

Report for Resolution

Report to Cabinet
27 October 2010
Report of Head of Housing Management
Subject Annual report to tenants 2010

6

Purpose

To consider the Annual report to tenants 2009/10 to meet the requirements of the Tenant Services Authority new regulatory framework for social housing in England.

Recommendations

That the Annual report to tenants 2009/10 be approved.

Financial Consequences

The financial consequences of this report are: None

The costs of producing the annual report will be met through: the existing tenant participation budget

Risk Assessment

The Regulatory Framework introduced a suite of intervention and enforcement powers which may be applied where a provider fails to meet the TSA's standards. Under section 220 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, the regulator may, in prescribed circumstances, serve an enforcement notice on the provider or on a member, employee or agent of the provider. However, the TSA will usually give the provider the opportunity to correct issues and take responsibility for self-improvement before using these powers.

The Tenant and Empowerment Standard makes it clear that, in meeting all the standards, providers must understand and respond to the needs of all tenants, taking into account both equality and diversity and care or support needs.

Strategic Priority and Outcome/Service Priorities

The report helps to meet the strategic priority "Safe and healthy neighbourhoods – working in partnership with residents to create neighbourhoods where people feel secure, where the streets are clean and well maintained, where there is good quality housing and local amenities and where there are active local communities" and the service plan priority (Click here to type service plan priority)

Executive Member: Councillor Arthur - Housing and Adult Services

Ward: University

Contact Officers

Andrew Wilson ext 2083

Background Documents

Tenant Services Authority: The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England from April 2010

Housing and Regeneration Act 2008

Norwich City Council Delivery and Business Plan 2010-2014

Report

Housing annual report for tenants

1. In order to comply with the new regulatory regime, Norwich City Council has written its first Annual report to tenants and this document is attached. However, final approval of the report is sought from the Executive because the council is directly regulated by the TSA and is accountable to its tenants for the housing services.
2. The report covers each of the five national standards that apply to local authority housing providers. Against each standard, we have outlined activity and progress over the past year providing performance figures where relevant.
3. We have consulted with tenants through the Talkback panel and with members of CityWide Board about the format of the annual report. Due to the limited time available in which to produce this report, we have used information gathered through a number of consultations with tenants and leaseholders over the past 12 months to identify information and services which are of most importance to our tenants.
4. Subject to Executive approval, we intend to publish the annual report on the website from 28 October 2010. Due to the purdah period, the council was granted an extension from 1st October 2010 by the TSA. Tenants will be advised through the TLC magazine and where possible by email that this report can be viewed online. In addition, links to the website copy will be sent to the council's customer pool (Talkback) and through Twitter. Hard copies will be made available on request.
5. We are currently in the process of setting out our action plan for developing local offers in consultation with tenants. Once this consultation has been completed, final agreement from tenants will be sought and the local offers will be implemented by 01 April 2011.

Norwich City Council Summary annual report to tenants 2009-10

This is the summary version of Norwich City Council's annual report to tenants for the period April 2009 to March 2010. A full version can be found by visiting the housing pages of the A-Z at www.norwich.gov.uk

Section one – maintaining your home

- **Repairs and maintenance**

We carried out:

35,396 repairs to homes, communal areas and blocks reported by you

21, 385 (60%) of these were completed right first time.

This cost: **£6.1 million**.

Tenant satisfaction was **93%**

- **Upgrades and improvements**

We spent **£12.5 million** on bringing **2,000 homes** to the decent homes standard.

This included:

replacing windows in **1,772 homes** and fitting:

566 new kitchens

88 new bathrooms

932 new heating systems

482 new front or back doors

- **Adaptations**

We spent a total of **£1.3 million**.

217 major adaptations (eg walk-in showers and wheelchair ramps)

148 minor adaptations (eg grab rails and lever taps for kitchens)

Section two – neighbourhood and community

- **Environmental projects**

In 2009-10, **£171,000** was spent on **41 projects** citywide. These projects are environmental improvements such as the work to a communal garden at Gristock Place and Knowland Grove pictured.

<before and after Gristock Place/Knowland Grove garden project before and after pics as per version 3.>

- **Walkabouts**

44 neighbourhood walkabouts in **11** neighbourhood areas took place. This is where residents joined council staff, councillors to walk around an area to share ideas about what they think would improve it.

- **Antisocial behaviour**

In **2009-10** we had 4,612 reports of antisocial behaviour.

- **Hate incidents**

In **2009-10** we had **96** hate incidents reported to us.

We provide immediate support to victims and witnesses of hate crime and work closely with partner agencies to resolve these cases.

- **The Families' Unit**

The Families' Unit works intensively alongside families to promote well-being and address any antisocial behaviour issues that could, if continued, lead to enforcement action having to be taken.

In 2009-10

84 families received support.

100 % of cases were closed with tenants keeping their home and no enforcement action needing to be taken.

Section three – value for money

When spending public money we always try and make sure we get good value for money.

- **Rent – for council owned homes**

Achievement

Norwich City Council sits in the top 25% of all major housing organisations for performance on rent collection.

2009-10

£49 million – the amount collected

£1.35 million – the amount owed by current tenants for homes and garages.

£1.06 million – the amount owed by former tenants for homes and garages.

£30 million of this money was spent in 2009-10 on repairing and managing your home.

£4 million was paid to the government.

Section four – tenant involvement and customer care

Norwich City Council is committed to offering tenants opportunities to be involved in the management of their housing. This includes influencing housing policies and how services are delivered.

Active groups and their work

- **Norwich Tenants' CityWide Board**

This is made up of tenants and should also include representatives from sheltered housing, as well as leaseholders.

In 2009-10, the board was involved in the recruitment of senior housing staff and set up a number of sub-groups to look at Norwich City Council's housing service standards and performance, publications, budgeting and repairs.

- **Sheltered housing tenants' forum**

This forum represents tenants of sheltered housing and work with the council and other stakeholders, such as NHS Norfolk, and Norfolk County Council – Community Services.

In 2009-10 an average of 23 out of 28 schemes were represented.

- **Tenant inspectors and mystery shoppers**

In 2009-10 a group of tenant volunteers agreed to test how we handle phone calls and visit homes that have recently had new kitchens, windows and bathrooms installed. All feedback received for these mystery shopping and inspections will help improve our services.

- **TalkBack panel**

More than 1,200 tenants and leaseholders take part in telephone surveys and focus groups.

Changes to housing service as a result of TalkBack consultation – **14**
TalkBack activities – **12**

These are just a few examples of ways tenants have been getting involved. To get more involved or find out more information on what opportunities are available, contact the team on e:involvement@norwich.gov.uk t:0344 980 3333.

- **Customer and support services**

Call waiting times

Average amount of time to answer housing calls **1.56 minutes**.

Norwich Community Alarm Service (NCAS)

24-hour response and monitoring service.

Average amount of time to answer calls – **9.82 seconds**

Properties benefitting from the service – **1,393**

- **Mow & Grow – gardening service**

This is a gardening scheme to assist tenants who are unable to maintain their gardens due to physical or mental health issues, a disability or long term illness.

216 tenants used this service in 2009-10.

- **New tenants**

We have a new sign up process for new tenants. Tenants will receive three informal visits by the housing officer in the first year. These will allow the housing officer to identify needs and arrange support at the earliest opportunity.

- **Pre-tenancy awareness sessions**

Pre-tenancy awareness sessions are held by our money advice team for prospective tenants in hostels or supported lodgings who are ready to move into permanent accommodation with the council.

51 people attended these sessions.

People who attended these sessions were **31%** more successful at maintaining their rent account than young tenants in similar situations that were rehoused during the same recent period.

Section five –Tenancy

- **Waiting lists**

Home Options is the way that people can apply for social housing in Norwich.

8,100 – average applicants on the Home Options waiting list

2,381 – new applicants

1,381 –new tenancies

120 – new sheltered housing tenancies

967 –new (introductory) tenancies

250 – exchanges and transfers

60 – average number of bids per property

96% of introductory tenants in 2008-09 went on to become secure tenants this year.

120 new affordable homes built in Norwich and provided to people on the waiting list

- **Empty council homes**

46 days – the average time council homes have stood empty between tenancies.

Section six – What we're doing this year (2010-11)

Some of the highlights for this year are included here.

Your home

We are:

- continuing to work with tenants and leaseholders to make sure services keep improving
- continuing with our programme of replacement windows, boilers, kitchens and bathrooms
- working with Norfolk County Council to improve the time it takes to carry out adaptations to homes of tenants with limited mobility.

Antisocial behaviour

We are setting up an antisocial behaviour action group with other local agencies and organisations to work together to provide solutions to complicated cases and identify and tackle hotspots.

Neighbourhood and community

- We are restructuring the housing service to introduce four new neighbourhood teams with the aim of bringing services closer to local people.
- £50,000 has been budgeted to make environmental improvements to estates and communal areas.

Value for money

- Tenants and leaseholders were invited to give their views of the draft housing value for money strategy in September 2009. These views will be taken into account and the strategy will be published in 2010-11.
- We are carrying out a review of the sheltered housing service looking at how this can be improved.

Tenant involvement

- We will continue consulting with you on our services and prioritising the things most important to you.
- We are introducing a new tenant involvement team to improve our relationship with tenants, encourage new ways to get involved.

Contact the team on e:involvement@norwich.gov.uk t:0344 980 3333.

Tenancy

- We are revising the tenancy conditions, in consultation with tenants and stakeholders to make these clearer.
- We will aim to reduce the average time it takes to relet a property from 46 days to 24 days.

Staff and tenant training

You've told us a well-trained skilled work force is important to you.

We are training frontline staff are undertaking NVQ training in customer service to give you the best customer service experience possible. We are also hosting training session for tenants to help them feel equipped to run groups or hold meetings.

Call times

During this year we reduced our target from two minutes to answer your calls within **20 seconds**.

New homes

We are aiming to assist in the development of 350 new affordable homes.

Local offers

Over the coming months we will consult you on services that you want in your neighbourhood – these are called local offers.

We will be working with you on understanding the services you would like to see and hope to have these in place in April 201.

Norwich City Council

Annual report to tenants 2009-10 – full version

<introduction. Include an image of cllr Arthur and her signature at the end as per TLC magazine>

Welcome to this first annual report for Norwich City Council tenants.

The report covers the period April 2009 to March 2010 and gives you open and honest information on how we have delivered services during this time.

The report also looks forward to what tenants can expect to happen now and in the future.

Both the Norwich Tenants' CityWide Board and a focus group of residents have worked with us on the content and design of this report.

As well as reporting to our tenants on how we are doing, this report will go to our regulator, the Tenant Services Authority, so it can see how we are performing against the following new standards.

- Maintaining your home
- Neighbourhood and community
 - antisocial behaviour
- Value for money
- Tenant involvement and customer care
- Allocating homes and sustaining tenancies

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- Hate incidents
- Families' Unit

Section three – Value for money

- Rent collected and how it is spent
- Savings we have made

Section four – Tenant involvement and customer care

- Active groups and their work
- Customer and support services

Section five –Allocating homes and sustaining tenancies

- Waiting lists
- Empty council homes
- New tenants
- Pre-tenancy awareness sessions

Section six –What we're doing this year (2010-11)

- Your home
- Antisocial behaviour
- Neighbourhood and community
- Value for money
- Tenant involvement
- Tenancy
- Local offers

<Main section> Section one – maintaining your home

<Sub-section one>Repairs and maintenance

We carried out:

35,396 repairs to homes, communal areas and blocks reported by you

21, 385 (60%) of these were completed right first time.

This cost:

£6.1 million, or an average of **£174.26** per repair.

Tenant satisfaction was **93%**

<wherever there is an achievement/s sub-header, could this be designed to slightly stand out in some way?>

Achievement

99.9% of homes had an up to date gas safety certificate.

We want to make sure **100%** of our tenants are in safe homes. Please **keep appointments** for gas safety inspections or let us know if you would like to re-arrange them by calling us on 0344 980 3333.

<Sub-section two> Upgrades and improvements

Norwich City Council is committed to making sure homes are warm, weatherproof and have modern facilities. The programme of updating all council properties to meet this commitment is called the **decent homes standard** and this must be met by 31 December 2010.

We spent **£12.5 million** on bringing **2,000 homes** to the decent homes standard.

This included:

replacing windows in **1,772 homes** at an average cost of £3,175 per property fitting

<could this be designed so the words 'at an average cost of' is not repeated? eg these figures could be in a list with the phrase in the middle to span the list>

566 new kitchens at an average cost of £4,560 each

88 new bathrooms at an average cost of £3,164 each

932 new heating systems at an average cost of £3,866 each home

482 new front or back doors at an average cost of £639 each

1,259 (8%) homes did not meet the standard at the end of March 2009. This number was reduced to only **396 homes** (2%) not meeting the standard at the end of March 2010. This means that at the end of March 2010, 15,562 met the standard.

<Sub-section three> **Adaptations**

Some of you may have a bit of difficulty moving around your home and may need adaptations to make getting around your home easier.

We spent a total of **£1.3 million**. This included:

217 major adaptations (things like walk-in showers and wheelchair ramps) at an average cost of £4,307 per adaptation

148 minor adaptations (things like grab rails and lever taps for kitchens) at an average cost of £580 per adaptation.

<Sub-section four>

Helping cut energy costs...

...and doing our bit for the environment too

Making improvements to your home can help cut down on the energy that is needed to keep it warm. This can help keep energy bills down and is also good for the environment.

Double glazing can save around **£140 a year** on energy bills.

A more efficient boiler could save you up to **£275 a year** on your heating bills.

By law, every new house, whether it is council or privately owned, must have an energy rating known as standard assessment procedure (SAP). SAP ratings are given on a scale of 1 to 100 and the higher the number, the better the rating, or more efficient your home is.

Achievement

The **national average** SAP rating is **50**.

The **average** SAP rating of **Norwich City Council owned** properties is **71**.

Section two – neighbourhood and community

<sub-section one>

Fly tipping

On average, Norwich City Council deals with around 350 fly tipping incidents a month or about 4,500 a year. The total cost, including officer time and administration, is around £200,000. This is around the same cost as **63** new bathrooms.

It is a council priority to reduce incidents of fly tipping and reduce the amount of public money spent on clearing it up.

Norwich City Council is committed to maintaining and safeguarding neighbourhoods and communities, working with partner organisations and agencies where necessary.

<sub-section two>

Environmental projects

In 2009-10, **£171,000** was spent on **41 projects** citywide. These projects are environmental improvements which have benefitted tenants, residents and visitors of residential areas, such as the work to a communal garden at Gristock Place and Knowland Grove pictured.

<before and after Gristock Place/Knowland Grove garden project before and after pics as per version 3.>

Sub-section three>

Walkabouts

These are where residents join council staff, councillors to walk around an area to share ideas about what they think would improve it.

In 2009-10 **44** neighbourhood walkabouts took place in **11** neighbourhood areas.

<sub-section four>

Antisocial behaviour

Reports of antisocial behaviour

In **2009-10** we had 4,612 reports of antisocial behaviour. This is 15% less than in 2008-9 where we had **5,487**.

Most common types of complaints are (in order):

noise

nuisance behaviour(eg climbing on buildings, ball games in restricted or inappropriate areas)

harassment.

In most cases these are resolved early on. We can offer a number of types of support to people who are suffering from antisocial behaviour includes.

Sometimes, though, we may need to take enforcement action. This can include taking someone to court where they can be fined, a tenant having their secure tenancy rights taken away for one year, injunctions or even eviction.

1 eviction

33 possession order

26 injunctions

1 demotion order.*

*This is a legal order that will remove the council tenancy security and rights of a secure tenant for a period of 12 months. If the council later provides the court with evidence that the order has been breached, possession of the property is guaranteed which can then lead to eviction.

More information

To find out more on how Norwich City Council tackles antisocial behaviour and what support we can offer to people who are experiencing it, click here for our guide

<link to the online guide http://www.norwich.gov.uk/intranet_docs/ABATE/ASB_residents_guide.pdf >

<sub-section five>

Hate incidents

A hate incident is any that is seen by the victim or another person as being motivated by prejudice or hatred towards a person because of their:

- cultural, ethnic, national or racial origin
- religion
- sexual orientation
- gender or gender identity
- age
- disability.

A hate incident could involve:

- name-calling
- making threats to people, their homes or possessions
- abusive letters or graffiti
- some other form of intimidation or harassment.

In **2009-10** we had **96** hate incidents reported to us.

This is compared to **71** in **2008-9**.

We provide immediate support to victims and witnesses of hate crime and work closely with partner agencies, such as the police and the Norfolk and Norwich Racial Equality Council to resolve these cases.

<sub-section six>

The Families' Unit

<use logo>

The Families' Unit is a family intervention project that provides individually tailored support to the whole family. The team works intensively alongside families to promote their physical, social and emotional well-being and address any antisocial behaviour issues that could, if continued, lead to enforcement action having to be taken.

Families volunteer to work with the Families' Unit which aims to help them to make positive changes. The team also offers a variety of parenting support and group programmes to any family living in the Norwich area.

In 2009-10

84 families received support.

100 % of cases were closed with tenants keeping their home and no enforcement action needing to be taken.

Achievement

This service is recognised by the government and external organisations as invaluable. Of the £405,000 it costs to fund this service, **£290,000 (or 72%)** is funded by external organisations.

<section three>

Section three – value for money

When spending public money we always try and make sure we get good value for money.

Rent – for council owned homes

Achievement

Norwich City Council sits in the top 25% of all major housing organisations for performance on rent collection.

2009-10

£49 million – the amount collected

£1.35 million – the amount owed by current tenants for homes and garages

This is the equivalent of 296 new kitchens

£1.06 million – the amount owed by former tenants for homes and garages

This is the equivalent of 247 new heating systems>

£30 million of this was spent in 2009-10 on repairing and managing your home

<The pie chart from the draft to be inserted that could be designed as a pound coin divided up into the portions spent on different items. This pie chart demonstrates how each pound we spend is spent on different services.

<link to pie chart of £30m breakdown>..\\How pound is spent.xls

£4 million was paid to the government, as required by law, into the national subsidy system.

Achievements

Example of savings we have made in 2009-10

We saved **£9,000** by switching from paper vouchers, for tenants' decoration allowance, to electronic cards.

This is the equivalent of 14 new front or back doors.

We managed to negotiate a **25% reduction** in the amount paid by tenants for home contents insurance.

Section four – tenant involvement and customer care

Norwich City Council is committed to offering tenants opportunities to be involved in the management of their housing. This includes influencing housing policies and how services are delivered. Tenants can be involved in scrutinising performance of housing-related services and we will also offer tenants support so they are more able to be effectively engaged, involved and empowered.

<sub-section one>Active groups and their work

Some of the groups that are active and work they've been doing in 2009-10 are highlighted below.

<In the following paragraphs, there is a bit about various groups by way of explanation and then an 'Achievements...' section. Could this achievements bit be designed to really stand out?>

Norwich Tenants' CityWide Board

This is made up of tenants and should also include representatives from sheltered housing, as well as leaseholders. Representatives consider strategic aims, debate proposed policy changes, make recommendations about council services and monitor housing standards and performance.

Achievements

- Representing tenants locally on the Housing improvement board – which is a panel of experts that look at and make recommendations about the work the council is doing to improve housing services.
- Representing tenants nationally at the Association of Retained Council Housing (ARCH) tenant and residents' conference in Birmingham.
- Involved in recruitment of senior housing staff
- Attending joint events with council staff including staff workshops on housing improvement and a visit from London Borough of Croydon – an authority considered to be a beacon example of best practice for resident involvement.

In 2009-10 the board set up sub-groups which look at Norwich City Council's housing service standards and performance. These groups and their purpose are set out as follows.

- Publications sub-group

<Tenant approved logo>

Purpose: to look at the quality, timing and content of Norwich City Council's housing related publications, including the tenant and leaseholder newsletter as well as review the website. This helps improve communication between Norwich City Council and its tenants and leaseholders.

Achievements

There are a number of documents the group has considered and agreed to award a tenant tick.

- Performance sub-group

<Thumbnail of performance scorecard>

Purpose: to understand, agree, monitor and challenge Norwich City Council's performance and service standards. This helps to improve Norwich City Council services for tenants and leaseholders.

Achievements

In consultation with this group we have developed new systems to track our work and set priorities based on the things that matter to you.

As part of this work we now produce a quarterly scorecard so you can see how we are doing at a glance. This scorecard has been considered by the citywide board performance sub-group and so bears the tenant approved logo.

You can see this by visiting the Housing performance section of our website or clicking here <hyperlink to the following:

http://www.norwich.gov.uk/webapps/atoz/service_page.asp?id=1720>

- Repairs and recharge sub-group

Purpose: to influence and improve the repairs and planned maintenance service provided by Norwich City Council.

- Tenant constitution sub-group

Purpose: to influence and review the role and make up of the city wide board. This helps the city wide board to make sure that it remains relevant and fit for purpose for Norwich City Council tenants and leaseholders.

Achievements

The group was scheduled to consider the constitution and make changes to it so that more tenants can have their say in the work the board does and get involved in 2010-11.

- Housing revenue account sub-group

Purpose: to meet with the finance control manager to gain an understanding about how council housing is funded, housing service costs (such as charges for premises management services) are calculated and to make recommendations where necessary.

Sheltered housing tenants' forum

Norwich has an active forum that aims to represent tenants of sheltered housing and work with the council and other stakeholders, such as NHS Norfolk, and Norfolk County Council – Community Services.

The forum develops tenant participation and enables them to challenge, advise and comment on housing and care support services and policies for older people living in Norwich.

Average number of schemes represented during 2009-10 **23 out of 28**

Achievements

Safety, security and prevention awareness

Tenants requested that Norfolk Constabulary visit to give an overview of the police's role in helping tackle antisocial behaviour in new housing developments before these are built. This covered things such as making sure communal areas are well lit and open. A DVD was also shown to tenants giving safety advice to tenants when dealing with bogus callers trying to take advantage of older people.

Laundry contract renewal

Tenants asked for improved washing machines at schemes. The tenants' forum was involved in re-letting the contract to an organisation which provided new machines and a better repairs and maintenance service.

Tenant inspectors and mystery shoppers

In 2009-10 a small group of tenant volunteers has agreed to give up their time to test how we handle calls from you about our housing services and visit homes that have recently had new kitchens, windows and bathrooms installed. All feedback received for these mystery shopping and inspections will help improve our services.

Tenant volunteers

9 mystery shoppers

4 tenant inspectors

Housing improvement board

Norwich City Council is committed to improving its housing service and has a programme of work to drive this forward.

As part of this we have a group called the housing improvement board (HIB) which is made up of both internal and external experts including a tenant representative.

It meets formally every two months to consider the progress of the housing improvement project and more often if required to look in more detail at a particular area.

It acts as a 'critical friend' or adviser to the council, with responsibility for making decisions and carrying out actions to be made by corporate management team, the cabinet and housing improvement team.

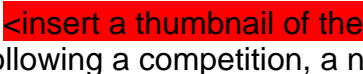
TalkBack panel

More than 1,200 tenants and leaseholders take part in telephone surveys and focus groups.

Changes to housing service as a result of Talkback consultation – 14

Talkback activities – 12

Achievements

- The review of *Tenant Talk* magazine.  This now has a new look and, following a competition, a new name. *TLC magazine* is

designed to cover more of the information you want and discuss the issues that matter to tenants.

- As a result of suggestions from tenant focus groups we have revised and published new housing service standards stating our promises and commitment to delivering a quality service to tenants.

These are just a few examples of ways tenants have been getting involved. To get more involved or find out more information on what opportunities are available, contact the team on e:involvement@norwich.gov.uk t:0344 980 3333.

<sub-section two> Customer and support services

Call waiting times

Average amount of time to answer housing calls **1.56 minutes**.

Norwich Community Alarm Service (NCAS)

Norwich Community Alarm Service (NCAS) provides a 24-hour, year round monitoring and response service for people considered vulnerable or at risk in the community.

People living in Norwich or the surrounding area who are considered vulnerable or at risk are eligible for this service. Although a large number of people who use the service are elderly or disabled, the council provide services to cover situations like domestic violence, racial harassment or neighbourhood nuisance.

Once connected, a trigger pendant or wrist strap will be given to wear. To alert someone that help is required the trigger button needs to be pressed. The alarm unit is connected to the telephone line and will call through to the control centre. Trained staff will then make sure help is at hand.

Properties benefitting from 24-hour, year-round response and monitoring service:

general needs **427**

sheltered and good neighbour housing **966**

Average amount of time to answer Norwich Community Alarm Service **9.82 seconds**

Mow & Grow – gardening service

<M&G logo>

The aim of the gardening scheme is for Norwich City Council to offer assistance to tenants who are unable to maintain their gardens due to physical or mental health issues, a disability or long term illness.

For some people a one-off clearance may enable them to keep the garden tidy in the future, while others may need regular maintenance visits as well. The work will be carried out by Mow & Grow, who recruit and train volunteers to undertake community based gardening projects.

Number of tenants using the assisted gardening service **216**

Section five –Allocating homes and sustaining tenancies

Waiting lists

<Home Options logo>

Home Options is the way that people can apply for social housing and access other housing options including shared ownership, private rented and key worker housing in the council areas of Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk.

Home Options lets people apply for the housing option of your choice instead of having to wait for an offer from one of the three councils.

All available properties will be advertised on the internet, through public access computers, on digital television and in a newsletter published weekly. A range of other housing options will also be advertised.

Tenants tell us which properties you are interested in. This process is known as bidding.

8,100 – average applicants on the Home Options waiting list

This includes people who are already in a council homes and looking to transfer as well as people who are interested in moving into Norwich from another area.

Total number of new applicants **2,381**

Total new tenancies (excluding exchanges and transfers) **1,381**

New sheltered housing tenancies **120**

Number of brand new (introductory) tenancies **967**

Exchanges and transfers **250**

60 – average number of bids per property.

96% of introductory tenants in 2008-09 went on to become secure tenants this year.

120 new affordable homes built in Norwich and provided to people on the waiting list

Empty council homes

Average number of days council homes have stood empty between new tenant and old **46**.

Total rent loss as a result of empty properties **£828,758**.

New tenants

We have a new and improved sign up process for new tenants. Every new tenant will receive three informal visits by the housing officer in the first year. These appraisals are in place to allow the housing officer to identify needs and arrange support at the earliest opportunity.

60 referrals were made to support agencies in 2008-09.

58 of these cases still had their tenancies in 2009-10. This is a **97% success rate**.

Pre-tenancy awareness sessions

Pre-tenancy awareness sessions are held by our money advice team for prospective tenants in hostels or supported lodgings who are ready to move into permanent accommodation with the council. These sessions help residents prepare for the responsibilities of becoming a tenant. These have proven successful.

51 people attended these sessions and went on to accept a tenancy with the council. At the end of March 2010, **98% (50)** of these tenants still had their

People who attended these sessions were 31% more successful at maintaining their rent account than young tenants in similar situations that were rehoused during the same recent period.

Section six –What we’re doing this year (2010-11)

Some of the highlights for this year are included here.

<these could be highlighted in the colours that are chosen for the section divides>

Maintaining your home

We are:

- continuing to work with tenants and leaseholders to make sure services keep improving and meet your expectations
- continuing with our programme of delivering quality replacement windows, efficient boilers and quality kitchen and bathroom upgrades
- working with Norfolk County Council’s occupational therapists to improve the time it takes to carry out adaptations to homes of tenants with limited mobility.

Neighbourhood and community

- We are restructuring the housing service to introduce four new neighbourhood teams with the aim of bringing services closer to local people.
- £50,000 has been budgeted to make environmental improvements to estates and communal areas.

Value for money

- Tenants and leaseholders were invited to give their views of the draft housing value for money strategy in September 2009. These views will be taken into account and the strategy will be published in 2010-11.
- We are carrying out a review of the sheltered housing service looking at how the service is delivered and how this can be improved.

Tenant involvement and customer care

- We are introducing a new tenant involvement team to improve our relationship with tenants, encourage new ways to get involved and to develop skills and capacity within new and existing tenant and resident associations.

Contact the team on **e:involvement@norwich.gov.uk t:0344 980 3333**.

- We will be working with tenants to make our housing pages on our website more accessible and eye-catching. These will contain more information to help you.
- We will continue consulting with you on our services and prioritising the things most important to you.
- Training –You've told us a well-trained skilled work force is important to you. We are training frontline staff are undertaking NVQ training in customer service to give you the best customer service experience possible. We are also hosting training session for tenants to cover things like planning and presentation skills and chairing meetings to help them feel equipped to run groups or hold meetings.
- Call times – during this year we reduced our target from two minutes to answer your calls within 20 seconds.

Allocating homes and sustaining tenancies

- We are revising the tenancy conditions, in consultation with tenants and stakeholders to make these clearer.
- We will aim to reduce the average time it takes to relet a property from 46 days to 24 days.

Local offers

Over the coming months we will consult you on services that you want in your neighbourhood – these are called local offers.

We will be working with you on what services you would like and hope to have these in place in April 2011 and have agreed with you ways you can see how we are performing in delivering these promises to you.