

# HOUSING PERFORMANCE 2006 – 07 AND PLANS FOR 2007 – 08

## VOIDS, ALLOCATIONS AND LETTINGS

### Looking back at 2006 – 2007

Last year 282 council homes became void (empty).

We let a total of 294 properties.

53 tenants transferred to more suitable homes in Harrow.



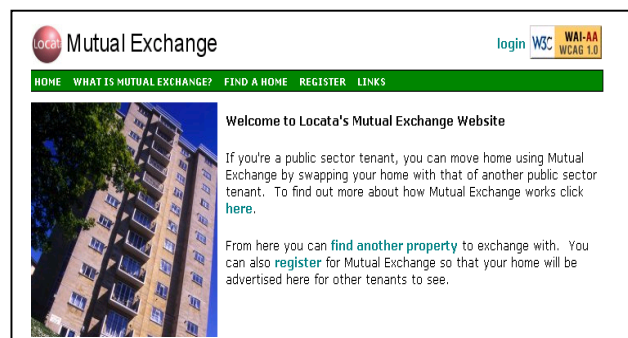
We reduced our void turnaround time from 42 days to 32 days, or by almost a quarter.

We completed the work necessary to move our mutual exchange scheme on to Locata. It will be live on Locata from 2 July this year.

We spent £352k on undertaking repairs and improvements to properties that became available for re-letting during the year.

### Looking forward to 2007 – 2008

Our target for void turnaround in 2007-08 is 29 days.



As the government has ended the HOMES scheme for mutual exchanges nationwide we are joining HomeSwapper to keep this option open for our tenants. We have secured the budget for the necessary subscription and tenants seeking an exchange should be using the mechanism within a few weeks.

## RENTS

### Looking back at 2006 – 2007

We collected over £20 million in rent last year. This is nearly 97% of the rent owed to us in 2006/07.

We initiated our ongoing Rent First! campaign. We publicised this launch with a leaflet sent out with rent statements, rent increase letters and articles in **Homing In**.

We reduced the number of tenants that owe more than seven weeks' rent from 15% to fewer than 7%. A reduction of more than half.



## Looking forward to 2007 – 2008

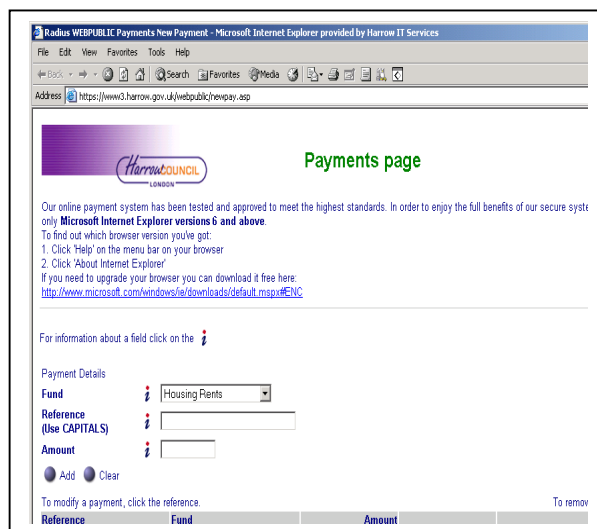
We depooled rents and service charges this year in line with government guidelines. 'Rent depooling' is a major change in the way we administer our rent and service charges.

This separated rent (ie accommodation costs) from the costs of providing services to tenants for example caretaking and grounds maintenance.

Facilities charges are made for communal provision of hot water and heating (facilities charges usually apply mainly to sheltered accommodation.)

Building on last year's successes, we have set a target for rent collection of 98% in 2007/08. This is in the upper threshold of performance for the CPA.

Starting in 2008 TLCF and tenants will be consulted about our provision of a range of facilities eg communal aerials, emergency alarm and door entry systems.

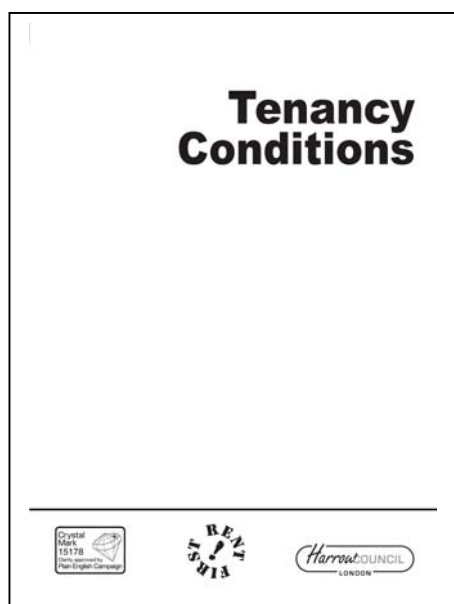


Currently the charges for such facilities are included in the basic rent but they should be included as separate charge items. We intend to provide itemised rent notification letters showing the actual cost for each of the services we provide. This will allow tenants to:

- See what they are getting for their money
- Assess the reasonableness of the charges.

## TENANCY MANAGEMENT

### Looking back at 2006 – 2007



Throughout September/October 06 there were 19 consultation meetings held across the borough allowing tenants to discuss the proposed changes to tenancy terms and conditions. Written comments were also sought.

In response to the contributions made by tenants during this consultation we revised the proposed document.

For example, in respect of flats maisonettes and shared areas: we introduced a special section on these and the wording used was simplified to avoid use of terms such as "communal" and to explain in greater detail the tenants' obligations, especially around anti-social behaviour.

Following sign off of the final document at Tenants and Leaseholders Consultancy Forum (TLCF) we secured the Crystal Mark for the revisions. We are arranging the launch of the revised terms and conditions.

## Looking forward to 2007 – 2008

The new tenancy conditions will become enforceable on 6 August 2007. They will apply to all secure tenants.

Each resident will receive a letter, a variation notice and a copy of the new tenancy conditions. (This will be posted out first class on 5 July.) There will be an article in **Homing In**. In addition we are going to be taking photographs of all tenants who sign up to a new tenancy from summer 2007. This is an initiative tied to the changes in the tenancy agreement and formed part of the original consultation. This only applies to existing tenants if they move to new accommodation after the launch of the photograph scheme.

Building on the new tenancy conditions, in 2007-08 we will be reviewing

- Our procedures on anti-social behaviour
- Our procedures on rent arrears

## ESTATE MANAGEMENT

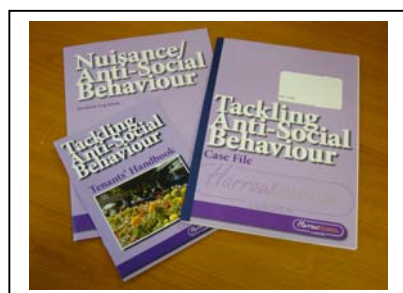
### Looking back at 2006 – 2007

In the last year we introduced an Anti-Social Behaviour casework recording system. This includes

- A handbook for all residents
- An incident log book for anyone affected by ASB
- A case file for housing officers to monitor any reported cases



We want to be able to monitor and resolve any instances of ASB on our estates effectively.



We have worked closely with colleagues from external agencies such as the Safer Neighbourhood Teams and NHS trusts in order to tackle ASB effectively and this work will continue over the coming year.

## Looking forward to 2007 – 2008

In terms of improving the quality of life for people resident in our properties, the main focus for us in 2007-08 will be to build on our work last year to challenge ASB

We will be signing up to the Government's Respect Agenda for tackling ASB on our housing estates. This is a further demonstration that we are committed to taking ASB seriously.

## REPAIRS

### Looking back at 2006 – 2007

The single most important achievement in the last year for our repairs service was the decision to award the Harrow Integrated Property Services Partnership (HIPSP) to Kier.

The decision was taken with the active involvement of resident representatives.

**“We have seen first hand in Islington the sort of relationship that Harrow can aspire to have with Kier.”**

The partnership comes with four headline aims:

- Appointments: to improve the scheduling and arrangement of these to fit in with our residents' preferences
- To extend the service to leaseholders on a re-chargeable basis: offering a reliable and affordable service to home owners
- Getting it right first time and avoiding the need for repeat visits: saving residents inconvenience and lowering costs
- Training: the chance for members of our community to train and work for a company delivering service to our residents

We spent £0.48m this year responding to day-to-day housing repairs.

### 2007 – 2008

Our role in monitoring Kier's performance starts from the 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2007, the date that Kier takes over our responsive repairs service.

We will be closely monitoring the performance levels against the high service level agreement we negotiated with Kier.

We expect to see immediate gains in terms of efficiency and response reflected in much improved levels of customer satisfaction.

**“I can't wait for them to start as they have a clear commitment to their customers.”**

## DECENT HOMES AND PLANNED MAINTENANCE

### Looking back at 2006 – 2007

We are on schedule to meet the Decent Homes target of 2010 set by central government.

This is despite a slow start last year to our Decent Homes programme that resulted in a reduced number of homes being completed. The homes on which the target was missed have been transferred to the 07-08 schedule.

Part of the explanation for this is contractor performance. The new repairs and maintenance partnership contract with Kier includes Decent Homes work. We now have a contractor in place with the capacity to deliver to deadline.

We spent £5.6m delivering decent homes this year.

### Looking forward to 2007 – 2008

We have produced a three-year programme of decent homes works up to and including 2010. Subject to the agreed budgets being available in each year we should reach the Government's target by 2010 for all the housing stock. The exceptions are those dwellings that are part of the regeneration process.



The new repairs and maintenance partnership with Kier will see major reductions in tendering periods and site setup time.

We will be able to provide a seamless programme of works over the next three years without any breaks for a change of Contractor.

We have also reintroduced a five-year cyclical pre-painting, joinery repairs and painting programme. Kier will undertake this work and again we should benefit from long term partnering in terms of resident satisfaction and value for money.

## TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

### Looking back at 2006 – 2007

There were a number of major pieces of work done last year in which residents and resident representatives played an essential part.



In Summer 2006 we reviewed the Tenant and Leaseholder Compact with our residents and drafted a new compact on the basis of that consultation. The new compact was signed on 28 September 2006. It will improve how we deliver services and the various ways residents can influence those services.

In the early part of 2007 residents participated in the selection process that led to Kier Group being awarded the contract to deliver all housing repairs and maintenance services. This contract takes effect on 2 July 2007.

To increase resident participation a Leaseholder Support Group (LSG) was set up in October 2006. The LSG now meets on a quarterly basis to look at leaseholder issues.

A new TRA was established in Hatch End in January 2007.

### Looking forward to 2007 – 2008

To consolidate and improve all of our resident involvement initiatives an independent tenant advisor (ITA), FIRST Call Consultants, was appointed to:

- Look at our communication with residents
- Look at our engagement with our residents
- Work with our residents to build their capacity for meaningful engagement with us
- Work with residents to explore the 'Right to Manage' option



Funding has been secured to look at Right to Manage options and the review of these options is approaching completion.



We will be working closely with residents throughout 2007-08 to build on last year's achievements. In particular we expect to take up the findings and recommendations of the ITA.

We want HFTRA to develop its effectiveness and we will continue to promote the creation of new TRAs for estates currently without formal representation.

On a lighter note: we will be holding an 'Estates in Bloom' competition in August.

### SATISFACTION SURVEY

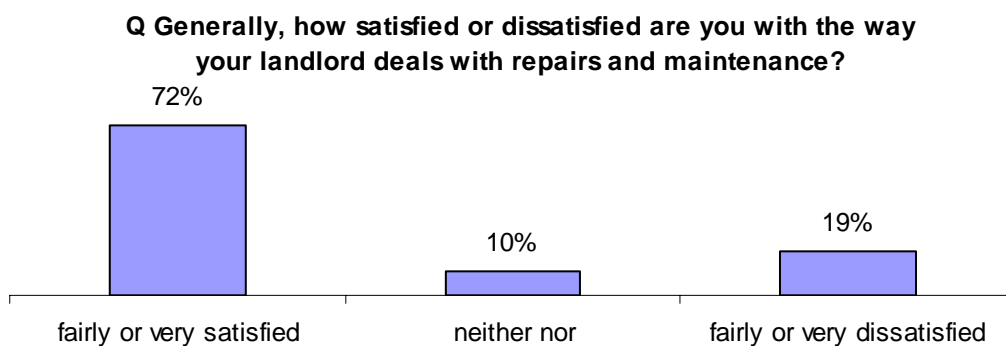
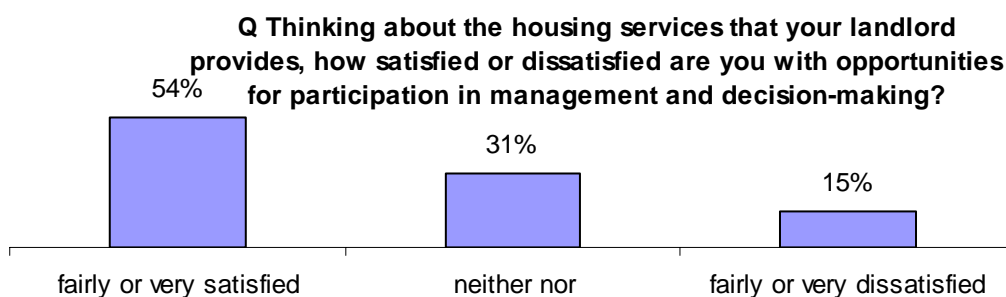
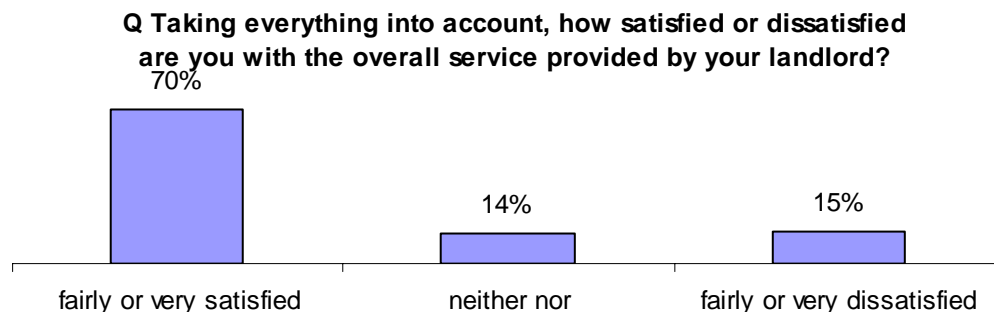
Last Autumn Ipsos MORI carried out a survey to measure tenants' satisfaction with our housing services. Questionnaires were sent to 2100 tenants and 34% of those tenants responded, 711 in all.

We asked them questions on

- Housing and neighbourhood
- Their contact with us
- Our repairs service

- Our communication with them
- How we can improve services
- Estate and caretaking services

The charts below show the results of the key satisfaction measures.



A summary report of the findings together with an action plan derived from them is being prepared as a key component of our ongoing service improvement.

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