

Our Vision

“A well-run council, creating a city of strong and equitable local neighbourhoods, recognised for their enviable quality of life and range of opportunities for local people”.

Foreword

We have made some big changes to our services to tenants over the last twelve months. We have been working closely with tenant representatives to develop our services and are pleased to celebrate some of our successes with you.

The preparation of this report is a requirement within the new Regulatory Framework for Social housing that was introduced from 1st April 2010. Its content and presentation aims to be of a standard deemed to be ‘Fit for Purpose’ as defined by the Tenant Services Authority (TSA). Although the Council has written this document it has been developed with the input of tenant representatives and reflects the changes being made.

It is our first Annual Report to Tenants since 2000, although we have kept

you consulted and informed about changes through ‘Homelink’ your newsletter and through various Tenants Forums.

We have listened to your views and continue to contact you directly, either in person or by writing to you about matters which directly affect you.

Tenant representatives have had a busy year in responding to the TSA’s proposal on the Framework for Social Housing. They have also attended several consultation events to review the way tenants can influence and shape the service. This report shows some of the ways tenants are helping to shape services and priorities, the way we provide landlord services and how you can check on our performance.

By working closely together, we will make steady progress in improving what we do and achieve our aim of providing excellent services to you.

We would like to thank all of our tenant representatives, and staff who have worked very hard to produce this report.



Councillor Eddie Strengeil
Housing Portfolio Holder

Eddie Strengeil



John Bibby
Director of Housing & Community Services

John Bibby

Also with thanks from Christine Swanston, acting Chair of the Lincoln Tenants Panel

1. Introduction

In April of this year all Social Housing Providers, which included Local Authorities, Housing Associations and Arms Length Management Organisations became the subject of a New Regulatory Framework through the Tenant Services Authority (TSA). This framework is based on Housing Providers working in partnership with its tenants to ensure that the service delivered meets their needs and aspirations. Since December 2009 we have held Local Conversation events with invited tenants with a view to:

- Forming a response to the consultation on the draft regulatory framework from both tenants and officers to the TSA
- Agreeing our priorities at a City wide level
- Considering ways to improve tenant involvement and empowerment
- Working towards agreeing local offers and how they will be reported and monitored
- Setting up Service Focus Groups
- Reviewing the terms of reference for the Lincoln Tenants Panel (formerly Tenant Advisory Panel)

The new framework is based on co-regulation, which requires Housing Providers to work jointly with tenants through effective tenant involvement.

It sets out a number of standards (see table below) that it expects Housing providers to meet: To meet these standards the TSA expects us:

- To involve you in the shaping of local delivery to local priorities and scrutinise performance
- To involve you in the development and scrutiny of the Annual Report
- To provide capacity building support for you to make 'co-regulation' more effective
- To ensure that you have the ability to make a complaint

Although the New Framework is based on six standards, only five relate to Local Authorities. The sixth is around governance arrangements for other housing providers such as Housing Associations, Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMO's and Tenant Management Organisations (TMO).

Proposed Standard	This covers	Your priority score
Tenant Involvement and Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement and Empowerment • Customer service and choice • Equality and Diversity • Tenants with other support needs • Complaints 	High
Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repairs and maintenance • Quality of accommodation 	High
Tenancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocations • Rent • Tenure 	Medium
Neighbourhood and Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood management • Local area co-operation • Anti Social Behaviour 	High
Value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value for money 	Medium

Annual Report to Tenants 2009/2010

How we have developed our annual report to tenants

Tenant Representatives have been actively involved in developing this annual report and agreed the layout, and content at its meeting on 1st September 2010. We also held 10 consultation events with representatives and looked at:

- **The TSA standards** - How we are meeting the required standards?
- **Our performance** - How are we doing?
- **Reality checking** - Tenant views from focus groups, estate inspections and complaints
- **Feedback** - Customer satisfaction information from surveys
- **Self assessment** - How we assessed ourselves
- **Local offers** - Proposals for local offers based on the findings of the annual report
- **Improving the service** – Looking at case studies and good practice and how we compare with other housing providers.

What we did in 2009/2010

Key objectives for 2009/2010	How did we do?
Roll out the Decent Homes Programme	We are on target to meet the Decent Homes Standard target by 31 December 2010 with the exception of three Sheltered Housing Schemes
Reduce the length of time properties are empty	We always strive to improve performance and this is reflected in our report
Improve our repair service	Started our pilot for improving repair appointments time and getting the job done 'Right first time'
Review the Tenant Involvement Strategy and Tenant Compact	We have developed a revised Strategy and Tenant Compact, and are developing service focus groups
Increase number of tenants engaging in the empowerment process	More tenants are showing an interest in getting involved. We are also working with 'Housemark' consultancy in a 'capacity building' exercise with tenant representatives. This will help them to identify what we need to do to improve in coming years
Improve customer access to services	We have improved our customer access with a better reception and moved the Property Shop to City Hall
Understanding the requirements of the TSA	Responded to the Governments proposal for national standards to the TSA
Increase Tenant Involvement and Empowerment	Undertaken several local conversation events

Our commitments and service pledges for 2010/2011

Our commitments (or pledges) are to:

- Improve the time it takes to complete a repair
- Maintain the Decent Homes Standard
- Improve our repairs appointment scheme and reduce the cost of repairs
- Improve our vacant property re-let times and reduce costs
- Review our tenants handbook and improve the quality of information and style of leaflets
- Develop a programme for Neighbourhood Plans
- Monitor and report on 'new tenant satisfaction' to ensure the right level of support is provided where needed
- Increase the number of Estate Inspections and Involve more of you in them to get greater feedback on local issues
- Answer all telephone calls within 30 seconds
- Involve you in mystery shopping to test our services
- Have a consistent approach to dealing with anti social behaviour
- Agree 'local offers' with you before introducing them from 1 April 2011

These commitments have been developed during the consultation events with tenant representatives earlier in the year.

We would also like to find out your views on these and any other commitments or local offers you feel we should put in place to tailor our services to meet your requirements.

At the back of this report we have included a questionnaire which we would like you to complete. These commitments will form the basis of Local Offers being put in place by April 2011.

Benchmarking

We compare our performance against other landlords through a 'benchmarking' organisation for landlords called 'Housemark' and using information published by central government and other agencies. We compare ourselves against similar landlords and the best performing ones to provide us with a robust comparison and the opportunity to explore where service improvements can be made.

In this report we have shown our performance compared to other housing providers within the Benchmark Club. Tenant representatives have asked us to show our performance in a traffic light key to indicate how we are doing.

The key is:



- Bottom 25% of performers in sample



- Neither top nor bottom 25% of performers in sample



- Top 25% of performers in sample

The Benchmark Club is developing more indicators to allow better comparisons in future years. More importantly we will in future be measuring the things that are important to you and are agreed in the Local Offers.

We have included a questionnaire in this report. We will use the findings in

the survey to work with you to improve future reports.

Developing Local Offers

The 'Housemark' Consultancy team are working with Tenant Representatives during September and October 2010 to determine what the Local Offers in Lincoln should look like. You can contribute to this process by returning our questionnaire. We will be consulting you again through 'Homelink' on the final proposals when they are available.

To agree local offers by 31 March 2011 we will:

- Use our revised Tenant Involvement Strategy to involve tenants
- Actively involve our tenants in the development and design of the annual report
- Develop local offers to meet local issues
- Use our tenant involvement database and structure to involve as many tenants as possible
- Hold an annual tenants conference in partnership with stakeholders and partners
- Consult tenants on the draft local offers
- Agree arrangements for how the local offers will be monitored and reviewed
- Develop a new performance report with tenants to ensure we are reporting on the right issues
- Publicise performance information on the national standards and local offers

2. Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard

With Tenant Representative's help we have agreed our aims and objectives, including an improvement action plan for our Tenant Involvement Service. We have developed service standards and established a new focus group to help us monitor and improve the service.

To help us achieve this, we set ourselves high standards and stretching performance targets. These will be monitored to ensure we continue to improve the quality of the services we provide to you.

All Council staff have a responsibility to ensure that the services provided to you meets the highest possible standards at all times.

2.1 Customer Service, Choice and Complaints

Customer Service

There are various ways in which you can contact us:

- Visiting, phoning or writing to City hall where there is also access to other services
- E-mailing individual officers, teams or housing@lincoln.gov.uk
- Visiting our website at www.lincoln.gov.uk where there are on-line forms for a variety of things including reporting a repair; make a payment or request a number of different services

See inside the back cover for contact details and opening times.

We are passionate about customer service. It is at the heart of what we do as a public service. An 'Access to Services' review made a number of recommendations over the short, medium and long term designed to improve the customer experience. Many of the key recommendations from this review have been achieved including the creation of a specific Customer Services Team, installation of a state of the art telephone contact centre and continued development of the council's website.

How did we do?

- We answered 81,646 housing telephone enquires
- We received 1,016 housing related emails of which 87% were dealt with on first contact
- Responded to all calls in an average time of 59 seconds
- We hold estate surgeries in most areas of the city where you can speak to your estate officer and get housing and benefit advice

Every two years we undertake a sample survey of tenants through the National Tenant Satisfaction Survey for Social Landlords, also referred to as the Status Survey. The last survey was carried out in the autumn of 2008 and it will be carried out again in the autumn of 2010. We will report the changes from the last one in next years Annual Report.

Customer Service		How we compare to others	Benchmark
Percentage of our customers satisfied with the overall service	78% (2008/09 Status Survey)	No comparative data for 2009/10	National Benchmark 81% 
Net satisfaction with how enquiries are dealt with generally	51.6%	114 th out of 149 within Benchmark Club	Benchmark median 59% 
Net Satisfaction with overall service provided	67.9%	97 th out of 196 within Benchmark Club	Benchmark Median 67.4% 

71% of tenants who contacted the council in the 12 months prior to the survey did so by phone and 73% of those were about repairs. Most tenants said that found staff helpful and able to deal with their problem. Significant numbers said they had found it difficult to get hold of the right person and /or were dissatisfied with the outcome

We have recently changed the way all customers access the Council's services. We now have a 'Corporate Customer Contact Centre' which handles all calls on first contact. As this is a relatively new service we are still developing comparable targets and making changes to the service to improve it.

In 2010/11 we aim to:

- **Answer 80% of calls within 30 seconds**
- **See 87% of visitors at the Contact Centre within 15 minutes**
- **Deal with 87% of emails on first contact**
- **Deal with 90% of correspondence within 10 working days**

Customer Choice

- You can make an appointment for repairs to be carried out to your home
- You can choose the design and style of new kitchens and bathrooms when improvements are carried out to your home
- We offer a choice based lettings service and a common allocations policy in partnership with a housing association
- You can join in Estate Inspections and get involved in making decisions about improvements in your area

Customer Complaints

The Council operates a corporate complaints procedure which is available in a leaflet at our offices and on our website. We monitor our complaints to ensure that we learn from any mistakes and say sorry.

The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Service Focus Group will receive reports about complaints to ensure that the way we deal with complaints is transparent.

Customer Complaints	What we did in 2009/10	How we compare to others	
Percentage of complaints dealt within 15 working days	86%	<i>We are changing the way we monitor complaints performance in line with our Benchmarking Club so we can measure our performance with other housing providers in future</i>	

We aim to answer 90% of complaints in 15 working days in 2010/11.

2.2 Tenant Involvement and Empowerment

We are committed to promoting and encouraging tenant involvement through a range of formal and informal structures and initiatives. These aim to maximise our accountability to you and will provide you with the opportunity to influence both our policies (including the way in which estates and properties are managed) and proposals for improving service delivery.

We are revising our Tenant Involvement Strategy and Tenant Compact. These reviews are due for completion in the summer of 2010.

'Housemark' are also working with tenants to help them better understand the role of the 'TSA' and the outcome of this work will form the basis of all service reviews.

What we already do?

- We provide premises for the Hartsholme Community Contact Centre and The Centre on Ermine rent free
- We employ 2 dedicated staff members to support our tenant involvement service as well as other members of staff
- We have undertaken intensive consultation sessions with the Tenants Panel on the new Framework and the TSA Standards
- Hold Tenant Forums and Estate Surgeries

Tenant Advisory Panel recognised that to respond to the requirements of the new framework and to engage in a more of a scrutinising role they needed to change their name. They have therefore dropped 'Advisory' from their title, and become known as the **Lincoln Tenant Panel**. The Panel are currently reviewing their constitution and will hold elections in December each year.

The Tenant's Panel are involved and empowered in various ways. They are:

- Consulted on all key decisions about housing included strategic priorities and changes in policies
- Included in performance monitoring and target setting for a range of performance indicators covering all major aspects of the service
- Involved in monitoring local standards of performance

If you would like to nominate a tenant representative for your area please contact the Tenant Liaison Team for a nomination form.

We are also developing Service Focus Groups to scrutinise performance. These cover the Home Standard, Tenant Involvement and Empowerment, Neighbourhood and Communities (including Tenancy), Finance including Value for Money and Equalities in Housing.

- We also hold tenant forums across the City 3 times a year
- We produce regular newsletters and information for tenants
- We regularly ask tenants and leaseholders how satisfied they are with different parts of the service

As well as meeting the TSA's own standards, the TSA require landlords

to agree local standards with tenants. It calls these local offers. We already have some locally agreed service standards which we agreed and published earlier in the year (these can be found on our website).

We already have some local arrangements for the delivery of services, for example we developed a Lincoln Standard of Accommodation as part of our Decent Homes Programme, which goes beyond the Government's Decent Homes Standard.

In three areas of the City we also have neighbourhood management teams which, through partnership with other agencies, are involved in identifying issues that affect local communities and agreeing how they can be resolved.

Capacity building with tenants



A tenant training needs survey has been carried out with the support of Housemark. We are due to start a programme of capacity training in September 2010 to ensure all tenants have the skills to participate in developing the local offers.

We are currently developing a timetable with the Lincoln Tenants Panel about the development of local offers.

We employ 2 dedicated staff members to support our tenant involvement service as well as other members of staff and community groups.

How did we do?

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment		How we compare to others	Benchmark
Percentage of customers satisfied they were being kept informed	77% (2008/09 Status Survey)	No comparative data for 2009/10	National Benchmark 80% 
Percentage of customers satisfied that we take account of their views	59%	No comparative data for 2009/10	Benchmark median 60% 
Percentage of customers satisfied with the opportunities for participation and management in decision making	59%	No comparative data for 2009/10	Benchmark Median 62% 

2.3 Understanding the diverse needs of our tenants

We aim to ensure that all tenants are able to participate at a level which suits them while recognising the needs of special interest groups. The City of Lincoln Council is committed to providing information and services equally and without discrimination to meet everyone's needs.

We also do what we can to make sure that our services are open, welcoming and easy to use for people irrespective of their age, religion or faith, gender including transgender, sexual orientation, race or ethnicity, and people with disabilities or care and support needs. We do this through:-

- An Equal Opportunities Policy and trained staff who respond well to a variety of needs, treating everyone fairly and with respect
- Holding meetings in places that are accessible and meet the requirements of the Disabled Disability Act
- Offering Home visits

- Having access to a translation service and provide documents in different languages where requested
- We offer a menu of involvement and will engage with special interest groups such as elderly people living in supported housing. We are striving to find new ways to engage with other hard to reach or special interest groups
- We aim to provide information in a format which suits the tenants
- We liaise with supporting organisations where special requirements are needed

Our Customer profile

Satisfaction Survey results showed that tenants in younger age groups were less satisfied than older respondents with the overall housing service provided by the Council. As these trends were repeated throughout the survey, showing that certain groups consistently have lower levels of satisfaction.

How we have assessed our performance

A survey of tenants showed that 73% of contacts were about repairs. General improvements in the customer experience are likely to be reflected in improving the way repair requests are dealt with. The survey also told us that council tenants found it more difficult to get hold of the right person.

In response to comments made by customers the City Council redesigned its Customer Contact Centre to make services more accessible. We have changed the way enquiries are handled to provide a single point of contact for you. In addition self help terminals have been provided to allow customers direct access through 'MyInfo' (a new service to give you more choice in the way you do business with the council). 'My info' is an area of our website where customers can manage their Council Tax account online.

Residents can check their balance, review personal details to make sure they are correct and let the council know of any changes – at any time of the day or night.

This area of the web also includes bin collection calendars and an online Housing Benefits application form that can be completed through the website.

If the scheme proves to be a popular way to access council services, the 'My info...' area may be expanded to include other services such as rents and repairs.

We also feel it is important to test the quality of our calls to customers and will introduce mystery shopping. Whilst we monitor calls, we have no independent evidence of the quality of the calls. We intend to train tenant representatives to carry out the mystery shopping as this will be independent.

Whilst on occasions we are unable to deal with complaints in the specified timescale due to the complex nature of some complaints, we aim to carry out further monitoring of complaints to improve our performance.

We have limited information about the people who access our services and aim to carry out assessments to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our customers.

We had a testing year in 2009/10 with both posts in the Tenant Liaison Team becoming vacant together at a time when we were launching into a period of review. However we have managed to maintain a heavy consultation programme and managed to help the Tenant Advisory Panel review its role and take on the new challenge. The challenge ahead is to deliver the programme of change agreed with tenant representatives.

Complaints about our tenant involvement and empowerment service

There were 19 complaints about our tenant involvement and empowerment service in 2009/2010 of which 6 were upheld, which means we apologised to our customer and/or took corrective action.

Improving our tenant involvement and empowerment service

During 2010/11 we aim to improve services by:

Action	What will be done
Improve access to services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce mystery shopping. • Find new ways to involve more people. • Carry out mystery shopping to test our services.
Improve choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand our choice based lettings service by working with neighbouring housing providers.
Reduce complaint handling time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage our complaints more effectively.
Increase our understanding of our customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a Housing Diversity Policy. • Develop an Equalities in Housing Service Focus Group. • Carry out Equality Impact Assessments on more of our services. • Improve the information we hold on customer profiles.
Improve tenant involvement and empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop our Service Focus Groups. • Expand the role of the 'Lincoln Tenants Panel'. • Develop tailored training for tenants including monitoring and scrutinising our performance. • Review our Tenant Involvement Strategy and Tenant Compact. • Develop our website to make it more attractive. • Develop a Tenant's web page that is used by tenants for tenants.
Improve Communication and Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve 'Homelink' and include a "You Said We Did" article reporting back on how we take tenants views into account, giving examples of where this has influenced the service.
Providing tenants with a range of opportunities to influence how we meet the TSA standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the Service Focus Groups. • Tenant Panel to scrutinise performance against all standards. • Agree and develop a timetable for involving tenants in producing and scrutinising future annual reports.

3. Home Standard

3.1 Quality of Accommodation

The council has a significant role in providing rented accommodation which is affordable and at 1 April 2010 the Council had a housing stock of 7944.

In 2006 the Council reported on the outcome of the stock option appraisal and the vote to retain ownership and management of the stock. It was made very clear at that point that whilst there appeared sufficient resources to complete the Government's Decent Homes Standard there would be very little scope for further improvement in the stock. The Lincoln Standard was agreed with tenants with a target date of 2016. However where possible some of this would be carried out where opportunity allowed it with existing contracts. In the first 4 years

of the Business Plan to deliver Decent Homes, the Council has spent over £30m on the properties.

Tenants have played an active role in the partnership with two representatives sitting on the Core Strategy Group which involves all partners in the project (The Council, Kiers and Aaron Services).

A major factor in the success of the partnership has been the joint use of Hamilton House. This building doubles up as both office and depot facilities. Working side by side has allowed the Council's Maintenance and Investment Team to work more closely with our partners. In 2008 we opened a new stores facility at the site in partnership with Jewson Builders Merchants.

How did we do?

Quality of Accommodation		How we compare to others	Benchmark	
Percentage of customers satisfied with the general condition of their home	78% (2008/09 Status Survey)	No comparative data for 2009/10	National Benchmark 84%	
Percentage of customer satisfied with the overall quality of their home	80%	No comparative data for 2009/10	National Benchmark 84%	
Percentage of homes that fail to meet the Decent Homes Standard *	26%	180 th out of 224 within Benchmark Club	Benchmark median 6.65%	
Energy Efficiency Rating	74	13 th out of 193 within Benchmark Club	Benchmark Median 68	

* The Decent homes target of 31st December 2010 will be met with the exception of 724 properties which includes 151 in three sheltered housing schemes, 93 where tenants have refused access and 520 where tenants have declined to have the work carried out.

We have completed an options appraisal for 151 properties at 3 of our sheltered schemes. Whilst we can make these homes decent, they are bedsits which are proving less popular by elderly people today.

In addition a small number of properties may also not meet the Decent Homes Standard as tenants have refused access or do not want the improvements carried out.

The Lincoln Standard is over and above the Decent Homes Standard and includes: -

- Upvc double glazing
- Energy efficient heating system
- Modern kitchens and bathrooms to all homes
- Communal areas to flats to be decorated to a high standard
- Modern fencing and gates
- Door entry systems to communal flat doors
- External security lighting to 3-storey blocks of flats
- Secure boundary fencing to vulnerable communal areas
- Open spaces to be maintained to a high standard
- Mains wired smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors in all homes
- Internal plaster in a reasonable condition
- Cladding and insulation of non-traditional homes

We now need to complete a new stock condition survey to maintain decent homes and review your priorities for progressing the Lincoln Standard.

We provide a 'respite and drop in' centre called 'The Haven' in areas where improvements are being carried out. 'The Haven' acts as a customer liaison point and allows tenants to meet up during the day.

All our homes now have UPVC windows

Energy Efficiency

We aim to ensure that we deal with all your enquiries respectfully and courteously by doing the following things:

- Advise all new Council tenants of the relative efficiency of their homes by providing an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) during the 'offer' process
- Explain what the EPC means and what tenants can do to reduce their fuel bills and CO₂ emissions
- Ensure residents are able to obtain up to date information on the availability of grants and discount schemes that can improve the energy efficiency of their properties and help reduce their fuel bills

The Standard Assessment Procedure (or SAP rating as it is better known) is based on energy costs associated with space heating, water heating, ventilation and lighting. Our SAP rating is 74 out of 100. This is above the average score of 64 for other councils.

Roman Pavement

A major improvement programme including underpinning and drainage work is being carried out at Roman Pavement and East Liberty. The properties have received kitchens, bathrooms, heating systems, doors, electrical re-wiring and re-decoration. Tenants were temporarily moved out of their homes whilst improvements took place and the project is due to end in December 2010.

Adaptations and major works for people with disabilities

In 2009/10 we spent £165,350 on properties occupied by people with disabilities. This equated to major adaptations including extensions, at a rate of 3 per year.

2,769 council properties have some kind of adaptations for disabled or elderly people

3.2 Repairs and Maintenance

- You can report repairs 24 hours a day by phone, text or on line
- Appointments can also be made straightaway at a time which suits you during office hours
- We inspect 10% of all completed works to ensure that the repair meets our quality standard
- We will send an SMS text message the day before your repairs appointment
- 73% of respondents were satisfied with the council's repairs and maintenance service, which is up 2% since 2006. The National Benchmarking figure is 75%

More detailed analysis showed that tenants were less satisfied with our repairs service, compared with tenants of other landlords. Most especially with the information provided to them as to when workers would call and the time taken for work to start.

Since this survey was carried out we have introduced Mobile Working Technology which allows the workman

to carry a small computer tablet to pick up the next job, allowing more time to do the repairs.

The information gathered in the survey has been used in preparing a LEAN System Review of the repairs process.

The review was started late in 2009/10, the full impact of which will be reported to tenants in the autumn of 2010. The review aims at making it easier and quicker to get repairs done, allowing us to undertake a much higher proportion of repairs by appointment and completed right 'First Time'.

A pilot scheme run on the Birchwood and Hartsholme Estates will be reviewed before rolling the improvements out across the city.

We have also developed a Home Standard Focus Group in which tenants are involved in managing and monitoring the Repairs and Maintenance service.



How did we do?

Repairs and Maintenance		How we compare to others	Benchmark	
Percentage of customers satisfied with the repairs service	73%	Status Survey	52% bottom quartile	
Average repair cost per property	£801.35	111 th out of 166 within Benchmark Club	£719.37 Benchmark median	
Percentage of urgent repairs completed on time	93.95%	232 nd out of 325 within Benchmark Club	98% Benchmark median	
Average number of calendar days to complete a repair	10.6 days	112 th out of 149 within Benchmark Club	8 days Benchmark median	
Percentage of homes with a gas safety certificate as at 1 April 2010	100%	Housemark Benchmark Club	100% (no Benchmark data for 2009/10)	

Estate and Environmental Works

A budget is available to carry out small environmental works which has resulted in a number of small scale local improvement schemes being carried out on estates. These works can arise from the Decent Homes Programme, through Estate Inspections or suggestions made either directly by tenants or through their Estate Officer.

During 2009/10 a number of schemes were completed including:

- Security fencing at St. Botolph's Court and Risby Green Supported Housing Schemes
- Car parking schemes on the Ermine Estate

- Mobility Scooter stores at Gaunt Street and Derek Miller Court

We plan to develop this further with tenants during 2010/11 within the Service Focus Groups and publish a new information leaflet to encourage more tenants to participate in this scheme.

Health and Safety

The Council monitors the health and safety for operatives and tenants whilst work is being carried out. We comply with all Health and Safety requirements for gas, water, asbestos, fire risk and the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.

Gas Safety Checks

100% of our properties had a gas safety certificate as at 1 April 2010 which makes us one of the best performing landlords in the country.

Asbestos

The council has developed an asbestos management policy to safely manage asbestos within homes. The council makes an assessment as to whether asbestos materials need to be removed from the property and, if any future works are planned that may disturb these materials. Specific information leaflets are provided to you and to all new tenants on this subject.

Empty Properties

We aim to ensure that we deal with all your enquiries respectfully and courteously by doing the following things:

- Accompany all prospective new tenants when viewing a home
- Provide new tenants with information on their new home and provide a Welcome pack
- Complete all repairs required to the empty properties and re-let the properties within 25 working days
- Ensure that all our properties meet our empty homes standard before you move in

How we have assessed our performance

Whilst we have reduced the length of time it takes to re-let a property we would like to reduce this further to maximise our rental income and reduce waiting time. Performance has stabilised but efforts to drive it below the target of 25 days is proving difficult and as a result we intend to undertake a fundamental review of the processes involved. This function has been identified for a Lean Systems review in 2011 and is scheduled to commence in January.

We realise that our repairs service is very important to you and this is an area where we are not performing as well as we could be. We are

completing repairs on time but the waiting times could be improved. We will therefore be concentrating on making things better during 2010/11.

Complaints about our home service

There were 74 complaints about our home service in 2009/2010 of which 44 were upheld, which means we apologised to our customer and/or took corrective action. In the case of repairs the main complaints were missed appointments which we are addressing through our Pilot Improvement Scheme.

Improving our homes

During 2010/11 We aim to:

Action	What will be done
<p>Improve tenant involvement in the quality and condition of our properties</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have recently set up service focus group around the Home Standard to look at the work we are doing
<p>Improve our repair appointment service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor progress on the Repairs Pilot Scheme and report outcomes to the Focus Group • Consider roll out of the scheme dependent on the above • Increase database of mobile phone users to allow more tenants to receive text message or by phone call the day before the appointment • Reduce the number of failed appointments through reminding tenants of pre-arranged repair appointments.
<p>Reduce the time it takes to re-let a property</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a LEAN System Review of the empty property process • Review the Empty Property Standard with the Focus Group • Consider Initiative Schemes for tenants to leave properties in good condition • Review our policies on termination of tenancy
<p>Improve time it takes to complete a repair</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor progress on the Pilot Scheme and report outcomes to the Focus Group • Implement a 'roll out' of the scheme dependent on the above

4. Tenancy Standard

4.1 Allocations

We let housing in a fair and transparent way. The Council and our partnering housing associations are part of the 'Lincoln Homefinder' scheme which is a choice based lettings system.

- We offer an assisted bidding service to those people who need support to bid for properties and provide support to those people who may have a disability
- Older people applying for sheltered accommodation have their support needs assessed by our warden service, as well as their housing and medical needs
- We have information about homes suitable for households with mobility

needs and advertise them accordingly. Applicants are assessed according to their mobility need so we can achieve the best use of our housing

- We let 855 properties last year of which 69% of tenancy offers were accepted first time
- We review our waiting list annually
- We accompany all prospective new tenants when viewing a home to provide advice and support
- We provide a new tenants handbook

How did we do?

- *69% of tenancy offers were accepted first time*
- *There were 749 empty properties were re-let during 2009/10*
- *5% of people on the housing register want to transfer to another council home*
- *16% of lettings were made to transfer applications*
- *79 existing Council tenants 'Exchanged' their tenancy with another tenant*

Allocations		How we compare to others	Benchmark
Average time to re-let a property	28 days	34 th out of 59 within Benchmark Club.	Benchmark median 27.6 days 

4.2 Rents

Although the rents part of the TSA's Tenancy standard does not apply to councils as we set our rents according to government rules we do provide performance information which is included in this section.

We provide a number of convenient ways in which you can pay your rent such as:

- ✓ **Direct Debit**
- ✓ **Standing Order**
- ✓ **Debit or Credit card**
- ✓ **By post using a cheque**
- ✓ **Through various outlets in the City such as Post Offices and shops**

✓ **The Council's direct telephone payment facility**

✓ **Through the Councils web site.**

In addition:

- We send you a rent account statement at least once every year
- We will do everything we can to prevent you from falling in arrears
- We will help you complete a Housing Benefit Application Form
- We will give you four weeks notice of any rent increases
- We offer a Home Contents Insurance Policy

How did we do?

Rents		How we compare to others	Benchmark	
Percentage of rent collected against the amount due	99.4%	16 th out of 35 within Benchmark Club	Benchmark median 98.36%	
Level of arrears against the total rent due	1.53%	14 out of 241 within Benchmark Club	Benchmark median 3.60%	
Percentage tenants evicted due to rent arrears	0.41%	133 rd out of 230 within Benchmark Club	Benchmark median 0.06%	

We aim to collect 99% of rent due in 2010/11

4.3 Tenure

As a Council we apply an Introductory Tenancy for all new tenancies. After a year if there has been no breaches of the tenancy agreement a Secure Tenancy is then awarded.

Our new tenancy 'sign up' covers tenants and landlords obligations under the Tenancy Agreement. Language translations are also available.

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We carry out home visits to new tenants in the first 6 weeks of their tenancy and complete a new tenant questionnaire to establish any additional support a new tenant may require to sustain their tenancy.

How we have assessed our performance

We acknowledge that we have not assessed tenant satisfaction with our lettings and new tenancy service and will be introducing a new survey during 2010 to gather information to help us improve our service. The

Neighbourhood & Community Focus Group will cover this area and will monitor the results and findings of the survey. We will also encourage more people to get involved through this point of contact.

Complaints about our tenancy services

There were 25 complaints about our tenancy service in 2009/2010 of which 8 were upheld which mean that we apologised to our customer and/or took corrective action.

During 2010/11 We aim to:

Action	What we will be do
Improve our allocations policy	Introduce a new Allocations Policy, which is due to come into force at the end of 2010
Increase choice to people on our Housing Register	Implement a Common Allocations Policy in partnership with North Kesteven District Council, West Lindsey District Council and Acis Housing Group to increase choice and give applicants better access to affordable housing
Improve the information we give to new tenants	Review our Tenant Handbook
Monitor tenant satisfaction with their new home	Review our new tenants questionnaire to include information on tenant satisfaction at the 6 week visit
Improve our overall tenancy service	Establish and develop a service focus group which will cover all aspects of Neighbourhood and Tenancy Management
Improve our rent payment service	Develop an on-line rent statement service
Improve our Empty Property Re-let Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commence a LEAN System review of processes in Nov 2010 • Review our Letting Standard for empty properties • Improve the property details on the online bidding software

5. Neighbourhood and Community

5.1 Neighbourhood Management

Our aim is to ensure that all estates and flat blocks are safe and clean place to live. We have a team of estate caretakers who visit every estate on a 6-8 week rota where they will clean communal entrances to flat blocks and other open spaces including garage sites. In addition we employ 2 caretakers at each of our three tower blocks and have a night caretaking team who patrol the blocks to ensure they are kept clean, tidy and safe.

77% of tenants said that they were satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live which is down 2% since 2006. The National Benchmarking figure is 78%.

5.2 Local area co-operation

In dealing with anti-social behaviour we have set up a Tenancy Enforcement Team and we have developed excellent working and information exchange arrangements with a wide range of our partnership agencies and particularly with neighbourhood policing teams.

These arrangements have been enhanced following the Council establishing a corporate Anti-Social Behaviour Team as well as three Neighbourhood Management Teams in the Moorland, St Giles and Abbey / South Park areas of the City.

Various joint agency meetings have been established, both at operational and strategic level, including joint monthly intelligence meetings to deal with specific issues of anti-social and criminal behaviour in the City.

Also bi-monthly Community Safety Partnership meetings are held where long term projects to tackle anti-social and criminal behaviour are developed. This group are informed of the public's views on how agencies are performing and what it wants the agencies to do about these problems.

The Council's Housing Strategy 2010-2015 includes, as a key priority, the development of frameworks which allow Sustainable Communities to develop. Apart from the provision of good quality housing we work closely with partners to ensure that a first class tenancy management service is provided.

The Tenants Panel played a role in shaping the strategy through a consultation meeting.

5.3 Anti social behaviour – Joint Agency Working

We believe that we meet the 'Respect Standard for Housing Management' which has the specific aim of embedding a culture of respect in housing management activities through a balanced approach, involving prevention, early intervention, enforcement and support, thereby giving residents the confidence that anti-social behaviour will be tackled.

The Community Safety Partnership also chairs an Anti-Social Behaviour Thematic Group which includes other partners such as Fire and Rescue and Youth Services.

Acts of anti-social behaviour will not be tolerated but we will always aim to work with parties to prevent problems escalating. We have access to mediators through our own staff, who have been trained, or independent mediators to help resolve disputes.

We use a wide range of tools to combat anti social behaviour including:

- Acceptable Behaviour Contracts / Agreements.
- Mediation.
- Counselling.
- Parenting Contracts / Agreements.
- Noise Abatement Orders.

If intervention fails we will use enforcement action which may result in a demoted tenancy or a possession order.

In 2009/10 we dealt with 927 Tenancy breaches which equates to dealing with breaches in 11% of our properties

We work closely with other statutory agencies, such as the Police, Social Services and Youth Services to deal with anti-social behaviour.

When there appears to be either an individual or a group causing anti-social behaviour to a whole estate / neighbourhood the problem solving group approach, involving such agencies can be very useful. It allows good relationships to develop between agencies enabling early intervention and the promotion of co-ordinated planning towards dealing with anti-social behaviour.

An estate improvement scheme

As mentioned in paragraph 3.2 above we provide a scheme for environmental works which allows you to have say in how some money is spent to improve communal areas and the local environment.

Tenants and residents, estate staff and other partners such as the Police may request improvements, however each case is judged on its merit

Grounds Maintenance

We provide a grass and hedge cutting service for older tenants or tenants with special needs. We also maintain

grassed and communal areas that we own. We are currently carrying satisfaction surveys for these services.

Dealing with enquiries about neighbourhood issues and communal areas

The satisfaction survey we carried out in 2008 recommended that we carry out a review of how we handle enquiries from tenants about general neighbourhood issues and communal areas. We are looking at this issue with a view to developing neighbourhood plans which will be monitored by the Neighbourhood & Community Focus Group.

Tenants Rights and Responsibilities and our policy on how we deal with Neighbour Nuisance are set out in information leaflets and on our website at www.lincoln.gov.uk

Estate Inspections

A programme of Estate Inspections is carried out each year where tenants join officers, local councillors and other partners in estate walkabouts to identify any problem areas or areas for improvement both in physical layout and in the way we deal with issues.

These Inspections are carried out on all estates twice a year and are planned a year in advance.

Fire Safety

We carry out a fire risk assessment on all our flat blocks every year. The Tower Blocks and the Supported Housing schemes assessments are carried out by an Independent Fire Risk Assessor. A random check is undertaken by Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service and we comply with any recommendations made.

We also provide advice to all new tenants on fire safety.

- We dealt with 233 new cases of anti social behaviour in 2009/10
- 22.9% of cases investigated were resolved either by an eviction notice or demotion of tenancy
- 4.73% of cases in 2009/10 resulted in possession orders being granted
- 2.55% of cases resulted in an eviction
- In 1.45% of cases an injunction was used to tackle anti-social behaviour

How did we do?

Anti-Social behaviour /		How we compare to others	Benchmark
Number of closed resolved cases as % of closed cases	100%	1 st out of 174 within Benchmark Club	82.8% Benchmark median 
Average number of days taken to resolve ASB cases	10 days	3 rd out of 143 within Benchmark	82.14 days Benchmark median 

How we have assessed our performance

Where a cases of anti-social behaviour has been closed we have started seeking the views of all complainants through a satisfaction questionnaire providing us feedback that will help to improve the way we deal with complaints of this nature.

We need to learn more from the information being supplied to the Benchmarking Club to ensure that everyone is classifying ASB the same way and measuring the same parameters.

We have now started supplying our performance statistics on anti-social behaviour and satisfaction levels to a new part of the Benchmarking Club. Many local authorities and other social housing providers across the country are also providing similar information so

that future comparisons can be made and trends monitored.

Such statistical information will also form part of our local performance indicators and contributes towards data collected by the Community Safety Partnership.

We recently established a 'Neighbourhood and Community Service Focus Group', in which we are involving our tenants in assessing and improving services on neighbourhood management, local area co-operation and anti-social behaviour.

Complaints about our neighbourhood and community services

There were 10 complaints about our neighbourhood and community service in 2009/2010 of which 5 were upheld, which means we apologised to our customer and/or took corrective action.

Improving our neighbourhood and community service

During 2010/11 We aim to:

Action	What will be done
Improve our overall neighbourhood and community service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop the recently formed service focus group to cover all aspects of Neighbourhood and Tenancy Management
Tackle anti social behaviour and social exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduce a family intervention service to tackle various issues for families whose tenancies may be at risk
Assess the quality of our grounds maintenance service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Carry out an annual satisfaction surveys of grounds maintenances and caretaking services
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop neighbourhood plans to monitor neighbourhood issues and communal areas• Investigate the data being compared within the Benchmarking Club

6. Value for Money

Value for money is an integral part of delivering Housing Services within the City of Lincoln Council to ensure that the best deal is being secured for the Council's tenants, leaseholders and customers.

Making better use of public money is a key objective for us and we aim to reduce costs while maintaining the service provided to you. Over recent years we have made significant savings to ensure the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan was sustainable. This was achieved without reducing the level of service to you.

We have continued to reduce costs and some of the ways we have improved value for money include:

- Entering into a partnership with Jewson Builders Merchants to supply our stores and materials which has reduced our cost by an estimated £164,000 per year.
- Improving rent collection rates achieving a gain of £103,065.
- Improving our garage rentals achieving a gain of £24,440.
- Gains through the Decent Homes partnership amounted to £240,712.
- Re-tendering the Gas Service & Maintenance Contract saved £98,387.
- Restructuring the City Maintenance Service saving £194,240.
- Introducing a new schedule of rates for repairs.

However we did lose

- £46,286 through more properties becoming vacant.
- £48,762 owing to increased costs on re-tendering the electrical and heating contract and costs involved in the combined depot for all construction partners.

The overall gain was £567,603.

Cost of managing your tenancy

Many things affect the cost of managing your homes including, loan repayments and the interest on them, bad debt provisions, cost of staff and overheads and the cost of repairs etc. The actual direct staff cost of managing your home is £8.91 per week

Cost of Repairs & Maintenance

The actual cost of housing repairs per dwelling during 2009/10 was £14.45 compared to £14.93 in 2008/09 and £15.32 in 2007/08

The Property Shop

In May this year we closed our property shop on Silver Street and relocated a much improved Property Shop to City Hall as part of our service improvements to customer. We have reduced our costs by an estimated £15,000 by doing this.

Customer Access

An agreement for the Council to purchase City Hall has meant that improvement works to the building to improve customer access are almost complete. Not only will this improve the look and feel of the building, but will also save money in the long term. Previously the council rented the building and was tied to a 127 year lease. By purchasing the building, at a cost of approximately £13 million, the Council will save £230 million in rental costs.

Rents

In 2009/10 the average gross rent was £55.40 per week compared to the national average at 31 March 2010 for general needs stock owned by large registered providers at £80.56.

We collected 99.4% of tenants rent during 2009/10.

Service Charges

The City Council does not generally apply service charges but pools rents which means that everybody pays for the services whether they are used or not. The exception to this is in

Supported Housing where a charge is made and the cost met, where the tenant is eligible, through Supporting People Grant.

How we have assessed our performance

Whilst officers have made every effort to improve efficiency gains and ensure value for money this has been achieved without too much input from tenants. We see this as a major weakness which we will be aiming to redress during 2010/11 through a Focus Group that will have a specific brief in relation to income and value for money.

Improving value for money

During 2010/11 We aim to:

Action	What will be done
Identify issues at an earlier stage and prevent them escalating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase frequency of Estate Inspections. • Seek to free up Estate Officers time so that they can spend more time on your estate.
Making efficiency savings across all our budgets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult tenants through a Focus Group about the principle of Service Charges. • Increasing income by reducing the time it takes to re-let properties.
Involve tenants more	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing a Value for Money Standard Service Focus Group. • Involve tenants more in scrutinising budgets and the investment programme. • Involve tenants in reviewing the Value for Money Strategy and Action Plan.

Notes:

Questionnaire

The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) require us to produce this annual report for tenants to show how we are delivering services and how these compare with other Registered Housing Providers.

Your views on this report will help us in the preparation of next years report and we would therefore like you to spend a few moments and complete the following questionnaire. The Address for completed forms can be found on inside the back cover.

How did we do?

Question 1

Is the information clear and easy to understand?	Yes	No	Don't know
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question 2

Do you agree with what we have said in the report?	Yes	No	Don't know
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question 3

Is there enough information on performance?	Yes	No	Don't know
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question 4

Does the report explain:	Yes	No	Don't know
a) How we are developing local offers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) How tenants have been involved in producing the report?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) How we are meeting the national standards?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) How we are developing local standards of service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question 5

Are there any gaps in the information?	Yes	No	Don't know
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question 6

Do you agree with our commitment offers to improve our service, including:

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | Yes | No | Don't know |
| • Improve our repairs appointment scheme and reduce the cost of repairs. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Improve our vacant property re-let times and reduce costs | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • We will review our tenants' handbook. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • We will monitor and report on 'new tenant satisfaction levels | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • We will involve more of you in estate inspections with us | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • We aim to answer all telephone call within 30 seconds. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • We will involve you in mystery shopping to test our services | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • We will have a consistent approach to dealing with anti social behaviour. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • We will agree an additional local offer to come into force from 1 April 2011 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Question 7

What other local commitments do you think will improve our service to you?

- | | Yes | No | Don't Know |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Car Parking | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Rubbish/Letter | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Cleaning in Communal Areas | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Grass Cutting | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Garden Service | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Grounds Maintenance | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Abandoned Vehicles | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Anti-Social Behaviour | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Yes | No | Don't Know |
| • Tenancy Breaches | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Garages | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Any other please list

.....

.....

.....

.....

Question 8

Would you like to be involved in any of the following ways?

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Activity	Description	Please tick here if you would like more information
Tenant Forums	Local meetings three times a year to discuss housing issues with staff and other tenants	
Service Focus Groups	Give your opinion on specific issues concerning you	
Estate Walkabouts	Join in estate inspection with staff and ward councillors	
Tenants Association	Set up and join a local group	
Tenants Panel	Meet every 3 weeks to consult on housing issues and represent tenants views	
Training Programme	Learn more about housing	
Mystery Shopping	Test our services	
On line consultation	Complete our surveys on line	
Homelink Newsletter	Join our Editorial Panel or write an article	
Annual Report to Tenants	Join our Editorial Panel	

Question 9

Are there any other comments you would like to make?

.....

Name -----

Address -----

Postcode -----

Phone number -----

Email address -----

Thank you for taking the time to complete our questionnaire