the last 12 months we have:

- Completed more repairs on time and had more satisfied customers; it has been the best ever performance for the responsive repairs service
- Reduced the number of properties stood empty and the time they are vacant to an average of less than 6 weeks; this is the best performance in the last 3 years
- Brought closure to a number of longstanding Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) cases to reduce them by more than 50%
- Supported over 4,000 customers with fuel poverty
- Helped more vulnerable people feel safe in their homes

Despite this good progress, these are challenging times. The Government is making some major changes to the benefits systems through the Welfare Reform Act which will have a big impact both on social landlords and tenants.

In the future, recipients of the new Universal Credit will need a bank or credit union account to receive their payments, and will need to claim it online. Our research shows that many of those affected will live in Council housing.

Some Council tenants will be more directly affected than others. Any Council households that the Government says have more bedrooms than they need have already seen their Housing Benefit reduced. Although these changes were introduced relatively recently, the Council is already seeing a rise in the number of tenants not being able to pay their rent, and help and advice is being offered to anyone affected.

Other Government changes soon to be introduced include Housing Benefit being paid directly to the tenant, alongside all other benefits as one lump sum. The money will be paid monthly and it will then be the tenant's responsibility to budget and pass on their rent to their landlord. We have yet to see how this will impact both on tenants and on the Council rents collection service.

Looking forward, we will continue to ensure we provide a high level of service for our customers, whilst ensuring we support those affected by the Government's Welfare Reform Act.

We hope you enjoy reading this report.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R McNeely". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Councillor Rose McNeely

Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods

1 How our Council housing services are viewed externally and locally

Nationally, Rotherham Borough Council's housing services were ranked in the top 50% for its performance in the country during 2012/13:

- This service was ranked **71** against **336** other organisations for repairs completed on time (*amongst the best*).
- This service was ranked **65** against **217** other organisations for repairs completed right first time (*above average*).
- This service was ranked **101** against **215** other organisations for appointments made and kept (*above average*).
- This service was ranked **187** against **247** other organisations for re-let times (*about average*). This is an improvement from 2011/12, when the service was ranked *below average*.
- This service was ranked **43** against **280** other organisations for rent collected against rent owed (*amongst the best in the country*).

Awards

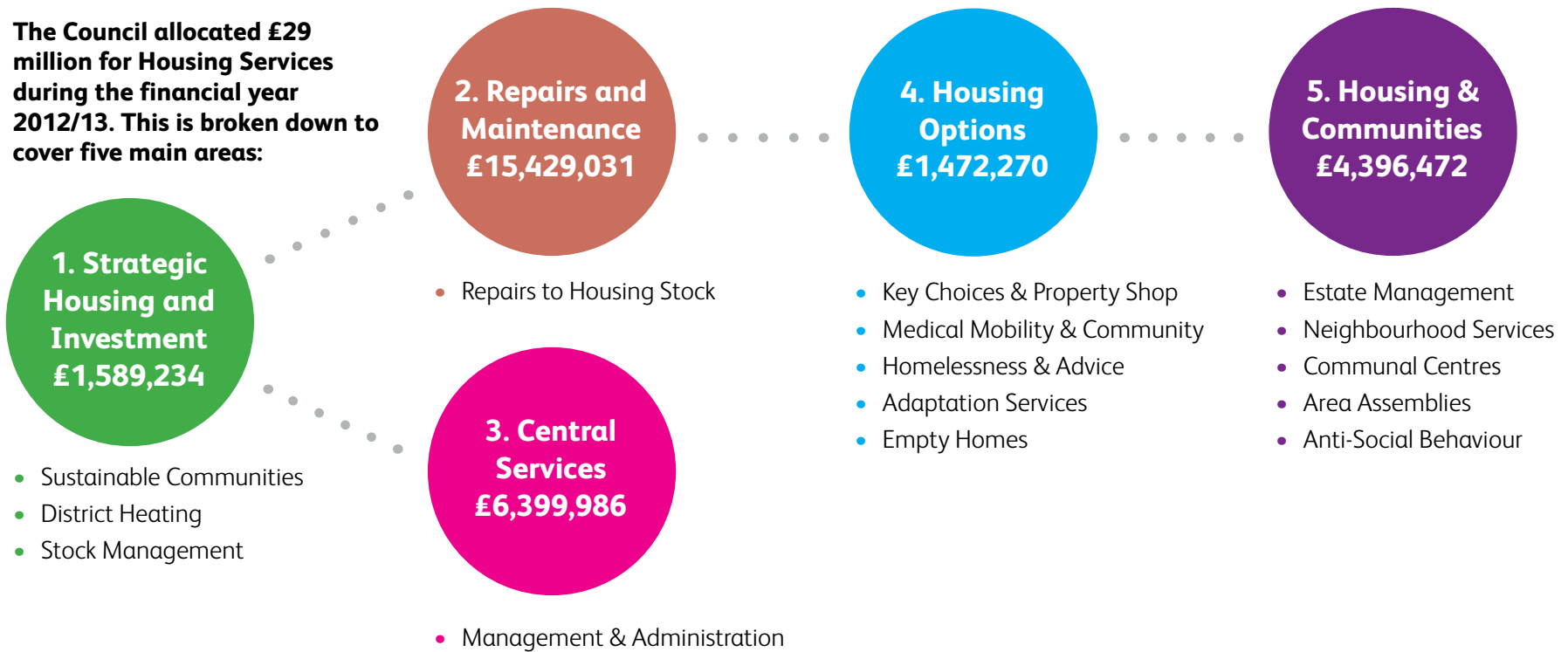
The Council's repairs and maintenance contractor Willmott Dixon achieved national recognition for its partnership working for the second year in a row when it won the prestigious 'Contractor of the Year' award at the annual Housing Excellence Awards in Manchester.

Judges stated they were impressed by Willmott Dixon's close working relationship with the Council and other local contractors.



2 Key facts about how we spend your money

The Council allocated £29 million for Housing Services during the financial year 2012/13. This is broken down to cover five main areas:



3

What customers think about the services we deliver

Rotherham Borough Council's housing services received 303 compliments during the year.

Complaints were down.

325 complaints; a **12%** reduction from 2011/12. The decline in complaints suggests the service is putting right what has gone wrong and learning from the customer experience to improve services

12%
REDUCTION

47% reduction in complaints progressing to stage two. This appears to reflect improved investigation of complaints, and better communication

47%
REDUCTION

All complaints were responded to within the target timescales compared to **89%** in 2011/12

305 new (stage one) complaints, a **9%** reduction on the **336** received in 2011/12

9%
REDUCTION

Number of complaints fully upheld: **161**, a **15%** reduction on the **190** received in 2011/12

15%
REDUCTION

16 complaints escalated from stage one to stage two, a **47%** reduction from 2011/12

47%
REDUCTION

5 customers wished to progress to stage three

The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) did not formally investigate a single complaint about the service in 2012/13, demonstrating an improvement in complaints handling by the housing service.

Top complaint issues

Nearly half of all the complaints involved the council housing repair service.

This includes day to day repairs including gas repairs (excluding gas servicing, planned and capital works).

The most common complaints were about damp, gas boiler/heating issues, delay in repairs and action/attitude of staff.

Trends from upheld complaints related to rainwater goods, roof leaks and damp and missed appointments/boiler issues.

The service recognises the need for a clear longer term strategy to address these trends and external repairs and programmes are being developed for the coming 5 to 10 years. During 2012/13 over two thirds of the flats in the Rockingham area were re-roofed and the remainder will be completed during 2013/14.

It will take some time for the wider impact of the strategy to be felt but the targeted approach based on the repair history should begin to have a positive affect on complaints.

A large number of complaints were about enforcement actions taken by Housing Champions in relation to anti-social behaviour with almost a quarter being partially or fully upheld.

In response, operational management arrangements with regard to ASB casework management were reviewed and ASB Officers now work alongside Housing Officers in the localities, acting as advisors and mentors, to increase skill sets amongst Housing Officers in ASB and tenancy enforcement techniques.

Analysis indicates further guidance on communication skills may help reduce the number of this type of complaint. The Customer Contact Centre was also the subject of a significant number of complaints mainly relating to delays on the phone, with almost all being upheld.

In response to this Housing Champions were introduced into the team on a temporary basis to help improve call waiting times. This also supported the team



by providing a greater depth of knowledge allowing enquiries to be answered first time.

Councillor Surgeries

246 Councillor enquiries were received in the year, the vast majority being related to services received by existing or perspective council tenants.

Repair issues were the subject of the largest number of enquiries with damp, leaks, gutters and footpaths being the most common issues raised.

Following this, the biggest issues were anti-social/nuisance behaviour and grounds maintenance related issues.

Learning from ALL Complaints

Discussions take place with accountable managers for every enquiry to promptly identify any service improvements and changes in current practice.

Appointments

Some customers complained that operatives had not turned up to an appointment, mostly caused by operatives running over time on the previous job. This appears to be linked to one of the work planning systems being used.

An alternative work planning system will be used in the future with additional resources to be allocated between 5pm and 8pm. The service will contact customers and confirm and arrange appointments to minimise the number of aborted visits.



Asbestos

A complaint was made about an asbestos garage, which should have been removed prior to letting.

In response to this problem:

- An easy-to-read letter is now given to new tenants to identify the type, location and level of risk of asbestos in each room
- An easy to read advice leaflet was designed to reassure customers
- The allocation process was amended and training given to allocation officers to advise prospective tenants of the presence of asbestos.

Communal lighting

A customer complained about a delay in resolving a problem with communal lighting in flats. The problem was in part caused by an issue with accessing keys. Similar issues have been experienced by cleaners when cupboards have been broken into and locks changed.

In response to their concerns the service is replacing all communal facility cupboards with key pads to avoid future delays.



4

Our plans for Improving Services – how we have performed

In our 2011/12 Local Account, we made a commitment to improving services within the next 12 months.

Below, you can see what our plans were for future improvements and whether or not we achieved these.

1 Anti-social behaviour and crime is reduced and people feel safe where they live by ensuring the delivery of the following actions where:

Our commitment	Did we achieve?	Find out more within this report
We work faster to respond to anti-social behaviour issues by merging the role of the housing champions and anti-social behaviour officers	Yes	Pages 20 -23
We will identify vulnerable victims of crime/ anti-social behaviour earlier and intervene much more effectively with the problems they are experiencing	Yes	Pages 20 - 23



2 People are able to live in decent affordable homes of their choice by:

Our commitment	Did we achieve?	Find out more within this report
Driving up the standard and quality of housing services in the borough	Yes	Pages 14 -18
Developing new housing	Yes	Pages 17 - 18
Publishing plans to show how we look after our properties and how we invest in the borough	Yes	Page 24
Further improving the quality and responsiveness of the council housing repairs and maintenance service, increasing satisfaction and reducing complaints	Yes	Pages 14 - 16
Improving access to housing in Rotherham by improving the way houses are allocated and by reducing the size of the housing register by 10%	Yes	Pages 17 - 19
Improving the way we assess customers who need home aids and adaptations to support those who wish to live independently in their own home	Yes	Pages 15, 18
Improve how we work in the community to improve Rotherham’s most deprived neighbourhoods including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reducing the number of empty homes and the time they stand empty • reducing anti-social behaviour and crime • improving environmental standards 	Yes	Pages 17 - 22



3 We will improve the way in which customer can access services to offer a quicker and responsive service

Our commitment	Did we achieve?	Find out more within this report
We will deliver an integrated accessible neighbourhood service through three high quality service centres across Rotherham	Yes	Pages 10 - 11
We will improve service accessibility and responsiveness by changing our current call centre arrangements and our accessibility outside normal office hours	Yes	Pages 10 - 11
We will increase and make easier the opportunities for customers to self serve through improving and integrating our internal information systems	Yes	Page 10, 25



Involving & Empowering Tenants



How are we meeting promises:

- **More** customers are involved in shaping housing service delivery
- We have recruited **six** new members to the Area Housing Panels
- We have a **more** responsive out of hours repairs service: a new team has been recruited meaning that emergency calls are now answered quicker and waiting times have reduced significantly
- **Better** Housing Contact Centre service
- Staff **trained** generically to deal with all housing services at first point of contact
- A manual call-back process introduced whereby staff will collect details initially and arrange a return call at a time to suit the customer
- **Extended** service hours from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday, an increase from 45 hours to 60 hours per week
- Processes have been **reviewed** to ensure quicker call handling times
- A single Golden Number for **ALL** Housing enquiries introduced in April 2013, making it easier and less confusing for customers to contact the housing service
- The availability of kiosks for property bidding **increased** across the borough
- A **number** of cash payment machines implemented at local sites.



Contact Centre

During the year, the Contact Centre dealt with more calls as a result of changes to Government legislation. This involved supporting customers who were deemed to have more bedrooms than they needed, and helping those tenants who wished to downsize to a smaller property.

Mystery Shopping

Throughout the year, a number of Mystery Shopping exercises were carried out by customer volunteer inspectors.

Areas studied included the lettable standards, responsive repairs and garage inspections, amongst others. The inspections were carried out using telephone and face to face surveys, visits to empty homes and on-site garage inspections.



Volunteer Inspectors

During 2012/13, mystery shopping exercises were carried out by customer volunteer inspectors.



Winnie Billups, Chair of the Quality & Standards Challenge Group, gave feedback from the findings of the Customer Inspection Group.

“All the volunteers enjoy being a part of assessing services and find it a rewarding experience. The group talk positively about the work they are doing and feel they are learning from their experiences and seeing things from both Rotherham Borough Council and the customers’ perspectives. The group want to carry on with future activities and are keen to get involved in all areas.”

The Tenants Quality & Standards Challenge Group was set up to:

- Have powers to test the services the Council is providing
- Look at Council services legal framework of scrutiny
- Work to improve information and communication
- Scrutinise the activities of departments
- Monitor Council services, their performance and give feedback to improve

The skills needed to be in the group include:

- Knowing how to access services and who to contact
- Knowledge and understanding of sharing information and communication
- Knowing how to challenge and influence how things are done differently
- Knowing how to recognise community priorities
- Knowledge of the legal framework of scrutiny

Examples of how customer testing and scrutiny has helped the Council improve performance of services:

- Improved the speed in which we respond to repairs
- Improved the standard of homes available to let and reduced the length of time homes are empty

Plans are then put in place to share improvements with the group so they can see personally what they were achieving.

For more information contact the Performance and Quality team at servicequality@rotherham.gov.uk or phone 01709 823427.

Tenants Spring Conference

The Tenants Spring Conference was held in March 2013 at the New York Stadium.

Tenants from across the borough attended and found out information on:

- Welfare Reform - to help understand the impact of the bedroom tax
- Attractive Neighbourhoods - tenants support for more enforcement
- Safer Neighbourhoods - how and where to report issues
- Improved Homes - refurbishment, accessing grant funded schemes
- Affordable Warmth - giving information on how to make energy savings i.e. cost of boiling a kettle, savings on not overfilling, shopping around for best tariffs on utilities
- Getting Involved - an interactive workshop to show people how they can make being involved more fun and what they can achieve by having a say

There were also stalls giving information and advice throughout the day including:

- Connect to Support - online market place for adult social care
- Morrison - repair and maintenance advice
- RotherFed- the independent federation representing all tenants and residents in Rotherham
- Housing Helpdesk - accessing housing advice

The Council's Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods Dave Richmond spoke about the current situation with regards to Council housing and the challenges that face the Council due to cuts imposed by central Government:

- Utilise existing workforce to have right people in right places
- Improving performance
- Improving outcomes for Rotherham people

A speech was given by tenant Sithule Moyo including the benefits for getting involved.

The evaluation sheets returned on the day demonstrated the event had been a success.

	Average	Good	Very Good
Time of Day	17%	17%	66%
Was the venue easy to get to?	8%	33%	59%
Venue	8%	8%	59%
Refreshments	8%	8%	84%

	Average	Good	Very Good
Organisation of the event	8%	23%	69%
Presentations	9%	18%	73%
Workshop AM	8%	25%	67%
Workshop PM	0%	9%	91%
Speakers	8%	8%	84%

Want to come this year? Call the Contact Centre on 01709 336040.

"Thanks, food great, nice to meet other people who came."

"Very well organised and enjoyable. Everyone was very helpful. Thank you."

"Enjoyed it. Thank you."

"Really enjoyed it. Looking forward to the next one."

"I attended the affordable warmth workshop. It was very useful regarding the cost of heating and using household appliances at certain times."

"Very good."

Debt Support

Mrs F was reported to be in debt following a referral by Laser Credit Union. When staff from Rotherham Borough Council visited Mrs F they found her heating not to be working and the house was very cold with Mrs F wrapped under blankets. The staff had concerns for the customer's wellbeing.

“The initial problem was to get some heating in the property, to get some food for the tenant for the weekend or this lady may have had some serious health problems if left with no heating, food and money for two or three days.

“All the services reacted very quickly including the Neighbourhood Champion, who used his own money to buy some food, Voluntary Action Rotherham and Social Services who reacted immediately to my plea for help. When we left the tenant we were happy she was warm, and had some food and money to last her over the weekend. Longer term, the Citizens Advice Bureau and Age UK have helped Mrs F to sort out her debts - partnership working at its finest I think.”



Communities in Action

The CIH course Communities in Action Level 2 was delivered by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service on behalf of Rotherham Borough Council.

Fifteen Council tenants took part from differing areas of the borough; two did not have English as their first language and the ages ranged from 16 to 55.

The course focused on boosting community activity and raising awareness on equality and the different reasons people become involved in their communities and the skills needed.

Chairman of the Rockingham 33 Tenants and Residents Association (TARA) said:

“I attended all the sessions and found them very interesting and fascinating. The tutor was friendly and professional in her approach delivering the knowledge in an interesting and understandable way.

“The workbooks that we were given and the exercises contained therein were of great value to me personally as the Chair of a TARA. Over the period of the course, my approach to the developing of the TARA and community development within Rockingham changed as I understood more of the processes required to improve the effectiveness of our aims. One of the things that this course provided me with was the knowledge to be able to help create a diverse committee comprising of the various

tenures found in Rockingham as well as the various age bands from mid 20s up to senior citizens.

“All this and much more came from Rotherham Borough Council's forward thinking in putting on this course and in doing so advancing community development within the borough.

“I say ‘do it again and again’ and then harness the product of your forward thinking and make this borough one of the best places to live in the UK.”

Area Housing Panels



Before: Through the Area Housing Panel, residents reported fly tipping and children getting nettled by weeds. The area looked unsightly and people were reportedly cutting through the farmer's field.



After: The area now looks tidier. There are no reports of fly tipping, anti-social behaviour or people cutting through the farmer's field.



Home



How are we meeting these obligations?

- **106** properties were made Decent during 2012/13
- The repairs and maintenance service saw its best ever performance in 2012/13 with all targets met in this area
- **99.01%** of repairs were completed within target; the number of repairs completed on time was **95.39%**, whilst **95.39%** of repairs were completed to an acceptable quality standard
- At the end of March 2013, only **19** gas safety certificates were outstanding (reduced from **37** in March 2012, and from **473** in 2011). This equates to a reduction from **0.09%** to **0.01%**
- The performance for repairs appointments made and kept was maintained at **98.50%**
- **95.39%** of repairs were completed 'Right First Time', an improvement from **93.57%** in 2011/12
- The number of all repairs completed within target timescales increased from **96.95%** the previous year to **99.01%** in 2012/13
- **99.75%** of customers stated they were satisfied with the service, an improvement from **99.63%** the previous year

- The average length of time waiting for major adaptations from assessment to work beginning is **12.25** weeks – a slight increase from **11.89** in 2011/12



Adaptations

Mr C couldn't access the facilities in his home as he is an amputee and he felt there was a risk to his safety. He couldn't go outside without needing assistance to access his wheelchair as he had steps to negotiate.

A ramp was created at the rear of his property, which involved removing part of a store to accommodate an appropriate wheelchair turning circle.

A kitchen/living dividing wall was also removed which has transformed Mr C's accessibility profoundly. Walls in the hall and his bedroom were also altered including making door openings wider to provide greater wheelchair access.

Finally, a level access shower was installed.

Mr C is now able to access the facilities in his home with a reduced risk to his safety. He can now go outside if he chooses, without needing assistance to access his wheelchair or having steps to negotiate.

Investing in the Borough

During 2012/13, we published the garage site investment programme. We also visited each of 65 housing estates with housing champions to prepare long term investment plans for the sustainable improvement of areas such as bin stores, paths and drying areas.

A new Asset Investment Strategy has been drafted and over 2,000 homes are being externally surveyed to appraise their condition and this information will be used to forecast investment over the next 30 years.

Gas Services

A new tenant experienced delays in having a gas supply connected, after the previous tenant's gas supply was disconnected. The Utility Company will only schedule the work once they have been paid and then place the work onto a 12 week programme.

The problem was exacerbated by the service not having access to a credit card to place the order.

In response to the customer's concerns:

- The use of an emergency credit card has been arranged for similar future incidents
- A customer information leaflet has been created to provide advice and support to the customer

Phone Lines

Some customers complained they were unable to get through on the phone lines. In response, we took the following steps:

- Housing champions were introduced into the team on a temporary basis. The move also provided a greater depth of knowledge allowing enquiries to be answered first time.
- An integrated call centre has been created, merging the First Contact Team, Corporate Call Centre and Rothercare. This has enabled a 24 hour telephone access service via a single number.

Staffing issues have affected the Contact Centre call response and waiting times performance and the ongoing programme of training is still reducing the number of available call handlers:

- Training continues so that enquires can be dealt with at first point of contact
- Recruitment is ongoing for two posts to work at peak times
- Staff work patterns are being reviewed
- A call back process has been implemented

These changes led to a dramatic reduction in complaints by the end of 2012/13.

Working in partnership

Rotherham Borough Council works in close partnership with Willmott Dixon and Morrison who carry out repairs and maintenance on the Council's behalf.

Willmott Dixon Services

“Our Rotherham Branch remains one which Willmott Dixon Partnerships is particularly proud of:

“Since the branch was established in November 2010, when over 160 people were transferred to us from Rotherham Borough Council’s housing management organisation, it has twice won the Willmott Dixon Branch of the Year award for its outstanding all round performance, as well as being the case study put forward for the company’s winning entry for the National Housing Federation Contractor of the Year award.

“Transferring employees have flourished, with many grasping opportunities to develop their careers with the company, whilst their improving performance has driven a reducing number of complaints, plus an increasing number of compliments received from the residents we are proud to serve.

Our Opening Doors programme has allowed us to give work experience and practical skills training to increasing numbers of young people and the long term unemployed, whilst our growing calendar of Community Engagement events has allowed us to invest time and resources into good causes across the borough.

“We look forward to continue working closely with the council, to create an ever improving and increasingly efficient service that can play its part in making Rotherham a better place to live and work.”

**David Coldwell, Rotherham Branch Manager
Willmott Dixon**

Morrison Facilities Services

“Morrison remain immensely proud of their relationship with the Council.

We set out with a vision in respect of the service and its clear this vision has now reached fruition.

The vision to deliver an exemplar service for both clients and customers, based around the principle of getting the basics right and the aim to carry out repairs on time.

Looking back at the year, not one month passed without Morrison surpassing the target set for repairs completed within target and customer satisfaction.

In addition to the above we as a business and our operatives receive an ever growing number of customer compliments, for which we thank you, as they are truly appreciated.

However, we will continue to strive to improve the service as continual improvement is what its customers deserve.

We also set out with a commitment to apprentice recruitment, taking a ‘home grown approach’ from within the community and our commitment remains.

Again, looking back at the year we are so proud of the fact we now employ 31 apprentices on the Rotherham contract alone.

Our commitment to community engagement remains as strong as ever, offering continued and varied support to local community groups and charities.

We will continue to develop and strengthen our partnership approach, to ensure the service we provide prospers, bringing best value to the Council but at the same time the best possible service to our customers.”

**Gavin Scott, Regional Director
Morrison**

Tenancy



How are we meeting these obligations?

- On average, properties were stood empty for **6 weeks – 28.89** working days (a dramatic decrease from nearly **8 weeks or 39.49** working days in 2011/12, making it the best performance in the last **3** years)
- To reduce the turnaround time further, properties over **35** days old will be identified, along with reasons for the time lapse. Early intervention will take place and weekly updates will be provided
- The number of households living in temporary accommodation has decreased to **23**, from **31** households the previous year
- In line with our strategic objectives **104** affordable homes were purchased in 2012/13 and we have purchased three new homes from a developer to add to the Council's stock
- **£6,984,047** of additional income was collected during 2012/13 compared to 2011/12, representing a **10.68%** increase
- **0.8%** of income was lost through vacant dwellings compared to **1.08%** in 2011/12
- Rent collected as a percentage of rent owed **100.30%**. This means we have collected more rent than was owed this year. This figure is higher than **100%** as we have successfully collected backdated rent owed from previous years. This figure has improved from **96.95%** in 2011/12. The amount of rent arrears currently owed (shown as a percentage of

rent due) was **1.59%** in 2012/13. This has decreased from **1.70%** in 2011/12



New Build Adopted Homes

Housing Options Manager, Sandra Tolley said: "Quality of life is notoriously difficult to measure. It has no quantifiable element in that what is good to one person is not to another. However, when I come across a quote such as this:

"This home has given me a whole new lease of life. It has enabled me to live my own life and still remain close to my parents. I never thought I'd be able to do that."

"I can say without any shadow of a doubt quality of life has increased for this person as a result of being rehoused in suitable accommodation.

"The story behind this quote is a happy one, especially in these difficult economic times, and it is a result of joined up working within Rotherham Borough Council and with our partners in The Rotherham Foundation NHS Trust and in particular the Community

Occupational Therapy Service and Young Adult Transitional Team (YATT).

"Working together to write recommendations based on the needs of customers enables us to provide the best outcome for all. Customers benefit by being offered interim advice, minor adaptations and equipment to help them manage any risks presenting at their current property and they have a bespoke recommendation which considers their long term re-housing needs.

"Statutory services benefit as customers can then choose empty properties with pre-existing adaptations which meet their health needs. This reduces risk and hospital admissions associated with, for example, falls. It also reduces the costs of adapting more properties and presents a best use of adapted stock."



Vacant Properties

1727 properties became vacant during 2012/13 compared to 1793 the previous year. The average turnaround of empty homes was 28.89 days, making it the best performance in the last 3 years. This was a dramatic decrease from 39.49 days in 2011/12.

Home Services Manager James Greenhedge said: "This is testament to having a full year's implementation of the new procedure that was introduced last spring. The service is currently undertaking a review of last year's performance to identify further improvements and ways to radically alter the way that the Council lets properties, including improving the standard of properties and customer experience.

"However, this is taking place against a backdrop of the welfare reform changes, which are already starting to have an impact including increasing in the number of terminations coming through."

In order to improve the process for those looking to rent a property, a number of initiatives are being explored.

These include:

- Revising the property standard and price for preparing an empty property
- Introducing an empty properties management service for gas and electric
- Reviewing the gas uncap and test procedure
- Forward dating of tenancies to improve the customer experience and minimise rent allowances
- Reviewing the 'It's Your Move' process to expedite blockages when re-short listing
- Introducing multiple viewings for properties that are difficult to let.



Downsizing

Tenant Linda Stringfellow downsized from a three bedroom house in Thrybergh to a bungalow. She was very impressed



with the service she received to help her move, in particular the staff, who reassured her 'they would take care of everything' and that she 'would not have to worry about a thing'.

"I can't thank them enough," she said. "They were brilliant."



Neighbourhood & Community



How are we meeting these promises

- With our contractor partners, we have reorganised the estate caretaking service, to ensure that the right number of estate workers are targeting the right places, to improve the appearance of the neighbourhood
- We have deployed more staff to tackle rubbish removal on the estates
- We have introduced an annual deep clean within the communal areas within flats
- The number of long standing cases of anti-social behaviour (those being dealt with over a period of six months or more) has reduced by over **50%**
- We closed or resolved **95.8%** of anti-social behaviour cases in 2012/13 against a target of **93%**. This compares to **90.85%** in 2011/12.
- There were **3337** fewer reported incidents of anti-social behaviour in 2012/13 than the previous year, a **20%** reduction
- During 2012/13, serious crime such as domestic burglary, theft of/from a motor vehicle, and robbery was reduced by **4%** (**387** offences) compared to 2011/12.
- There was an **8%** reduction (**267** fewer offences) in criminal damage compared to 2011/12.



Violent Crime

Although significant improvement had been made towards the end of the year, the target for violent crime was not achieved, with an increase of 3% (or 58 more offences) compared to 2011/12.

Analysis indicates that the vast majority of offences of violence that affected this indicator were classed as 'violence without injury'.

Although not achieving the target, Rotherham was the third best performing Community Safety Partnership of its most similar group of 13 partnerships.

Joined up working, together with ongoing quality assurance checks and customer surveys and inspections, is providing an enhanced degree of performance and service scrutiny.

Serious Noise

Residents in Swinton reported serious noise and other issues relating to a neighbour. As a result of enforcement action, and working with Social Services, the tenant was evicted.

Following the eviction, one of the neighbours said: "It's been like heaven. I can't believe the change. We can now sit outside in the garden and enjoy our home."

Fly-tipping

The garage site around Hounsfield Crescent flats had been a target area for vandalism and fly-tipping. Garages had been broken into and the area had become overgrown with self set bushes and weeds.

To combat anti-social behaviour the area was made a PACT area through the Safer Neighbourhood Team, and regular checks were made by the Housing Champion and partners to identify any issues. Plans have also been put in place to improve the area further.



Anti-Social Behaviour

Every Area Assembly area now has a dedicated, named anti-social behaviour officer working closely with housing champions and local police resulting in an improved joined up approach.

This approach helps increase skills in dealing with anti-social behaviour and tenancy enforcement techniques.

During 2012/13, anti-social behaviour and most categories of reported crime were significantly reduced compared to 2011/12.

A joint Rotherham Borough Council/South Yorkshire Police Vulnerable Persons Unit has been established, currently based at Main Street Police Station.

Canklow Community Connections

Canklow Community Connections is an excellent example of what communities can achieve. It is a local group of predominately women who have come together to change the appearance and perception of the Canklow area.

Historically Canklow has suffered from fly tipping and littering and the group has decided to reclaim the area for the local community by working together. Their first initiative is their 'Adopt a Street' project funded through Community First. With help from partners including Rotherham Borough Council and Canklow Woods Primary School the group is encouraging community members and local children to get involved in the project thus developing a sense of pride in their area and increased local involvement.

Each street is being adopted and cleaned in turn and residents are being encouraged to continue the process. Signage will eventually be used to inform the community of the streets that have been adopted and the signs will remain to help sustain the cleaned up area.

Casting Innovations has been a part of the process using the street clean as an opportunity to litter pick aluminium cans with help from school pupils. Casting Innovations holds lessons in the school enabling the school children to see results of recycling thus reinforcing the recycling and clean up message.

Working with Rotherham in Root, the group is working hard to develop a community garden in Canklow. The land has been identified and work is being carried out to develop the area. The group is encouraging other community members to become involved and a by-product of this is more members of Canklow Community Connections.

The community wanted to use the garden as a space to teach growing skills and raise awareness of the benefits of growing your own food. This could help people by enabling them to save money on the cost of the food they buy and also encouraging participants to eat a healthier diet.



Value for Money



How are we meeting these obligations?

Rents

- We collected **£7.23m** rent, which included outstanding rent from previous years and this gave a year end performance of **100.3%** against a target of **100.27%**
- A target above **100%** was given as the service was expected to collect arrears outstanding from previous years
- A target for 2012/13 was set at **100.27%** as **99.35%** of available rent was collected during 2011/12. The service is looking to achieve continuous improvement during the year
- The Housing Income service met both of its key performance indicators relating to rent collect rates and arrears control during 2012/13

General

- The Moving On Panel for young people in supported housing ensures tenants are able to live independently in council accommodation (those aged under **25** are most likely to face eviction)
- A tenancy support officer has been appointed to help customers in furnished homes sustain their tenancies
- The Council works with Laser Credit Union to help tenants set up a bank account and gain access to affordable credit if needed, to avoid the pitfalls of high interest pay day loans and doorstep lenders

- We help tenants claim Discretionary Housing Payment to help with the costs of under-occupancy and refer for debt and money management advice, if necessary
- We present cases to the Housing Assessment Panel to allow tenants in arrears due to under-occupancy to downsize.



Our promises to you

Last year we made promises to reduce crime and help people feel safe, drive up the standard of homes and improve access to services.

Throughout the report you will see that we have made a number of improvements to evidence these promises and the high performance levels clearly demonstrate our commitment to improve these areas for customers:

During 2012/13, anti-social behaviour and most categories of reported crime were significantly reduced compared to 2011/12 and 50% of longstanding cases were brought to closure.

Our repairs and maintenance partnership has gone from strength to strength with the best performance during the last 3 years in completing repairs on time and turning around empty properties, with the highest customer satisfaction levels ever.

We have supported more customers with fuel poverty throughout the borough and will continue to pursue opportunities to improve the energy efficiency of the housing stock.

We have integrated the Housing Contact Team and Out of Hours service within the Council's Corporate Call centre. This has enabled access to services via a single telephone number and enabled 24 hour telephone access.

Our key influencers are our tenants who help us to scrutinise services to continually improve. Over the last 12 months we have worked with our customers to make this one of our most successful years. Customer feedback has helped

us to provide services in a more timely manner and right first time. As a result of this customer satisfaction rates in Rotherham across all housing services is one of the highest in the country.

We are grateful to customers who have shared their experiences with us so that we can continue to learn from what they have been through and change the way we do things in the future for the better and this is why your feedback is really important to us.

We have improved performance in areas which customers told us we need to target – letting empty homes much quicker, completing repairs faster and more accurately and help people who need support due to welfare reform. This has been a challenging year for the people of Rotherham. The financial challenges that people face has resulted in putting in place extra support to help people pay their rent and support their families. The bedroom tax and welfare reform have led to supporting over 3,500 customers via a home visit and taking over 20,000 phone calls to provide assistance in very difficult times.

We have seen a reduction in complaints and an increase in the number of compliments we have received about our partners, staff and services. This is great indication that with support from our customers we are improving.

Nearly £17 million has been invested throughout the borough on external refurbishments work (e.g. re roofing at Canklow) and maintaining the Decent Homes standard in addition to improving the energy efficiency (installing new

boilers, external insulation) within our tenants homes. This type of work will continue year on year to support the Councils' objective of making Rotherham a better place to live.

During 2013/14 we will be investing £10 million in properties on roofing programmes and environmental improvements and strive to increase and improve the supply of affordable rented housing in Rotherham.

We will continue to maintain and improve upon these results in the future to ensure the best possible service is delivered to all Rotherham residents.

The detail of our priorities for the next year based on your feedback can be found in section 6.



Tom Cray

Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods and Adult Services

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Our plans for improving services in the next 12 months

1. People are able to live in decent affordable homes of their choice.

- We will improve the quality of our homes and estates.
- We will continue to improve the quality of our housing repairs and maintenance service.
- We will develop new council housing and help provide better private accommodation.
- We will give greater priority to those in most housing need.
- We will help people to make the changes to help with the impact of the Welfare Reform Act.
- We will buy new homes to sustain our stock levels to help tenants acquire the best quality accommodation.

2. We will improve the way that customers can access services to offer a quicker and responsive service.

- We will implement the first phase of our new housing IT system which will increase the efficiency and quality of the service we offer to our customers.
- We will improve the customer experience, increase take up and make it easier for customers to access our services out-of-hours, including self service.

3. Vulnerable people are protected from anti-social behaviour, crime is reduced and people feel safe where they live.

- We will improve the responsiveness to crime and nuisance to ensure the protection and support of vulnerable residents and victims.
- We will co-ordinate action in Rotherham's most deprived neighbourhood's and focus resources to improve housing and neighbourhood standards in these areas.



Have your say – we would like to encourage you to contact us about our performance and get involved in our plans. You can do this in any of the following ways:

Email:

ServiceQuality@rotherham.gov.uk

Telephone contact:

Performance and
Quality Team
01709 822661/822328

Letter:

Performance and Quality Team
2nd Floor, Wing C, Riverside House,
Main Street, Rotherham S60 1AE

Council Housing Services:

Request a non-urgent repair online:

www.rotherham.gov.uk/forms

By email:

councilhomes@rotherham.gov.uk

Council Housing (general enquiries):

01709 336040

Council Housing Repairs:

01709 336009

Key Choices: 01709 336005

Streetpride: 01709 336003

Contact your local Housing Officer:

Housing Officers across the borough are responsible for looking after you and your home. We can put you in touch with your local Housing Officer.

Other Council Services:

Website:

www.rotherham.gov.uk/contactus

Telephone:

01709 382121

Minicom:

01709 823256

Council Tax and Benefits:

01709 336006