



Broxtowe
Borough
COUNCIL

Welcome to Your **HOUSING ANNUAL REPORT**

1st April 2019 – 31st March 2020

This year has been a busy year for the Housing Department with the approval of a new Housing Delivery Plan and the Income Team have welcomed five new colleagues to provide greater support to customers with the roll out of Universal Credit across the Borough.



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COVID-19

Towards the end of the period covered by this report we saw a number of services in Housing and across the Council disrupted due to Covid-19. Officers have been working hard during this time to ensure as many services as possible are still being delivered, whilst ensuring the safety of customers and employees at all times. Where needed we have ensured there has been regular contact with customers, who have needed some extra support, to ensure everything is in place for them while they have been staying safe at home.



We would like to thank you for your patience during this difficult time and as more services are returning to normal, or are resuming again, we can assure you officers are working hard to ensure any outstanding areas of work are resolved as quickly as possible.

We would also like to thank all employees in the Housing Department who have adapted so quickly to delivering services in a different way, whilst also ensuring essential and emergency services continued to be delivered. Also to those employees who have gone above and beyond to help out within our communities, delivering food parcels and essential supplies.



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Our new Housing Delivery Plan was approved this year, with an Interim Housing Delivery Manager appointed to take forward plans.

Work is well under way for Phase 1 of the Housing Delivery Plan, with a focus on:

- Building new homes on land the Council already owns
- Purchase of already built properties
- A Buy-Back Policy for ex-Council properties
- Remodelling of under-used accommodation

Work has already begun on the development of two dementia friendly bungalows in Beeston, which will form part of the Council's housing stock. Two further sites in Bramcote and Stapleford are being considered to provide family homes and accommodation for ex-service personnel. Garage sites in Chilwell and Watnall are also included in Phase 1 plans.

Increasing council owned social housing in Broxtowe, is one of the key objectives set out in the Housing Delivery Plan. To enable the Council to achieve this, a framework has been developed to assess the viability and value for money of acquiring property and land; the Council's approach to valuation and how available funds will

be identified. The framework is set out in our new Acquisitions Policy.

The work being done to increase council owned social housing in Broxtowe will assist us in addressing the high demand on our waiting list, to help ensure we are able to invest in the right type of stock to meet the needs of housing applicants.

Last year saw the Income Collection Team join the Housing Department, with five additional positions, including an enhanced Financial Inclusion service, to provide greater support to customers with the role out of Universal Credit across the Borough. The hard work of the team has helped to ensure that as of 31st March 2020 the Housing Department had received 99.81% of rent, as a proportion of the rent owed. This is above the target of 99% we set at the beginning of the last financial year, even with the significant increase in Universal Credit claimants across the Borough.

The Housing Repairs Service has undergone an extensive independent review. This has been conducted



through consultation with customers and employees, along with good practice visits to other social housing landlords. This approach has enabled a valuable range of insight into the service to be gained. Customers have provided insight from the point of reporting a repair through to completion of works. Through individual meetings and a working group, staff involved in the Repairs Service have also been able to feed their views and suggestions into the review, including Repairs Operatives who carry out the repairs; staff who take repairs calls from customers and plan workloads and the out of hours emergency repairs service. The visits to other comparable social housing landlords have helped to highlight where Broxtowe's Repairs Service is achieving and where improvements are needed, along with some good ideas picked up along the way that could be replicated at Broxtowe.

A findings report, for the Repairs Service Review, which contains a number of short-term and long-term recommendations, was approved by Housing Committee in January 2020. The Housing Repairs Team is currently working towards getting the

recommendations in place to ensure the best possible service is being provided for customers within available resources.

The newly appointed Domestic Abuse and Private Sector Liaison Officer was welcomed to the Housing Options Team. The role was reviewed to include responsibilities around Domestic Abuse, as well continuing the good work with Private Sector landlords to provide an increased level of suitable accommodation for housing applicants.

Links with supported accommodation providers have been further developed, which has led to our most vulnerable housing applicants being referred to accommodation placements with these providers, which ensures they receive the support needed to sustain their tenancies.

The role raises the profile of Domestic Abuse through awareness raising initiatives, such as the White Ribbon Campaign and Make a Stand. They help to co-ordinate the partnership work of Domestic Abuse agencies within the Borough and manage the Council's Sanctuary Scheme, which provides security improvements for survivors of domestic abuse.



ACTIVITIES CO-ORDINATORS

The Activities Co-ordinators deliver activities directly and in partnership with others including; LLeisure; Crime Stoppers and Inspire Libraries. This partnership approach ensures that we can maximise opportunities for tenants to get involved in activities both in schemes and within the local area.



DURING THE PERIOD COVERED BY THIS REPORT THE ACTIVITIES CO-ORDINATORS HAVE ACHIEVED THE FOLLOWING RESULTS:

603 social activities have been held

640 customers attended activities for the first time

572 customers continue to attend activities after six months

Partner organisations have been involved with **67** social activities

**IN TOTAL 3,992 CUSTOMERS
ATTENDED SOCIAL ACTIVITIES**

From fun fitness to walking groups; craft sessions to table top games; reminiscence discussions to sing-alongs and intergenerational visits to gardening activities, the Activities Co-ordinators are able to turn any ideas into an interactive fun experience for customers.



Positive feedback has been received from customers and their families about the activities and here are just a few comments to share with you:

Movement to Music, chair based exercises are popular across a lot of our Independent Living schemes and it's always great to hear how these are having a positive impact on customers.

“ Living on your own can be lonely, so the classes are great for being able to chat with other people and we've already seen an improvement in our physical fitness, with less aches and pains. ”

Where customers are able to, we encourage them to keep active away from their home. A walking group has been set up, which sees customers, from different Independent Living schemes in an area, coming together to take advantage of local parks and open spaces

“ I got up this morning and was looking forward to getting out, as I haven't been out all week. It's a wonderful walk both the scenery and the company. ”

Finding creative ways to get important information to our customers is a good way to help get messages across. Customers were delighted when following a Crime Prevention discussion, one of the Police Officers got their guitar out and everyone joined in with a sing-a-long.

“ When you said the Police are coming, I never expected this, it's been absolutely brilliant. When is the singing Policeman coming back? ”

Intergenerational activities, where young and old can come together have proved to be popular at one Independent Living scheme. A customer who took part in an activity, which saw children from a local nursery play table top games with our customers, told us:

“ It's great to have children around the place. They really brighten the place up. ”

The Activities Co-ordinators also receive positive feedback from customers about the good job they do, ensuring the communal lounges are alive with activities and give customers a boost and lift they need.



INDEPENDENT LIVING



Our Independent Living Service is all about making life easier.

It provides customers with the support they need to live as independently as they can. Moving into one of our quality apartments gives peace of mind with:

- Support on hand when customers need it
- A packed programme of social activities
- A feeling of being safe and secure, without the burden of having to maintain a larger property



Making the decision to move into Independent Living is not always easy. We have a team of friendly enthusiastic and professional staff to help customers and through dedicated Independent Living Co-ordinators can ensure that a care model is in place tailored to suit individual needs.



ONE CUSTOMER TOLD US ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE OF MOVING INTO INDEPENDENT LIVING ACCOMMODATION:



"I've travelled a lot over the years as a Royal Engineer and then as a transatlantic lorry driver. After being diagnosed with a medical condition I was told that I would no longer be able to continue driving.

I went to Citizens Advice, who were very helpful and contacted the Housing Department at the Council. The application process was simple and fast and I was viewing properties with Officers within weeks. I viewed this one and knew at once it was for me; I signed up there and then.

Moving into the property was very easy and the Independent Living Co-ordinator was very helpful. I've been creative with the space and have sourced furniture from local charity shops and up-cycled them.

I love my home; it's a good place to live. I feel safe here; there is no noise or trouble. It's not costly and the maintenance is very easy. I'm close to family and they can come and visit me, which is really great.

All the staff I've met have been top notch, helpful and accommodating. The Independent Living Co-ordinator cares about me and the scheme. They've taken time to get to know me and are on hand if I need them.

I go to coffee morning in the lounge every week for a chat, everyone is friendly and welcoming. I'm quite active and spend a lot of time out and about, but I know the activities are there if I need them.

I'd encourage anyone moving into the accommodation to talk to people. Introduce yourself to your neighbours, especially if you're on your own. They can help you get to know where you're living and become a valuable friend."



KEY FACTS AS AT 31ST MARCH 2020

Housing Department



4,406 Number of properties the Council owns

155

Households where homelessness was prevented as a result of housing advice



1,726

Customers signed up to Your Voice, Your Views
Views to let us know how they want to have a say in service improvements
www.broxtowe.gov.uk/getinvolved

287 Homeless interviews completed



2,020

Number of people on the Council's waiting list

17 Properties sold under the Right to Buy



Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

In 2019/20 Broxtowe Borough Council received £16.1 million in income to the Housing Revenue Account. £15 million came from housing rents; the remainder was from garage rents, Independent Living management charges and leaseholder service charges.

£70.54

Average weekly rent

Where the money was spent

£1.2 MILLION

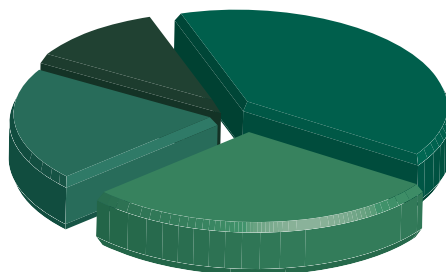
Capital expenditure financed by HRA

(Includes a direct contribution from the HRA towards capital expenditure costs)

£6.6 MILLION

Charges for capital

(Includes depreciation, gains/losses on disposal of properties and interest payable on borrowing)



£4.4 MILLION

Supervision and management

(Includes staffing costs)

£3.3 MILLION

Repairs and maintenance

(Includes repairs costs, contractor costs, void work, electrical testing etc)

TOTAL = £15.5 million

Repairs and Maintenance

£673K
Employee costs

£340K Sub- contractors and specialist contractors

£1.1M Other expenditure
(includes vehicles, tools, materials, administration, premises, clothing etc.)

Total = £2.1 Million



Your Homes

52 Kitchens and bathrooms modernised

20 Gas central heating replacements

15 Electric heating and hot water replacements

54 UPVC window replacements

108 Roof replacement (including soffits, fascia's and rain water goods)

49 Major adaptations (including stair lifts, wet rooms etc.)

147 External door replacements

390 Minor adaptations (including handrails, half-steps etc.)

12 Cavity wall insulations

54 External wall insulations

27 Communal door replacements

332 Homes repainted (including soffits, fascia's and rain water goods)

FINANCIAL INCLUSION



The Financial Inclusion Service helps Housing customers with priority debts such as rent arrears, Council Tax, Gas and Electric, TV Licence and welfare benefit overpayments. In addition advice is provided for non-priority debts such as water, credit cards and catalogues.

Financial Inclusion Officers assist customers with:

- completing financial statements to establish debt management options
- completing welfare benefit checks
- completing welfare benefit forms
- challenging and appealing welfare benefits

The additional Financial Inclusion Officer role, approved last year, has enabled the Financial Inclusion Service to offer more assistance to customers around increasing household income and



reducing household outgoings. This has helped to reduce rent arrears and assist customers to sustain their tenancies. We've also been able to promote the service more through the website and assist more customers, more quickly. The service is now well established in the Department and receives referrals from other service areas as concerns arise.

During the period covered by this report the service supported **205** customers, securing **£40,000** in backdated income from welfare benefit claims and a rent arrears reduction of **£34,000**.

Fuel Poverty Case Study

A customer with a significant amount of debt owed to utility companies contacted the service for help, due to the amount being deducted from welfare benefits being unmanageable and causing them to be living in poverty. The Financial Inclusion Officer contacted DWP and arrange for the direct payments to be stopped from the customers benefits.



Through contact with the utility companies the Financial Inclusion Officer enabled the customer to access schemes, which saw the debts paid off in full. They also set up new payment methods with the companies, to ensure the customer remains out of poverty.

The support from the Financial Inclusion Officer has seen the customer's weekly utility payments for these companies drop from around £65 per week to around £12 per week, which the customer is able to sustain.

Welfare Benefit Case Study

A customer contacted the Financial Inclusion Service after their Employment Support Allowance (ESA) was stopped following a medical examination. The Financial Inclusion Officer assisted the customer with the mandatory reconsideration process, requesting that the decision was relooked at.

During this time ESA payments stopped and the customer was supported to update Housing Benefit and Council Tax to ensure they receive payments they were entitled to and did not get into arrears while waiting for an outcome.

After the reconsideration process was rejected the Financial Inclusion Officer assisted the customer with the appeal process and supported them through this. The appeal was successful and the customer's ESA has been reinstated. They now receive a disability premium top-up as part of their claim and have received a backdated payment of just under £5,000.



COMPLAINTS

We value all feedback about services we deliver to customers and understand that at times we do not always get things right. We want to hear from you if you do not feel you have received the level of service you expect from us, so that we can learn and make improvements to our services.

SERVICE AREA	COMPLAINTS RECEIVED
Housing Options	19
Housing Repairs	76
Housing Strategy	9
Income	3
Independent Living	16
Tenancy & Estates	13
TOTAL	136

25 complaints were not resolved under Stage One of the Complaints Process and were investigated under Stage Two.

A total of 54 complaints were upheld.

Out of the complaints investigated under Stage Two, ten were upheld and one partially upheld. Every complaint we receive is reviewed to identify any learning we can undertake to improve services for the future. For example, when the review of the Repairs Service was undertaken, all complaints received were taken into consideration and learning built into the recommendations

The main reason for Complaints received in 2019/20 was that customers did not feel they had received the level of service expected. Whilst we endeavour to ensure that processes and procedures cover every eventuality, we continually review and update these as issues arise. We also provide staff with further training to prevent similar issues arising again.

YOU SAID: "Due to work being carried out in the communal lounge and no cleaning being undertaken we have not been able to use it for social activities for over three weeks."

WE DID: Issues were encountered during the works, which resulted in delays to the communal lounge becoming available again. Plans have been put in place, along with a review of works completed, to avoid this happening again. All customers affected have received a letter of apology.



YOU SAID: "I handed some documentation into the office, but it was not received by the team it was for."

WE DID: The documentation was located and the process has been reviewed to establish more electronic means of providing documentation, which will also help to improve audit trails.

YOU SAID: "There was insufficient detail on service charge invoices regarding any works carried out."

WE DID: Our Housing Management System has been recently upgraded, which will allow for changes to be made in the information provided. Quarterly repairs statements will be provided that will contain more detailed information about works carried out

YOU SAID: "I was not updated about the repair I reported."

WE DID: We are reviewing our operational procedure to establish if any reasonable steps can be taken to alleviate customer concerns during the period of reporting a repair, allocating resources and confirming appointments for non-priority repairs.



Compliments and Comments

We also like to hear from you when we get things rights, or go beyond your expectations. If you would like to compliment us for a job well done, or have suggestions about how we can improve, please let us know. Here are just a few compliments we have received:

"Thank you for being extremely helpful, you have helped me through a difficult time."

"I am extremely grateful for the work that has been done; they all did a brilliant job, even with the awful weather."

"Thank you for being very polite, kind and helpful when working at my Dad's property."

"I would like to thank you for your great efficiency in coming back to me so quickly. Your professionalism has been outstanding."

"I would like to pass on my sincere thanks; any problems which have arisen and reported have been dealt with immediately and in a very professional manner."

"All the staff I've met have been top notch, helpful and accommodating."

STAYING UP TO DATE



Sign up to our email me service - subscribe to updates on the services that matter to you, all direct to your inbox with our Email Me Service.
www.broxtowe.gov.uk/emailme



Follow us on social media for daily updates and news from across the Borough. You can find us on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube

Our Broxtowe Matters newsletter is delivered to every home and business in the Borough twice a year. It can also be read online at www.broxtowe.gov.uk/councilpublications

ہم نے یہ سہولت آپ کو ہر دو سال ایک بار ہر گھر پر بھیجی جاتی ہے۔ اگر آپ اس سہولت سے زیادہ معلومات چاہتے ہیں تو براہ کرم 0115 917 7777 پر رابطہ کریں۔

如果你需要此傳單用其他的形式或文字寫成，請撥電話 0115 917 7777 與我們聯絡。

اگر آپ چاہتے ہیں کہ یہ سہولت آپ کو ہر دو سال ایک بار ہر گھر پر بھیجی جائے تو براہ کرم 0115 917 7777 پر رابطہ کریں۔

If you need this leaflet in other formats or languages contact us on 0115 917 7777



Visit our consultations page to see how you can have your say on Council services www.broxtowe.gov.uk/consultations

Community Action Teams (CAT) Meetings take place in the Borough and provide an opportunity to raise issues with local Councillors www.broxtowe.gov.uk/cat

The Council has Committees which make decisions about services or which have delegated powers to make decisions based on law. Most committees are public meetings so members of the public are welcome to attend. At certain meetings, like Full Council Meetings, members of the public can ask questions by prior arrangement. Agendas, minutes and meeting dates are published on our website at www.broxtowe.gov.uk/committees and decisions for many of the committees are shared on our Twitter account @broxtowebc.

TYPETALK - TEXT DIRECT



Typetalk's purpose is to bring the benefits of the telephone network to deaf, deafblind, deafened, hard of hearing and speech-impaired people.

Managed from a state-of-the-art centre, Typetalk's highly trained operators understand the special requirements of its customers and provide a warm, friendly service in complete confidentiality.

For Broxtowe Borough Council telephone
18001 0115 917 7777.



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