

Housing Annual Report to Tenants 2016/17

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

making a difference

www.redditchbc.gov.uk



Welcome to the annual report on the achievements and future plans of our Housing Services.

This year I have seen first-hand the work being done to ensure that we understand tenants' needs and meet them, including working with other agencies and partners when those needs are beyond what we deliver as a council.

Of course there are challenges ahead for all of us, including the impact of Universal Credit, and we welcome the opportunity to work with you to meet these challenges and provide a service we can be proud of. See the back page for how to contact us and get more involved.

In your responses to our customer survey last year the top issues were parking, rubbish/litter and overgrown trees/shrubbery. I am now taking these issues forward to bring about change and improvement. In addition we continue to look at ways to improve our homes, and find opportunities to add more homes as more people need affordable places to live.

We are all passionate about making decent, comfortable homes in the borough.

Thank you for the part you play in this.

Councillor Mark Shurmer *Housing Portfolio Holder*

Key facts and figures:

- As at 31st March 2017 we owned a total of **5,811** homes for rent.
- Total value of our housing stock was approx. **£254 million**.
- During 2016/17 we received a total of **92** Right to Buy applications.
- We acquired **13** properties using Right to Buy receipts.

Ways to pay:

We want you to be able to pay your rent as easily as possible. There are six ways to pay:



- Direct Debit
- Standing Order



- Online - www.redditchbc.gov.uk



- Phone (24hrs) - 0300 456 0515



- In person at one of our Customer Service Centres at the Town Hall, Batchley, Winyates or Woodrow



- At a Payzone

If you are on a low income you may be able to claim some help with your rent.

If you are struggling to pay your rent, please speak to us as soon as possible as there are a number of ways we can help. We will always deal with your problems in an understanding, sympathetic, fair way.

Failing to pay your rent can be a serious problem that may lead to you losing your home. Speak to us early and avoid it getting that far.

Find our contact details on page 4.

Rent and how we spend your money

Our aim is to provide a range of high-quality services which provide value for money. The majority of our income comes from the rent and service charges you pay.

In 2016/17 our average weekly rent was £86.13



We spent £5.467m looking after your homes

Next year in 17/18 we plan to spend £4.895m

£24.09m

Total rent due including Service Charges

£23.79m

total rent collected in 2016/17

79%

of you in our recent tenant survey said you wanted to continue to pay your rent over 48 weeks with 4 'no collection' weeks

Cumulative rent arrears at 31st March 2017 were

£718,196.15

24

tenants were evicted for rent arrears

Annual Report to Tenants 2016/17

Looking after your neighbourhood

Managing your tenancy

- 351 new tenancies began in 2016/17.
- 171 were introductory, or first time, tenancies.
- We supported 71 households with mutual exchanges.
- 66% of tenants who responded to our survey felt that we provide access to clear and relevant tenancy advice.

What you told us: Top 3 issues

You told us these are the main problems within your neighbourhoods, and we are keen to work together with you and our local councillors to tackle them. Here's how.



1. Parking



2. Rubbish or litter lying around



3. Overgrown trees and shrubbery

How we are going to tackle these issues

We will tackle rubbish, fly tipping and grounds maintenance through regular estate inspections, together with colleagues from our Environmental Services team.

Parking is a growing issue across the Borough. Although unable to enforce parking, Housing Locality Officers will work with residents to find solutions. We have a policy setting out how we will fairly allocate priority disabled parking.

Please look out for your Locality Officer or contact them on the numbers on page 4 if you'd like to join them on an estate walkabout.

67% rated their neighbourhood as being 'good'



Right To Buy Scheme

Do you have the *Right to Buy* your home?

82% of people who responded to our survey knew that eligible council tenants can buy their home at a discount under the government's 'Right to Buy' scheme.

If you want to enquire about buying your home, you can get more information and an application pack from us or the government's Right to Buy Agent service:

Council Right to Buy Team: Call 01527 64252 or email Right2Buy@redditchbc.gov.uk

Government Right to Buy Agents: Call 0300 123 0913 or visit their website <https://righttobuy.gov.uk>



Gas Servicing

It's essential to have an annual gas safety check to protect your life and the lives of your family. Please make every effort to allow us access to check your gas safety. It's the law.

£21,000

Annual cost of being unable to access properties for gas checks

121 Right of Entry Warrants granted by the court in 2017 so that we could do gas checks



70%

Industry standard audit score for gas safety management procedures

90%

Our score after a Gas Safe audit in November 2016, the recommendations from which we have also implemented

Keeping your home in good repair

How did we perform?	Last year 15/16	This year 16/17
Time taken to re-let properties	61 days	54 days
Total number of repairs completed	7195	6410

What major works did we carry out?



71% of you were satisfied with the length of time taken to complete a repair

93 kitchens



308 bathrooms

457 boilers



95 roofing works

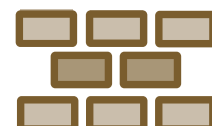


141 glass reinforced plastic doors



750 electrical upgrades

35 external wall insulations



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Housing Options and Allocations Policy

We allocate all our properties in line with our Housing Allocations policy, which was updated in July 17.

As part of our commitment to provide good quality housing advice and assistance, all applicants now have an interview with us to discuss their housing needs and the available options, to come to a housing decision together **before** accessing Redditch Home Choice.

Redditch Home Choice is where we advertise our properties for bidding, along with properties from other social housing landlords - although other landlords make their own allocations decisions.

A copy of our Housing Allocations policy is available on our website.



What we have delivered

6930

residents were seen by a housing options officer for housing advice and assistance

530

households were accepted on the housing register

110

households were accepted as homeless

108

households on our waiting list were allocated a housing association property

211

homeless preventions

210

existing tenants applied for a housing transfer



Helping and supporting you

Did you know that housing locality services can offer you help and support to manage your tenancy? If you are struggling to pay your bills, maintain your home or just need some short term help to get you through a difficult time in your life, Housing Locality can provide you with support and advice.

In our recent tenant survey we asked if you felt you were able to manage your tenancy although **84%** of you said you could, **16%** of you that felt you would benefit from help, and the type of help you felt you would benefit from was as follows:

What type of help would benefit you in managing your tenancy?



38.2%
Benefits

47.1%
Health/mental health



35.5%
Financial/budgeting



35.3%
Moving home

If you are struggling day to day and need some help please contact your Housing Locality Officer who will arrange to come and visit you in your home. **Please see page 4 for our contact details.**

Our new Resident Involvement Strategy, adopted in 2017, recognises the importance of tenant engagement. During our tenants' survey we asked 'would you be interested in getting involved' and just under half of respondents said they would be, and in the following ways:

How would you like to get involved?



34.8%

Comments/suggestion cards

34.8%

Through a regular newsletter



44.9%

Redditch Borough Council website

Social media e.g. Facebook group

31.5%



83.1%

Complete surveys

29.2%

A tenant specific website



22.5%

Public meetings

There are good opportunities for you to be involved, and we will now be working alongside council colleagues to ensure that we provide more, including carrying out more surveys.

Since the summer of 2017, **four** tenants have joined our Community Panel, an online engagement, and **one** tenant has joined the Redditch Community Forum, an active group.

If you are keen to get involved or need to get in touch then please contact us on the details below.

How to contact us

If you would like to get more involved or need to get in touch then please contact us on:

Tenancy Management - Central: Covers Abbeydale, Greenlands, Lakeside, Lodge Park, Mayfields, Smallwood, Southcrest, Town Centre and Woodrow.



01527 64252
ext. 2131



locality.central@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

Tenancy Management - East: Covers Church Hill North, Church Hill South, Matchborough and Winyates.



01527 64252
ext. 2111



locality.east@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

Tenancy Management - West: Covers Astwood Bank, Batchley, Crabbs Cross, Feckenham, Headless Cross, Oakenshaw, Walkwood and Webheath.



01527 64252
ext. 2121



locality.west@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

Housing Repairs:
01527 534074

Out of Hours
Emergency Repairs:
01527 67666

Gas Safety: 01527 548267
Text: 07860 033651

gas.inspections@redditchbc.gov.uk

If you need this information in another language or format, please contact us to discuss how we can best meet your needs. Email: equalities@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk or phone: 01527 548284