

Annual Report to tenants

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Welcome to the 2020/21 housing annual report

The annual report is a summary for council tenants on the performance of their landlord. In this report, you'll find updates on 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 under the different standards set out by our regulator 'Homes England'. The report sets out what we have done and what we are going to do to make services better in the year ahead. If you want to find out more about the different regulatory standards referred to in the annual report, please visit: www.gov.uk/guidance/regulatory-standards

“The annual report allows us to show what we have achieved over the last year, but also identifies areas where we realise there is progress still work to do. It's been another busy year for us in which we've made real progress in the provision of high-quality housing services and we're proud to see the results of our projects to improve our existing homes and communities.

“Despite the challenges created by Covid-19, we've made significant progress on a number of key projects and I'm very proud that our team continued to deliver responsive and quality services throughout lockdown. Following the completion of new build projects at Heaton Court and Manor Drive earlier this year, we're well on our way to reaching our target of building 100 new homes by 2023. An additional 21 homes at Brockwell are also expected to be complete in the coming weeks – you can read more about this on page 12.

“Stay safe and we are looking forward to continuing to work closely with you during the year ahead.” – Councillor Chris Ludlow, cabinet member for housing

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During the 2020/2021 financial year, the Covid-19 pandemic brought new challenges and disruption for the service. As restrictions ease, many services are returning to normality. Our priorities 2021/2022 are:

- To stay compliant and ensure all properties pass gas and electrical checks
- To continue to increase the number disabled adaptations we deliver, making sure we have properties to meet our tenants' needs
- To continue to deliver our housing capital programme to ensure we have we have quality homes for our residents
- To ensure we are prepared for the implementation of the Social Housing white paper (more information on page 20)
- To maximise the number of properties available for letting to address the increasing housing demand. To achieve this a dedicated voids improvement group has been established, prioritising properties that require minimal work and also diverting resources from other areas to tackle the backlog that built up during the lockdown periods.

New homes at Brockwell Court

Construction of the latest council homes being built is progressing well, with new homes set to welcome families in the coming weeks.

As part of the council's commitment to increasing the supply of affordable properties across the borough, 21 new properties are being built on the former Brockwell Court site in Loundsley Green.

Despite the challenges faced as a result of the pandemic, the council's main contractor, Henry Boot Construction, started work on site in May 2020 and the homes are set to be completed in late 2021.

The new development, named Badger Croft, will comprise of ten two-bedroom houses, six three-bedroom houses, four four-bedroom houses and one three-bedroom bungalow – all of which will be added to the council's housing register.

Environmental improvements, including the creation of wildflower meadows and planting areas, are also included in the scheme to help boost biodiversity, support pollinators and create a better living environment. Henry Boot Construction has been working with Holmebrook Conservation and Improvement Group to complete these additional landscaping works - including planting fruit trees, building and installing more planters and creating a new border for planting.

Councillor Chris Ludlow, cabinet member for housing, said: "We're pleased to see that works at Brockwell Court are progressing well. We're committed to meeting the housing needs of local people, now and in the future, and these new properties will provide affordable, modern and accessible homes for families in our borough.

"It's also really important that new developments in the borough take account of environmental issues – contributing to a more sustainable future for us all."

Tenant involvement and empowerment – keeping tenants involved during Covid-19 pandemic

We're committed to engaging and working with tenants to improve your quality of life as well as ensuring that you have the opportunity to play an active role in shaping what we do, and how do it.

Following the outbreak of Covid-19, it was not possible to meet with tenants face-to-face due to the restrictions in place. As a result, the tenant participation service was temporarily suspended in March 2020 and tenant participation officers were redeployed to support other council services that were under extra pressure as a result of the pandemic.

However, keen to ensure that we could still engage with tenants, the team quickly adapted to the new ways of working. They were able to continue working with a tenant challenge panel and key staff from across the council, allowing tenants to have their say on the council's housing service.

As a result, the tenant challenge panel has still been able to review the council's updated policies – influencing significant changes to make sure they are fair and transparent for all tenants. This included:

- Scrutinising the Tenancy Management Policy which included some additions due to regulation changes – tenants influenced some significant changes to some of the tenancy management process, ensuring fairness and transparency
- Reviewing an updated complaints policy – tenants helped make sure this was written in a way that easily explained the process, by ensuring it was clear and concise
- Reviewing the 'repair tenant obligations' that were introduced in 2016 to check on progress that had been made. Looking at a tenant survey the panel were able to recommend changes

As restrictions ease, our team are committed to finding new ways of engaging with our tenants and are looking forward to supporting local communities.

If you are interested in working with us, please contact the tenant participation team by emailing: tpenquiries@chesterfield.gov.uk, calling 01246 345147 or visiting: www.chesterfield.gov.uk/housing/counciltenants/tenant-involvement/chat-get-involved.

Page 4 & 5 - Tenancy Standard

This standard looks at how we allocate our properties and support our tenants.

Indicator	2019.20	2020.21
Properties – these are the homes the council has to let	8,968	8,932
0 bedroom (bedsits)		32
1 bedroom		3162
2 bedroom		2803
3 bedroom		2688
4+ bedroom		247
Right to Buy	76	57
New properties brought into stock this year	5	17
Other changes due to leasing of stock	-6	4
The number of homes we have let	846	675
Empty properties	242	225
Households on housing register	1,229	2,252
Of households applying for re-housing, they require:		
1 bedroom	700	1,260
2 bedroom	313	624
3 bedroom	149	269
3+bedrooms	67	99
Careline calls	66,976	69,058
Careline call outs	2,895	3,879
Older persons supported	653	582
Tenancy sustainment	314*	322
Relet times	63.3days	110.7

*We are pleased to report that for tenants who started to receive support from our tenancy sustainment team in 2019-20, 96% of them remained in their homes a year after support began. You can find out more about how the team adapted to support our tenants on page 18.

Throughout the pandemic there have been a number of external factors that have impacted the number of properties that we have been able to let to tenants. Most noticeably were the restrictions that stopped people moving home between March 2020 and June 2020 meaning we were unable to let properties during this time, other than in an emergency. Despite these restrictions easing in late June 2020, some limitations and restrictions remained in place until August 2020 which further impacted on the number of tenancies that we were able to offer. Now that restrictions have been lifted, we are working hard to address this, and we are aiming to reduce the time it takes to re-let a property.

We were still able to continue to offer support in emergency situations. We engaged with and supported Derbyshire's response to the Government's "Everyone In" initiative – a national effort to house all rough sleepers following the outbreak of Covid-19. We were able to accommodate over 60 people who were experiencing homelessness during the first three months of the pandemic.

The demand for council houses is at the highest level in recent years, with 2252 households currently registered on the council's Home Options system. This has increased significantly in comparison to 2019/20, although it should be noted that the figure shown for 2019/20 is lower than would normally be expected due to the implementation of the new Home Options system.

We're working hard to increase the supply of affordable homes in the borough to meet this demand by building and buying new properties for local families – you can read about the latest development on page 12.

Page 6 and 7 Home Standard (2 pages)

Indicator	2019.20	2020.21
Responsive repairs	34,096	25,616
Average time for a repair to be carried out	7 days	12 days
Repairs satisfaction	74%	74%
Gas servicing	100%	88.63%
Replacement:		
Boilers	233	73
Roofs	290	205
Kitchens	309	92
Bathrooms	120	34
Major adaptations	98	33
Minor adaptations	397	130
Decent homes spend:		
Maintenance	£14.56m	£11.41m
Sheltered	£2.47m	£3.34m
New build and acquisitions	£3.01m	£4.38m
Total	£20.04m	£19.13
Decency	100%	100%
Satisfaction with homes	80%	80%

Finding new ways of working to support our tenants

As a responsible landlord, keeping our tenants safe is our top priority. Over the past year we haven't been able to carry out as many repairs, maintenance and replacement works due to Covid-19 restrictions. But despite the challenges we faced, our team have responded quickly to identify new, safe ways of working to make sure we can continue to keep you safe in your home.

Keeping on top of essential inspections

Our Housing Property Operations team carry out around 8,150 gas services per year. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, these checks were undertaken on a 10-month programme and 100% of our properties were compliant.

At the peak of the pandemic the 100% success rate unfortunately dropped and although the team were committed to continuing with these essential services, they faced some challenges accessing properties for a number of reasons, including concerns about the spread of the virus. However, the team has worked hard to improve this position, working with tenants to reassure them of the safe working measures in place to protect them.

With new ways of dealing with the pandemic and improved ways of accessing properties, we're working hard achieve a 100% success rate once again.

We also carry out five-year electrical tests as, if not checked, electrics could be a hidden fire risk. During 2020/2021 the team carried out 1564 electrical inspections ensuring these properties were safe.

If we ask to visit your home for these checks to be carried out, please do help us – it's for your safety and peace of mind.

Getting back on track with repairs

In 2019/2020, our repairs team completed over 60,000 repairs to properties, from a leaking radiator to new fencing. When the pandemic hit, guidance from Government advised us not to visit properties unless it was an emergency – as a result the number of repairs we could complete vastly reduced, but we still visited over 43,000 repairs.

As restrictions eased in the summer, our team were quick to respond and get back to helping tenants with their repair requests, and we're working hard to reduce the backlog of work.

Going the extra mile!

During the height of the pandemic, as well as keeping your homes safe, our team delivered over 10,000 prescriptions to vulnerable people who were unable to leave their homes, along with food parcels and other essentials.

Providing homes for the vulnerable

Our voids team quickly adapted to Covid secure ways of working so we could continue to maintain empty properties - meaning we had properties readily available for vulnerable residents who needed a home.

In total, the team worked on 842 homes in 2020/21 so they could be let to local people at a difficult time.

Neighbourhood and Community Standard (1 page)

This standard sets out how we should work with other agencies to manage estates and tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB).

Indicator	2019.20	2020.21
ASB cases	329	490
Total evictions, of which were due to:	33	0
Rent arrears	31	0
ASB	2	0
Closure Orders	2	0
Injunctions	1	0
Notice to quit served	11	17
Satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live	79%	79%

Here to help our tenants

Our dedicated tenancy sustainment team is on hand to support you when you need it, and this has been more important than ever over the last year.

Despite the challenges created by Covid-19, the team has continued to help people manage their tenancies and stay living in their homes – making sure they could access the welfare benefits, grants and specialist care and support they were entitled to. Additional staff have been re-deployed into Tenancy Sustainment and Tenancy Management to ensure we are responding to the increased demand.

Over the last year we have seen an increase in the number of anti-social behaviour cases reported which could be a direct impact of the Covid-19 restrictions, and because more people have been staying at home. We have redeployed staff to help meet the increased demand. We understand that people may have felt isolated or anxious during this time, and with many of us spending more time at home, relationships with neighbours may have also become strained. Our team has continued to respond to these reports and help tenants get support from other specialist agencies. Due to the pandemic, the Government suspended evictions and court services were very restricted. We therefore focused on new ways of managing tenancies to make sure nobody was evicted in 2020/2021.

Page 9 Value for money (1 page)

This standard looks at how we spend the money we receive as rent

Indicator	2019.20	2020.21
Average rent per week	£77.53	£78.25
Of which by property size:		
0 bedroom		61.78
1 bedroom		72.82
2 bedroom		78.82
3 bedroom		82.89
4 bedroom+		91.04
Rent collection rate	99.1%	99.8%
How much we spend		
Maintaining properties (of which):	£3,007	
Major works and cyclical works	£2,351	
Responsive repairs and voids	£656	
Housing management (of which)	£314	
Rent collection	£86	
Letting homes	£58	
Tenant participations	£20	
Tackling anti-social behaviour	£53	
Tenancy management	£97	
Maintaining estates	£97	
Supported housing for elderly residents	£97	
Other costs (IT offices etc)	£441	
Total cost	£3,956	

New guidance to protect your rights

Protecting the rights of people who live in council homes and other social housing is the focus of new Government guidance

Shaped by the views of residents across England, the new guidance, called the 'charter for social housing residents – social housing white paper,' sets out what tenants can expect from their landlords - including us - and is designed to improve housing standards across the country over the next two years

It also makes sure you have opportunities to have your voice heard and be involved in what we do.

As a responsible landlord to tenants living in over 9,000 properties, we've always been committed to delivering excellent services. And over the next 12 months, we will be reviewing how we work to make sure we will meet the new standards, and work in line with the new guidance as it published.

The charter sets out seven key commitments. Here is a summary of what you can expect from us as guidance is developed:

To be safe in your home

Your safety is our priority, and we will meet new requirements around things like fire safety, legionella, gas servicing, electric testing and lifts.

To know how we are performing as your landlord

We will regularly publish more information about:

- Repairs and maintenance
- Safety standards
- How we engage with you
- Neighbourhood management, including measures on anti-social behaviour
- How we spend money

To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly

- It will be easier and quicker for you to take your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman
- We must show we have learned from complaints about our service
- We are also reviewing our own complaints policy

To be treated with respect

We're already committed to treating everyone fairly and with respect. We'll be regularly inspected and must formally report our performance to show this is happening.

To have your voice heard by your landlord

The charter recognises how important it is for landlords to listen to tenants' views. We're reviewing tenant representation and how we support our vulnerable tenants.

To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in

There will be a review of the decent homes standard and what landlords need to do to meet this.

To be supported to take your first steps into ownership

This final commitment applies to housing association tenants only.

For more information visit www.gov.uk/housing-local-and-community/council-housing-association

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Creating an attractive borough

We are fully committed to enhancing the borough's housing offer and creating attractive places for our residents to live, now and in the future.

Over the past year, we have continued to make excellent progress on our modernisation and refurbishment projects. Our 'Residential Block Refurbishment' is progressing well with Pullman Close at Staveley being one of the latest block to benefit from a facelift.

The £8 million programme will see even more blocks of flats across the borough undergo extensive internal and external improvements too over the next three years.

As well as the refurbishment of blocks, we're also carrying out environmental improvements to our estates which will not only make it easier for residents to get round the estates, it will also help boost biodiversity, support pollinators and create a better living environment.

We'll provide you with regular updates on the latest projects in future editions of Your Chesterfield.

Careline services receives award for commitment to community

Chesterfield's Careline service has been presented with a Derbyshire Beacon of Hope award and has been recognised for its continued efforts to support over 4,000 residents, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, throughout the pandemic.

The Beacon of Hope Award is seen as a way of showing the county's gratitude and thanks to all residents who have kindly donated their time, during these unprecedented challenges.

From March 2020, the team has continued to take calls 24/7 - assisting residents in an emergency, offering emotional support or just being a friendly voice at a time when people needed it most. As well as receiving calls from tenants, the team also made regular calls to isolated and vulnerable residents to check on their wellbeing during lockdown.

Councillor Chris Ludlow, cabinet member for housing, said: "Careline is a vital service and has been a lifeline for many, especially since the outbreak of Covid-19. It allows many residents in the borough to continue living independently with help and support available at the touch of a button.

"Throughout the pandemic, our dedicated team members have been working around the clock to answer calls and ensure everyone gets the support they need. Receiving this award is a testament to their commitment and determination."

To find out more about the service visit www.chesterfield.gov.uk/careline, email queries.careline@chesterfield.gov.uk or call 0300 303 3378.