

September 2010

The annual report to tenants 2010

A guide to housing services and
the local offer



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Introduction and background information



Councillor Timothy Coleridge, Cabinet Member for Housing and Property

In a time of austerity and change it is reassuring to know that the Council and the TMO continue to work together to provide really good services for the borough's tenants. It is important that housing services are shaped by tenants and that working with residents, is at the very centre of our approach to managing our homes. This annual report sets out what will be delivered to tenants here in the Royal Borough by the Council and TMO and how we are developing services to meet tenants' needs and expectations.

I would like to thank all the tenants who have given up their time to make this report possible. This is an annual report written with the tenants for our tenants.

Purpose of this report

This report is our way of letting you know how we have performed in the last year in delivering housing services to all tenants. We are also required to produce a report for tenants annually by the regulator for housing, the Tenant Services Authority (TSA). We will give them a copy of this report so that they know we are meeting any promises and local offers we make to you.¹ Throughout this report we highlight those areas where we know we must do better. These key points will inform an action plan and a focus for improvement (Appendix 1).

This report also sets out what you have told us about what you want from us in terms of local offers and how we plan to have this in place by April 2011. Although we have already spoken to many tenants, this report gives a further opportunity for you to comment on the priorities and the arrangements for you to ensure that our performance is up to the standards we have agreed.

Who we are

This report has been produced jointly by The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (your landlord) and the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation (KCTMO) which manages the delivery of housing services, including repairs and rent collection.

On 1 April 1996 responsibility for managing the 6,924 tenanted properties passed from The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea to the Tenant Management Organisation (TMO).

The Council still owns the homes and is responsible for making sure there is enough money collected from rent and received from the Government to deliver the services to tenants and to keep homes in good condition.

¹ TSA (www.tenantservicesauthority.org).

Action point 1 – The Council will monitor the TMO to ensure it provides the services set out in the local offer.

About the Tenant Management Organisation

The TMO has a close working relationship with the Council, although it is a completely separate company.



Reg Kerr-Bell

The TMO is managed by a Board of Directors comprising of eight elected tenant and leaseholder members, four appointed Councillor Members and three independent appointed other members. The Chair of the Board is Reg Kerr-Bell.

The Board meets on a regular basis to monitor how well the TMO is doing, agree plans for the future and decide on policies. The Chief Executive, Robert Black, appointed by the Board, has overall responsibility for the successful operation of the TMO, and for ensuring that the Board's decisions and policies are carried out.

The Council pays a management fee to the TMO to enable it to carry out its functions. For the year ending March 2011 this is £10,643,135. Over the last five years savings of almost 25 per cent have been achieved in the TMO costs and we are looking at how we can give greater value for money in a variety of ways such as broadening the scope of services and bidding for other work. We are consulting with tenants on these ideas.

Preparing this report

This is the first annual report that we have prepared for tenants and we have worked closely with tenants in its production. The TMO Resident Engagement Committee (REC) which is made up of resident board members and resident representatives from each of the eight areas of the borough has been involved in shaping and forming this report. A resident representative of this committee is also part of the project group which worked with the Council and the TMO in putting the report together and has been responsible for signing off this report on behalf of the committee.

Although we already report our performance to tenants through board reports, operational committee reports, at the Area Review Boards (ARB) and through our website and *Link* magazine, this is the first time we have brought all areas of performance together in one report.

How are we performing?

The TSA has set out national standards which lay out clear outcomes which all housing providers should achieve. However we must tailor our services according to the needs and priorities of our residents and in order to do this we have consulted widely with tenants. This report tells tenants how we are performing against each of the standards and sets out actions where we have identified the need to do further work to ensure that we meet them. From the information we currently hold on what you want as tenants we have listed the action required throughout this document and in Appendix 1.

The standards that apply are:

- Tenant Involvement – which includes complaints and customer service
- Home – the quality of the homes you live in and the repairs and maintenance service you receive
- Tenancy – allocating homes
- Neighbourhood and Community – looking after communal areas and dealing with issues from the community such as antisocial behaviour (ASB)
- Value for money

We will also tell you how we are going to tailor our services to meet your needs and how you can check that we are going to do what we promise to do.

Tenant involvement

Our tenants took control of their homes under the Right to Manage and set up a Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) which has a majority of tenants and leaseholders on the boards and sub-committees. A Committee for Resident Engagement ensures that the Resident Engagement Strategy, which was agreed by the Board in April 2010, is driven forward and that there is a commitment to place residents at the heart of the organisation. This committee is made up of resident board members and resident representatives from each of eight areas of the borough and they have been involved in shaping this report. A tenant member of this committee is also part of the project group which worked with the Council and the TMO in putting the report together.

We have listened to tenants in many other ways including surveys, conferences, focus groups and workshops. A door knocking exercise (TMO in Touch) is happening over the autumn 2010 to ensure that everyone who lives in our homes has the opportunity to comment on the services we provide and make suggestions for improvements. The Resident Engagement Team coordinates all activities and organises and supports training to make sure tenants have the skills they need to take an active role in the organisation. We also support and encourage residents' associations and other groups and are committed to increasing the number of groups and residents we reach. In order to understand the way tenants prefer to

engage with us the TMO sent out a survey to all tenants in 2009-10 and with the results of this a Residents Engagement Strategy was produced.

Tenants have a wide range of ways to contact us and we know that many of you like to speak to us face to face. There is a new reception in the north of the borough (The Hub) for contacting the TMO and there are plans to expand and modernise our offices in the south of the borough. From these locations it will also be possible to give you access to the internet. The content of the TMO website is under review as we commissioned an independent consultant to look at our services and they told us that we need to ensure that we update this more regularly. We also need to understand how many of our tenants have access to the internet and can be contacted electronically. We will be asking you for this information when we knock on your door. When we consulted with our Area Review Boards many people asked that we put more information on notice boards and ensure that where we have notice boards that are well sited and up to date.

Action point 2 - Contact residents in the way that they prefer.

Action point 3 - Put up to date and relevant information on our website.

We have set out service standards to measure how we perform and we have a panel of residents who we ask to help us set these standards.

Our service standards:

Customer Care	Target for 2009-10	Result
We will give you a full response to all written enquiries within 10 days	90%	87%
Average waiting time for us to answer your call in seconds	40	48
Percentage of first stage complaints answered within our target time of 10 days	90%	91%

We know that we are not answering your calls fast enough and that we need to review our call centre to ensure that we can deliver on our standards. We will also look at other organisations to ensure that we set ourselves comparable targets.

Action point 4 - Review our service standards and compare with other housing providers

We are doing well on answering your complaints within the timescales but we have not been collecting information on how satisfied tenants are with our complaints process or setting any targets to increase satisfaction. Since April 2010 we have started sending out complaint satisfaction surveys and we will be reporting on the results of these on a quarterly basis. We are already in the process of reviewing our

complaints process and have been meeting with our tenants and resident association chairs to help shape the changes.

Action point 5 - Report satisfaction levels on complaint handling process and changes to complaint process as a result of the consultation

The number of complaints that we registered has declined from 543 last year to 349 this year and we believe that this is due to pro active work in resolving the problems in the first instance. This means that if you tell us there is a problem we will try to put it right rather than recording it as a formal complaint. We have not been able to measure our complaints performance against other organisations in 2010; we joined a benchmarking club and will now be able to show how we are performing compared to other service providers.

Meeting your needs

The TMO has an Equality and Diversity Strategy and is committed to providing high quality and accessible services to all our residents. We work hard to ensure that the different needs and expectations of the borough's diverse communities are met. To help achieve this, the TMO will:

- provide a fair, appropriate and high quality service
- identify and address the service needs of all groups
- take positive steps to tackle discrimination that arises
- develop systems to monitor progress and satisfaction levels

We know that we do not have all the information about our tenants that we need to ensure that we deliver services to meet the needs of our diverse community. The TMO is carrying out a door knocking exercise which will increase our knowledge and tenants can learn more about what the TMO can provide. We are also committed to ensuring that we carry out tenancy checks on a regular basis. However we do understand that some people are reluctant to answer some questions. We will try to provide them with information to demonstrate how the information we collect can benefit tenants but respect the wishes of those who prefer not to give us personal details.

Action point 6 - Collect information so that we can best meet the needs of our tenants

Home - the quality of the homes and repairs and maintenance

You told us that repairing and maintaining your homes is the most important service we do. Complaints about technical services account for just over two thirds of first stage complaints. Last summer, in our resident engagement questionnaire, we asked residents which aspects of our services they would like to be involved in. By far the largest majority wanted to be consulted about repairs.

In our last survey only 71 per cent were satisfied with the overall repair service although this showed some improvement on the 68 per cent who were satisfied in our 2008 STATUS Survey.

In 2009 we prepared to let our new repairs contract and residents were involved in this process from the beginning. They participated in selecting the contractors and

setting performance standards. As a result of this consultation we changed our time limits for urgent and routine repairs from three to seven days to five days and routine from 28 days to 20 days. The new maintenance contractor, Morrisons, was selected based on quality and price; savings are anticipated in the first year.

Repairs performance	Target for 2009-10	Result
Percentage of emergency jobs completed on time	99%	97.6%
Percentage of urgent jobs completed on time	97%	96.2%
Percentage of routine jobs completed on time	97%	95%

We know that this change is taking time to get right and that initially residents still have concerns about how we are performing and we are involving them in monitoring how things are going. We also report this in our quarterly *Link* magazine.

Residents also wanted to know how we checked that our repairs were a good standard. We will report the post-inspection failure rate for 2010-11 to tenants.

Tenants wanted text messages to confirm appointments and also to ensure that we get the repair done on the first visit. We are now sending text messages but we have not been able to report on how often we can fix problems on the first visit.

Action point 7. Measure how often we can get things fixed at the first visit

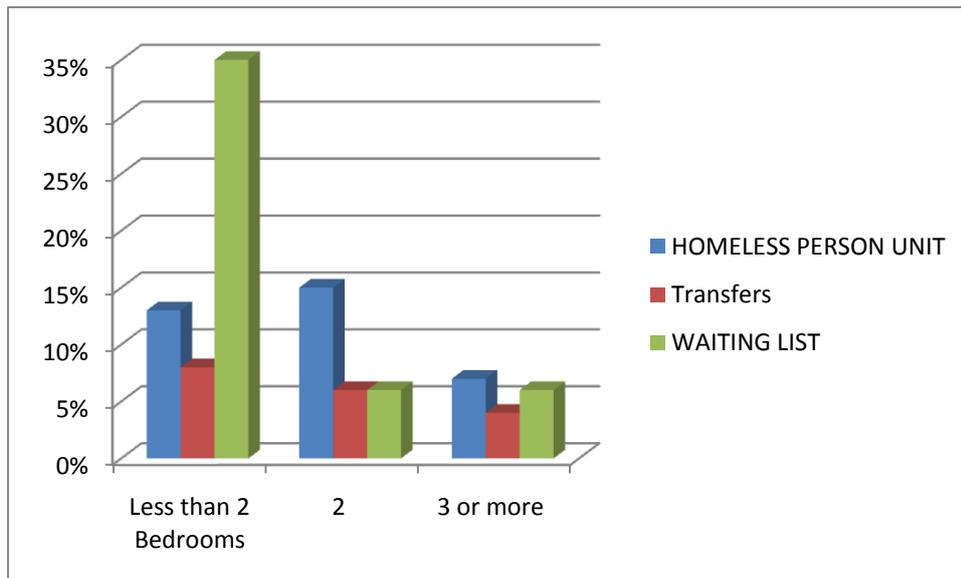
We are required to ensure that all our homes are warm, weatherproof and have relatively modern facilities (Decent Homes). We finished this work in December 2009 but there were still some 642 homes where tenants did not want us to do this work and some other properties that are no longer decent. We have also carried out a survey of our homes to make sure that we know where we need to do work in the future and how we plan to do this with the money we have to invest. We have also looked at the way we do work. We have saved money by only doing jobs that are necessary instead of doing them on a regular basis such as painting every five years when it was not always needed. This will save £800,000 in 2010-11.

Tenancy – allocating homes and tenure

To ensure homes are let in a fair and transparent way properties in the borough are allocated using the Common Housing Register (CHR), which is a list of all people applying for social housing run by the Council or housing associations.

We currently have 6,116 people on our housing register (this is total not just TMO tenants looking for a transfer). Last year we only re-let 280 council homes and 292 housing association homes. The chart below shows the breakdown of the people who were homeless, waiting for housing or those waiting for a transfer. The highest

proportion went to people on the Housing Register that needed studios, one or two bed properties.



Assistance for housing in the borough regardless of whether you are a tenant, on the housing register or homeless is provided through the Council’s Housing Options service. With the severe shortage of social housing in the borough, people wanting to transfer within TMO or housing association properties, particularly because of overcrowding, are recommended to consider all possible options. These may include private renting, low cost homeownership, moving to another area where council or housing association properties are more freely available, making the property more suitable for your needs through adaptations or swapping homes with another tenant through Mutual Exchange.

The Council has an Allocations Policy to ensure that properties that become free are allocated in a fair and transparent way that meets the Council’s statutory housing duties. The policy outlines the eligibility criteria, points system and the mechanisms for applicants. The latest version of policy is currently in its draft stage and is being consulted on with a range of interested people. This includes Council tenants, so we will be contacting you for your views in the near future.

The Council works with social landlords to increase the supply of social rented and low-cost home ownership properties in the borough, but there are very limited opportunities for development. We also work with other boroughs across West London to support the development of new affordable housing. Throughout the year some homes are available to Royal Borough applicants for rent or home ownership in other boroughs. In 2009-10, ten new properties were built in the borough for rent and 21 for low-cost homeownership, and through the West London working a further 15 properties were offered out of the borough for rent. In the current year (2010-11) there are no developments producing new units in borough but over 40 properties will become available through the West London working. It is worth noting that 11 properties in West London, including five three bedroomed properties were returned to the other boroughs for letting because there was no interest from people on the Common Housing Register in Kensington and Chelsea.

We are committed to ensuring that when our homes become empty we get them ready and re-let to new tenants in the shortest time possible. We know that we have not been generally as fast as we would like to be in doing this and last year our homes were empty for an average of 34 days. This is much longer than most housing providers. The Council and the TMO are working together to ensure that we improve and with our new repairs contractor we have already begun to see some improvements.

The amount of rent we collected over the year increased steadily up to 96.55 per cent and the amount of current tenant arrears as a percentage of all the rent due fell. This meant that less money was owed at the end of the year and we expect to see the percentage increase as more money is collected in the coming year.

The table below shows current tenant rent arrears as a percentage of rent due. Rent collection in the borough compares well to other boroughs and we are above average but not yet a top performer.

Upper quartile	3.46	Source: HouseMark London Benchmarking club The rate of collection has increased considerably since the beginning of the year	
Median	4.88		
KCTMO	3.9		
Number in sample	12		

Neighbourhood and community – looking after communal areas and dealing with antisocial behaviour (ASB)

We work hard to ensure that our estates and neighbourhoods are clean and well maintained. Wherever possible, we have worked with residents and key stakeholders to remodel outdated communal spaces to ensure they improve security, are attractive spaces to enjoy, improve the amenity value of the whole community and require less maintenance. Examples on estates include projects as diverse as demolition and re-building storage areas, innovative play spaces, new green spaces, lighting, CCTV to improve security and improvement in access arrangements. Satisfaction with the neighbourhood has increased from 71 per cent to 79 per cent (2008 STATUS Survey) and on a recent door knocking exercise satisfaction with the services that the TMO provides on some estates rose from 68 per cent (in the last STATUS Survey) to 78 per cent.

However we know that the costs per property of Estate Services at just over £388 per home is high, and when we look at other organisations (Housemark Benchmarking) that we are one of the most expensive.

We have a regular programme of estate inspections but tenants have told us that we do not always provide them with enough information on these inspections or feedback what has happened as a result.

Action point 8 - Let residents know when we are doing estate inspections and what we do with the findings

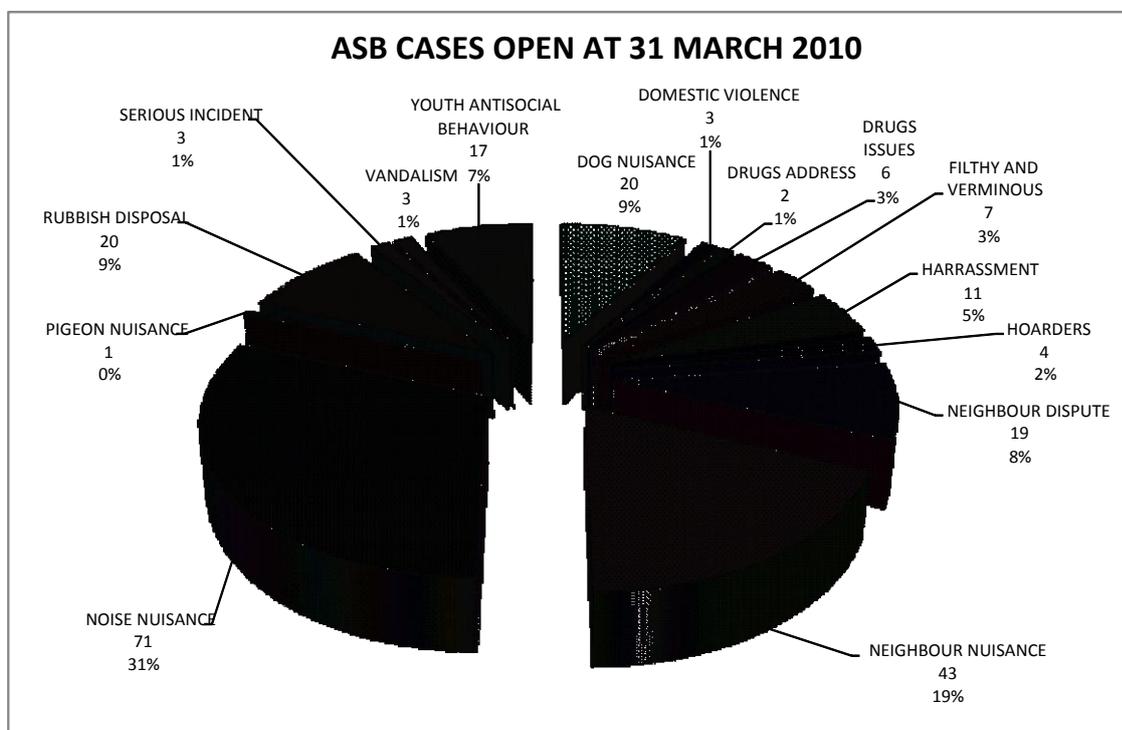
In the most recent STATUS Survey, dealing with antisocial behaviour was seen as the most important service for 40 per cent of tenants, the third most important service after repairs and maintenance and quality of homes. We work closely with the police, Youth Offending Team, CALM mediation and also MYGeneration and Golborne Youth Club to deal with issues surrounding young people.

We work in partnership to tackle antisocial behaviour and the eight Area Review Boards are able to bid for funding from the Council for regeneration funds to help reduce antisocial behaviour and crime.

We sent out a postal questionnaire to measure satisfaction with our work on anti social behaviour but we had an extremely poor return and we are looking at how we can ensure we capture this information better in the future.

Action point 9 - Collect and report on satisfaction with how we deal with antisocial behaviour

The chart shows that our biggest problem with antisocial behaviour is noise nuisance followed by neighbour nuisance and then youth antisocial behaviour.



Value for money

Achieving value for money is key to everything we do. Recently because of changes to the money we receive from central Government it looked like we would not have enough money collected from rent and Government to deliver the services to tenants and to keep homes in good condition, this is unlawful.

In order to deal with this problem, in 2008 the Council set up a programme called Stock Options, working in partnership with the TMO and tenants to look at all our options for ensuring long-term financial stability. In November 2009 the Council took the decision to keep the housing stock and the management arrangements with the TMO. As a result of this decision the Council, in partnership with the TMO, held a number of consultation events with tenants. These events informed tenants about the work we are undertaking to make sure we have enough money to repair, maintain, manage and invest in our housing for the next 30 years. We will continue to consult with tenants about our plans.

We look for value for money in all aspects of the services we provide and involve our tenants when we are commissioning new services. In terms of procurement we are moving towards longer term contracts (five year) rather than annual contracts in order to achieve savings.

We compare our costs with other providers of housing services (Housemark Benchmarking) to ensure that we are competitive and if we are more expensive that we know the reasons why this is. The results from Housemark show that we are expensive in terms of IT and some other central costs which include human resources and corporate costs. The TMO Business Plan sets out the importance of value for money and a value for money strategy is being developed.

The table below shows how we compare in key areas:

Value for Money 2009-10	Cost	How we compare	Quartile
Cost per property of Housing Management	£255		Middle
Cost per property of major works	£697		Upper
Cost per property repairs and voids	£824		Lower

We know the cost of repairs was too high and we have a new repairs contractor working for us. We expect to reduce costs in the next year 2010-11.

We have also been carrying out a value for money exercise across the TMO service areas and we have involved our board members in setting the directions.

Local offers

Local offers are the way in which we tailor our services based on what tenants want. From the work that we have done already we have a very good idea of many of the

areas of work that you want us to do and we will come back and talk to you again before April 2011 when our local offers must be in place.

Our local offers

You told us that we could provide more information on notice boards and they need to be better positioned and visible to everyone.

Our offer is to carry out a review of the notices on our estates and to make sure that they are well sited and have up to date information.

You told us that you were more concerned about getting repairs sorted out at the first visit than whether you had to wait a few more days.

Our offer is to make sure that we can measure how many repairs we can get right first time and set a standard that we will measure and report on.

You told us that you we do not give feedback on the changes that we make as a result of our consultation.

Our offer will be to set up robust mechanisms so that you will be able to check on what we did as a result of the consultation work that we ask you to get involved in and we will set these out in our communication strategy.

You told us that antisocial behaviour is not generally a big problem but there were issues with noise nuisance.

Our offer is to work with you to try and resolve these issues; we will record the outcome and measure your satisfaction with the result.

You told us that you wanted more information about caretakers and their role in looking after your homes.

Our offer is to review the caretaking service and consult with you on how this service can meet your needs.

Further consultation and agreeing offers

We are just at the start of shaping and developing the national and local standards. So far we have developed an action plan to make sure that we deliver against all the standards. In future we want to make sure we provide you with relevant and meaningful information you can use to measure our performance with. By working with the existing resident engagement structures (Area Review Boards and Resident Engagement Committee) we are expecting to see the level of understanding and engagement in performance measurement increase with the aim of developing practical, useful local standards, that are agreed, monitored, compared and celebrated if they are achieved. The Local Standards project group will continue to work on the standards in consultation with the tenants, through the committees, to ensure the local offers are made, measurement is in place and reporting deadlines are achieved.

We will be looking at involving more residents in monitoring our performance and will be discussing with tenants the idea of setting up a resident inspector project.

In January we aim to hold a residents' conference to look at the feedback we have received from residents, through ARB meetings, door knocking and publication of this report. The conference will also be a chance to finalise our offers to residents and to agree how these offers will be monitored.

Monitoring the offers and poor performance

It is proposed that monitoring the offers will be undertaken through the existing resident engagement mechanisms, as well as being reported on the website, but these methods will be part of the discussion we are having around local standards, and subject to consultation. One of the big questions we have to resolve is what actions should be taken or penalties imposed if there is poor performance and the standards are not achieved.

There are many ways to deal with poor performance; this can include the most usual method of expecting the organisation managing to provide a clear explanation as to why the target has been missed through an exception report, and to provide an action plan to remedy the situation. This information is made available to the appropriate meeting where further questions are asked. Other methods can include publishing data (naming and shaming), or imposing a fine, for example a donation to a tenants' club or a project.

Conclusion

We have an opportunity through this annual reporting to provide you with information about your housing service. We hope that you will share your thoughts and ideas about this report with us so that we can not only improve our services but also enable you to compare the service you get with that of other housing providers to ensure it is high quality and value for money.

Contact us at:

The Tenant Management Organisation – Strategy and Engagement Team
Telephone: 020 7605 6478 Email: ybirch@kctmo.org.uk

Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea – Partnership and Performance Team
Telephone: 020 7361 2238 Email: celia.caliskan@rbkc.gov.uk

Appendix 1 - Action point plan

What we need to do	How we will do it	When we will do it by	What will we do better	How you will know we have done it
1. The Council will monitor the TMO.	A report will be published on the website	April 2011	Provide clear information on how the TMO is performing on the local standards	You will be able to look at the report on the website
2. We will contact clients in the way that they prefer.	We will collect information when we contact you to ask you how we should contact you in future	Door knocking in September/October 2010 and tenancy checks in the next few years	We will send out information in the way that you have asked	You will receive the information in your preferred way
3 Put up to date and relevant information on our website.	We will put more up to date information on our website	We have already started to do this and will continue to update the information	We will make information easier for you to access and keep you better informed about our services	You will see that our website is now much more informative
4. Review our service standards and ensure that we monitor and feedback on all the standards.	Tenant panel discussions, officers, contractor meetings. Consult with REC Carry out benchmarking with other organisations	April 2011	We will be clearer about what we have agreed we can deliver and tenants will be able to monitor our performance and measure against other organisations	We will publish information in the <i>Link</i> magazine, take papers to Operational Committee and put on our internet. We will report at ARBs and REC
5. Report satisfaction with complaints process and changes we made to process as a result of	We will send out complaint satisfaction forms when we answer your complaint	August 2010	Our complaints service will be easier for you to understand and use	If you need to make a complaint you will be given a copy of our new policy and asked to

the consultation.	We will circulate our draft policy to residents involved in the consultation	September 2010		complete a satisfaction survey when we have answered your complaint
6 Collect information so that we can best meet the needs of our tenants.	Knocking on doors and tenancy checks	Door knocking will end October 2010. Tenancy checks of 25 per cent to 2014 and thereafter rolling 10 per cent	We will be able to make sure services meet the needs of our residents. We will be able to target specific groups when we make changes to our policies such as older people	We will update the information we have in our annual report. We will report on the door knocking exercise. We will know how our policies and actions affect all groups
7 Measure how often we can get things fixed at the first visit.	We will ensure our contractors give us this information and we will report progress to the Council Board, Operation Committee, area review boards, <i>Link</i> magazine and on our website	We will start reporting this information by October 2010	We will be able to monitor how well we do and ensure that our repair contractors do the best job possible	You will be able to see the information we provide
8 Let residents know when we are doing estate inspections and what we do as a result.	We will ask neighbourhood officers to post notice of inspections	We will start to do this by the end of 2010	We will have better inspections that residents are able to attend	We will put up notices and inform you of when these inspections will take place
9 Collect and report on	When we close your	We will start sending out	We will know if we have	We will report back to

<p>satisfaction with how we deal with antisocial behaviour</p>	<p>complaint about anti social behaviour we will send you a questionnaire for you to tell us how you rate our service</p>	<p>forms by November 2010</p>	<p>got our processes right and be able to change them if necessary</p>	<p>you through our committees and website how satisfied you are with our processes and any changes we make as a result of your comments</p>
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