

1. Primary Purpose

- 1.1 The provision of good quality, warm and modern affordable homes for rent.
- 1.2 To deliver an efficient, responsive, customer focussed landlord function.
- 1.3 To provide good quality housing advice, keep an up-to-date waiting list and lead on the provision of the statutory homeless function

2. Service Description

- 2.1 The Housing Division is the main landlord in the district to the 3,350 Council tenants and their homes. This entails delivering services addressing responsive repairs, planned improvements, rent accounting, rent arrears, neighbour disputes, anti-social behaviour, sheltered housing wardens, Careline emergency call system, right to buy applications, mutual exchanges, transfers and tenant participation. The Division is driven by the need to deliver effective customer service and to that extent is committed to service improvement.
- 2.2 We also have statutory responsibilities to manage and regularly review the waiting list, currently numbering 877 applications, provide housing advice and investigate and assess homeless applicants of which we are projecting 390 homeless presentations this year alongwith a further 69 where advice only has been given.
- 2.3 The Housing Division also has a number of other tasks allocated to it including the management of the long-term residency gypsy travellers site at Church Broughton, and the maintenance of other public buildings.
- 2.4 On a strategic and corporate level the Housing Division has a number of partners both within and outwith the Council in seeking to improve the estates and communities of the district including Environmental Health, Community and Leisure Development, Planning, County Council, Police, Health authorities and other RSLs.
- 2.5 At the time of writing this plan the Division is about to undertake widespread consultation on the future management of the stock. The outcome of this process significantly affects our direction in the period of this plan and it is for this reason the government does not expect us to deliver an updated business plan whilst the future management issue is undecided. However whatever our future management arrangements the priorities of our customers are likely to remain around service delivery issues and this plan concentrates on those areas.

3. Customers

- 3.1 Given our landlord function our relationship with our customers is different than in the rest of the Council. We carry out some 8,000+ responsive repairs each year and spend over £4m on improvements which involves substantial work to a large number of properties. Many tenants still pay rent in person rather than direct through the bank. Sheltered Housing wardens see tenants, a third of the total, several times each week. We see our customers more often and their opinion of us is usually based over a number of interactions with us. According to our last survey figures our customer satisfaction rating is 84.18%. Our priority though is to build on that, achieve higher satisfaction and to become a top performing housing authority.

3.2 Our aim is to work more closely with tenants on delivering their aspirations for the improvements we make to their homes and their Housing Service. We will start this process in the forthcoming Options Appraisal work but seek to develop it beyond that. Already, next year's improvement programmes will offer more choice than ever before in terms of layout of new kitchens and colours of new fittings.

3.3 The recent recruitment of a new Tenant Participation Officer has refocused our aim to more effectively involve BME and other hard to reach groups in the operation of the Housing Service. This process will start in 2004 with us seeking to learn from the tenant participation experience of the more diverse communities within our region.

4. Opportunities and Challenges

4.1 This service plan is centred upon performance improvement and therefore links centrally back to a key aim of the Council's Corporate plan i.e. to improve services. The division is fundamentally linked to another key aim, that of providing good quality affordable homes but also cuts across many others such as contributing to the well being of communities, contributing to economic development, reducing crime and disorder, listening and providing leadership to communities.

4.2 The Division also seeks to contribute fully to internal corporate priorities such as the community strategy, community planning, crime and disorder partnership, etc.

4.3 There are also significant internal corporate challenges for the Division such as the need to ensure that Housing is adequately financed to allow it to provide the services required by our customers. Although the principal funding mechanism of the service is ring fenced, the Housing Revenue Account, for a number of years now the division has received minimal capital finance and as the extent of improvement works programmes have been maintained the effect has been to draw heavily on revenue resources.

4.4 The Chief Finance Officer's projections for the HRA over the next three years show that the account is sustainable over that period. However he has alerted the Council to the fact that if we continue to draw upon revenue resources at current levels and other factors remain relatively neutral the account will go into deficit within the next five/six years. This information is critical to the work we are engaged upon on the stock options issue and also refocuses in on the capital finance issue.

4.5 The forthcoming year will include a review by the County Council of the Supporting People funding regime that supports our sheltered housing and Careline services. They will examine our services in terms of performance and value for money and the exercise may involve a change in our current funding package.

4.6 Within 2004 the Housing Service is due for a Best Value Review of the landlord elements of its service, excepting Sheltered Housing. This will involve us in significant work and will present a significant challenge. The outcome of the Option Appraisal process may impact further on the timescale for the review i.e. it may not be appropriate to undertake a full review if the stock options process proceeds to further consultation and a tenant vote.

- 4.7 The Best Value review will highlight areas where we are performing well and others where improvements can be made. However we don't need to wait for a review to be able to start tackling some of the areas for improvement. For instance although the management of our void properties has improved significantly over the last 18 months more needs to be done and we will be looking to reduce our rent loss on void properties significantly over the period of this plan setting specific targets for each part of the void property process.
- 4.8 A challenge to all Councils is to hit government targets related to Decent Homes and the reduction in Bed and Breakfast for homeless applicants with dependent children. It is also likely that more challenges will present themselves through the Anti-Social Behaviour Act being implemented in the current year.
- 4.9 Through the Council's commitment to long-term improvement works and the establishment and maintenance of good quality stock condition information we will be able achieve the government's Decent Homes standards within the set timeframes. Our challenge is to build upon that standard and work with our customers to realise their aspirations for a standard that relates directly to the South Derbyshire District. Whilst we have concentrated on improving the physical condition of the stock, and that is to the Council's credit, this has tended to be at the expense of the environment of our estates. To counter that a full detailed audit of the Council's garage sites and larger communal areas is currently underway and will report early in the new financial year. The outcome of this may lead to a requirement to find resources to reinvest in these assets.
- 4.10 The challenge on Bed and Breakfast accommodation is to eliminate its usage for homeless applicants with dependent children. Here we do have more difficulty in hitting the target as the amount of temporary accommodation available for homeless applicants is very low. This challenge is clearly recognised in our Homeless Strategy Action Plan and the medium term goal is make more good quality temporary accommodation available within the District
- 4.11 The priorities for our development, particularly over the next 12 months can be related to very specific actions. These have the benefit of being readily measurable in terms of achievement and should help the Division focus on the progress it seeks to make. Our recent customer satisfaction surveys show that our starting point is good but we are striving for a culture of looking forward and working continuously to improve in all areas whatever our starting position. Undertaking over 8,000 repairs each year, managing a waiting list with 877 applicants, providing a homeless advice service to over 450 people and actual homes to 100, etc, inevitably means that there will always be repairs or cases we could have handled better – our task is to continually make that proportion a decreasing minority of the whole.

5. Key Tasks

Tenancy management	Actions
Customer satisfaction	Our most recent full service survey was carried out in 2002. This showed that of 1,427 respondents, 84.18% were either very satisfied or fairly satisfied with the overall service provided by their Landlord. Our intention is to fully survey our tenants in 2004 to measure progress and establish a new baseline position from which to move forward.
Defining and meeting customer aspirations	As part of the Option Appraisal work we are planning to start the process of defining the standards of property improvement aspired to by our customers. Our plan is to build upon this work and feed the detail into our future works programmes.

Tenancy management	Actions
Tenant Participation	The Service has a good track record on tenant participation. With the appointment of our new Tenant Participation Officer in January 2004 we are also seeking to address the need to more effectively reach hard to reach groups such as BME and young people under the age of 25.
Rent arrears	The current rent arrears at the end of the 2002/3 financial year stood at £178,638 or 2.06% of the current annual rent debit. This is upper quartile performance. Our medium-term target (next three years) is to reduce the arrears to 1.5% of the rent debit. As the debit changes year on year it is difficult to give a cash figure target for more than the next 12 months.
Former tenant arrears	Over the period of this plan we will focus more on chasing former tenant arrears and seek to rationalise the debts into those recoverable and those not which require write-off as unretrievable. The former tenant debt stood at £159,370 at the end of the 2002/3 financial year. Our targets for the future will be to reduce the real amount owed by 10% each financial year.
Estate management	The Tenant Liaison Officers work hard encouraging tenants to look after their homes and gardens. Although more can always be done the measure of success is whether the appearance improves and popularity of the estates. Over the period of this plan we will seek to introduce estate audits to monitor their overall appearance.
Anti-social behaviour	A draft anti-social behaviour policy will be in place by April 2004 and will be consulted upon, finalised and then introduced in the Summer of 2004.
Tenancy agreement	The tenancy agreement we have with our tenants is more than 20 years old and is out-of date. We will be working on introducing a new version (subject to the option appraisal process) in the period of this plan. We will need to consult widely on these changes and therefore this is a significant piece of work.
Housing advice and homelessness	
Homelessness	The Government has set an aim of working to eliminate the use of Bed and Breakfast for homeless applicants with dependent children. The only way this can be achieved in South Derbyshire with current levels of homeless applicants is to provide more units of emergency accommodation. Without major affordable new build in the area this is most likely to be addressed by conversion of some current general units to homeless accommodation. Through the Housing Strategy Manager we will seek to work closely with our Housing Association partners to share the burden of this provision through implementation of the Homeless Strategy Action Plan.
Housing Advice	Within the first half of 2004 we will publish a Housing Advice booklet with the aim of informing the community of the housing options available within the District to inform them before they make decisions in relation to their own housing.
Housing Advice Surgeries	Commencing early in the new financial year we will open a Housing Surgery for young people in the local Connexions office and, if there is demand, extend surgeries around the District.
Strategic	
Best Value Reviews	Within 2004 the Housing Service is due for a Best Value Review of the landlord elements of its service, excepting Sheltered Housing. This will highlight areas where we are performing well and others where improvements can be made. However we don't intend to wait for a review to be able to start tackling some of the areas for improvement.

Strategic	Actions
Finance	Current reinvestment in stock is solely from HRA resources. This means at current levels HRA balances will be at critical level by 2009. The Corporate Plan commits the authority to a review of the Council's financial strategy in 2004/5.
Option appraisal	The options report was delivered in March 2003 and considered that retention or transfer of the stock to a housing association were the most likely future management arrangements. The Consultation and Empowerment Strategy approved in July 2003 committed us to in-depth consultation with tenants on all options and the preparation for that work is now well underway. The main phase of the consultation takes place from mid-February to early April 2004 with a final report being produced by consultants by May. The Council will then be asked to make a decision on how it wishes to proceed.
Performance	A performance framework has been put in place to monitor performance across key indicators including all government specified Best Value Performance Indicators. All staff will have targets set, linked back to the performance of the service as a whole, as part of the PDR process. A Performance Manager dedicated to this area of work will also be employed in 2004 to help drive forward process change needed to allow improved performance. A priority for performance improvement will be on our void management processes thereby delivering properties more quickly to prospective tenants and reducing our rent loss.
Procurement Partnering/ Negotiating/ Contracting	The Council has a corporate Procurement Strategy. The Housing Division has for the most part procured its contracts in the traditional way in accordance with the Council's financial regs. However, in recent years we have been negotiating with tried and tested contractors to undertake the maintenance and improvement contracts. In line with Egan principles and recognised good practice, all but one of the 2004/05 contracts will be procured using 'partnering' contracts. This form of procurement will be continually developed over the next 12-18 months. The gas servicing contract for 2004-8 is being tendered under European rules as we seek to put that element of work on an improved footing.
New IT system	The implementation of a complete new suite of IT software for Housing commences in February of 2004 with a view to the complete implementation of all modules within the financial year 2004/5. This is a major £250,000 project but once completed successfully will enable us to improve service delivery in all areas.
Housing Revenue Account Business Plan	Under direction from Government the Council should not produce a plan whilst the stock option process is underway (given that the Plan is a projection of the business into the future it could be fundamentally contradicted by any decision to change the management arrangements). Once the stock option process is complete our aim is to achieve the Government target for the plan of being assessed as 'fit for purpose'.

Strategic	Actions
Partnership and learning from others	<p>The Housing Division are currently members of the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Midlands Tenant Participation Forum (EMTPF) • Derbyshire Sheltered Housing Forum • Derbyshire Homeless Officers Group • Centre for Sheltered Housing Studies • Association of Social Alarm Providers • HouseMark (a national information and good practice exchange operated through the Chartered Institute of Housing) <p>We are also leading members on the Domestic Violence and Anti-Social Behaviour Action teams.</p> <p>We will look to extend our network of partnerships with the aim of delivering better and more co-ordinated services to the people of South Derbyshire.</p>
Risk assessment procedures and training	<p>The process of establishing risk assessments for all Housing tasks has now commenced. In Housing they cover a wide variety of tasks from an officer making a housecall, to the cleaners emptying wastebins, to a tradesman working at height. The process of completing risk assessments for all tasks will be completed in 2004.</p>
Staff development	Actions
Personnel Development	<p>All staff receive a personal development review (PDR) each year. This service plan will now be used as the framework against which individual development needs are established and targets set linking directly to the identification of training needs. A further development planned for 2004 is the establishment of a training database across the service to enable us to more readily assess our knowledge strength and weaknesses.</p> <p>Our in-service monthly team briefing process will be continued keeping all informed of developments, service improvements, performance issues and staffing matters.</p> <p>All sections hold regular team meetings.</p> <p>Within 2004 we will also look to develop a programme of management competencies in terms of developing the senior managers of the future.</p>
Restructuring the repairs and maintenance unit	<p>The restructuring of the repairs and maintenance unit is designed to give it more focus on its core activities. The creation of separate section managers to head up the responsive and improvements works will create smaller, more closely managed teams. The aim is also to remove the remaining physical split between direct works and repair ordering. These changes have been approved in principle by Committee and are currently being consulted upon.</p>
Repairs and Maintenance	Actions
Repair Policy	<p>Work is currently ongoing to consult our tenants on our draft policy for this element of the service with the aim of introducing the policy early in the 2004/5 financial year. Its aim is to ensure consistency of service delivery. Once agreed help guides will be produced for customers.</p>
Rechargeable repairs	<p>It also our aim to develop our work on rechargeable repairs in the period of this plan to seek to ensure that more tenants pay for deliberate damage.</p>

Repairs and Maintenance	Actions
Repair appointments	It is our aim to increase the number of repairs we complete at times agreed mutually with our customers during 2004. With the implementation of our new IT system in 2004 it is our aim in 2005 to move to 90% of routine repairs being carried out through mutually agreed appointments.
DSO	During the period of this plan and certainly commenced within 2004 we will seek to deliver productivity improvements and to put the operation on a sounder financial footing.
Gas servicing and repairs	A new contractor for gas servicing and repairs is due to be place early in the new financial year
Solid fuel appliance servicing	It is our aim from 1 st April 2004 to ensure that all solid fuel heating systems and appliances are serviced on an annual basis ensuring that we meet legislative requirements relating to emissions.
Repair satisfaction	Satisfaction with the repairs service continues to be assessed as part of the on-going questionnaire process. Complaints are now addressed through the Council's corporate system and are monitored on a monthly basis.
Asbestos	A draft policy and action plan will be in place by the end of March 2004 with the implementation of the action plan and risk management strategy by May 2004. Although legislative requirements from the 1 st of May concentrate on non-domestic property it is proposed that the action plan and policy will cover all Council property.
Decent Homes / Stock condition survey	The Division is committed to hitting the 2004, 2006 and 2010 government targets on achieving the Decent Homes standard. In 2004 though we wish to go further and, through initially utilising the option appraisal process, work with tenants to establish their priorities and aspirations with a view to setting and achieving a higher standard for South Derbyshire. Our baseline stock condition survey was put in place in 2002 and we need to continue to ensure that it is regularly updated ensuring it's continuation as a 'live' document to better inform Improvement Plan decisions.
Sheltered Housing	Actions
Defining the service (establishing a vision)	Work is currently ongoing to consult our tenants on our draft vision and proposed service standards for the service to be delivered by our Sheltered Housing section. This work should be complete by April 2004 and the service will then need to introduce an action plan to achieve that vision within a published time frame.
Changing the sheltered housing portfolio	The current sheltered housing portfolio is extensive, numbering some 1,119 properties, a third of the total stock. For the most part these properties are legitimately classified as sheltered but a process of rationalising the portfolio has commenced and it is anticipated that a number of units will be declassified from sheltered whilst others are brought into the stock over the period of this plan.
CareLine	Over the period of this plan it is our aim to both improve our existing service and develop new services utilising emerging technologies such as CCTV and Telecare that will broaden CareLine's current portfolio

6. Managing risks

- 6.1 This section identifies the main areas of risk involved in running the Housing business over the period of the plan. The most significant issues are the stock option process and the financial position of the service. These issues are also inter-linked. The stock option process in business terms is mainly a risk for the rest of the Council in that stock transfer may bring into question the viability of some parts of the services remaining with the Council.
- 6.2 Other areas of risk relate to ensuring that we comply with legislation such as the requirement not to use B+B accommodation for homeless applicants with dependants and particularly in the area of repair and improvement work e.g. conforming to asbestos legislation, gas servicing and electrical testing, etc.

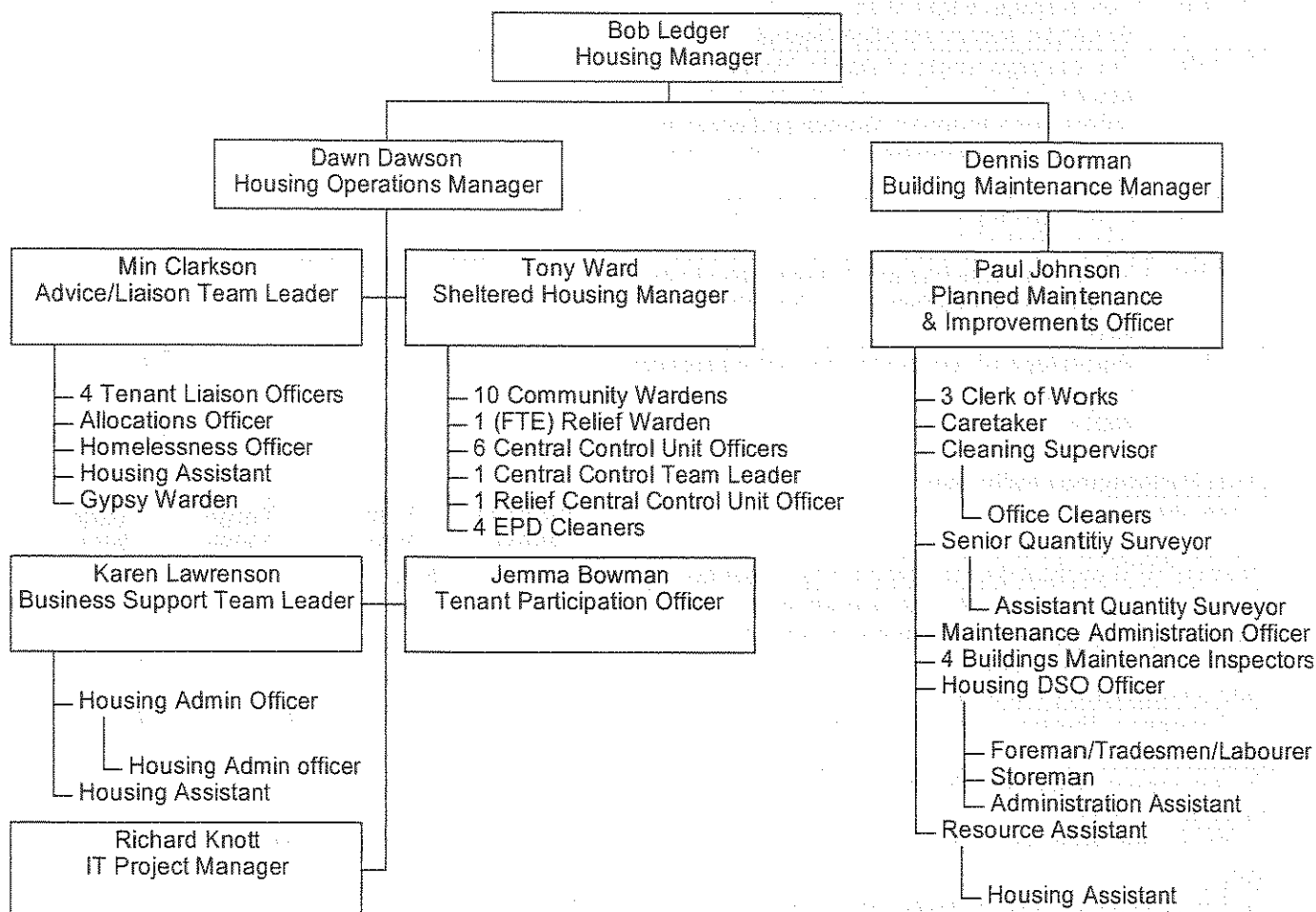
Risk	Extent of risk	Likelihood of occurrence (High/Medium/Low)	Proposed action to minimise the risk
Tenants express wish to transfer	Housing likely to move 'intact'. Significant affect on rest of Council	Medium	Not applicable. Tenants being offered genuine open choice
Financial position of HRA	Current reinvestment in stock is solely from HRA resources. At current levels HRA balances will be at critical level by 2009	Medium	Housing investment to be partly funded from capital resources.
Supporting People review	Our supporting people grant could change or the service delivered by another provider.	Low	Work in conjunction with the County Council to ensure that we have early notification of any change in funding
Failure to comply with legislative requirements or government targets	B+B homeless, asbestos, gas servicing, electrical testing, solid fuel testing, etc	Medium (a number of risks are low but B+B is high)	Need to work in conjunction with partners to reduce B+B risk.

7. Employee structure, work organisation and development needs

- 7.1 The Housing Service currently has 85 employees. The chart on the next page details the main structure.
- 7.2 As stated in section 5 all staff receive a personal development review (PDR) each year. This service plan will now be used as the framework against which individual development needs are established and targets set linking directly to the identification of training needs. A further development planned for 2004 is the establishment of training database across the service to be able to more readily assess our knowledge strength and weaknesses.

7.3 Given the breadth of service delivered by the 85 employees to detail all development needs in this document is inappropriate but there are several generic priorities i.e.

- Annual customer care training
- Development of a management competencies programme
- IT training related to our new systems being introduced in 2004
- Personal and workplace safety issues



8. Performance Indicators and Targets

Best Value Indicator		Estimate 2003/4	Target 2004/5	Target 2005/6	Target 2006/7
BV63	Energy efficiency – the average SAP rating of local authority owned dwellings	62.00	63.00	64.00	65.00
BV66a	Local authority rent collection and arrears: proportion of rent collected	98.2%	98.2%	98.2%	98.2%
BV74	Satisfaction of tenants of Council housing with the overall service provided by their landlord	84.8%	86%	86%	89%
BV75	Satisfaction of tenants of Council housing with opportunities for participation in management and decision making in relation to housing services provided by their landlord. (New BVPI is to divide this further into BME satisfaction – no SDDC figures available until 2004 survey)	73.84% (02/03)	75%	76%	77%
BV156	The percentage of authority buildings open to the public in which all areas are suitable for and accessible to disabled people	0	To be set corporately		

Best Value Indicator		Estimate 2003/4	Target 2004/5	Target 2005/6	Target 2006/7
BV164	Does the Authority follow the Commission for Racial Equality's code of practice in rented housing?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
BV176	The number of domestic violence refuge places per 10,000 population, which are provided or supported by the authority.	0	0	11	11
BV183a	The average length of stay in: Bed and Breakfast accommodation (weeks)	5.2	5	5	4
BV183b	The average length of stay in: Hostel accommodation which include dependent children or a pregnant women and which are unintentionally homeless and in priority need (weeks)	6	6	5	5
BV184a	The proportion of LA homes which were non decent at April 02 – 21%	N/A			
BV184b	The percentage change in proportion of non-decent LA homes between 1 April 2003 and 1 April 2004	17	14	12	10
BV185	Percentage of responsive (but not emergency) repairs for which an authority both made and kept an appointment	0	25	90	90

Local Performance Indicators

Local Indicator	Estimate 2003/4	Target 2004/5	Target 2005/6	Target 2006/7
Number RTB applications completed and properties sold	150	N/A		
Average time (upon receipt of all relevant info) in days to advise new applications of positions on waiting list	5	5	5	5
Number of homeless persons accepted as priority need and unintentionally homeless	200	200	200	200
% Emergency Repairs completed in target time (1 - 3 days)	91	95	100	100
% non-urgent Responsive Repairs completed in target time (9 - 56 days)	72	85	90	95
% SH tenants receiving 5 visits (where agreed) every 10 days	100	100	100	100
% SH Scheme fire alarms tested once a week	100	100	100	100
% of calls to CCU answered within 30 seconds	95	95	95	95
% of calls to CCU answered within 60 seconds	98	98	98	98
% tenants over 65 involved with Tenant Participation	41	45	45	45
% tenants under 25 involved with Tenant Participation	1.78	2.5	4	5
Number of tenants attending training/consultation meetings	900	700	750	800
The average weekly cost per local authority dwelling of management	£8.92	£8.87	£9.53	£10.44
The average weekly cost per local authority dwelling of repairs	£14.97	15.16	16.22	17.32
Average relet times for local authority dwellings let in the financial year (days)	45	35	25	20
% of rent lost through local authority dwellings becoming vacant	2.00	1.6	1.1	0.9

10. Useful contacts

Officer	Job title	Telephone number
Bob Ledger	Housing Manager	595775
Dawn Dawson	Housing Operations Manager	595797
Dennis Dorman	Building Maintenance Manager	595788
Paul Johnson	Planned Maintenance and Improvement Officer	595763
Lee Carter	Senior Quantity Surveyor	595957
Tony Ward	Sheltered Housing Manager	819483
Tim Dove	DSO Officer	595768
Karen Lawrenson	Business Support Team leader	595807

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