

# CHESTERFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Annual Report to Tenants

April 2015 to March 2016

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# WELCOME

Welcome to Chesterfield Borough Council housing service's annual report to tenants.

As an elected councillor I am answerable and accountable to our tenants on the performance of the housing service. This report is a key element in providing you with information demonstrating the performance of the housing service and a summary of the work we are undertaking to improve services for you – our customers.

We are committed to listening to and working with tenants as part of our desire to offer a professional, top class housing service. If you would like to get involved and work with us on improving our management service to you please get in touch with the tenant participation team on (01246) 345432.

Over the next few years the effects of recent government legislation may reduce the resources we have available to provide the level of services you currently receive. The reduction in rents, requirement to sell off any higher value vacant properties and changes to the way benefits are managed and paid mean we will have less income to invest in your homes. The challenge for this year and forthcoming years is to manage this reduction in an effective way as possible to ensure that our service quality does decline. Some of the actions we are proposing to respond to these changes are contained within this report.

Please take time to read this informative report and pass on any thoughts you may have about the housing service through the short survey on the back.

Councillor Tom Murphy  
Executive Member for Housing

## Who is this from?

Your landlord, Chesterfield Borough Council, has produced this report. You can contact us at:

Housing Services, Town Hall, Rose Hill, Chesterfield, S40 1LP

Telephone: (01246) 345432

Email: [louis.read@chesterfield.gov.uk](mailto:louis.read@chesterfield.gov.uk)

## CORE VALUES

The Council's vision is 'Putting Our Communities First'. Underpinning this, our key priorities are to make Chesterfield a thriving borough, to improve the quality of life for local people and to provide value for money services.

As a council we plan to increase the supply and quality of housing in Chesterfield borough to meet current and future needs, increase the quality of public space for which the council has responsibility, improve the health and wellbeing of people and reduce inequality and support the more vulnerable members of our communities.

As a housing service we are committed to working together with our residents and partners to create fair access to high quality, sustainable, decent and affordable homes and communities.'

Our aims and objectives have been shaped through consultation with our customers, through findings and recommendations provided by audits and reviews and through identifying our contributions to the Council's Vision, priorities and aims in the Council Plan and Chesterfield's housing strategy.

Our key objectives are to:

- meet and maintain, as a minimum, the Decent Homes Standard
- increase tenant satisfaction and opportunities for involvement in decision-making
- ensure residents can enjoy their homes and communities without the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour
- provide a high quality housing management service, in terms of cost, efficiency and service delivery
- provide a high performing, cost effective repairs and maintenance service
- deliver services fairly and recognise equality of opportunity and choice

# KEY SERVICE STANDARDS

We are committed to delivering excellent services to all of our customers and aim to continuously improve.

Our key service standards are as follows:

- make safe all emergency repairs within 24 hours and complete a full repair within five days, dependant on the type of repair required and availability of specialist parts
- complete all urgent repairs within five working days
- complete all routine responsive repairs within 20 working days
- attend all appointments made for responsive repairs where access into your home is required
- answer all telephone calls within 20 seconds
- respond to all answerphone messages within one working day (24 hours)
- reply to all letters within 20 working days (full response)
- respond to complaints within 15 working days (full response)
- acknowledge all emails within one working day and give a full response within 15 working days
- ensure all properties let meet Chesterfield's lettable standard
- respond to all serious anti-social behaviour or hate crime reports within one working day (24 hours) and all other cases of anti-social behaviour within five working days
- always wear identification badges and show them to customers when we meet them.

# INTRODUCTION

The housing service works towards delivering the Council's vision of 'Putting Our Communities First' and the priorities to make Chesterfield a thriving borough, improve the quality of life for local people and provide value for money.

The annual report is a summary for tenants to view the performance of the housing service as their landlord and how it contributes to the Council's overall priorities over the period April 2015 to March 2016. The report shows how the housing service is performing. We monitor how we are doing in all our service areas to make sure we are efficient, effective and we meet your needs. This report is designed to show the key areas of our performance.

The report also sets out some of what we have been doing and what we going to do to make services better in the year ahead.

As a housing service we are committed to working together with our residents and partners to create fair access to high quality, sustainable, decent and affordable homes and communities.'

## How do we measure what we are doing?

We monitor our performance through performance indicators which cover a range of housing services. We also measure customer satisfaction performance as this tells us which service areas are most important to you. We use this feedback, along with further consultation, to make improvements.

We 'benchmark' performance information which means that we compare ourselves to other organisations. Benchmarking helps us to understand performance and costs so that we can improve the quality and value for money of the services that we deliver to you.

## How many properties do we manage?

The number of properties we manage changes each year as properties are sold, demolished, built, converted or acquired. In the year 2015/16 the number of properties we managed and maintained reduced by 56.

<b>Stock April 2015</b>	<b>9,517</b>
Right-to-Buy sales	68
Demolitions	1
New builds and acquisitions	29
Leased to housing association	16
<b>Stock March 2016</b>	<b>9,461</b>



# TENANT INVOLVEMENT AND CUSTOMER CARE

We are committed to delivering excellent services to all of our customers and aim to continuously improve. Tenant involvement is at the heart of all that we do.

Where appropriate, we consult tenants on:

- any decision we make which will affect your home or neighbourhood
- how we monitor services and improvement plans
- how our services can be improved
- estate improvement projects

Tenants are the people best placed to tell us about the services that they want to receive. Tenants give us their views through a variety of ways including surveys, meetings, focus groups, the tenant challenge panel, tenant inspectors, service review groups, community engagement events, feedback and complaints.

We encourage all tenants to tell us how they want to be involved and what they want to be included in. We have structures in place to enable you to participate at whatever level you choose.

We will measure our performance against the local offers and tell you how we are doing in future annual reports.

- Because our tenants told us that their neighbourhoods were important to them, we restructured the neighbourhoods team so that our tenant participation team worked more closely with the neighbourhood rangers service under the same management.
- We formed service user groups to look at particular aspects of our services such as how we communicate. For example, we changed our rent arrears letters following recommendations by this group.
- We recruited and trained tenant inspectors to check the standards of our services, e.g., whether we meet our standards for void properties
- We consulted tenants on a broad range of projects to improve neighbourhoods using a specific budget and to encourage pride and ownership in local spaces, including:
  - providing fences and gates to provide enclosed gardens and security at several locations

- bulb-planting in Holme hall involving local residents and a local school sand tree planting in Dunston
- several gardens and environmental improvements, such as creating a community garden and a garden project in Staveley and regenerating a woodland area in Loundsley Green
- funding a summer house for a gardening project in Boythorpe
- buying new games equipment to transform a park in Spital
- contributing to the development of a multi-use games area in Grangewood
- Redesign of bin areas, external shared areas and gardens of blocks of flats in several locations
- We arranged or were involved in more than 30 events aimed at promoting pride in local neighbourhoods, looking after local environments, action against dog fouling and attracting tenants to have their say in the services we provide.
- We used customer feedback to improve our services in numerous ways. For example, we improved our procedures for staff dealing with anti-social behaviour and changed our standard letters.

#### Complaints responded to within 15 working days

	Performance	Target	Target met?	Improved?
2015/16	84%	94%	x	✓
2014/15	77%	94%	x	x

Our target for 2016/17 is 94%. This is the target set by the Council's Customer Charter.

## Planned developments for 2016/17

- Further development of Tenant Challenge Panel and service user groups to focus on how we communicate with tenants, rent collection, repairs, dealing with empty properties, how we finance services in future and others as needed or wanted by tenants.
- Our local offers were developed during an event at the Winding Wheel in November 2013. We want to consult on a new set of offers.
- Begin consultation on how we might change our customer involvement agreement.
- Train tenant inspectors to carry out surveys of the condition of our open spaces and empty properties.
- Focus on our performance in responding to complaints to meet our target.

We are normally available from 8.30am to 5.00pm Monday to Thursday and 8.30am to 4.30pm on Friday.

The phone lines are open at these times with an out-of-hours emergency service for repairs. You can email us at any time.

Please note some offices are closed until 10.00am on Wednesdays for training.

# MAINTAINING YOUR HOME

## Investing in your home

The government requires all our homes must meet the Decent Homes Standard. This means that homes must be warm, weatherproof and have reasonably modern facilities. At 31 March 2016, 100% of the Council's housing stock met this standard.

During 2015/16 we invested £16.6 million in over 4,500 properties to either bring them up to the Decent Homes Standard or to prevent them from falling below this standard in the future. Investing in your home can also be by carrying out adaptations to enable tenants to remain in their own home for as long as it is safe and reasonable to do so.

The work we carried out included:

- over 900 new central heating systems
- over 400 new roofs
- completion of the new Parkside older persons scheme
- 227 major adaptations and 308 minor adaptations

## Planned developments for 2016/17

- invest so that all of our housing stock continues to meet the Decent Homes Standard
- carry out the following major work programmes:
  - replacing 450 roofs
  - new central heating in 600 properties
  - refurbishing Brocklehurst Court sheltered housing scheme
  - begin our estate regeneration and environmental improvements programme
  - begin construction of new Council properties at Rufford Close, Boythorpe
  - begin working with Great Places Housing Group to provide new council homes on the former Brockwell Court site
- review the adaptations policy to ensure that it is easy to understand, gives clearer information on eligibility and how to apply for an adaptations

## Adaptations service

We work with social services to look at ways of adapting homes to meet tenants' needs for as long as it is safe and reasonable to do so.

- A restructure of the service has improved the delivery of the adaptations service.
- The restructure has enabled us to improve our advice and help to tenants to move to more suitable properties.
- We reduced the waiting times for major and minor adaptations to be carried out.

The number of referrals made to the service is ultimately determined by Social Services' referral criteria. Social Services use strict criteria for all adaptation requests due to consistently high demand for adaptations.

We aim to keep people in their homes for as long as possible, where it is safe to do so. We also try to make the best use of the council's housing stock rather than adapt properties which are not suitable. We actively work with tenants who require adaptations to be carried out to their home to assess which option is right for them. This may involve helping someone to move to a more suitable home or a home which can be adapted for their long-term needs.

### **Planned developments for 2016/17**

- review the adaptations policy to ensure that it is easy to understand, gives clear information on eligibility and how to apply for adaptations
- review performance targets with our partners and our contractors

# Repairing your home

The Council is responsible for the majority of repairs to your home and we aim to provide you with a good quality responsive repairs service at all times.

If you need to report a repair you can do so using any of the following methods:

- use the Council's website at [www.chesterfield.gov.uk](http://www.chesterfield.gov.uk) . Click on the I want to link and select report a repair
- email your repair to [repair.requests@chesterfield.gov.uk](mailto:repair.requests@chesterfield.gov.uk)
- use the iHome smartphone app which is available free from iTunes or Google Play Shop by searching for Chesterfield Council
- call the freephone repair hotline on 0800 587 5659 (available during office hours)
- to report an emergency repair outside office hours ring our emergency number (01246) 345041

## Total number of repairs

The total number of repairs we carried out in 2015/16 was **40,493**. This is just over four repairs per property.

## Percentage of repairs where an appointment was made and kept

We arrange appointments for most repairs. Making appointments reduces the number of times where tenants do not know when we will call. It also avoids having to make a second visit if you are out.

	Performance	Target	Target met?
2015/16	92%	90%	✓

Our target for 2016/17 is 90%

## Non-emergency repairs carried out within target

	Performance	Target	Target met?
2015/16	96%	98%	✓

Our target for 2016/17 is 97%

## Gas servicing completed on schedule

It is a legal requirement for the Council to carry out an annual gas safety inspections in every property with a gas supply. If we cannot

gain access to carry an inspection we take legal action to allow us to enter.

	Performance	Target	Target met?
2015/16	100%	100%	✓

Our target for 2016/17 is 100%

### **Customers receiving a repair who were satisfied overall**

	Performance	Target	Target met?
2015/16	96%	95%	✓

Our target for 2016/17 is 95%.

### **Planned developments for 2016/17**

We will carry out a review of repairs and maintenance with tenants to identify ways to improve the service and make it more efficient.

## ALLOCATING HOMES

The housing options service offers advice on a wide range of issues related to finding and allocating properties. Eligible applicants are entitled to bid on vacant properties that are advertised through our On the Move service.

We have 1,617 households on our housing register. 129 households are seeking a mutual exchange.

- We let 918 properties.
- Rent loss through empty homes was 2.0%. This was above our target of 1.6%.

### **Average number of days to re-let an empty home**

	Performance	Target	Target met?	Improved?
2015/16	35	27	x	x
2014/15	28	27	x	x

Our target for 2016/17 is calendar 27 days.

### **The number of calendar days taken to complete repairs to an empty home**

	Performance	Target	Target met?	Improved?
2015/16	19.9	17.5	x	x
2014/15	17.3	17.5	✓	✓

Our target for 2016/17 is 17.5 calendar days.

We subscribe to the Swap and Move mutual exchange service. Swap and Move holds details of people wanting to complete mutual exchanges within Chesterfield as well as details of those wishing to complete mutual exchanges from other areas. Swap and Move can really help to those affected by welfare reform and households who are under occupying accommodation.



## Planned developments for 2016/17

The increase in void time and rent loss is related to a fall in demand for one bedroom properties that are taking longer to let. During 2016/17 we will begin work on proposals to increase their demand. This will include:

- reviewing the allocation and transfer policy, including how we advertise and let Council properties
- reviewing our lettable standard for certain types of properties

## Homelessness

The main causes of homelessness in Chesterfield continue to be the ending of assured shorthold tenancies, relationship breakdowns and evictions from friends and family. The number arising from mortgage arrears is still low.

903 households received advice from the homeless prevention service (1010 in 2014/15), with a full homelessness duty accepted for 104 households (113 in 2014/15).

The homelessness prevention team uses a combination of homelessness prevention measures including negotiation with families and landlords, mortgage and debt advice, sanctuary measures for people at risk of violence from ex-partners and a tenancy bond guarantee scheme. It prevented or relieved homelessness for 518 households (624 in 2014/15) households who were threatened with homelessness.

We worked with a wide range of organisations and were involved with several projects across the county to prevent homelessness and to secure safe outcomes amongst single people and 16 to 17 years olds in particular.

## Planned developments for 2016/17

- deliver a joint homelessness strategy with other organisations
- further develop projects to projects to help young people who need housing and support
- respond to changes introduced into statutory homelessness duties by the Homelessness Reduction Bill, which is currently being debated in Parliament.

# COLLECTING RENT

Rent is our only income. If we don't collect rent, we cannot provide services.

In 2015/16, we:

- trained staff so that they can offer budgeting advice
- promoted direct debit uptake as the preferred method of payment
- encouraged tenants to consider having a water meter installed, where appropriate
- improved contacts with tenants
- reviewed and improved processes to introduce current good practice, including ensuring tenants in difficulty receive effective advice and support
- created a tenancy sustainment team to focus on providing support, particularly claiming welfare benefits entitlement and budgeting, for tenants who have difficulty managing to pay their rent

## How you can pay your rent

- use direct debit. This can be set up by ringing (01246) 345510 or by downloading a form at [www.chesterfield.gov.uk](http://www.chesterfield.gov.uk) and clicking on the Pay It link
- make payments online via the Council website at [www.chesterfield.gov.uk](http://www.chesterfield.gov.uk) by clicking on the Pay It link and following the instructions
- make payments by over the phone by calling the automated 24-hour helpline 0345 602 0214
- pay at any post office or PayPoint locations in the borough
- pay at the Customer Service Centre in the town centre or the Healthy Living Centre in Staveley

The percentage of rent collected is a key performance indicator for the Council's partnership with Arvato.

## The percentage of rent collected

	Performance	Target	Target met?	Improved?
2015/16	94.99%	95.27%	✘	✘
2014/15	95.49%	95.27%	✓	✘

Our target for 2016/17 is 95.27%.

On average our rents increased by 2.2% (£1.82 per week over 48 weeks) in line with government guidelines.

### **Planned developments for 2016/17**

- continue to train staff on planned government changes to welfare benefits so that they can offer good advice to tenants
- continue to work with other key services to review and improve the way we work and increase the amount of rent we collect

# TENANCIES, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND COMMUNAL AREAS

2015/16 was a year of change for the neighbourhoods team. We were concerned about the number of tenants, particularly younger, single people, whose tenancies were failing and were being evicted or giving up their tenancies. We identified a range of causes, including:

- Our policy did not allow us to prevent people from becoming tenants, even though they were unlikely to be able to afford to live independently.
- More tenants had greater support needs that were not being met by other organisations.

We responded by undertaking major restructures, including:

- We created a new tenancy sustainment team with six tenancy sustainment officers and a team leader to provide support for tenants at a higher risk of tenancy failure.
- We created a tenancy management team with six tenancy management officers and a team leader to provide a better specialist focus on anti-social behaviour and tenancy management, along with closer supervision of case management.
- We increased the number of neighbourhood rangers from six to eight to improve our ability to patrol our estates and deal with estate management problems.

## Tenancy management and anti-social behaviour

In 2015, we became aware of a rise in drugs-related activity and associated anti-social behaviour on some parts of some estates. This had a major impact on people in those areas and has become one of our biggest challenges. Taking action to deal with this can be very complicated and time-consuming. We work with the police and community safety team, with the support of the Council's legal team. However, we have carried out most of the work involved in taking direct legal action on our estates. For example, in January 2016, we provided much-needed relief to local people by carrying out three closure orders in the same area on the same day and following this up by evicting the tenants. This was only possible because residents were prepared to talk to us about what was happening.

We now measure how tenants feel by using an independent survey of tenants carried out by HouseMark who have experienced anti-social behaviour. This survey is carried out every two years by HouseMark, which is an organisation independent from the Council. We think that this will give us a more accurate idea. The next survey is due to take place in October 2017.

The results from October 2015 compared to the results from previous years are as follows:

**How easy or difficult was it to contact a member of staff to report the anti-social behaviour?**

Year	Very / fairly easy	Improved?
2015	76%	✓
2013	62%	N/A

Our target for October 2017 is 77%.

**How well were you kept up to date with what was happening throughout your anti-social behaviour case?**

Year	Very / fairly satisfied	Improved?
2015	42%	x
2013	46%	N/A

Our target for October 2017 is 50%.

Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the final outcome of your anti-social behaviour case?

Year	Very / fairly satisfied	Improved?
2015	49%	✓
2013	35%	N/A

Our target for October 2017 is 55%.

Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way that your anti-social behaviour case was dealt with?

Year	Very / fairly satisfied	Improved?
2015	52%	✓
2013	31%	N/A

Our target for October 2017 is 55%

How willing would you be to report any anti-social behaviour to the Housing Service in the future?

Year	Very / fairly satisfied	Improved?
2015	71%	✓
2013	68%	N/A

Our target for October 2017 is 75%

Overall, we are reasonably satisfied with this performance. However, we will continue to focus on the importance of supporting people and keeping them informed about how their cases progress. We are confident that the closer case supervision made possible by the new team will make sure that we do this consistently.

### Planned developments for 2016/17

- We are confident that the new tenancy management team will mean that we have a more specialised and better managed response to anti-social behaviour. However, are concerned that as a result of government restrictions on our income, we may not have the resources to respond to emerging problems associated in particular with drugs-related anti-social behaviour. Therefore, we shall identify areas of tenancy management work that might be taken on by other teams.

- We will work with the Council's legal team to increase its capacity to deal quickly with anti-social behaviour cases.
- We may need to make some tough choices about the type of anti-social behaviour we should tackle. We shall discuss this with the police and community safety team to bring about a fair shared responsibility that reflects the resources available and legal responsibilities.

## Estate management

We were concerned about several issues, including the standard of grounds maintenance (e.g., grass and hedge cutting) in some areas and the continuing problem of dog fouling. This is likely to have contributed to the slight fall in tenants' satisfaction with their neighbourhoods.

**How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your neighbourhood as a place to live?**

Year	Very / fairly satisfied	Improved?
2015	83%	✓
2013	82%	N/A

Our target for October 2017 is 84%

**In the last three years, would you say your neighbourhood has improved or declined?**

Year	Greatly / slightly improved	Greatly / slightly declined	Improved?
2015	22%	23%	x
2013	23%	20%	N/A

Our target for improvement by October 2017 is 24%

The restructure of the neighbourhoods team resulted in an increase from 6 to 8 neighbourhood rangers and a team leader who also line manages the tenant participation team. This will allow more patrols to be carried out and better monitoring of the standard of work to maintain our estates.

We continued to work with environmental health in areas where there is a problem of dog fouling. For instance, we carried out several projects to educate residents, engage them in taking responsibility for their



estate and to take action against people who allowed their dogs to foul without clearing up.

## Planned developments for 2016/17

- develop better arrangements with the Council's grounds maintenance service to make sure that grass is cut, hedges are trimmed, weeds are removed and rubbish is dealt with quickly.
- continue to focus our efforts on dealing with those who allow their dogs to foul on public land.
- develop new technology so that our neighbourhood rangers can record and report things from on-site automatically. This will give them more time to patrol their estates and to identify those responsible for dog fouling and dumped rubbish.
- develop a team of tenant volunteers to carry out regular surveys of the standards on our estates. This information will be used to monitor how we are doing and whether those carrying out the work are meeting tenants' expectations.

## Tenancy sustainment

Our new tenancy sustainment team was set up In February 2016 to give advice and support to tenants who are struggling to manage their tenancies. **We are here to help.** So if you, or someone you know needs help, call us on (01246) 345354.

## Planned developments for 2016/17

- recruit and train our 6 new tenancy sustainment officers in welfare benefits, budgeting advice and general support
- provide direct support and advice to tenants and work with any other relevant service to help people manage their council tenancies
- through our involvement, keep at least 30 tenants in their homes who would otherwise be at risk of their tenancies breaking down

# CARELINE AND SUPPORT

Careline is a service available to anyone who may be vulnerable and in need of reassurance and security. At the touch of a button you can speak to our trained operators whenever you need assistance, day or night, seven days a week.

Support officers ensure that appropriate support is being provided to enable independent living at home for as long as possible. This may include health and safety checks in the home, arranging benefits checks, checking on well-being, and involvement in social activities. They also provide a vital link in accessing services offered by other agencies, working together for the benefit of the customer.

There was a significant reduction of funding from Derbyshire County Council. To ensure that it continues to meet the needs of those people using the service, we reviewed the service in 2015/16.

- Careline dealt with 155,913 calls (99% answered within 60 seconds).
- Our response team assisted 2101 people to be lifted following a fall (99% arrived at the property within 45 minutes).
- We supported over 800 customers to maintain independent living in their own home.

## Planned developments for 2016/17

- continue a programme of works to improve the internal and external parts of housing schemes for older people and community rooms
- help groups at housing schemes for older people and community rooms to increase the range and level of social activities
- start a programme to replace all Careline alarm units that are over 5 years old, ensuring that all units meet the latest technological standards

## VALUE FOR MONEY

Recent budgets and legislation will impact on the resources we have to manage and maintain your homes in future. It is therefore essential that we keep trying to achieve even better value for money for all our services.

To begin this process we are involving tenants in group to look at the long term financial planning for the service (known as the Business Plan) and also as part of a review of repairs and maintenance. If you would like to get involved in this or similar projects to improve how the service is managed then please contact us on (01246) 345432

These reviews are looking at the service changes and improvements required to ensure the service's long term future.

The cost per property per year and cost for every £1 in rent of housing management service are as follows:

Area of Expenditure	Cost per property	For every £1 in rent
Property improvement	£2,082	61.1p
Responsive repairs	£769	22.6p
Cyclical repairs	£229	6.7p
Housing management (total cost)	£240	7.0p
Of which: rents	£73	2.2
allocations	£29	0.8
anti-social behaviour	£47	1.3
tenancy management	£72	2.1
resident involvement	£19	0.6
Estate services	£87	2.6p
<b>Total cost per property</b>	<b>£3,408</b>	<b>£1</b>

### Planned developments for 2016/17

- set targets to reduce responsive repairs expenditure
- increase rental income through identifying ways to reduce the time that property is empty

- improve the amount of rent by improving the rent collection service

# ENSURING THAT WE ARE FINANCIALLY SECURE

We are confident that over the next 30 years we can manage the additional £118 million debt that we took on at the start of the self-financing system and still have money left over to spend on our homes and on services for tenants. We will need to borrow a little more to continue to carry out major improvements and buy properties on the open market to meet housing needs, including homes sold under the Right to Buy.

We have now achieved the Decent Homes Standard across all of our homes, which is the minimum standard we expect our homes to meet. In fact, many of our homes already exceed this standard.

One of the next challenges is to agree with tenants the appropriate “Chesterfield Standard” for the next 10 to 20 years and balance the costs of this and other essential expenditure against rent levels.

So that we can respond to the reduction in rents and other new legal requirements that will have a major impact, we will need to look at our service priorities, with a focus on our income and sustaining tenancies. This may mean that we will need to change some of our structures and the way we provide services to you at a lower cost, for instance, repairs, maintenance and rent collection.

## Changes to Housing Benefit

As a landlord and Housing Benefit administrator, the Council has a legal duty to implement welfare reform rules. However, we recognise that many of our tenants are affected by these changes and have already introduced new or improved measures to help people look for smaller, more affordable accommodation, including:

- the Tenant Incentive Scheme to give financial help to tenants to free up much-needed accommodation
- a revised allocations policy which will generate additional transfers to smaller housing
- additional staff to help guide tenants through their housing options
- an improved mutual exchange scheme to help match those tenants who want larger properties to those who need smaller homes

Anyone struggling to make rent payments should talk to us so that we can offer advice and alternatives, including payment arrangements. The telephone number to ring is (01246) 345504.

We will also give particular support to tenants who are suffering from financial hardship where it is not possible for them to move. Ring (01246) 345484 for an application form or call in to our customer service centre for advice.

Tenants wanting advice or information on moving home are asked to ring or visit "On the Move", the Council's shop-front for allocations and advice on Low Pavement, telephone (01246) 345700.

# Tell us what you think about this report

We hope that you have found this annual report useful. It would be helpful if you could complete this short survey and let us have your comments on how it could be improved.

Is the report useful?  Yes  No

Is the information clear and easy to understand?  Yes  No

Is there enough information about performance?  Yes  No

Do you agree with what we have said in the report?  Yes  No

If you have answered no to any of the above please comment below:

Is there any information that you think should be added to the report?

What should Chesterfield Borough Council housing service do better?

Have you any suggestions for how the housing service can save more money?

Are there any other comments or suggestions you wish to make?

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Please hand in at the Town Hall or Stonegravels reception or post to:

Tenant Participation Team, Stonegravels Depot, Old Brickworks Lane, Chesterfield, S41 7JD

Your comments will help us to improve the services that we provide to our customers



# Are we accessible to you?

Awaiting approved version