



The Gateshead Housing Company Customers and Communities Committee

Thursday 7 November 2013 at 10am
Board Room 1, The Gateshead Housing Company, Keelman
House, Fifth Avenue Business Park, Fifth Avenue, Team Valley
Trading Estate, Gateshead NE11 0XA
Agenda

Item	Business
1.	Apologies for Absence
2.	Declarations of Interest
	<u>ITEMS FOR DECISION</u>
3.	Minutes (Pages 3-7) To approve as a correct record the minutes of the last meeting of the committee held on 12 September 2013
4.	Matters Arising
5.	Review of Leasehold Management Policy (Pages 8-23) Report of Head of Corporate Services
	<u>ITEMS FOR INFORMATION</u>
6.	Customer Involvement Activity – Update – April to September 2013 (Pages 24-34) Report of Managing Director

Contact: Stuart Gibson Tel: (0191) 433 5308 Date: 1 November 2013

Item	Business
7.	Moving Forward Customer Training Programme 2013-14 Update – April to September 2013 (Pages 35-43) Report of Managing Director
8.	TALISMAN Review – Rent and Income – Response to Recommendations (Pages 44-50) Report of Director of Customers and Communities
9.	Anti-social Behaviour Partnership Update – April to September 2013 (Pages 51-75) Report of Director of Customer and Communities
10.	Forward Plan (Pages 76-78) Report of Managing Director
11.	Items for Future Agendas
12.	Date and Time of Next Meeting Thursday 27 February 2014 at 10am at Keelman House, Fifth Avenue Business Park, Team Valley, Gateshead



CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

12 September 2013

PRESENT:

Directors

Robert Buckley (Chair)
Joanne Carr
Pauline Dillon
Kathryn Ferdinand
John Hamilton
Joachim Mouanda Mousounda
Gordon Spring

Advisers

Neil Bouch	Director of Customers and Communities
Julie McCartney	Head of Neighbourhood Services
Kevin Johnson	Head of Customer Service
Teresa Smare	Neighbourhood Services Manager
Louise Taylor	Involvement and Diversity Manager
Deborah Ewart	Housing Services Manager
Stuart Gibson	Governance and Risk Officer

Also Present

Hazel Hitchen	TALISMAN
Elizabeth Bird	TALISMAN
Margaret Gale	TALISMAN (observing)
David Hewitson	TALISMAN (observing)
Carole Cutter	TALISMAN (observing)
Clare Butterfield	TALISMAN (observing)

13 MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting of the committee held on 9 May 2013 were approved as a correct record.

14 MATTERS ARISING – HOUSING SERVICES PROVIDED FROM FELLING HIGH STREET HUB

It was noted that as agreed with ward members, the surgeries at Felling Hub have been reviewed and all the surgeries have now been withdrawn.

15 TALISMAN REVIEW – REVIEW OF RENT AND INCOME

The committee was informed of the outcome of the TALISMAN review into how the Company manages Rent and Income Services.

This was second review that TALISMAN had carried out and overall their findings showed the Rent and Income employees to be the biggest asset to the service. The overwhelming feelings from interaction with staff from all levels showed that they operate a ‘firm but fair’ approach and respect the customers they are dealing with.

Scrutiny of the service has highlighted 12 areas of positive practice including an easier to understand rent statement after consultation with tenants, regular training to staff around identifying vulnerable tenants, advice given around Welfare Reform, working with other agencies and the Money Matters leaflets.

It also resulted in the identification of 15 recommendations which if implemented will result in tangible improvements to customer service delivery and assist in managing the service more effectively.

- RESOLVED –
- (i) That recommendations and review positive practice be noted.
 - (ii) That a formal response to TALISMAN's recommendations from the Rent and Income Team be presented to the next committee and subsequently to report this response and action plan to TALISMAN.

16 CUSTOMER INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITY – UPDATE

The committee received an update on customer involvement activity for the first quarter of 2013/14.

During the period, 59 involvement activities took place. A range of activities are offered to provide tenants and leaseholders with the opportunity to get involved and influence decision making in a way which suits them.

Customers have been involved in involvement activities on over 2,684 occasions, although some may have been involved in more than one activity.

There have been a number of outcomes from customer involvement during the period, details of which were reported.

There are a number of service standards in place for involvement to help monitor performance and ensure that we continue to involve customers in the way services are delivered. The results at the end of the period were reported.

During the last quarter, through a partnership between Mears, the Company and Gateshead College, an 8 week training programme has begun offering tenants and leaseholders the opportunity to gain more detailed training on DIY, painting and decorating and carpentry, enhancing the training offered

through the existing Moving Forward programme. The outcomes of this training will be evaluated and reported to a future meeting of this committee.

A number of activities are planned for 2013/14, details of which were reported.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

17 OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS 2013

Following on from the success of the Opportunity Knocks 2012 programme, it was decided that the same approach would be taken for this year. By attending community led events across the Borough and Northern Pride (LGBT Festival) in Newcastle, would ensure the Involvement Team would be attending events which have a guaranteed high footfall level.

The purpose of the programme was to use range of opportunities to engage with the local community in their own environment and share key messages from the Company.

A summary of events attended and outcomes achieved were reported. The full report of the programme was also submitted.

There have been a number of outcomes achieved from Opportunity Knocks 2013, full details of which were detailed in the report.

The report will be shared with the Involvement SIG for discussion and it will be recommended that the same approach in 2014 be adopted.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

18 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR PARTNERSHIP UPDATE – APRIL TO JUNE 2013

The committee received a quarterly update on anti-social behaviour (ASB) partnership work and neighbourhood activity.

In particular, details of domestic abuse cases, sub-categories, closed cases, current open cases, referrals to other agencies, Multi-Agency risk Assessment Conference, domestic abuse training, repairs and security measures, Hate Incident cases, the Mental Health Link Worker, safeguarding adult/children, safe neighbourhood groups, the non-attendance panel, victim support, involvement, mediation training, the youth crime education programme, the Safetyworks! Initiative, multi-agency public protection arrangements and the Shelter Offender Management Event were reported.

RESOLVED – (i) That the information be noted.

(ii) That the committee receive a detailed update and evaluation of the learning outcomes and number of attendees of the Safetyworks! Initiative.

(iii) That the committee receive an update on the Mental Health Link Worker at a future meeting.

19 FAMILIES GATESHEAD (TROUBLED FAMILIES PROGRAMME)

In December 2011 the Government announced the Troubled Families Programme, which is committed to turning around the lives of 120,000 families nationally. There are additional resources of £448m over the initial three years of this programme, based on the analysis that these 120,000 families are costing £75,000 per family. The estimate from central government is that this equates to 595 families over the three year period, in Gateshead.

The estimation is that it costs £10,000 to 'turn a family around'. The programme offers local authorities and their partners 40% of this cost of providing intensive interventions, payable on the achievement of successful outcomes. A proportion of money is paid up front on a tapered basis to enable partnerships to invest in and redesign services which can respond to the needs of troubled families.

In June 2013 the DCLG announced that the programme is to be extended until 2020 in response to the success nationally in engaging families and achieving positive outcomes, with funding secured for 2015/16.

In Gateshead the troubled families programme is known as 'Families Gateshead'. A multi-agency project board is well established, which the company is represented on.

The approach Gateshead has adopted follows the principles of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), Team around the Family (TAF) and Lead Practitioner (LP) model. Cases are managed through delivering holistic family interventions, predominantly managed through the Council's Family Intervention Team, Children's Social Work and Youth Offending Team services.

The Annual Progress Report for 2012/13 was submitted. As at the end of April 2013, Gateshead was working with 229 'troubled families'. Families are fairly evenly distributed across the borough.

A national evaluation of the programme is currently being developed and Gateshead has confirmed it will take part in this evaluation exercise. Further detail can be provided to committee on this evaluation as it progresses.

RESOLVED – That Gateshead's approach to Troubled Families and progress made for year one be noted.

20 ESTATE MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY – APRIL 2012 TO MARCH 2013

The committee received an update on estate management activity for April 2012 to March 2013.

In particular, the following were highlighted: -

- Estate tours and grading
- External Peer review

- Neighbourhood Pride
- Designing Out Crime,
- Grounds maintenance,
- Pest Control
- Street Action and Enforcement
- Garden management
- Garden Scheme update
- Wrekenton Neighbourhood Action Plan – Cleaner, Safer, Greener

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

21 SHELTERED HOUSING SERVICE – YEAR END UPDATE 2012/13

The committee received an update on activity, performance and customer satisfaction for the Sheltered Housing Service for the year 2012/13.

In particular, estate tours, drop ins, Home Welcome visits, small tasks, Neighbourhood Pride, improving the quality of accommodation, digital inclusion, the Older Persons Service Improvement Group, the Sheltered Accreditation Working Group and Annual Scheme Meetings were reported.

In May 2012 committee received a report outlining the service achievements during 2011/12 and provided an update on the achievement of the accreditation by CHS Code of Practice. This quality mark demonstrates that sheltered housing related support services in Gateshead are of the highest standard, delivered consistently and are person centred. Re-accreditation for this code of practice is currently taking place in partnership with the Council and an on-site assessment is scheduled to take place by the end of September 2013.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted and the committee receive a further update on the outcomes of the CHS accreditation.

22 FORWARD PLAN

A forward plan of reports that will be presented to meetings of this committee during the next year was submitted.

RESOLVED – That the forward plan be noted.

23 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the committee will be held on Thursday 7 November 2013 at 10am in Board Room 1.



Report to Customers and Communities Committee

7 November 2013

Title: Review of Leasehold Management Policy

Report of: Head of Corporate Services

Purpose of Report

1. To provide the committee with a report on the review of the Leasehold Management Policy, which has been developed in conjunction with leaseholders, and provide an update on the work of the Leasehold Services Team in conjunction with the Leasehold Service Improvement Group (SIG) throughout 2012/13.

Background

2. The Leasehold Services Team provides leasehold management services for 818 owners of flats and maisonettes within the borough.
3. The team is focused on developing customer involvement, enabling leaseholder participation in improving services and ensuring that leaseholders are fully consulted on works and long term agreements entered into by the Company.
4. A primary function of the team is to calculate and collect service charge income, including major works, and to maximise collection by providing a range of payment methods and financial assistance packages.
5. The team have also recently taken on the role of marketing, selling and managing shared ownership properties on behalf of Keelman Homes.
6. The Leasehold Service Improvement Group meets every month to monitor and scrutinise performance and develop service improvements which are then implemented by the Leasehold Services Team.

Service Charge Policy

7. Attached at Appendix 1 to this report is the revised Leasehold Management Policy which was discussed and agreed by leaseholders at the Leasehold Service Improvement Group (SIG) on 14 October 2013.
8. The following information was discussed with leaseholders to identify changes/improvements they thought would be beneficial to include in the policy:

- Condense the current document to make it clear and easy to read
- Combine the information contained within the current principals and policy
- Agree 'commitments to leaseholders' rather than outcomes
- Add Risk Management implications
- Add Rights of Leaseholders
- Add learning from complaints in relation to major works
- Extend the review period from 2 to 3 years.

Leasehold Services Team Update

9. The Leasehold Services Team in conjunction with the Leasehold Service Improvement Group (SIG) has helped to ensure the following key developments in 2012/13:

Management Fee

10. The group has reviewed service charge and major works management fees, resulting in an average £10 reduction per year for customers.
11. The annual satisfaction survey showed an increase in customer satisfaction that service charges are Value for Money from 52% in 2012 to 61% in 2013.

Welfare Reforms

12. The Government changes to welfare benefits and the potential impact on leaseholders has been a key area of focus for the group throughout the year. Clear guidance on welfare reforms and their impact were published in the Leasehold News and this has helped to maximise year end income collection rates to 99.23% (above the target of 98.80%).

Gas Servicing

13. Leaseholders can now access a gas servicing scheme, provided by Mears, at a cost of £40.00 per appliance. The cost for this service is included in the actual service charge accounts, allowing leaseholders to pay for the charge over a number of months. 40 leaseholders have now taken up this offer.

Buildings Insurance

14. The Leasehold Service Improvement Group (SIG) worked with Gateshead Council on the tender for a new building insurance provider. All leaseholders were consulted, by letter, on the proposals and were able to influence the process.

New Initiatives

15. Recently the Company has accessed up to £1,000,000 worth of funding to enable qualifying leaseholders to have their boiler replaced for free through the 'Affordable Warmth' grant.
16. It is estimated that qualifying leaseholders will save up to £300 a year on their heating bills (estimate from the Energy Saving Trust) and leaseholders on the scheme will also receive a 5 year warranty on their new boiler. Appendix 2 outlines the eligibility criteria for leaseholders.

17. The Leasehold Services Team will be marketing the gas servicing scheme as part of the package of works provided to Leaseholders.

Shared Ownership

18. The team is currently diversifying into marketing, selling and managing 13 shared ownership properties at the Kibblesworth development. Shared ownership is part of a government funded part buy/part rent scheme to help first-time buyers become home owners.
19. The team has employed a wide range of marketing methods such as advertising in the Evening Chronicle, ISOS Homebuy website, Twitter and Facebook and has produced a 'frequently asked questions' brochure and shared ownership booklet. They also held an open day at the Kibblesworth Celebration event which had over 60 potential customers attend to view a 3-bed property.
20. To date, the team has dealt with one hundred and two expressions of interest from customers and seven properties have been sold. In addition, there are currently 10 further applications being financially assessed by ISOS.

Customer Satisfaction and Performance

21. Customer satisfaction with services provided has increased from 69% in 2012 to 73% in 2013, which is above the 70% target set for 2013. Improved communications with customers via the leasehold newspaper, drop-ins sessions, holding an annual forum, forming a repairs scrutiny group and the Leasehold SIG have all helped to improve satisfaction.
22. On a quarterly basis performance is also scrutinised via the Leasehold Service Improvement Group (SIG). As a result of this, service improvements to processes and procedures have been implemented to improve customer satisfaction, such as:
 - Including additional information in the standard solicitors pack to inform customers during purchase of the property
 - Changes to survey questions to enable better use of information
 - Publicising the roles, responsibilities and contact numbers of the leasehold team, the Company and Gateshead Council in the Leasehold News, to help direct customers to the appropriate officers to help with their enquiries.
 - The information provided regarding Major Works has been expanded to include a separate 'statement of charges' to help customers understand the costs associated with the works.

Link to Values

23. This report links to the following corporate values:-
 - Being a listening and learning organisation
 - Being honest, accountable and transparent
 - Being motivated, trained and committed
 - Being positive and responsive
 - Being customer focused, innovative and professional

Impact on tenants

24. There is no impact on tenants directly. The impact on leaseholders is that services will be applied consistently across the leasehold housing stock.

Risk Management Implications

25. The changes to the policy will ensure that the following risks are effectively managed:
- The full cost of services is not recovered, resulting in leaseholders being indirectly 'subsidised' by tenants.
 - Poor customer satisfaction levels with the cost and standard of service charges and the way they are administered.
 - Leaseholders can refer the reasonableness of their service charges to the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal
 - Service charges could be applied inconsistently across the leasehold housing stock.
 - Failure to adhere to legislation in relation to consultation could result in loss of income to the Company.

Financial Implications

26. The Company may be unable to recover the full cost of the services provided if the policy, in relation to consultation with leaseholders, is not adhered to.

Equality and Diversity Implications

27. The policy will ensure that services are applied fairly to all leaseholders.

Value for Money Implications

28. The development of the leasehold management policy will enable staff to implement procedures to maximise income recovery from leaseholders.

Consultation carried out

29. Consultation was carried out with leaseholders via the Leasehold Service Improvement Group (SIG) and with Mears the Company's responsive repairs and maintenance provider.

Recommendation

30. The committee is requested to recommend to the Board approval of the Leasehold Management Policy, as detailed in Appendix 1.
31. The views of the committee are sought on whether it is satisfied with the update on the Leasehold Services Team activities.

Leasehold Management Policy

Date: October 2013

1. Aim of Policy

- 1.1 The Gateshead Housing Company on behalf of Gateshead Council ('the landlord') is committed to providing the same standard of service and customer care to leaseholders as it provides to tenants. Whilst doing this, The Gateshead Housing Company will comply at all times with legislation, regulation and good practice in leasehold management.
- 1.2 The Gateshead Housing Company is committed to meeting its responsibilities to leaseholders under the terms of their leases to provide good quality services in the management and maintenance of their homes, which meets the diverse needs and satisfaction of its leaseholders.
- 1.3 The Gateshead Housing Company will aim to deliver continuous improvements and value for money in our services involving leaseholders at an early stage in setting the service charges and in the provision of information about service charges, including costs how charges are budgeted for and increases calculated.
- 1.4 The Gateshead Housing Company will actively involve leaseholders in all aspects of the Leasehold Management Service including the development of the Annual Service Plan and monitoring and scrutinising of services. They will also be provided with clear and understandable customer information on the quality, cost and performance of the service and will be fully consulted to ensure the effective development of the service within the terms of their leases.
- 1.5 This policy has been developed in partnership with leaseholders.

1.6 Our Commitments to Leaseholders

The Gateshead Housing Company has agreed with leaseholders that we will:

- Meet the responsibilities to leaseholders under the terms of their lease and to provide them with a high quality service in the management and maintenance of their properties.
- Provide good quality, cost effective services to leaseholders through a specialist Leasehold Management Section.
- Ensure service charges reflect the actual costs of providing services and are calculated and charged in accordance with the terms of individual leases and in accordance with legislation.
- Ensure major works charges reflect the actual costs of carrying out the work.

- Ensure that value for money is achieved in the provision of services and that the charges levied are reasonable.
- Provide a leaseholders handbook summarising rights, responsibilities and services to leaseholders.
- Involve leaseholders in the development of and review of policies, service standards and performance targets, which affect the management of their homes.
- Consult leaseholders on any works programmes in addition to the statutory responsibility to consult when letting certain contracts.
- Facilitate a service improvement group and leaseholder forum to enable leaseholders to become involved in issues which are specific to them.
- Endeavour to keep blocks and estates to the standard agreed with residents.
- Collect from leaseholders all monies due from them under the terms of their leases and offer support, advice and information to anyone having difficulty in making payment. Repay, in a timely manner, all monies and refunds due to leaseholders.
- Provide leaseholders with accurate and timely information about the services they receive, the cost and the amount due in service charge payments.
- Ensure all leaseholders are able to access our services and the needs of all our customers are addressed.
- Make available to leaseholders and their representatives details of the management charge.
- Ensure that leaseholders uphold the covenants in their leases, in particular with regard to harassment, neighbour nuisance and other actions taken by them likely to affect other residents.
- Ensure that leaseholders have access to a range of tenancy management services as far as possible aligned to those services available to tenants.

1.7 Contribution to The Gateshead Housing Company's Visions and Values

- Being customer focussed, innovative and professional
- Being honest, accountable and transparent
- Caring and respecting
- Being positive and responsive
- Being motivated, trained, and committed
- Embracing equality
- Being a listening and learning organisation

2. Policy

2.1 What is a Leaseholder?

A leaseholder is someone who has bought the right to live in a property for a fixed number of years. Although the term is fixed at the start, it decreases every year until it expires and the ownership of the property returns to The Gateshead Housing Company on behalf of Gateshead Council ('the landlord').

- 2.12 Gateshead Council ('the landlord') remains the owner of the overall building and the land it stands on. The Gateshead Housing Company on behalf of Gateshead Council ('the landlord') remains responsible for the maintenance and

repair of the structure, exterior and internal communal areas of the building. Leaseholders are liable for their share of the total costs of such work.

2.2 **What is the Lease?**

- 2.2.1 The lease is the contract between the landlord and the leaseholder. It sets out the respective rights and responsibilities of each party. The lease is a legally binding contract and enforceable by law. Current legislation may override parts of the lease.

In order to assist leaseholders understanding of their rights and obligations they are provided with a Plain English conversion of the lease.

2.3 **Leaseholders' Rights**

- 2.3.1 The Gateshead Housing Company is bound by the terms of the lease issued by Gateshead Council ('the landlord'). All leases issued by Gateshead Council ('the landlord') will include information about:

- The service charge to be paid, how it is determined and when payment is due
- The arrangements for collecting contributions towards additional costs and for refunding over-payments.
- The procedures for the leaseholder to assign the lease
- The grounds for the landlord ending the lease by forfeiture or re-entry.
- The details of the respective responsibilities of the leaseholder and The Gateshead Housing Company, on behalf of Gateshead Council ('the landlord') for repairs, maintenance and improvement to the property, the structure and common parts.
- Details of how the lease can be ended
- Details of the responsibilities of both the leaseholder and Gateshead Council ('the landlord').

2.4 **Breaches of the Lease**

- 2.4.1 The Gateshead Housing Company will take appropriate action whenever it becomes aware that a leaseholder is acting in breach of the terms of their lease, which may include:
- Unapproved works to the home or building
 - Improper use of the home or building
 - Failure to maintain, or damage to the premises
 - Refusal of access to the Gateshead Housing Company staff and/or their agents
 - Anti-social behaviour including harassment or neighbour nuisance

In all such cases The Gateshead Housing Company will work with the leaseholder to resolve the issue. However, if the breach continues legal action could be taken which may include seeking an injunction, or action for the forfeiture of their lease.

2.5 **Ground Rent**

- 2.5.1 Leasehold is a form of tenancy so it is subject to the payment of a rent to Gateshead Council ('the landlord'). The Gateshead Housing Company will ensure that you are sent a Notice of Ground Rent demand no less than thirty

days before and no more than sixty days after the day your ground rent is due to be paid.

2.5.2 All ground rent payments should be collected in full on the 1st April each year.

2.6 **Service Charges**

2.6.1 The Gateshead Housing Company will make a charge for a range of services provided to a block. These may include: caretaking, concierge communal cleaning, grounds maintenance, communal lighting, provision of lift, door entry phone, CCTV, communal heating, communal aerials, wherever such services are provided to the block, as well as the repair and maintenance of the fabric of the building and common areas.

2.6.2 The Gateshead Housing Company will provide leaseholders with accurate and timely information about the services they receive, the cost of those services and the amount due in service charge payments. Service Charges are variable charges intended to cover management costs, repairs and maintenance, insurance and other associated costs. The Gateshead Housing Company will:

- Empower leaseholders so they can act on an informed basis.
- Provide details of contacts and agreements entered into for the supply of services.
- Provide a summary of the rights and obligations of leaseholders relating to service charges and administration charges when sending demands for payment in line with statutory requirements.

2.7 **Service Charge Bills**

2.7.1 The Gateshead Housing Company will provide all leaseholders with a breakdown of how the annual service charge is calculated. Any under-spend on the previous year will be transferred to the current years charge. Refunds will be provided if the current years charge is paid in full. Any overspend is recharged through the 'Actual' service charge bill.

2.7.2 The Gateshead Housing Company will provide leaseholders, with an estimate of charges, at least one month before the start of the financial year; so that leaseholders are aware of any proposed changes in service or service charge levels, and can plan their finances accordingly.

2.7.3 When preparing the estimated service charge bills The Gateshead Housing Company will look at the actual cost for each service in the previous year and the budget for the service in the coming year, in order to ensure that the estimated bill is as accurate as possible.

2.7.4 The Gateshead Housing Company will provide leaseholders with the actual cost of services provided, for the previous financial year, within thirteen weeks of the close of the accounting year.

2.7.5 The budgets for the estimated service charges and actual charges will be agreed with the Leasehold Service Improvement Group (SIG), prior to issue, to enable leaseholders to challenge the cost of services.

2.7.6 In line with legislation when a demand for payment is issued a notice explaining leaseholders Rights & Obligations (Service Charges) will be served.

2.8 **Service Charge Accounting**

2.8.1 Individual computerised accounts will be created for each leasehold property. Each account will be credited with the service charge income and debited with expenditure under the various budget heads. A six monthly account statement will be produced for each account.

2.8.2 Where actual costs, in any accounting year, exceed the income for the same period, the balance will be raised as a separate invoice (the actual bill).

2.8.3 Where actual costs in any accounting year are less than the income for the same period, the balance will be credited to the next years, service charge account.

2.8.4 The Gateshead Housing Company Leasehold Manager and the Gateshead Housing Company Finance Manager will produce the actual and estimated accounts and all supporting information.

2.8.5 Service charges are held in designated separate client accounts. Under the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002 leaseholders have the right to ask for proof that this requirement has been met. The Gateshead Housing Company's Finance Service manages these accounts and balances the credit and debit entries. Gateshead Council ('the landlord') carries out all year end adjustments and transfers.

2.9 **Payment of Service Charges**

2.9.1 Leaseholders pay for their proportion of the amount that the service actually costs for their block. Leaseholders have the right to appeal to the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal if they believe that the services or the cost of these services are not relevant or reasonable. Leaseholders are able to pay the annual charge either in advance for the whole year, quarterly or monthly over either ten or twelve months.

2.9.2 The actual service charge bill is payable under the terms of the lease within twenty one days of issue.

2.9.3 Major works repayment packages are available for actual bills which contain large costs for repairs and maintenance or major works/improvements.

2.10 **Service Charge Arrears**

2.10.1 The Gateshead Housing Company will send leaseholders details of their service charge accounts every six months. Any leaseholder who falls behind with payments will be contacted promptly by the leasehold services team and appropriate action for arrears recovery will be taken in accordance with the leasehold Income Recovery procedures.

- 2.10.2 The Gateshead Housing Company will be responsible in our actions to make sure anyone experiencing difficulties in paying charges is made aware of sources of advice available including welfare benefits and debt counselling.
- 2.10.3 Where The Gateshead Housing Company is satisfied that appropriate courses of recovery action have been taken by staff and service charges remain unpaid, legal proceedings will be considered. A number of legal measures would be considered for persistent failure to pay service charges including forfeiture (possession) in accordance with the lease.

2.11 **Disputed Service Charges**

- 2.11.1 The Gateshead Housing Company will take a proactive approach to the resolution of disputes by ensuring that complaints are dealt with as quickly as possible, to minimise customer dissatisfaction.
- 2.11.2 To ensure we provide the same standards of customer care as we offer tenants the Corporate Complaints Policy will be followed.
- 2.11.3 In appropriate cases, The Gateshead Housing Company will refer the particulars of a case to the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal (LVT), for guidance and a ruling.
- 2.11.4 The Gateshead Housing Company will review disputes with the Leasehold Service Improvement Group (SIG) to establish trends and identify service improvements.

2.12 **Major Works - Costs**

- 2.12.1 The Gateshead Housing Company will involve leaseholders in all major work programmes that affect them in addition to the statutory responsibility to consult when letting certain contracts. Leaseholders will be involved in choosing of contractors, materials, colours and finishes, where it is appropriate for them to do so.
- 2.12.2 The Gateshead Housing Company is responsible for maintenance of the communal and structural parts of the building and communal parts of estates such as drying areas and pathways.
- 2.12.3 Leaseholders will be required under the terms of their lease to pay a proportion of the costs of the upkeep and repair of these areas. This will include relevant and reasonable project management charges.
- 2.12.4 Leaseholders will not be able to opt out of structural works such as window replacements; unless The Gateshead Housing Company is satisfied that such works have already been done to a satisfactory standard.
- 2.12.5 The Gateshead Housing Company will provide leaseholders with full details of the proposed works in accordance with statutory requirements, including estimates for the total cost of the works and estimates for the individual leasehold contributions before the works commence. Leaseholders will be charged for works in accordance with the terms of the lease.

- 2.12.6 The process for issuing section 20 consultation is contained in the Major Works Procedural Guide.
- 2.12.7 Following initial consultation if additional works are identified when the contractor is on site, it will be the responsibility of The Gateshead Housing Company to ensure that all leaseholders are advised/consulted. Any additional charges should be discussed prior to the invoice being issued.
- 2.12.8 The Gateshead Housing Company will usually raise major works invoices to leaseholders after the works are completed and the contractors account has been finalised. Invoices will be raised within 18 months of the costs being incurred. Major works invoices will be sent out separately from the annual service charge bills.
- 2.12.9 The Gateshead Housing Company will aim to recover from leaseholders all the money due from them towards the cost of major works in accordance with the Major Works Payment procedures.

2.13 **Overpayments**

- 2.13.1 All overpayments of service charges by leaseholders will be automatically transferred to the next financial year.
- 2.13.2 If leaseholders cease to be a tenant before then a refund of the balance will be provided.

2.14 **Works Outside of Landlords Responsibility**

- 2.14.1 The Gateshead Housing Company will arrange with its gas contractor the provision of gas servicing for leaseholders, as part of its overall gas servicing contract specification. The cost of the service will be included in the annual service charge bill.
- 2.14.2 The Gateshead Housing Company will also arrange with contractors for leaseholders to have the option to have internal improvement works carried out at competitive prices as and when refurbishments (such as kitchen/bathroom replacements) are being carried out in tenanted properties in the area. In this way leaseholders are able to benefit from the bulk-buy savings that the Gateshead Housing company achieves. Leaseholders will be invoiced by the Gateshead Housing Company and will be expected to pay a 10% deposit with full payment on satisfactory completion.
- 2.14.3 The Gateshead Housing Company will also provide leaseholders with an opportunity to join the tenants' contents insurance scheme. The policy covers potential loss to contents through theft, fire, vandalism or burst pipes. Gateshead Council has negotiated exclusive cover for leaseholders with low cost premiums. The cost of this service will be collected with the annual service charges.

2.15 **Board Membership**

2.15.1 Leaseholders are able to stand for election to Tenant Board Member places as existing members come up for re-election. There are no places specifically dedicated to leaseholders.

2.16 **Leaseholder Involvement**

2.16.1 The Gateshead Housing Company has a vision 'of involving residents in everything we do' and 'being a listening and learning organisation'. To provide services that people want and to meet the needs of our diverse community, customers need to be at the heart of all that we do.

2.16.2 The Gateshead Housing Company will provide leaseholders with opportunities for participation and involvement on a similar basis to those offered to tenants including:

- Influence decisions that affect the housing service
- Make the neighbourhood a better place to live
- Give views on the services they receive
- Be part of an interest, improvement or review group
- Help us better understand the needs of people from diverse groups
- Help us to provide better quality, customer focused services
- Develop their own skills

2.16.3 The Gateshead Housing Company will also work with leaseholders through the annual leasehold forum and neighbourhood drop –ins to provide leaseholders' with the opportunity to share information and ideas, to influence services provided to them and to provide the opportunity to discuss issues that are important to leaseholders. This may include the level and quality of services provided and the way charges are set.

2.17 **Buildings Insurance**

2.17.1 The Gateshead Housing Company will work with Gateshead Council ('the landlord') to ensure that value for money is obtained when insuring the buildings so that leaseholders can benefit from any cost savings. Leaseholders will be provided with copies of the relevant buildings insurance policy confirming the sum for which the property is insured, the name of the insurer, and the risks covered in the policy.

2.18 **Alterations or Improvements**

2.18.1 Leaseholders can make alterations or improvements to their flat as long as they do not remove or effect any structural walls or change the appearance of the outside of the building or the shared or communal parts in any way. This includes the boundary walls, fences and gardens areas generally where these have been included within the curtilage of the individual lease to the leaseholder.

2.18.2 Any leaseholder wishing to carry out improvements to their home must submit full details of the proposed works to The Gateshead Housing Company.

- 2.18.3 Each request will be looked at on its own merit and a decision will be sent to Gateshead Council ('the landlord') who will formally respond to the request.
- 2.18.4 Any detail of the proposed alterations will be accompanied with a full written explanation.
- 2.18.5 Planning and Building control regulations will need to be obtained and paid for by the leaseholder where applicable if the alteration is approved.
- 2.19 **Sale of Loft Space**
- 2.19.1 The Right to Buy lease does not include the purchase of the loft space.
- 2.19.2 Gateshead Council ('the landlord') will consider applications from leaseholders to purchase the loft space. The Gateshead Housing Company will establish viability of selling the loft, taking into account communal facilities (eg water tanks, lighting etc.)
- 2.19.3 A formal letter of permission will be issued by Gateshead Council ('the landlord') once agreement has been reached. When permission is refused, the reasons for refusal must be put in writing to the leaseholder. The full guidance for the sale of loft spaces is detailed in the 'Sale of Loft Space' procedural guide.
- 2.20 **Subletting**
- 2.20.1 Under the terms of the lease, leaseholders can sub-let their property without landlord permission. However, if the leaseholder has a mortgage it may be a requirement of the lender that the property is not rented out.
- 2.20.2 Breaches of the lease between the landlord and the leaseholder whether caused by the leaseholder, by their sub-tenant or by any visitors to the property will result in legal action being taken against the leaseholder not the sub-letting tenants.
- 2.21 **Collective Enfranchisement**
- 2.21.1 Leaseholders have the right to buy the freehold of the building their flats are in from the landlord. This is a right in law and the landlord cannot refuse to sell the freehold, as long as the building and those applying to buy the freehold meet the legal requirements within the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993 (as amended) by the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002.
- 2.21.2 The Gateshead Housing Company will co-ordinate requests for collective enfranchisement with Gateshead Council, Legal and Corporate Services.
- 2.22. **Equality and Diversity**
- 2.22.1 The Gateshead Housing Company will collect, record analyse and monitor customer profiling information of leaseholders and use it to inform service delivery and prioritise resources. We will ensure that this policy is applied fairly

to all our customers. We will not directly or indirectly discriminate against any person or group of people because of their race, religion or belief, age gender, gender reassignment, disability, pregnancy or maternity, marital status or civil partnership, sexual orientation and social or economic deprivation or other grounds set out in our Corporate Equality Plan.

2.23 **Survey**

2.23.1 Every year a service user satisfaction survey will be sent out. From the information received, The Gateshead Housing Company will investigate to see if any improvements can be made to the service. The results will be collated and discussed with the Leasehold Service Improvement Group (SIG). They will also be published to all leaseholders via the Leasehold Newsletter and internally within the organisation.

2.24 **Performance Monitoring and Reporting**

2.24.1 The Gateshead Housing Company will regularly monitor service provision, associated costs and our performance in collecting service charges. We report our performance to the company board on a regular basis.

2.24.2 Performance will also be monitored against service standards and leaseholders will be advised of the outcomes on a quarterly basis through the Leasehold Service Improvement Group.

2.25 **Feedback**

2.25.1 Any dissatisfaction or complaints received in any format will be responded to within ten working days. If the leaseholder is unhappy with any area of the service provided, the issue will be progressed through The Gateshead Housing Company complaints procedure or Leasehold Valuation Tribunal (LVT). Applications to the LVT can be made at any time without reference to The Gateshead Housing Company complaint procedure.

2.26 **Service Delivery and Value for Money**

2.26.1 The Gateshead Housing Company will encourage leaseholders to become involved in assessing value for money through the Annual Leaseholders Survey and Service Improvement Groups. We will also develop monitoring and scrutiny procedures involving leaseholders.

2.26.2 The Gateshead Housing Company will establish good practice through our involvement with the Housing Quality Networks, Leasehold Excellence Network and the North East Leaseholders Benchmarking Group.

2.26.3 The Gateshead Housing Company will endeavour to set reasonable charges in advance and involve leaseholders in budget setting and will provide leaseholders with feedback on the performance of contractors.

2.27 **Auditing**

2.27.1 Income and expenditure within the service charge designated account will be reconciled on a quarterly and annual basis.

- 2.27.2 Gateshead Council Internal Audit Service, under the Service Level Agreement, will audit Leasehold Services every two years. The audit will cover all procedures, risk assessments and accounting.

3. How the Policy will be delivered

- 3.1 The delivery of this policy and associated procedures will be the responsibility of the Leasehold Services Manager.
- 3.2 If staff become aware that there are problems with effective operation of the policy or the associated procedures, they should report this to the policy owner. This feedback will be incorporated into the policy/procedural review process.

4. Risks

- The full cost of services is not recovered, resulting in leaseholders being indirectly 'subsidised' by tenants.
- Poor customer satisfaction levels with the cost and standard of service charges and the way they are administered.
- Leaseholders will refer the reasonableness of their service charges to the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal.
- Service charge could be applied inconsistently across the leasehold housing stock.
- Failure to adhere to legislation in relation to consultation could result in loss of income to the Company.

5. Related Procedures

- 5.1 The following procedures need to be followed to implement the policy:
- Section 20 Consultation Procedure
 - Income Recovery Procedure
 - Major Works Payment Procedure
 - Corporate Complaint Policy
 - Corporate Equality Plan
 - Sale of Loft Space Procedural Guide

6. Review

- 6.1 This policy will be reviewed with leaseholders at least every three years. It will be updated to reflect any changes to corporate requirements, targets and legislation.
- 6.2 We will use customer feedback to inform reviews and recommend changes to this policy and procedural documents.
- 6.3 The Gateshead Housing Company's management board will approve the document and any substantial changes to it.

Appendix 2 - Affordable Warmth Grant – Eligibility criteria

To qualify for the Affordable Warmth Obligation with regard to State Benefits, you must satisfy the criteria in A, B, C OR D below:

A: Receive State Pension Credit

B. Receive Child Tax Credit (with a relevant income below £15,860)

C. You must be in receipt of:

- Income-Based Job Seeker's Allowance or
- Income Related Employment & Support Allowance or
- Income Support.

PLUS one of the following:

- Disabled Child Premium
- Have parental responsibility for a child aged under 16 who lives at the property
- Have parental responsibility for a child aged 16 or over but under 20, who lives at the property and is in full-time education (not in higher education, such as at a university)
- Pension Premium (either Higher or Enhanced)
- Child Tax Credit which includes a Disability or Severe Disability element
- Disability Premium (either Higher or Enhanced)
- Work Related Activity or Support Component (with Income Related Employment & Support Allowance only)

D. You must be in receipt of:

- Working Tax Credit (with a relevant income below £15,860)

PLUS one of the following:

- Have parental responsibility for a child aged under 16 who lives at the property
- Have parental responsibility for a child aged 16 or over but under 20, who lives at the property and is in full-time education (not in higher education, such as at a university)
- Disabled Worker Element or Severe Disability Element
- Aged 60 or over.



Report to Customers and Communities Committee

7 November 2013

Title: Customer Involvement Activity – Update
– April to September 2013

Report of: Managing Director

Purpose of Report

1. To provide committee with a summary of involvement activity across the company for the second quarter of 2013/14.

Background

2. All housing company customers are encouraged to get involved in ways that suit them, based on the time they have available and the level of commitment they wish to make. Customer involvement is central to the way we deliver our services.
3. The Involvement and Empowerment standard of the HCA's Regulatory Framework places a requirement on landlords to ensure that tenants are given a range of opportunities to influence and shape policies and scrutinise our services.
4. The Delivery Plan 2013-15 includes an objective to support and fully embed co-regulation. This is carried out through a range of ways including the TALISMAN panel, Complaints Scrutiny Panel and through the development of an annual report for tenants and leaseholders each year, (designed, developed and written by our customers).

Summary

5. During the period, 1 July to 30 September 2013, 78 involvement activities took place. Customers were involved in various activities including: TALISMAN meetings and a TALISMAN led mystery shopping exercise, Service Improvement Groups, attendance at summer community events, BME housing forum, Disabled Persons Housing forum and Management Team Drop Ins.
6. Customers have been involved in our activities on over 3500 occasions, however some may have been involved in more than one event.

7. Appendix 1 to this report shows a summary of activities undertaken during this period and demonstrates the variety of ways customers have been involved. This information is broken down by the two broad service areas, Corporate Services and Customers and Communities, to highlight the different forms of activities that have taken place across the company.
8. Appendix 2 to this report shows where the venues activities have taken place during this period.

Key outcomes of involvement

9. There have been a number of outcomes from customer involvement during this period which are highlighted below:
 - A TALISMAN led mystery shopping exercise of the services provided by Rent and Income team to those customers whom were affected by the newly introduced Welfare Reform bill.
 - Feedback gained from attendance at Northern Pride part of the Opportunity Knocks programme will be used to formulate a proposed LGBT customer forum.
 - Customers were given the opportunity to engage with the Management Team through a series of drop in events taking place in local offices.
 - The Disabled Persons Housing Forum reviewed the ARCH hate crime reporting annual report 2012 / 2013.
 - BME housing forum reviewed the existing Single Equality Scheme and comments taken from this group will be incorporated into the revised version of the scheme.
 - Consultation took place with Involvement SIG regarding transportation costs incurred for SIG's and forums. The group reviewed costings and feedback that transportation assistance should be reviewed when the business co-locates to Gateshead civic centre as transport links are close by.
 - Tenancy and Allocation team are reviewing their automated message accessed by customers contacting Tyne and Wear Homes. Following initial feedback that the message was too long, they are reviewing the wording of message.

Performance against service standards

10. There are a number of service standards in place for involvement to help monitor performance and ensure that we continue to involve customers in the way services are delivered. They are as follows:
 - Number of involved customers (previously titled Representation of involved customers)
 - Annual training programme course attendance
 - Satisfaction with feedback following involvement
 - % of tenants satisfied that their views are taken into account (annual figure reported to the last committee)
 - Number of events attended.

11. At the end of the period 1st July 2013 – 30th September 2013, performance was as follows:
- There were 876 involved customers on our database, exceeding the target of 840 for the year.
 - There have been 84 attendees on customer training courses, on course to meet to the target of 180 by the end of the year.
 - Satisfaction with feedback from involvement was 98.0%, exceeding the target set for the year of 97%
 - We have attended 26 events, exceeding the target of 16.

Summer of Fun

12. The Summer of Fun programme ran from June to August 2013 aiming to provide prizes to local community groups ranging from items from gardening equipment to kitchen utensils.
13. 31 groups have been awarded a prize. Examples of the successful groups include Chopwell Community Centre, Chowdene Children's Centre, Young Fire-fighters and Clara Vale Village Hall Association. Feedback will be received following receipt of the prizes to find out what impact these have on the groups.

Outcomes from Service Improvement Groups

14. In the last 6 months the service improvement groups (SIGs) have met regularly with service managers to enable customers to be involved in monitoring performance, identifying areas for improvement and working to develop new initiatives or policies.
15. Appendix 3 to this report provides a summary of the outcomes from these groups over the last 6 months.

Mears Community Initiatives

16. Appendix 4 to this report highlights the community activities Mears have completed in the last quarter. This is in addition to projects they have agreed to deliver through the community fund but which have not yet commenced which include the refurbishment of a shower block at Wrekenton Blue Star FC.

Future activity

17. The following activities are planned for 2013/14, although there will also be a range of additional activities likely to take place:
- Newcastle Eagles Hoops for Health programme for 2013/2014 will be rolled out. This year's programme will be focussing on Hate Crime coupled with the benefits of exercising, healthy eating and the dangers of passive smoking and alcohol.
 - Following on from the success of the recent event attended to recognise World Mental Health Day, the Involvement Team are attending and

hosting a stand at International Day of Disabled People to be held in December at the Sage in Gateshead.

- Consultation including a series of drop ins around the borough will be undertaken to engage with residents about the review of the Tenancy Agreement.
- Following to a successful application for funding to deliver our Energy Best Deal events, these will be rolled out in the near future.

Link to values

18. This report relates to the following company values:

- Being customer focused, innovative and professional
- Being a listening and learning organisation
- Embracing Equality.

Impact on tenants

19. We continue to work extensively with tenants, leaseholders and the wider community, to get views and opinions to identify priorities and inform services.
20. The information gained from these involvement activities helps inform service improvement and delivery, to make sure that the services we are providing to our customers meet their needs.

Risk Management Implications

21. Failure to engage with customers was identified as a key strategic risk for the company.
22. The Homes and Communities Agency's (HCA's) Involvement and Empowerment standard requires us to demonstrate that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to be involved in the management of their housing and are provided with the support they need to take part in this. The activities outlined within this report demonstrate our compliance with this standard.

Financial Implications

23. The Head of Corporate Services confirms that a budget is available to support customer involvement, and resources have been made available to support the activities outlined in this report.
24. Individual service managers have the opportunity to request funding from this budget to support involvement activities where they can demonstrate the potential outcomes for housing company tenants and leaseholders.

Equality and Diversity Implications

25. TGHC is committed to involving people from diverse communities to ensure everyone's views, needs and aspirations are considered in the decision making process.
26. Support is available to assist people with additional needs to access involvement opportunities and this is regularly promoted.
27. Every effort is made to ensure we do not directly or indirectly discriminate against any individual or group and to provide equal access to this service and the representation of involved tenants is regularly monitored and acted upon.

Value for Money implications

28. The involvement of tenants and the wider community can result in value for money savings as service managers can gain an insight into what tenants want and need. This can result in resolving the issues first time and delivering something that works for all parties.
29. All Service Improvement Groups now have Value for Money as a regular agenda item in addition to the specific Value for Money group.

Environmental implications

30. The environmental impact of involvement is considered when conducting activities across the company and addressed wherever possible, for example, customers sharing taxis where possible when attending events.

Consultation carried out

31. Updates are given on a regular basis to TGHC's Involvement Service Improvement to advise of progress of involvement across all services and the outcomes which result.

Health Implications

32. There are no direct health implications arising from this report although the successful implementation of the recommendations would have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of Gateshead residents.

Recommendation

33. The views of the committee are sought on whether it is satisfied with the involvement activities undertaken in the quarter.

Contact: Simon Hand, Involvement and Diversity Officer Tel: (0191) 433 5381

Appendix 1: Summary of involvement activities across the company

Title of Activity	Number of Events	Number of Customers Involved
Drop In Sessions	21	239
Forum	4	37
Focus Group	9	33
Service Improvement Group	12	90
Mystery Shopping	2	2
Surgery	2	24
Training Course	8	54
Event	12	3048
Meeting	8	60
Total	78	3587

Summary of Involvement Activity – Corporate Services

Title of Activity	Number of Events	Number of Customers Involved
Forum	4	37
Focus group	3	17
Service Improvement Group	5	47
Mystery Shopping	2	2
Surgery	2	24
Training course	8	54
Event	10	2780
Meeting	8	60
Total	42	3021

Summary of outcomes – Corporate Services

- TALISMAN mystery shopping exercise contacting customers whom had been impacted upon by the Welfare Reform. Results of this were presented to Rent and Income manager via a report written by the group based on findings from the exercise.
- Annual Report working group. Involved customers developed and designed new report gaining information required by interviewing members of corporate management team.
- Continuation of the Involvement Teams attendance at a number of community led events for Opportunity Knocks 2013, including Dunston Gala Community Festival, and well Community Fire Station Open Day etc. enabling contact to be made with customers whom we would not normally come into contact with.
- Attendance at Northern Pride to gain feedback from those in attendance of their experiences of good and poor customer service. People also provided feedback about setting up an LGBT housing focus group.

Summary of Involvement Activity - Customers and Communities

Title of Activity	Number of Events	Number of Customers Involved
Drop In Session	21	239
Focus Group	6	16
Service Improvement Group	7	43
Event	2	268
Total	36	566

Summary of Involvement Activity – Customers and Communities

- Over the course of this quarter, a number of drop in sessions have taken place across the borough which were facilitated by TGHC's Estate Officers. These have given elderly customers the opportunity to have face to face contact which they normally would not have.
- Attendance at the opening of a new play park in Kibblesworth whereby a number of groups and organisations attended. This was to show TGHC's support for this project and to promote services.
- Multi Storey Service Improvement group members undertook a joint inspection of works undertaken in one of our blocks.
- Tenancy and Allocation Service Improvement Group re-launched

Appendix 2: Location of Activities

Venue	Amount
Keelman House	25
Lansbury Close	1
Gateshead College	3
Civic Centre	5
Greenfield Business Centre	1
Newcastle (B&Q Scotswood and Newcastle Civic Centre, Newcastle Exhibition Park	3
Bensham Grove	2
Birtley Hub	1
Swalwell Fire Station	1
Lobley Hill Primary School	1
Dunston Park	1
Kibblesworth Lounge	1
Deckham Community Centre	1
Elgin Centre	1
Kibblesworth	3
Harrison Court	2
Joyce Close	2
Angel Court	4
Kays Cottages	1
Warwick Court	2
Croftside	1
Leyburn Place	1
McErlane Square	1
Birtley Villas	2
Cheshire Ave.,	1
Springwell Community Centre	1
Pleasant Place	3
Leam Lane Community Centre	4
Mary Saunders Hall	1
Easington Ave.,	1
Barley Mow School.	1

Appendix 3: Outcomes from Service Improvement Groups

- **Outcomes achieved**
 - **Involvement** – Reviewed recommendations for a revised version of TGHC website, this were taken forward by ICT section. Reviewed 2013 Opportunity Knocks programme and assessed results and outcomes achieved on a value for money basis. Agreed programme met VFM and that this programme should continue in 2014. Reviewed TGHC's membership of TPAS and the benefits the company receives from this. Group signed off continued membership for a further 12 months. Reviewed proposals for programme of mystery shopping and where appropriate results taken to table for comment.
 - **Older Persons** – Reviewed and agreed the implementation of tenant led budgets for sheltered schemes. Group reviewed satisfaction levels of customers whom had accessed Small Task Services and agreed that services provided were of an excellent standard. Group reviewed and fed into fire safety checks in sheltered schemes policy. Reviewed updated boiler instruction manual and comments were actioned.
 - **Home** – Joint meeting held with Leasehold SIG and members of staff from Mears and customers to review contact performance and forward plan, this was following a request from customers that staff from Mears should take an active part in this meeting and forward planning. exercises. Repairs and Maintenance, key performance indicators were brought to the group for the financial year 2013 / 2014. These were reviewed and amendments from previous year's targets were agreed.
 - **Leasehold** – Reviewed annual survey satisfaction results and discussed customer priorities and how they can be built into the SIG workplan. A review took place of Leasehold Management Policy and amendments were confirmed and agreed by the group.
 - **Multi-storey** – Group reviewed proposed amendments to Tyne and Wear Homes surveys, this was deemed fit for purpose. Customers from Multi Storey SIG have volunteered to inspect areas of works that have been carried out within the blocks they live. At SIG's they have agreed which customers will assess which blocks and their findings will be presented to the group for reference. Group have also reviewed a draft survey to be undertaken as a mystery shopping exercise on the Caretaker and Concierge service.
 - **Tenancy and allocation** – Group has been re-launched. Initial meeting was to gain feedback on Tyne and Wear Homes customer satisfaction survey and to create a work plan for the group moving forwards. Group are currently reviewing answer phone message for the service in terms of the wording used and the current length of the automated information before customers are transferred to the Tyne and Wears call queue.
 - **Value for money** – Group were presented with VFM strategy which had been drafted and amended at board level. Customers reviewed strategy and confirmed this was fit for purpose. The group have received regular updates with regards to the costs savings made due to employees have the use of an electric car for external visits / meetings. The group has reviewed cost savings and the improved impact on the environment and has recommended

continued usage of the car. Group agreed to proposals to incorporate VFM in staff induction programme.

- **Anti-social behaviour** – Group reviewed proposed training programme for ASB officers and made suggestions of how this could be themed to make it more affective. Members of the group reviewed and assessed proposals for the Customer Assessment Tool (CAT) to be used by members of staff from ASB team to ensure consistent levels of information were sought when liaising with customers reporting anti-social behaviour. Review of the service was undertaken via a mystery shopping exercise commissioned by TALISMAN. Areas of concern that were highlighted were reviewed by the SIG and an action plan drawn up. Customers reviewed and commented on action plan before sign off.



Report to Customers and Communities Committee

7 November 2013

Title: Moving Forward Customer Training Programme 2013/14 – Update – April to September 2013

Report of: Managing Director

Purpose of Report

1. To provide a six month update on the Moving Forward Customer Training Programme for 2013/14.

Background

2. The Involvement and Empowerment Standard of the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)'s Regulatory Framework places a requirement on landlords to provide support to tenants to build their capacity to be more effectively involved. Previous successes have seen attendees going on to join Service Improvement Groups, take part in mystery shopping and become members of the Board.
3. The Moving Forward training programme offers many customers a chance to develop their skills and capacity, with the aim of getting more involved with other activities across the company. This programme has expanded and adapted each year based on the needs of tenants and the issues currently affecting people living in our homes.
4. The programme has previously been identified as positive practice and we have shared our experiences of delivering the programme with a number of organisations.

Summary

5. Courses are delivered by a range of providers including B&Q, Gateshead Council, Citizen's Advice Bureau, Health Works and The Gateshead Housing Company.
6. The programme combines a range of scheduled with demand led sessions. This flexible approach has shown to be an effective way to engage our customers in training and building practical skills, helping them to become actively involved in shaping services or to use these skills in other parts of their lives.
7. The programme is open to all tenants and leaseholders with the new programme being sent via the company newspaper reaching nearly 21,000 homes. In addition to this, targeted promotion is carried out through community

organisations, at events, in housing offices and through officer networks. The courses are also featured in Gateshead Council's Learning and Skills directory, which is sent to all residents of Gateshead throughout the year. This wider promotion has resulted in an increased interest in courses and less need for targeted work to generate attendance.

Current Position

8. Providing training and support to customers appropriate to their needs is a service standard for the company. The current target is for 180 attendees to access the Moving Forward training during 2013/14. This includes attendance at courses provided through the training programme as well as any external conferences or seminars we may support customers to attend.
9. A total of 8 courses have been delivered during the period 1 April to 30 September 2013. There have been a total of 84 customers attending the training, which is an average attendance of 11 people per course. This is an increase of 3 people per course compared to the same time last year.
10. Appendix 1 highlights attendee information from 1 April to 30 September 2013 and comparison data for the 2012/13 programme.
11. To date, five demand led courses have taken place this year: -
 - Meeting skills and being Chair
 - Spot the scam
 - How to manage your money
 - Drug and alcohol awareness
 - Managing your stress (full day).
12. Although the 'Spot the scam' course is scheduled the programme, due to popular demand an additional session was delivered in May, to recognise Adult Learner's Week and Scam Awareness Month. Delivered by Gateshead Council's Trading Standards, this proved to be very popular with 17 attendees, highlighting the concerns of residents on this issue.

Feedback from attendees

13. An evaluation form is distributed at the end of each course to help us gather valuable feedback. The evaluation now gathers profile information which helps us to improve our understanding of who is accessing the training. Appendix 2 highlights the profile information of attendees during the period 1 April – 30 September.
14. Satisfaction figures are based on 81 responses, with 100% of attendees satisfied overall with the course they attended. Appendix 3 shows the results for satisfaction responses of the courses during the period 1 April to 30 September 2013 and some of the specific comments made by attendees.

Training with Mears

15. In partnership with Mears we have delivered a programme of practical sessions to help build skills in areas including painting and decorating, plumbing and electrics.
16. This was a pilot project open to tenants and leaseholders of the housing company, and was held at Gateshead College Construction Campus, due to established links Mears already have with them. The project was scheduled to run for one day per week over a course of eight weeks.
17. The sessions were similar to those delivered by B&Q, but offered a more in-depth look at each subject as they were full day courses and therefore allowed time to be more 'hands on'. This helped attendees gain more confidence in carrying out practical tasks.
18. A commitment was required from attendees to go to each lesson, rather than selecting one-off sessions, to help develop a more rounded skills set and enable us to gather a more in-depth evaluation of the project.
19. Due to a staffing issue at the college, the Carpentry and Joinery sessions were unable to take place as scheduled which has resulted in a delay in evaluating the programme. A full evaluation will be taking place following this report, to learn from this project and help any future programmes that may take place.

Future plans

20. The company has recently secured repeat funding to deliver Energy Best Deal (EBD) training to vulnerable tenants and leaseholders to help ensure they are on the best energy deal for them, aiming to avoid tenants and leaseholders going into fuel poverty.
21. This training will be delivered between October 2013 and March 2014. Three officers across the Involvement, Rent and Income team and the Environmental management group will be delivering these sessions. Front line officers who did not attend last year's briefing or would like further training, will be able to access the information to enable them to signpost customers accordingly who require further support in this area.
22. Learning from last year's EBD sessions, we are currently planning how to effectively promote this opportunity to our more vulnerable customers who are likely to benefit from this training.
23. A further update will be provided in the next Moving Forward committee report once we have started delivering the training.

Link to values

24. This report relates to the company values of:
 - Being customer focused, innovative and professional
 - Being a listening and learning organisation
 - Embracing Equality.

Impact on tenants

25. Offering a range of free courses where customers can build their skills and capacity is an example of how the company empowers customers to develop and support further involvement with the company.
26. The practical courses offered by B&Q provide tenants and leaseholders with the skills to make small improvements themselves and take pride in their homes, potentially reducing the impact on the HomeRepairs team.
27. Tenants have the opportunity throughout the year to offer suggestions of new courses which are then considered in the planning of the next programme.

Risk Management Implications

28. Failure to engage with tenants was identified as a strategic risk for the company. Through delivery of the training programme we ensure that we are offering a range of opportunities for our tenants and leaseholders to do this, which in turn supports the Involvement and Empowerment standard, set out within the HCA's regulatory framework.

Financial Implications

29. The Head of Corporate Services confirms that a budget is available to support customer involvement and resources have been made available from this budget to support the Moving Forward Customer Training Programme.
30. External funding has been secured from Skills for Life, where we receive approximately £3.95 per person per hour of learning for capacity building courses. There is now a restriction on the amount of funding we receive of £624, for the academic year 1 September to 31 August, rather than the financial year the company works to.

Equality and Diversity Implications

31. The company has a commitment to valuing diversity and ensures all customers have the opportunity to access the courses within the programme.
32. Every effort is made to ensure we do not directly or indirectly discriminate against any individual or group and we provide equal access to this service.
33. The equality impact assessment was reviewed and updated for the 2013/14 programme to ensure that it continues to be accessible to all. Through collection of profile information from the evaluation form we can build a better picture of who is attending the training and if there are any groups that are particularly under-represented to identify future actions.
34. Appendix 3 shows profile information collected for the first six months of the programme and shows that there are more women than men accessing our training and 37.04% are disabled. The majority of attendees are white British (74.08%) and the age group 60-74 is the most common for attendees, followed by 25-39 and 50-69 (18.52%).

Environmental implications

32. The programme offers a course relating to environmental awareness, aiming to reduce fuel poverty called 'Saving energy and money'.
33. In addition, we are due to deliver more Energy Best Deal sessions to customers who want to try and save money on their fuel bills and understand how to reduce negative impacts on the environment. Outcomes of this will be reported in the Moving Forward annual review committee report.

Health implications

34. Feedback from customers has told us that attendees feel a direct health improvement from attending our courses in building their confidence through socialising with other people, learning and developing new skills.
35. Specifically we have delivered a 'Managing Stress' course during this period which aims to reduce the levels of stress among our tenants, leaseholders and residents in Gateshead and ultimately improve their health and wellbeing.
36. In addition the 'Spot the scam' course aims to help people reduce stress and anxiety and minimise the potential of falling victim to a scam. This is scheduled to be delivered in November as many people are targeted by fraudsters in the lead up to Christmas, which can lead to serious financial pressures and can in turn impact on their mental health.

Value for Money Implications

37. When developing the programme each year, we work with tenants and leaseholders to identify the best way to deliver and promote the programme in a cost effective way.
38. By offering demand led courses it ensures that they are run when there is a high level of attendance, rather than committing resources to a session where there is little or no take up by customers.
38. The current programme was sent to all tenants and leaseholders as part of May's company newspaper, meaning only design and print costs of £900 were incurred. The cost of promoting the programme in this way is significantly less than through a separate publication like previous years, which cost approximately £4000 to reach the same number of people.

Consultation carried out

39. Customers were involved in consultations to develop the 2013/14 programme around the content, design and the selection of the trainer for capacity building courses. An updated design was launched this year, continuing the branding of Opportunity Knocks.
40. Satisfaction with the programme is reported to the Involvement Service Improvement group where any areas of dissatisfaction can be discussed and addressed. The Involvement SIG approved the 2013/14 programme and was impressed with the new design.

Recommendation

41. The views of the committee are sought on whether it is satisfied with the impact on customers to date from the Moving Forward Customer Training Programme.

Contact: Helen Watson, Involvement and Diversity Officer Tel No. (0191) 433 5376

Table 1: Comparison figures for the first half of the programme for 2013/14 and 2012/13

	2013/14		2012/13	
	Scheduled Courses	Demand led courses	Scheduled courses	Demand led courses
Number of courses held	3	5	5	6
Total of Attendees	33	51	44	43
External funding received	n/a	£145.30*	n/a	£478.70

*This will be issued in December along with amount due for the current academic term (September-December). The company will receive a maximum contract value of £624 for the academic year 2012/13, therefore we can only receive the difference of £145.30 following the amount already received in 2012/13.

Table 2: Courses held and attendees for Moving Forward programme 2013/14 and 2012/13

2013/14		2012/13	
Course Title	Attendees	Course Title	Attendees
Meeting skills and being Chair	14	Understanding health improvement	9
Spot the scam	17	Gardening	10
Gardening	12	Plumbing	11
How to manage your money	8	Improve your health	11
Plumbing	9	Help with employment	7
Drug and alcohol awareness	5	Dealing with stress	8
Basic DIY	12	Basic DIY	5
Managing your stress (full day)	7	Social media made simple	5, 8
		Confidence building	7
		Checking our services (mystery shopping)	6
Total	84	Total	87

Table 1: Profile of attendees 1 April to 30 September 2013

Gender		
Male	24	29.63%
Female	57	70.37%
Total	81	100%
Disability		
Disabled	30	37.04%
Non disabled	47	58.02
Unknown/blank	4	4.94%
Total	81	100%
Ethnic origin		
Asian Pakistan	2	2.47%
Asian Other	3	3.70%
Chinese	6	7.41%
Black African	-	-
Mixed Other	5	6.17%
White British	60	74.08%
White Other	3	3.70%
Unknown/blank	2	2.47%
Total	81	100%
Age		
Under 25	2	2.47%
25-39	15	18.52%
40-49	9	11.11%
50-59	15	18.52%
60-74	34	41.98%
75 and over	3	3.70%
Unknown/blank	3	3.70%
Total	81	100%

Table 1: Responses to questions for those who answered ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied for courses during the period 1 April – 30 September 2013

Question		Satisfaction Response – ‘Very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied	
1	How satisfied are you with the course organisation?	100%	
2	How satisfied are you with the facilities?	96.30%	
3	How satisfied are you with the length of the course?	98.77%	
4	How satisfied are you with the trainer?	98.77%	
5	How satisfied are you with the course content?	97.53%	
		Yes	No
6	Did you find anything in the course racist, sexist or offensive in any way?	-	100%
7	From the skills and knowledge you’ve gained in this course could you apply them in your day to day life?	97.53%	2.47%
8	Did the course meet your expectations?	96.30%	2.47%
9	How satisfied are you with the opportunities to get involved today?	100%	
10	Overall, how satisfied are you with the course today?	100%	

Customer comments from courses:

- *“Thoroughly enjoyed the course it was well structures and I learnt a lot. Thank you”, Meeting Skills and being Chair*
- *“Courses have been excellent. All staff are brilliant, courses are very informative. Good work”, Spot the scam*
- *“Brilliant course I could not improve – only more of them”, Gardening*
- *“I am not so scared to deal with my problems”, How to manage your money*
- *“I enjoyed this course it is very important to me”, Plumbing*
- *“Learnt a lot”, Drug and alcohol awareness*
- *“Learnt skills I can apply and do myself”, Basic DIY*
- *“Enjoyable, beneficial course well worthwhile”, Managing your stress (full day).*



Report to Customers and Communities Committee

7 November 2013

Title: TALISMAN Review – Rent and Income
– Response to Recommendations

Report of: Director of Customers and Communities

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide committee with a response to the Tenant and Leaseholder Independent Scrutiny Management Panel's (TALISMAN) recommendations previously reported to committee in September 2013.

Background

2. TALISMAN reported outcomes to this committee following scrutiny of the Rent and Income Service. A range of positive practice was identified and in addition a number of recommendations for service improvement were made.

Summary

3. We welcome the report and recommendations made by Talisman. Feedback from the review and the recommendations made have been shared with the team through briefing sessions and team meetings.
4. A proposed response to the recommendations is attached at the Appendix.
5. A number of the recommendations have already been addressed fully or in part by the service. Training and development needs will be addressed as part of the employee appraisals and 1-2-1's between team members and their line managers.

Link to values

6. This report links to the following company values:
 - Being a listening and learning organisation
 - Being honest, accountable and transparent
 - Being customer focussed, innovative and professional

Impact on tenants

7. Scrutiny of the Rent and Income Service ensures continuous improvement is made in addressing the recommendations made. Improving customer satisfaction levels and the quality of rent and income work will impact positively on customers accessing RAIT services.

Risk Management Implications

8. Tackling rent arrears effectively is a company priority; failure to prioritise and tackle these issues is a risk for the company in terms of levels of customer satisfaction and reputation.

Financial Implications

9. There are no additional financial implications arising as a result of implementing the proposed recommendations within the action plan.

Equality and Diversity Implications

10. There are no additional Equality and Diversity implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Value for Money Implications

11. Ensuring accessible information for customers on the services we provide and improvements made will impact positively on effective and efficient service delivery.

Health Implications

12. There are no additional health implications associated with this report.

Environmental Implications

13. There are no environmental implications associated with this report.

Consultation carried out

14. The recommendations made by TALISMAN have been shared within the service in order to inform the response to the recommendations.

Recommendation

15. The views of the committee are sought on the proposed response to recommendations document outlined in the Appendix.



Recommendations for Improvement and Response

Scrutiny findings/Recommendation	Response
Information/Communication	
<p>Leaflets In two housing offices, old leaflets were found amongst the newer versions</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i> <i>Regular checks to ensure that leaflets are always up to date</i></p>	<p>The Rent and Income Manager will discuss with the Communications Manager how best to ensure leaflets are kept up to date and checked on a regular basis.</p> <p><i>Target date: November 2013</i></p>
<p>TGHC Website: Rent and Income pages Language used was considered to be negative and repetitive. The home page was mainly negative with very few positives. Readers could easily lose interest.</p> <p>Tenants who are financially vulnerable find it difficult to discuss their finances so the issue of confidentiality should be paramount. This wasn't made clear on the website.</p> <p>The drop down menu was found to be inaccessible.</p> <p>Different computer operating systems such as tablets can make it difficult to access information from some websites.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i> <i>TALISMAN understands that since this exercise was carried out the website has changed so the recommendation would be to revisit this section's wording and check links etc.</i></p>	<p>The TGHC website has recently been re-designed and some of the out-dated content and broken links have been removed/fixed.</p> <p>The content will be reviewed to ensure the information is both accessible and accurate.</p> <p><i>Target date: January 2014</i></p> <p>Once checked the RAIT team will review the rent related website content on a quarterly basis. The initial check will be carried out in March 2014 in preparation for next financial year.</p> <p><i>Target date: Quarterly from March 2014</i></p>
<p>Letter from Gateshead Council During the mystery shopping exercise, nine customers felt that the initial letter from Gateshead Council sent out in March 2013 was difficult to understand in three areas (see mystery shopping report at Appendix 3)</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i> <i>Gateshead Council be asked to take into consideration these comments when producing future letters around Welfare Reform</i></p>	<p>This letter comes under the remit of Gateshead Council and the content has been discussed with them. The letter is a system generated letter which contains a large amount of information set out in statute. The ability to manipulate stock letters is also limited due to system limitations.</p> <p>However, Gateshead Council do keep their letters under review and are keen to make them as user friendly as possible.</p>

Recommendations for Improvement and Response	
Scrutiny findings/Recommendation	Response
	<p>For example the Discretionary Housing Payment decision letter was recently amended following feedback provided by TGHC.</p> <p>Contact Helen Paine (Benefits Manager) for further information.</p>
<p>Arrears Intervention TALISMAN felt that information around arrears information was too negative and there was too much emphasis on the escalation process.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i> <i>More positive information about arrears intervention</i></p>	<p>The Rent and Income Manager will discuss rent arrears information with the Communications manager to ensure that a more positive outlook is presented where possible. We will endeavour to produce more good news stories related to Rent.</p> <p>Only recently a story about our clear rent account prize drawer winners was publicised in the quarterly newspaper.</p> <p><i>Target date: December 2013</i></p>
<p>Tenancy Agreement The Tenancy Agreement has not been updated since 2008 and needs updating to reflect Welfare Reform and its impact on tenants.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i> <i>Review of Tenancy Agreement needs to reflect Welfare Reform and its impact on tenants.</i></p>	<p>The Tenancy Agreement is currently under review and the Rent and Income Service will play a part in this process to ensure that all rent related aspects are covered sufficiently.</p> <p>Welfare Reform and its impact on tenants will also be included in any new tenancy documentation.</p> <p><i>Target date: March 2014</i></p>
<p>Rent Card – Sign Up The review found that in some cases, it wasn't made clear to new tenants during the sign up that they needed to ask for a separate card to pay for their Council Tax and that it could not be paid on the rent card. TALISMAN found four examples where summonses had been sent to tenants because they had mistakenly paid their rent and Council Tax together on the same card.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i> <i>Make it clear to new tenants during sign up that Council Tax cannot be paid on rent card.</i></p>	<p>The sign-up procedure has recently been reviewed and the rent and income service played a significant part in this.</p> <p>The new process is far more robust in relation to rent and housing benefit matters and more emphasis is put on ensuring the new tenant knows both what to pay and how much they need to pay.</p> <p><i>Implementation for the revised sign up procedure: December 2013</i></p>
Customer Involvement/Engagement	
<p>Service Improvement Group (SIG) There was currently no SIG for rent and income. The establishment of a Rent and Income SIG allowing for</p>	<p>SIGs have recently been reviewed and a decision taken not to have a dedicated Rent and Income SIG, however the Rent</p>

Recommendations for Improvement and Response	
Scrutiny findings/Recommendation	Response
<p>regular customer engagement on the service. This also means that customers are not involved in the process for setting targets for the year as is the case in other service areas.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i> <i>The establishment of a Rent and Income Service Improvement Group.</i></p>	<p>and Income Manager frequently attends other SIGs to give updates on rent related matters.</p> <p>Only recently a focus group with tenants was held to discuss a new style rent statement, so the RAIT service do consider tenant involvement an important part of service management.</p> <p>We recognise that more regular customer involvement would be beneficial for the service.</p> <p>We will therefore begin taking more regular updates to the Tenancy and Allocations SIG as well as continuing the practice of bringing customers together to discuss important changes on an ad-hoc basis.</p> <p><i>Target date: February 2014</i></p> <p><i>The establishment of a rent and income service improvement group will be considered when SIGs are next reviewed.</i></p>
<p>Timing of Surveys Surveys had been sent to tenants just after the rent increases which could result in a negative response from tenants.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i> <i>Better consideration of all relevant factors before determining when to send out surveys.</i></p>	<p>The rent survey is posted with the quarter 1 rent statement. This survey is 4 months after the rent increase letter is received by tenants.</p> <p>In order to allow for effective comparison the survey is posted out at the same time each year.</p> <p>However, the opportunity to look at this recommendation again will be taken when the survey methodology is next reviewed.</p>
<p>Young People The Rent and Income Team tried hard to engage with young people but more work should be done to ascertain what other organisations were doing.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i> <i>Identify good practice from other organisations when engaging with young people.</i></p>	<p>The rent and income team work hard to sustain all tenancies and put particular emphasis on under 25's.</p> <p>The Rent and Income manager will ensure that Young People and tenancy sustainment is on the agenda of the next Northern benchmarking group meeting that is held. This will enable TGHC to</p>

Recommendations for Improvement and Response	
Scrutiny findings/Recommendation	Response
	<p>identify good practice from other organisations.</p> <p><i>Target date: February 2014</i></p>
Performance/Service Standards	
<p>Performance Report Some targets were reduced for the next year, however it wasn't made clear in the narrative of the performance report that this had happened or the rationale for reducing them.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i> <i>Narrative in performance report make it clear when a target has changed for the next year and the rationale behind the change</i></p>	<p>The rent and income manager will endeavour to make it clear the rationale for any changes in performance targets.</p> <p>Performance targets are set around February/March each year and any explanation for amendments will be included on performance reports.</p> <p><i>Target date: April 2014</i></p>
<p>Target Setting TALISMAN were concerned that the Rent and Income Manager set all the targets without the involvement of the managers within the service or front line employees.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i> <i>More involvement of other staff in target setting for them to take ownership and understand how their role contributes to the overall performance of the service.</i></p>	<p>The rent and income management team meet on a monthly basis to discuss all aspects of the service, one of which is performance.</p> <p>These meetings inform decisions on performance setting and these targets are discussed with the RAIT management team during appraisals and 1-2-1's.</p> <p>Greater emphasis will be placed on the input the team have on the target development and setting for 2014/15.</p>
<p>Sharing of Good Practice TALISMAN felt that in order for teams to share good practice with each other there should be a standing item on all team meeting agendas as this appears to happen on an ad hoc basis.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i> <i>Standing item around sharing of good practice on team meeting agendas.</i></p>	<p>This recommendation is something that has recently commenced within the service. During the Wednesday afternoon briefing sessions all employees are given an opportunity to share good practice or indeed express concerns they have.</p> <p>These issues are discussed and brought to the attention of the management team. The service as a whole will also be coming together on a regular basis to share thoughts and issues as a team.</p> <p><i>Target date: November 2014</i></p>
<p>Publicising of Service Standards TALISMAN found two instances where service standards were different in some documents.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i></p>	<p>Service standards should be the same in all documents, the rent and income manager will review both the service standards and documents they are published in when the standards are</p>

Recommendations for Improvement and Response	
Scrutiny findings/Recommendation	Response
<p><i>Ensure that service standards are the same in all documents</i></p>	<p>reviewed at the end of the year.</p> <p><i>Target date: March 2014</i></p>
Training	
<p>Training</p> <p>Training was discussed with managers and front line employees and highlighted that some training has been provided to existing employees although there were some gaps.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i> <i>Conflict and resolution training needs to be provided as soon as possible for new employees during induction. There should be a consistent induction plan for new employees prior to them undertaking the role rather than this varying for each employee.</i></p>	<p>Training is important and each team members training needs are addressed through appraisals and 1-2-1's.</p> <p>Conflict and resolution training has been given to every member of RAIT in early August as this was seen as imperative for the role of the rent and income team.</p> <p>The Rent and Income Manager has recently met with HR to discuss a consistent induction plan for new employees to ensure all staff are offered the correct training prior to undertaking the role. This should be rolled out in the near future.</p> <p><i>Target date: February 2014</i></p>



Report to Customers and Communities Committee

7 November 2013

Title: Anti-Social Behaviour Performance Update:
April to September 2013

Report of: Director of Customers and Communities

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide a performance update for the period April to September 2013, as well as an update on anti-social behaviour (ASB) procedure developments.

Background

2. The report details a summary of ASB performance results and achievements during the first two quarters of this year. This performance is broken down further by neighbourhood area in appendices one to eight. Progress in relation to ASB service developments is also included.

Performance Update

3. During this period 1133 new cases were opened. When compared to the same period last year this represents an increase of 12 %. Within the new cases opened there has been an increase in a number of different reported case categories when compared with the same period last year. These categories are; unruly children, animal Nuisance, noise nuisance and domestic abuse. There are no identifiable trends or hotspot areas for the increase in these types of ASB cases.
4. As at 30 September 2013, there were 495 cases currently being investigated across the borough; this is a decrease of 24% compared to the same period last year. Compared with the same period last year both the number of cases opened and cases closed have significantly increased during this period, while the current case load has decreased. This shows that we have been able to resolve customer's ASB cases at an earlier stage.
5. The top three types of ASB issues recorded during this period are,
 - Noise Nuisance 328
 - Animal Nuisance 132
 - Domestic Abuse 127

6. Compared to the same period last year, Noise Nuisance remains the most reported issue by customers. Animal nuisance has replaced youth disorder as the second highest reported issue and Domestic Violence has remained the third highest reported issue.
7. During this period we made 1073 referrals to other agencies in relation to supporting customers during the investigation of ASB cases. This is a 17% increase compared with the same period last year. These are broken down by Office in appendices 1 to 8.
8. Between April and September 2013, we closed 1107 cases. Of these closed cases 1082 (98%) were resolved without the need for ASB legal action. This is an increase compared to the same period last year where 97% of cases were resolved without the need for ASB legal action. The reasons for case closure are included in appendices 1 to 8.
9. Between April and September 2013, we took 373 Formal and Legal Actions. This equates to three actions being taken each working day. This is a 25% increase on the same period last where we took 279 legal and formal actions and that equated to 2.3 actions being taken each working day.
10. The Formal and Legal Actions are broken down below: -

• Formal Warnings Issued	333
• Notice of Seeking Possession Served	26
• Possession Granted	2
• Eviction carried out	1
• Injunctions	5
• Extension of Introductory Tenancy	3
• Notice of termination Served	3
11. Analysis of the legal actions undertaken has shown that the actions are across all neighbourhoods and that they vary in terms of case category. Therefore there is no identifiable trend for the increase when compared to the same period last year.
12. Details of how we have performed against the performance indicator and service standards are included in Appendix 9.

Customer Satisfaction

13. During this period, 1,107 cases were closed, of these 728 cases had Customers. 122 (17%) of cases with customers were surveyed following the closure of their ASB case. Of these, 113 (93%) of customers stated that they were satisfied with how their case was dealt with and 111 (91%) of customers were satisfied with the outcome of their case.
14. There were 13 customers (10%) who were dissatisfied during this period, nine of which stated that they were still experiencing problems, two were unhappy with the outcome of the case, one customer said that they were not advised what actions would be taken to resolve their complaint and one was dissatisfied due to the lack of regular feedback given by the investigating officer. All cases were reviewed and attempts made to contact customers to discuss their dissatisfaction, these actions confirmed the following outcomes: -

15. Two customers had left their homes since their ASB case was closed and were unable to be contacted. One related to dissatisfaction that Council departments could not take enforcement action. One case was re-opened and referred to NRT which has subsequently been closed and agreed with the customer. One customer was contacted by a Neighbourhood Relations Officer and confirmed the problems had since stopped. Three customers stated that although the problems had stopped they were worried about repercussions or further ASB problems. One Customer remained unhappy with the outcome and felt that although the problems had stopped that their neighbour should have been evicted.
16. Of the four other cases, these were reviewed by NRT Managers and discussed with the investigating officers; two cases were found to have been correctly investigated and in two cases appropriate advice was provided regarding the need to provide customers with agreed feedback on their cases.

Hate Crime Incidents

17. During this period, we received 30 Hate Crime incident reports; this is a 7% decrease compared to the same period last year. The new Hate Crime incidents reported related to: -
 - Race 20
 - Disability 5
 - Religion 1
 - Sexuality 4
18. See the table below for further details: -

Year	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Total
2008/09	1	8	17	6	32
2009/2010	8	11	13	13	45
2010/2011	8	10	18	10	46
2011/2012	16	16	2	15	49
2012/2013	10	22	10	17	59
2013/2014	10	20			30

19. We closed 31 ASB cases relating to Hate Crime incidents during this period. The closure reasons are detailed below: -
 - Resolved without the need for legal action 19
 - Written warning 1
 - No Hate Crime evidenced 3
 - Non-engagement from Customer 3
 - Customer re-housed by TGHC 1
 - Referred to support agencies 1
 - Perpetrator terminated tenancy 1
 - Customer terminated tenancy 1
 - Perpetrator served with NOSP but not pursued at court 1
20. We are currently investigating 18 cases relating to Hate Crime incidents.
21. Where cases are closed as a result of no evidence, discussions are held with relevant partner agencies and other referrals that may be able to provide support are considered at this stage.

Domestic Abuse

22. During this period, we received 127 new reports of Domestic Abuse; this is an increase of 25% compared to the same period last year when we received 95 incident reports. The new Domestic Abuse reports related to: -
- Physical 63
 - Emotional 20
 - Psychological 10
 - Financial 1
 - MARAC – For info only 33
23. We closed 145 ASB cases relating to Domestic Abuse during this period. The closure reasons are detailed below: -
- Resolved without the Need for Legal Action 41
 - MARAC – Information Only 65
 - Victim Re-housed 15
 - Perpetrator Re-housed 1
 - Victim Terminated Tenancy 10
 - Referred to Agencies for Support 3
 - Not evidenced 2
 - Perpetrator Terminated Tenancy 1
 - Warning Issued 1
 - Non-engagement from Customer 5
 - Perpetrator served with NOSP but not pursued at court 1
24. We are currently investigating 34 cases relating to Domestic Abuse.
25. Where cases are closed as a result of no evidence, discussions are held with relevant partner agencies and other referrals that may be able to provide support are considered at this stage.

Customer Assessment Tool

26. Between April and September 2013, we carried out 474 assessments with customers which related to 439 cases. The scores were as follows: -
- High Priority 109 (23%)
 - Medium Priority 240 (51%)
 - Standard Priority 125 (26%)
27. All high priority cases were referred to Community Safety and Neighbourhood Policing teams and discussed with partner agencies at the relevant neighbourhood Tasking & Co-Ordination meeting.
28. The number of forms completed during this period highlights that approximately 40% of our ASB cases are being managed by officers using the assessment tool.

Vetting and Exclusions

29. Between April and September 2013, we carried out 179 police vetting checks. Of these, 145 related to male applicants and 34 related to female applicants.

30. Of the 179 vetting checks received, 155 were from TGHC Home Choice, 14 from Gateshead Council's Housing Options Service and 10 were from Gateshead Council's Supported Tenancy Team.
31. Of the 179 vetting checks carried out, 64 met the criteria for Exclusion, 93 applicants were given access to the Housing Register, three were demoted and 19 applications were require further information to make decision. A customer profile breakdown of Excluded applicants is detailed in Appendix 10.

ASB Training Programme

32. Following the recommendations from the TALISMAN scrutiny, learning from customer complaints, satisfaction surveys and consultation with SIG members a training programme has been developed to assist employees to effectively manage ASB cases. Further the training will seek and re-refresh their skills and learning in terms of best practice. The planned training will be delivered during November and December 2013. An update on this training will be provided in a future report.

Legal Tools and Powers

33. During September 2013, the Housing Services Manager attended an Anti Social Behaviour conference, hosted by Northern Housing Consortium. Learning from the conference will be developed to ensure we can prepare to respond to the changes that will be introduced following the implementation of the ASB Police and Crime Bill 2013. Updates in relation to the new legal tools and powers will be provided in future reports.

Customer Involvement

34. During this period, the ASB Service Improvement Group has met on three occasions which were attended by a total of 11 customers.
35. The group have received a presentation on value for money which has helped members to develop a better understanding of performance information and to identify practical examples of efficiencies.
36. Further the group were given an explanation on the background and aims of the Safetyworks initiative. The group considered draft versions of pre and post questionnaires and their views were fed back to the initiative steering group.
37. In addition they viewed the partnership DVD and raised a number of constructive comments. This included suggestions on how funding could be obtained to help deliver the training to young persons in future years. Further discussion on the group's comments will be shared with partners during the evaluation of the Safetyworks! initiative. An update will be provided to the committee within the next report.

Knowledge Exchange Partnership

38. Following on from his research undertaken during 2011 into the role of specialist ASB officers, Dr Kevin J Brown from Newcastle University's Law School, approached us to discuss a knowledge exchange partnership.

39. It was proposed this would involve Dr Brown providing detailed advice and analysis on the pending ASB legislative changes which would help us to swiftly revise our policies, procedures and practices. Further that Dr Brown presentation skills and knowledge could be utilised to deliver training across the partnership including to frontline officers, police officers and as a legal specialist to the judiciary. In response and subject to approval from TGHC and Safer Gateshead, Dr Brown would use the experience gained to produce academic articles and research into the use of ASB tools and powers.
40. After discussing the proposal with the Council's Community Safety section it was decided to progress the Exchange partnership on the basis that Dr Brown would spend a six month placement for 2.5 days per week that would see him dividing his time between both TGHC and Community Safety.
41. The cost of the knowledge exchange relates to Dr Brown's salary and would partially be met by a funding application to the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). Further indirect 'payments in kind' that relate the usage of our equipment e.g. computers, photocopier, printing materials and room hire can be deducted from the sum.
42. However as this would not fully meet the required costs, a funding application was therefore presented during September 2013 to the Community Safety Board. The Board endorsed the knowledge exchange and agreed to provide match funding for the sum of £2,508.07.
43. Dr Brown is now drafting the application and should the bid be successful it is envisaged that the joint working arrangements would be established by March 2014, which would mean that Dr Brown's placement would coincide with the new legal tools and powers coming into force. An update will be provided to the committee within future reports.

ASB Conference

44. The Council's Community Safety team have organised an ASB conference and exhibition to be held at the Dryden Centre during November which will involve presentations and workshops for a range of partner agencies including, TGHC, Police Officers and specialist ASB officers from Registered Providers. The conference will involve guest speakers from; Social Landlords Crime & Nuisance Group (SLCNG), Home Office ASB Policy team and Newcastle University. An update will be provided to the committee within the next report.

Impact on Tenants

45. Our partnership approach ensures we continue to focus on the customer priority of tackling anti-social behaviour effectively, supporting vulnerable victims and having a positive impact on tenants, their families and communities.

Link to Values

46. The report relates to the following values of the company:-
 - Being customer focussed, innovative and professional
 - Being motivated, trained and committed across the company
 - Embracing equality

- Being a listening and learning organisation

Risk Management Implications

47. Tackling anti-social behaviour effectively has continued to be a key priority both nationally and locally for tenants in Gateshead.

Financial Implications

48. The Head of Corporate Services confirms there are no financial implications arising directly from the recommendations of this report.

Value for Money

49. The proposed ESRC knowledge exchange partnership represents value for money in obtaining the services of leading academic at a significantly reduced cost.
50. The ASB Conference will be free of charge and will allow officers to benefit from knowledge from expert speakers. Learning from the event will be further disseminated throughout the Company and improve our approach to tackling ASB.

Equality and Diversity

51. Ensuring we have access to specialist services and resources to support the most vulnerable residents, regardless of what diverse needs they may have is crucial in tackling ASB. Further developing our approach to managing risk for customers will enhance the service provided.

Health Implications

52. By accessing partnership arrangements and developing a holistic approach is enabling us to continue to address the underlying causes of ASB, supporting both victims and perpetrators. This will impact positively on the health and well being of individuals.

Environmental Implications

53. There are no environmental implications as a result of this report

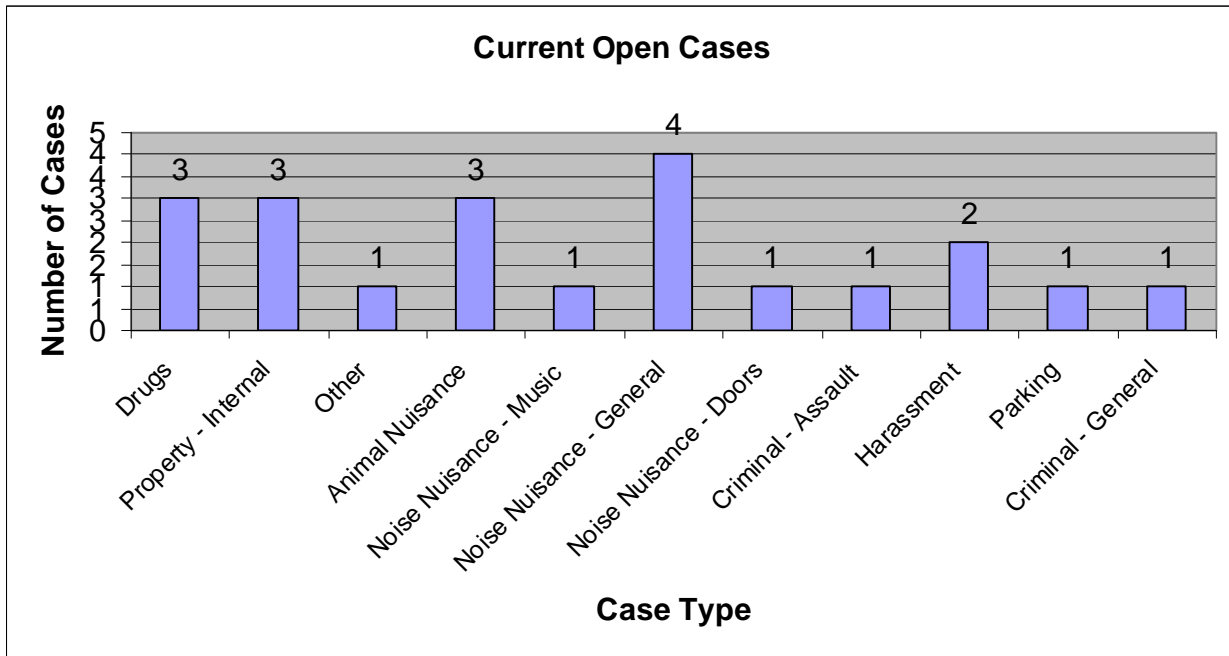
Recommendation

54. The views of the committee are sought on whether it is satisfied with the anti-social behaviour update for the period April to September 2013.

Central

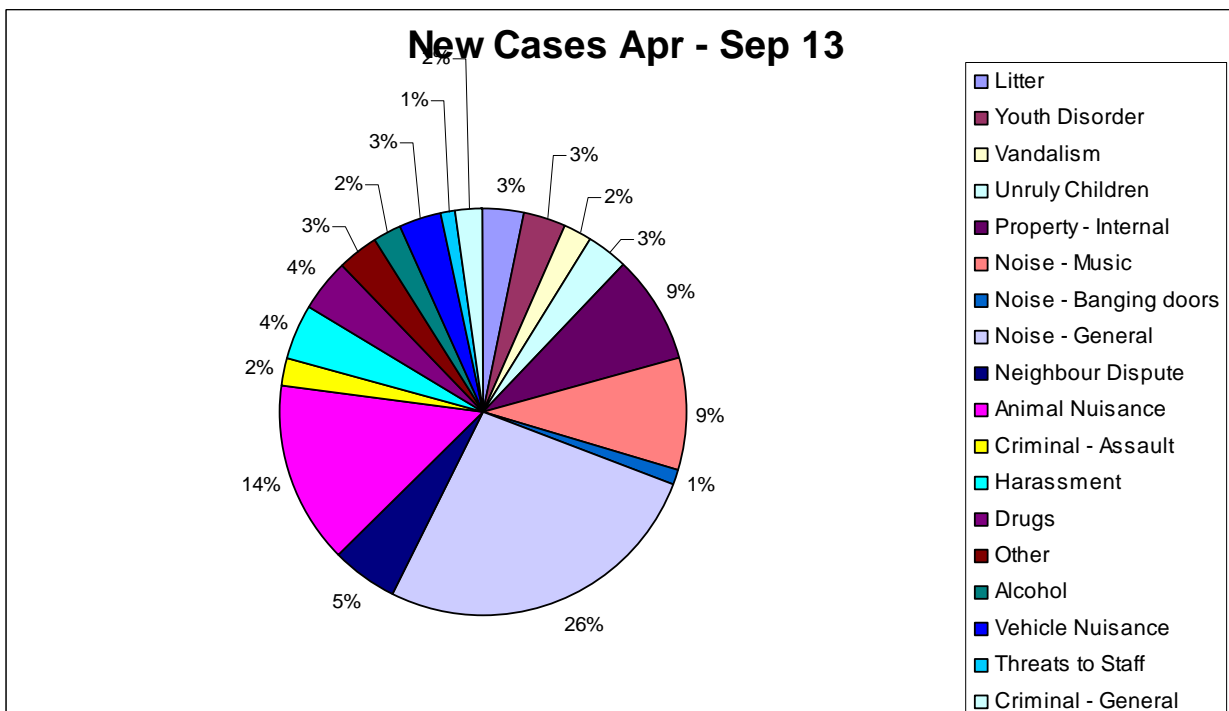
Current Caseload

The current caseload for Central Housing Office at the end of September 2013 is 21 open cases. This can be broken down further by case type.



New Cases

Between April 13 and September 13, 91 new ASB cases have been opened in Central area.



Closed Cases

Between April 13 and September 13, 94 cases have been closed within the Central area. The closure reasons are as follows:-

Resolved without the need for Legal Action	46
Written Warning Issued	28
Complaint Investigated - No Nuisance evidenced	5
Non-engagement from Customer	4
Perpetrator Terminated Tenancy	4
Complainant Terminated Tenancy	2
Referred to Other Agency	1
Perpetrator Flit	1
Legal Other	1
Perpetrator Deceased	1
Perpetrator Re-housed	1

Formal Actions

Between April 13 and September 13, 43 written warnings were issued.

Service Standards

Between April 13 and September 13, 91 new cases were opened and 91 100% of these were acknowledged and investigations begun within timescales.

Between April 13 and September 13, 94 cases were closed, of these 94 100% of Customers were sent a closure letter prior to the case being closed.

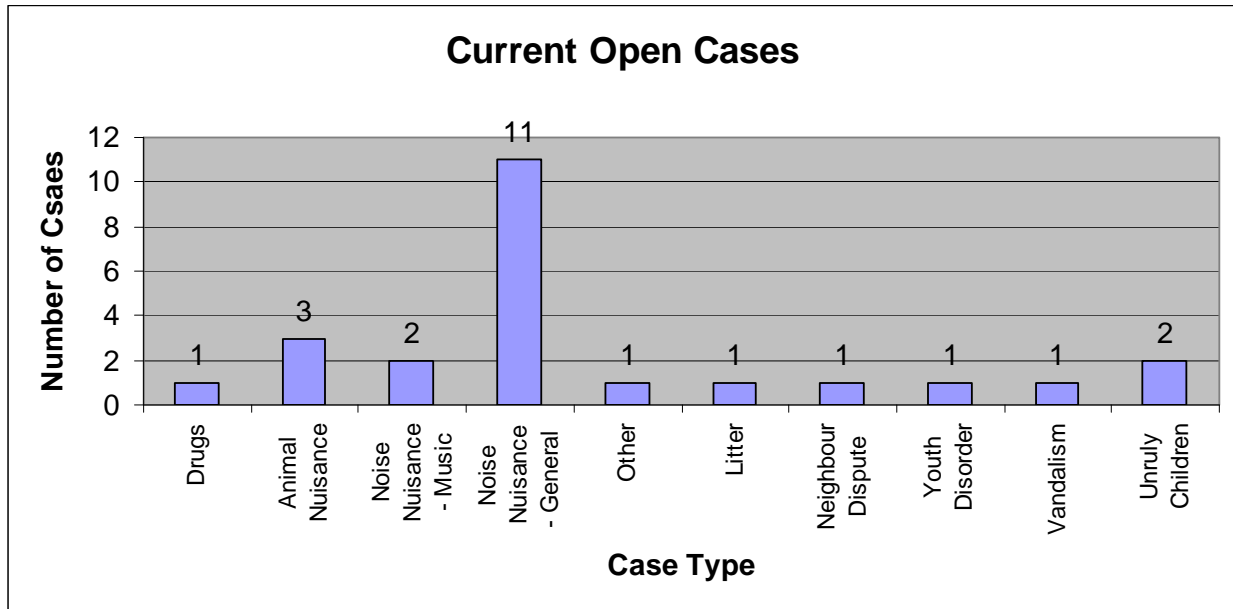
Referrals to Agencies

Between April 13 and September 13, 43 referrals have been made to other agencies.

Dunston

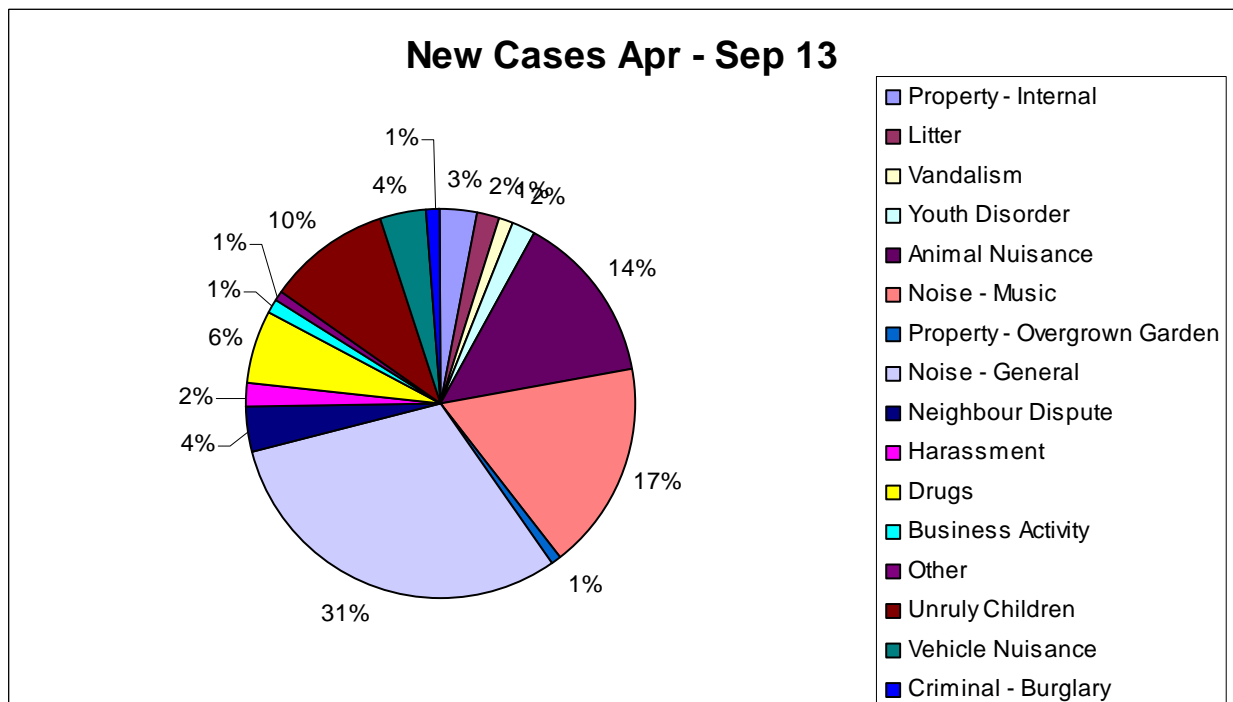
Current Caseload

The current caseload for Dunston Housing Office at the end of September 2013 is 24 open cases. This can be broken down further by case type.



New Cases

Between April 13 and September 13, 99 new ASB cases have been opened in Dunston area.



Closed Cases

Between April 13 and September 13, 100 cases were closed within the Dunston area. The closure reasons are as follows:-

Resolved without the need for legal action	37
Written Warning Issued	31
Complaint Investigated – No Nuisance Evidenced	14
Non-engagement from Customer	7
Referred to Other Agency	6
Perpetrator Terminated Tenancy	2
Duplicate Case	2
Perpetrator Deceased	1

Formal Actions

Between April 13 and September 13, 43 written warnings were issued.

Service Standards

Between April 13 – September 13, 99 new cases were opened, of these 97 (98%) were acknowledged and investigations begun within timescales.

Between April 13 – September 13, 100 cases were closed, 100 100% of Customers were sent a closure letter prior to the case being closed.

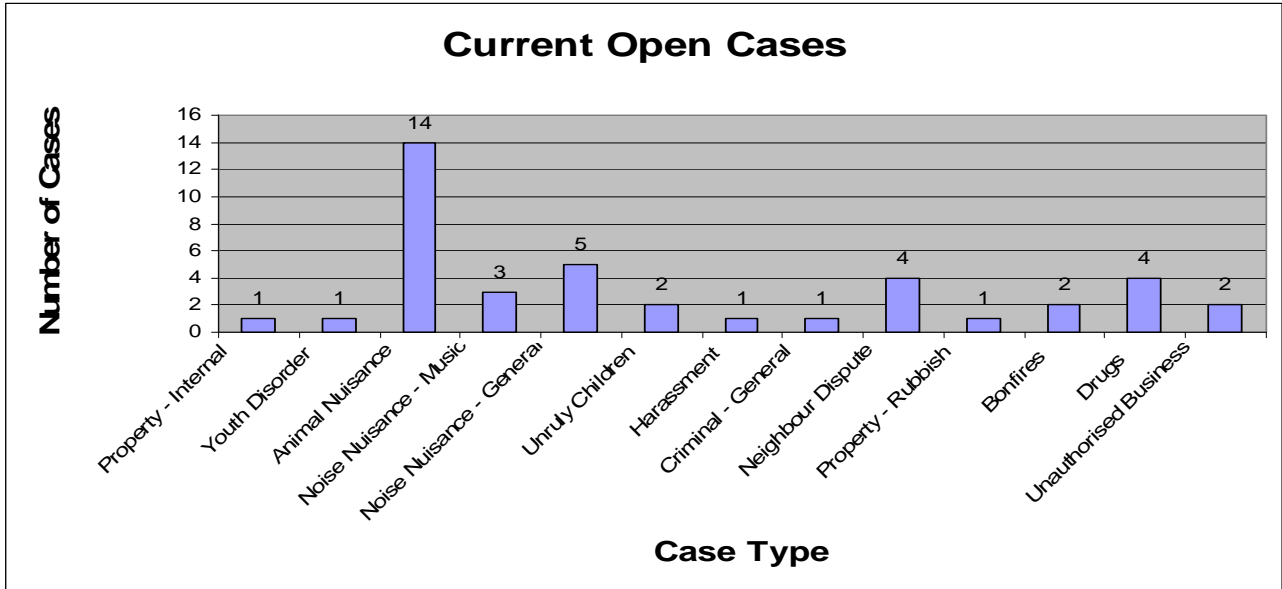
Referrals to Agencies

Between April 13 – September 13, 103 referrals were made to other Agencies.

Blaydon

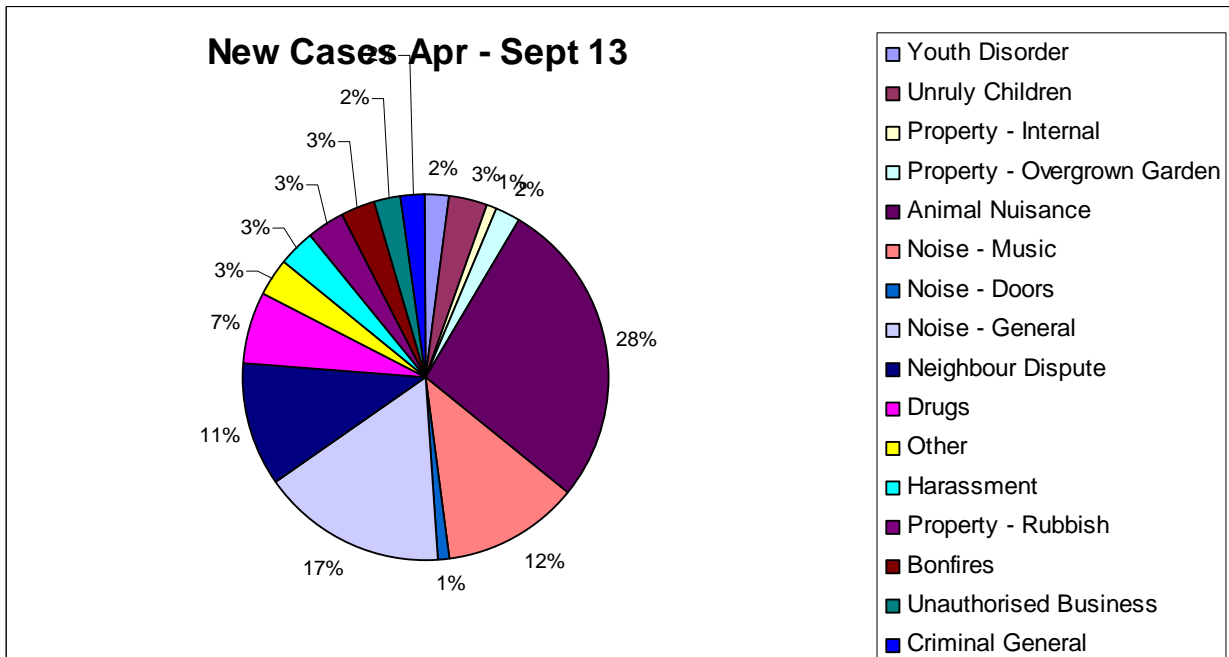
Current Caseload

The current caseload for Blaydon Housing Office at the end of September 2013 is 41 open cases. This can be broken down further by case type.



New Cases

Between April 13 and September 13, 92 new ASB cases have been opened in Blaydon area.



Closed Cases

Between April 13 and September 13, 70 cases were closed within the Blaydon area. The closure reasons are as follows:-

Resolved without the need for Legal Action	36
Complaint Investigated – No Nuisance Evidenced	8
Non-engagement from Customer	8
Duplicate Case	7
Written Warning Issued	4
Referred to other Agency	4
Customer Terminated Tenancy	2
Perpetrator Terminated Tenancy	1

Formal Actions

Between April 13 and September 13, 9 written warnings were issued.

Service Standards

Between April 13 – September 13, 92 cases were opened of these 86 (93%) were acknowledged and investigations begun within timescales.

Between April 13 – September 13, 70 cases were closed, of these 70 100% of Customers were sent a closure letter prior to the case being closed.

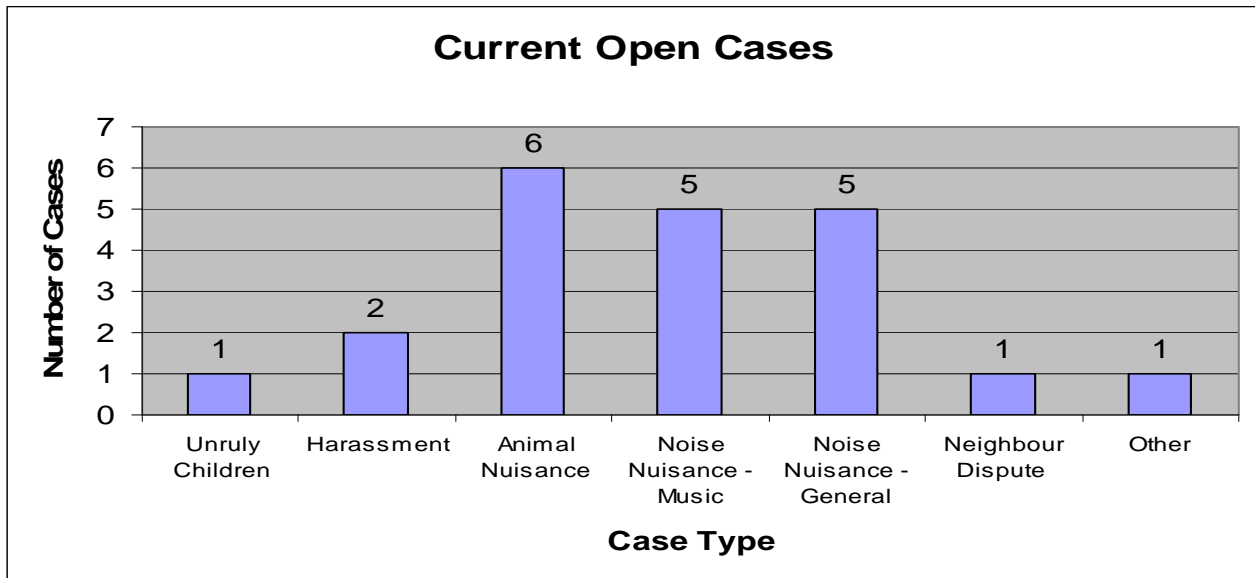
Referrals to Agencies

Between April 13 – September 13, 48 referrals were made to other agencies.

Felling

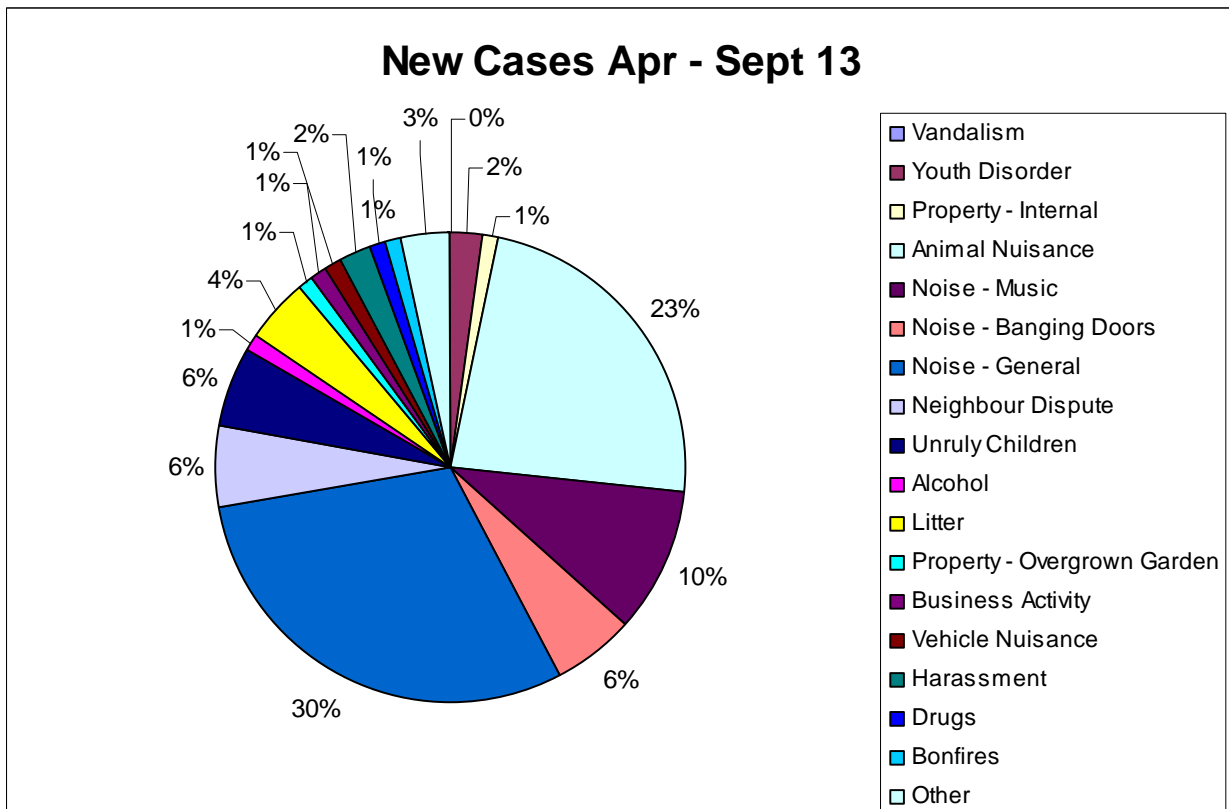
Current Caseload

The current caseload for Felling Housing Office at the end of September 2013 is 21 open cases. This can be broken down further by case type.



New Cases

Between April 13 and September 13, 90 new ASB cases have been opened in Felling area.



Closed Cases

Between April 13 and September 13, 85 cases were closed within the Felling area. The closure reasons are as follows:-

Resolved without the need for Legal Action	36
Written Warning Issued	23
Complaint investigated – No nuisance evidenced	11
Referred to other Agency	4
Non-engagement from Customer	4
Duplicate Case	3
Perpetrator Terminated Tenancy	2
Complainant Terminated Tenancy	1
Complainant Deceased	1

Formal Actions

Between April 13 and September 13, 28 written warnings were issued.

Service Standards

Between April 13 – September 13, 90 cases were opened, 89 (99%) of these were acknowledged and investigations begun within timescales.

Between April 13 – September 13, 85 cases were closed, of these 85 100% of Customers were sent a closure letter prior to the case being closed.

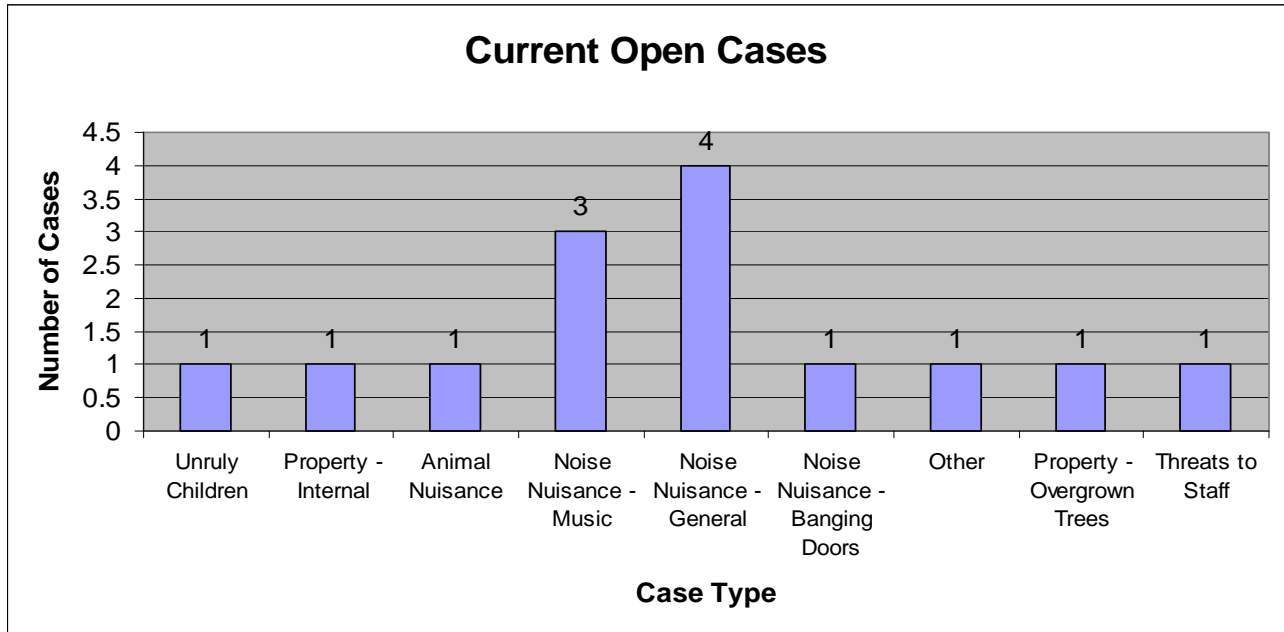
Referrals to Agencies

Between April 13 – September 13, 62 referrals were made to other agencies.

Leam Lane

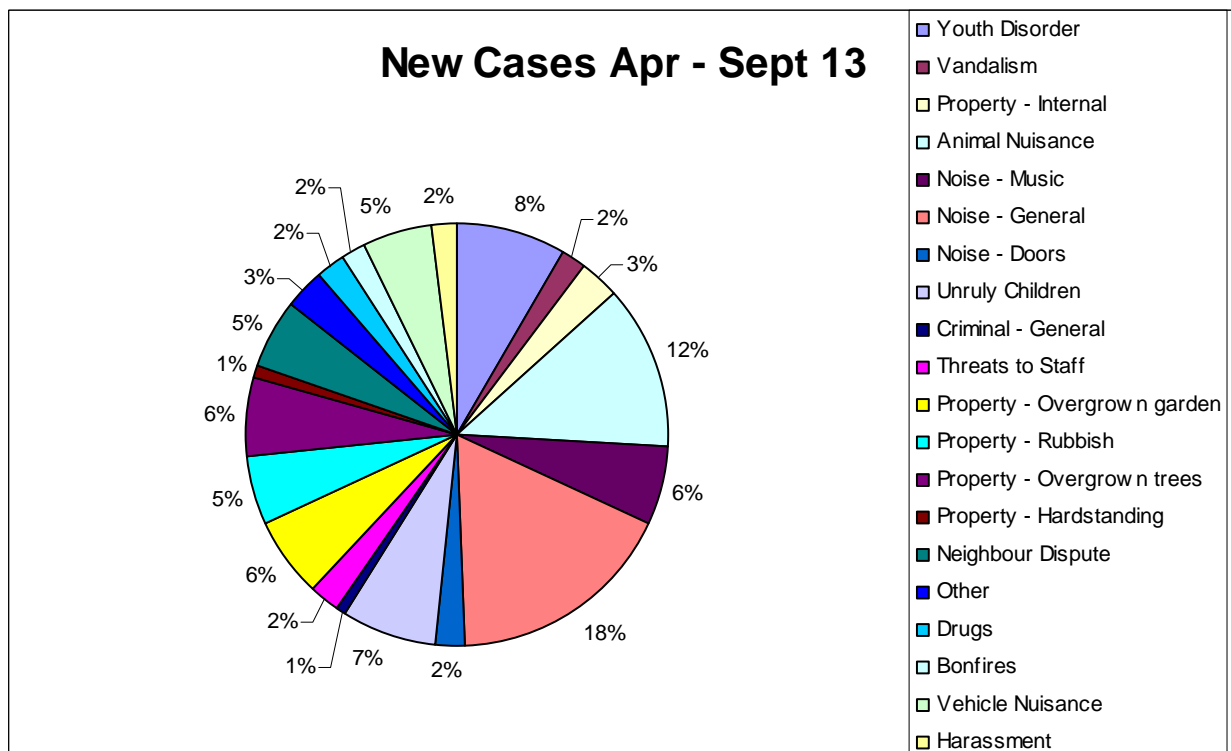
Current Caseload

The current caseload for Leam Lane Housing Office at the end of September 13 is 14 open cases. This can be broken down further by case type.



New Cases

Between April 13 and September 13, 97 new ASB cases have been opened in Leam Lane area.



Closed Cases

Between April 13 and September 13, 102 cases were closed within the Leam Lane area. The closure reasons are as follows:-

Resolved without the need for Legal Action	68
Written Warning Issued	16
Referred to other Agency	8
Duplicate Cases	5
Complaint investigated – No Nuisance Evidenced	4
Mutual Exchange	1

Formal Actions

Between April 13 and September 13, 18 written warnings were issued.

Service Standards

Between April 13 – September 13, 97 cases were opened, of these 97 (100%) of cases were acknowledged and investigations begun within timescales.

Between April 13 – September 13, 101 cases were closed, of these 101 100% of Customers were sent a closure letter prior to the case being closed.

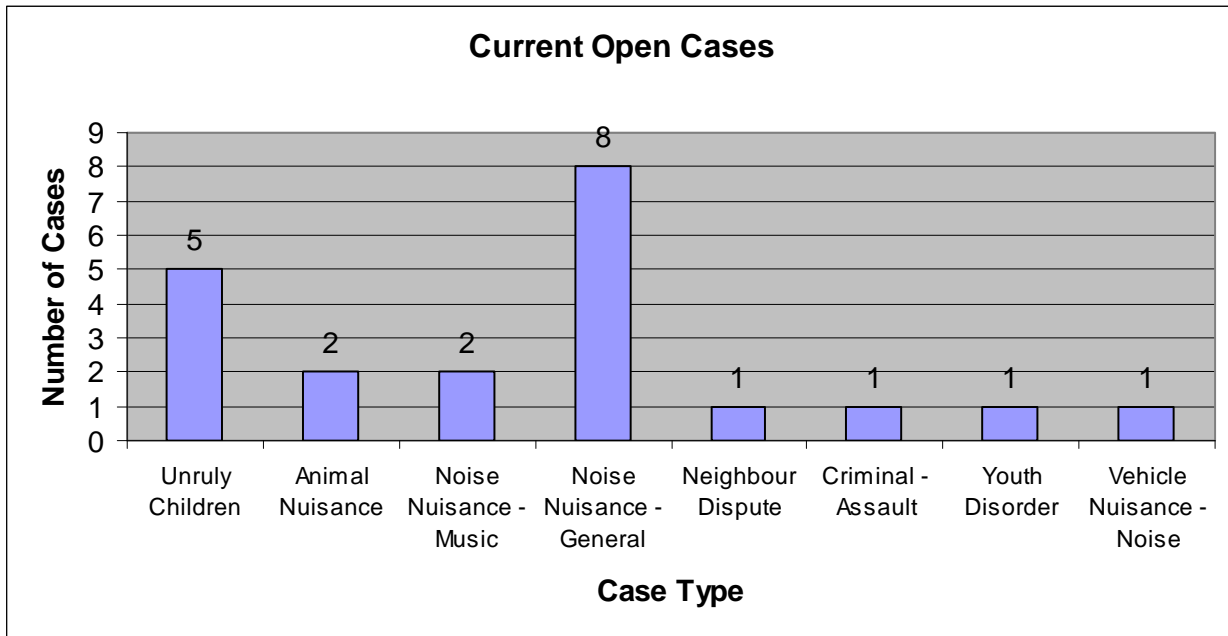
Referrals to Agencies

Between April 13 – September 13, 64 referrals were made to other Agencies.

Birtley

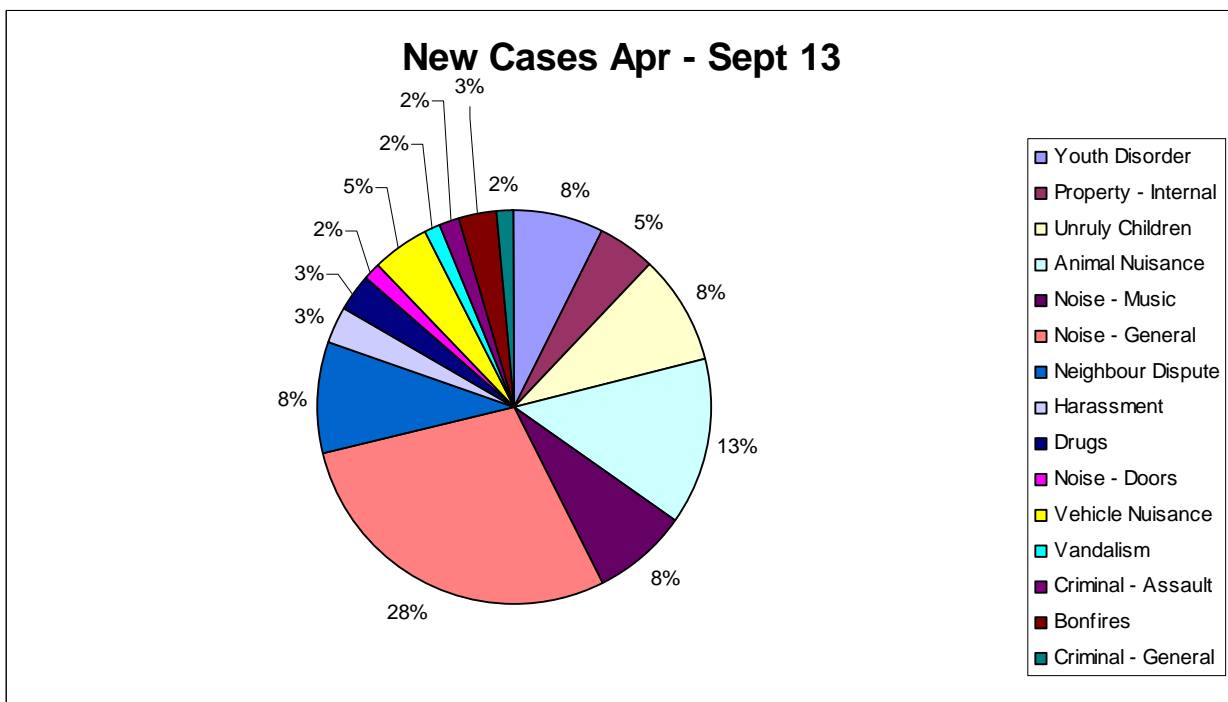
Current Caseload

The current caseload for Birtley Housing Office at the end of September 2013 is 21 open cases. This can be broken down further by case type.



New Cases

Between April 13 and September 13, 66 new ASB cases have been opened in Birtley area.



Closed Cases

Between April 13 and September 13, 69 cases were closed in the Birtley area. The closure reasons are as follows:-

Resolved without the need for Legal Action	54
Non- engagement from Customer	5
Written Warning Issued	3
Complaint Investigated – No Nuisance Evidenced	2
Duplicate Case	2
Perpetrator Terminated Tenancy	2
Deceased Perpetrator	1

Formal Actions

Between April 13 – September 13, 5 written warnings were issued.

Service Standards

Between April 13 – September 13, 66 cases were opened, of these 65 (98%) cases were acknowledged and investigations begun within timescales.

Between April 13 – September 13, 69 cases were closed with 68 99% of Customers being sent a closure letter prior to the case being closed.

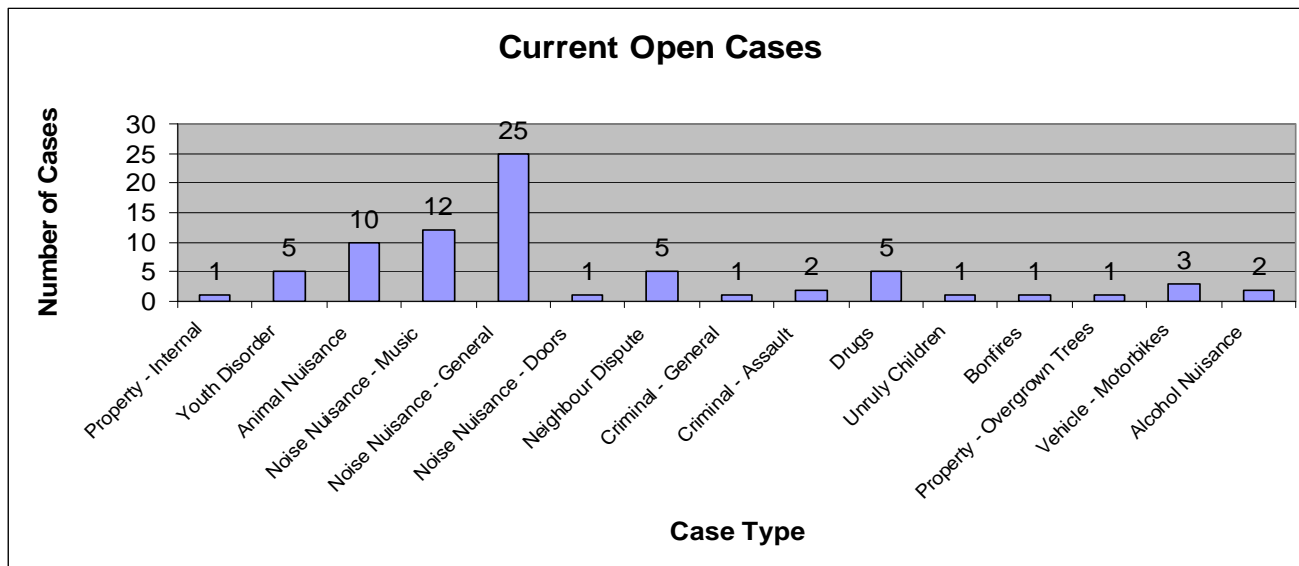
Referrals to Agencies

Between April 13 – September 13, 102 referrals were made to other agencies.

Wrekenton

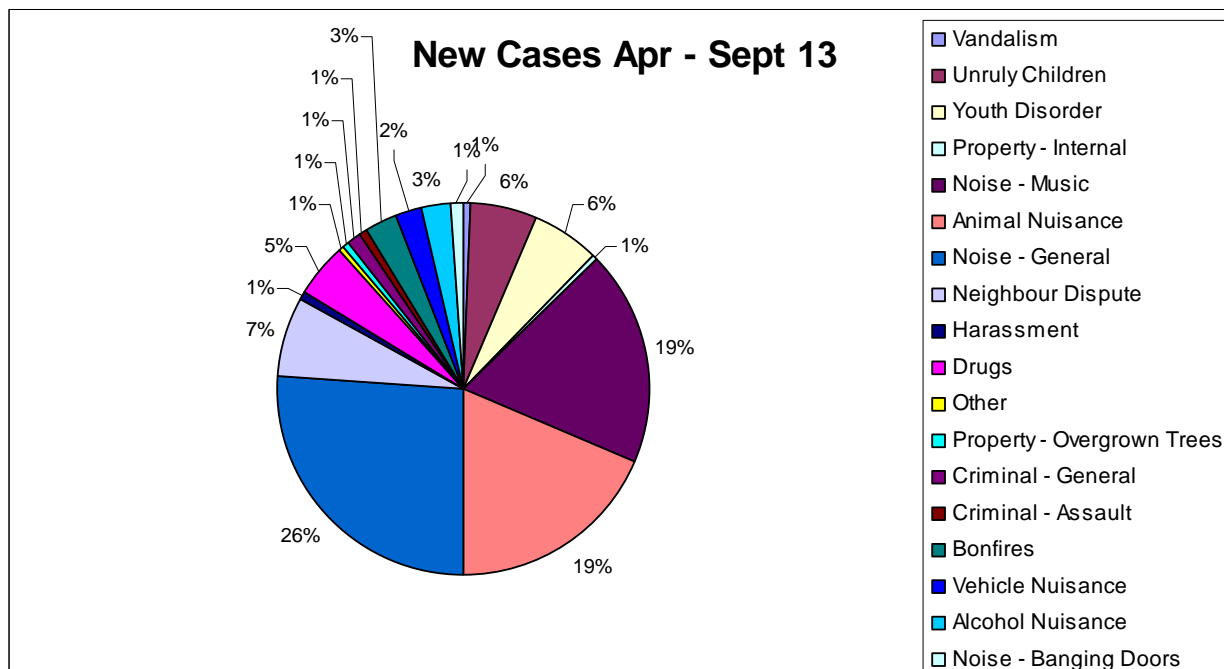
Current Caseload

The current caseload for Wrekenton Housing Office at the end of September 2013 is 75 open cases. This can be broken down further by case type.



New Cases

Between April 13 and September 13, 188 new ASB cases have been opened in Wrekenton area.



Closed Cases

Between April 13 and September 13, 173 cases were closed in the Wrekenton area. The closure reasons are as follows:-

Resolved without the need for Legal Action	121
Written warning Issued	28
Complaint Investigated – No Nuisance Evidenced	9
Non-engagement from Customer	4
Duplicate Case	4
Referred to other Agency	2
Perpetrator Terminated Tenancy	2
Complainant Terminated Tenancy	1
Perpetrator Re-housed with TGHC Support	1
Perpetrator Flit	1

Formal Actions

Between April 13 – September 13, 39 written warnings were issued.

Service Standards

Between April 13 – September 13, 188 cases were opened, 187 (99%) of cases were acknowledged and investigations begun within timescales.

Between April 13 – September 13, 173 cases were closed, of these 173 100% of Customers were sent a closure letter prior to case closure.

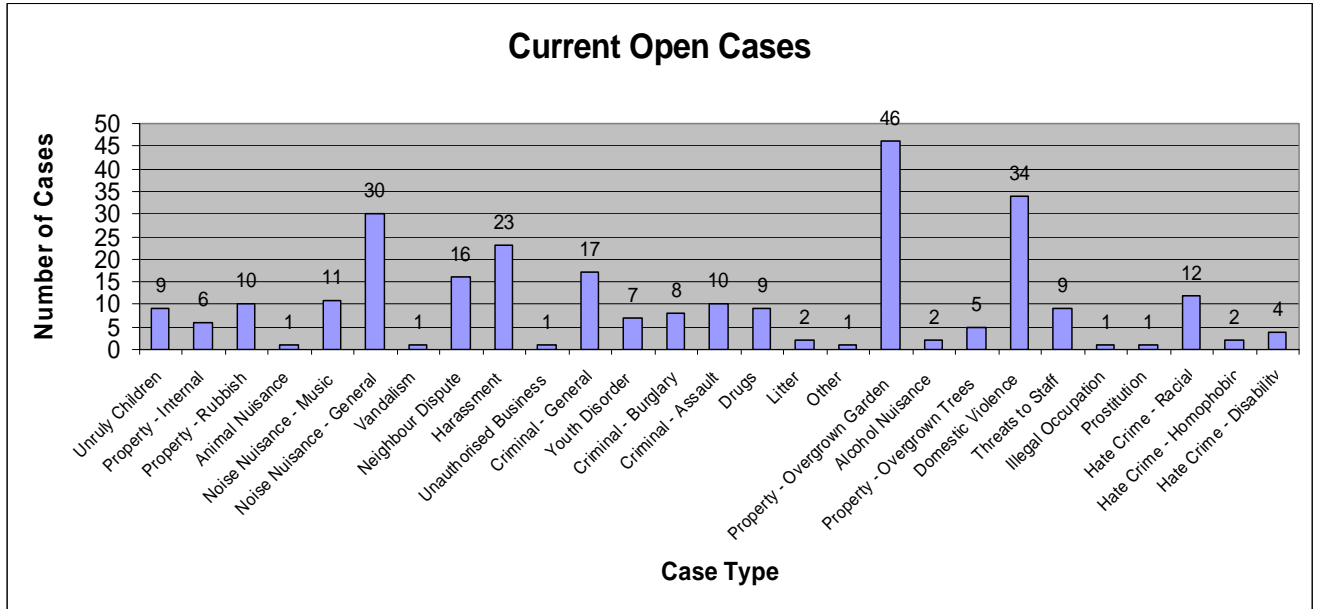
Referrals to Agencies

Between April 13 – September 13, 63 referrals were made to other agencies.

Neighbourhood Relations Team

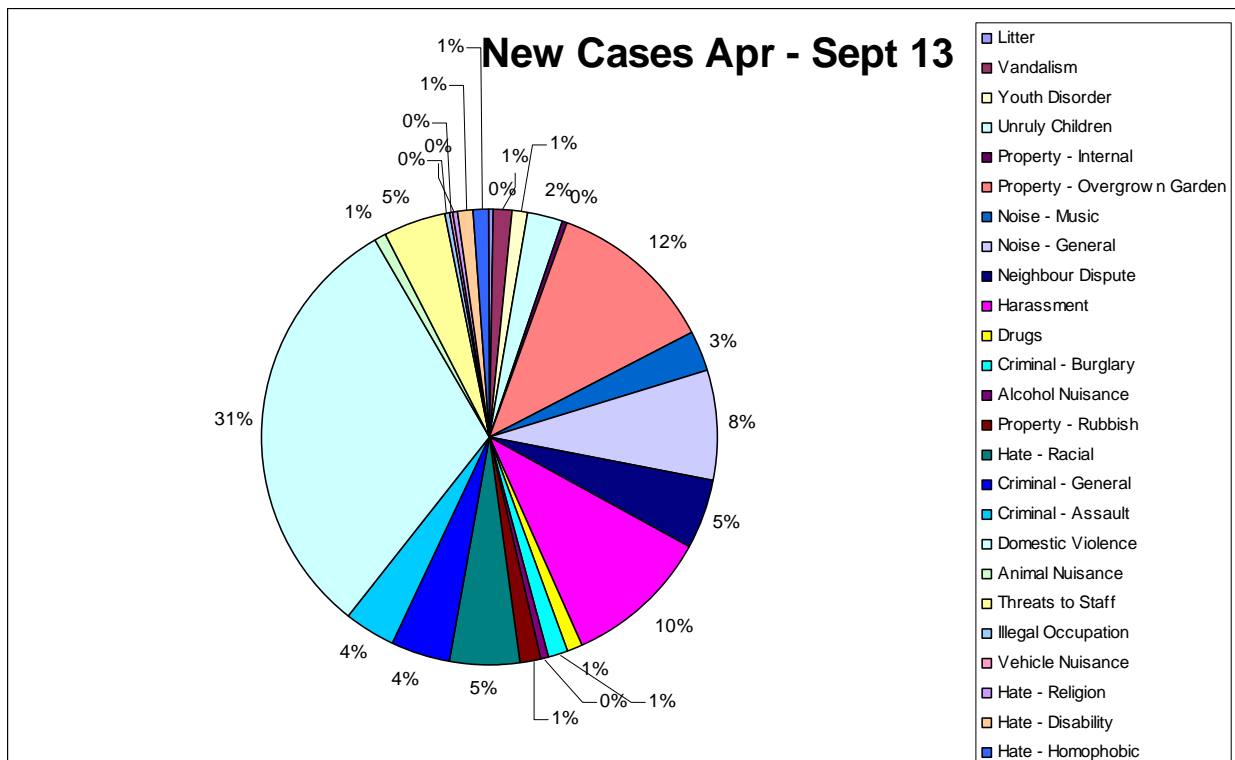
Current Caseload

The current caseload for The Neighbourhood Relations Team at the end of September 13 is 278 open cases. This can be broken down further by case type.



New Cases

Between April 13 and September 13, 410 new ASB cases have been opened by the Neighbourhood Relations Team.



Closed Cases

Between April 13 and September 13, 414 cases were closed within the Neighbourhood Relations Team. The closure reasons are as follows:-

Resolved without the need for Legal Action	181
Written Warning Issued	42
MARAC – Information Only	58
Complaint Investigated – No Nuisance Evidenced	25
Complainant Re-housed	23
Perpetrator Terminated Tenancy	17
Non-engagement from Customer	10
Referred to Other Agency	8
Legal Action - NOSP served not pursued	13
Legal Action – Eviction	5
Legal – Other	3
Complainant Terminated Tenancy	17
Perpetrator Re-housed	3
Legal – Possession	2
Duplicate	5
Perpetrator - Flit	1
Legal Action – Injunction	1

Formal Actions

Between April 13 and September 13, 188 legal and formal actions were taken; 40 Legal actions and 148 written warnings were issued.

Service Standards

Between April 13 – September 13, 410 cases were opened, of these 410 (100%) of cases were acknowledged and investigations begun within timescales.

Between April 13 – September 13, 414 cases were closed with 414 100% of Customers being sent a closure letter prior to the case being closed.

Referrals to Agencies

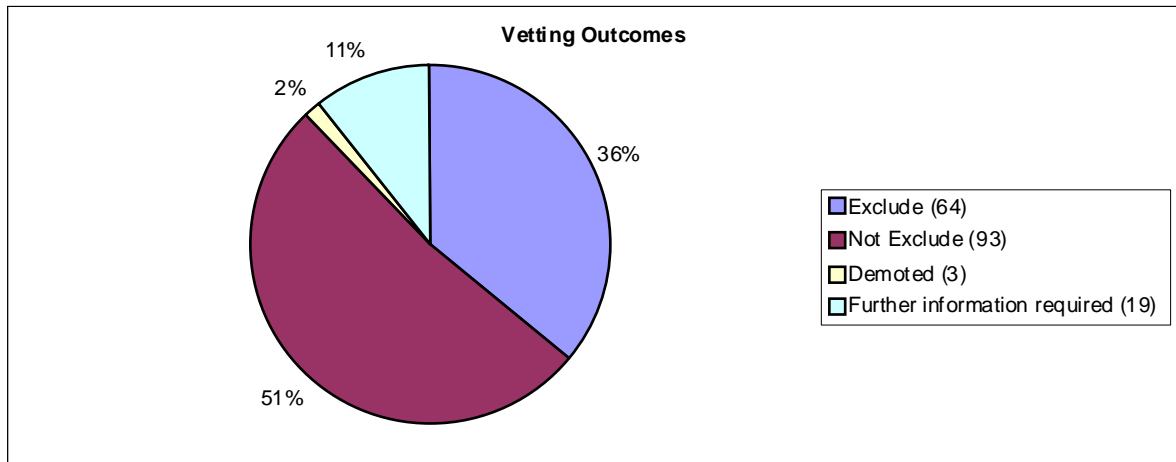
Between April 13 – September 13, 587 referrals were made to other agencies.

How We've Performed – Year to Date

Measure	Target	Cumulative 2013/2014 (Last year)	Overall Performance 2012/2013
Performance Indicator			
The number of hate crime incidents reported	Increase	30 (32)	59
% of hate crime incidents that resulted in further action	100%	100% (100%)	100%
The number of Domestic Violence incidents reported	Increase	127 (95)	212
% of Domestic Violence incidents that resulted in further action	100%	100% (100%)	100%
% of ASB cases that are resolved without the need for ASB legal action	96%	98% (97%)	97%
Satisfaction with the way ASB complaints are dealt with	94%	93% (94%)	93%
Satisfaction with the outcome of ASB complaints	93%	91% (91%)	91%
Service Standards			
% of ASB cases responded to and investigations begun within the timescale	98.5%	99% (98%)	98%
% of cases closed where the customer was sent a closure letter prior to case being closed	N/A	99% (99%)	99%

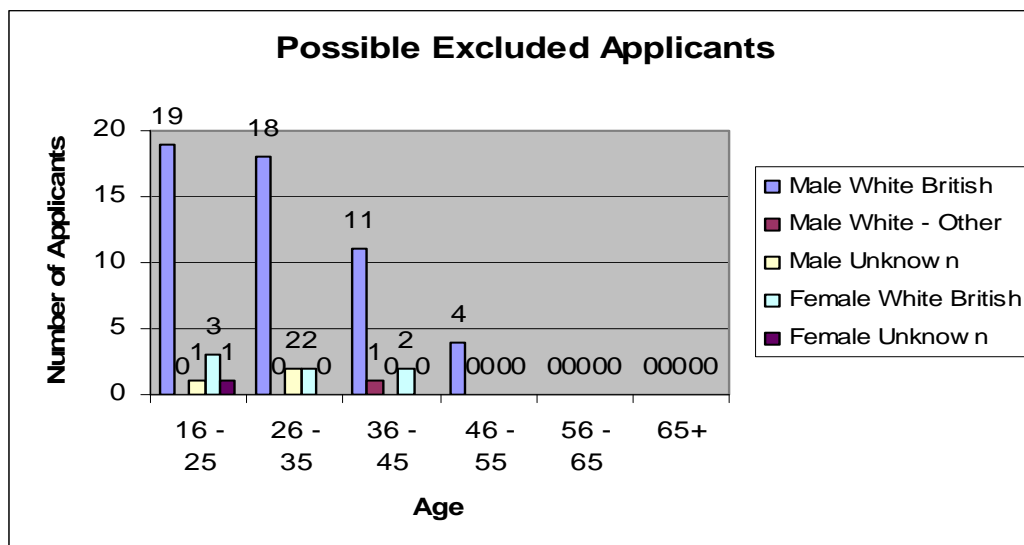
Vetting and Exclusions

Between April 13 and September 13, 179 vettings were received, 145 were in relation to male applicants and 34 were female applicants.



Of the 64 applicants put forward for possible exclusion 56 were male and 8 were female.

The possible exclude cases can be further broken down by age, gender and ethnicity:





Report to Customers and Communities Committee

7 November 2013

Title: Forward Plan

Report of: Managing Director

Purpose of report

1. To note the forward plan of reports which will be presented to Customers and Communities Committee during the next year.

Background

2. The committee agreed, at its meeting held on 2 February 2011 that a forward plan of reports it will receive at future meetings become a standing item on every committee agenda.
3. Attached as an Appendix to this report is a forward plan of reports that will be presented to meetings of this committee during the next year. This will not be an exhaustive list of reports and there will clearly be a number of other items of business that the committee will be required to consider during the course of the next year. It will however give the committee an idea of forthcoming business. It will also assist officers when planning in business and meetings to avoid when there is a lot of business.

Outstanding Issues

4. The committee noted in its last Forward Plan that the following issues would be discussed at this meeting: -
 - Complaints and Compliments Performance – End of Year Report 2012/13 – The Company have provided the Council with details of the complaints performance for 12/13 in order to inform the Council's Cabinet Report. This information together with details of a review of our approach to complaints will be the subject of a report to a future meeting of the Committee.

Link to Values

5. This report relates to the following company value of being honest, accountable and transparent.

Risk Management Implications

6. The forward plan will mitigate the risk of reports not being planned into the committee cycle.

Value for Money Implications

7. There are no value for money implications directly arising from this report.

Equality and Diversity Implications

8. Equality and diversity implications will be addressed separately in future reports.

Financial Implications

9. There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

Health Implications

10. There are no health implications directly arising from this report.

Environmental Implications

11. There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

Consultation carried out

12. Lead officers within the company have identified reports for future meetings of this committee.

Impact on Customers

13. There is no impact on customers as a result of compiling this report.

Recommendation

14. It is recommended that the forward plan be noted.

Contact: Stuart Gibson, Governance and Risk Officer

Tel No: (0191) 433 5308

Customers and Communities Committee Forward Plan

Customers and Communities Committee	Issues to be discussed
27 February 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TALISMAN – Review of Voids
May 2014 (date still to be agreed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grounds Maintenance Service Agreement 2014-15 • Complaints and Compliments Performance – End of Year Report 2013-14 • Moving Forward Training Programme • Mystery Shopping 2013-14
September 2014 (date still to be agreed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estate Activity Report – April 2013 to March 2014 • Sheltered Housing Service – Year End Update 2013/14
November 2014 (date still to be agreed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving Forward Training Programme – Six Monthly Update
<p>The following reports are taken to every meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-Social Behaviour Progress Report • Customer Involvement Activity 	