

Vectis Housing Association

Annual Report to Tenants

2010



Kate Newman
Chairman

I am very pleased to welcome you to this, our first annual report prepared just for you, our tenants. On behalf of the Board of Management, and our staff, I hope you find it interesting and helpful.

Let me start by going over some of the things we achieved during the last financial year, and what we have done since. Hopefully this will show how we are so much more than just a “landlord”, collecting rent and doing repairs. It will also demonstrate how we are already complying with new regulations introduced from April this year.

The year saw sixteen more homes brought into ownership, eleven of which were newly built, with a further three close to completion.

Despite the reluctance of banks to lend in the present environment, an additional £2 million was successfully negotiated with Nationwide Building Society. This will go towards the funding of a new development strategy aimed at providing upwards of thirty more new homes over the next five years or so.

Our tenant forum attracted new members and built on the already close relationship which exists between staff and residents. We also held an “awayday” earlier in the year at which board members and staff met on an informal basis and exchanged views about the work we do and the way we do it.

The draft of the new regulatory framework was considered, and a comprehensive response sent to the Tenant Services Authority, as part of the national consultation process. Tenants’ views were very much at the heart of the submission, which was published on the TSA’s website.

Our long-term maintenance programme continued to provide more modern and energy efficient facilities to existing homes.

Back at the office, we invested in a new housing management system which would produce essential information on recording rent and repairs in a more efficient and cost effective manner.



More new homes.....

Some of you may know of our collaboration with the Source Development Partnership which is a consortium of associations mostly based on the mainland which attracts grant funding from the government to enable us to build or otherwise provide new homes. The partnership continued to deliver its objectives for Vectis during the year. Eleven homes were handed over at the Hawthorn Meadows site in Whippingham, East Cowes.

At the behest of the Isle of Wight Council, we purchased two four-bed houses in the Newport area, with the aid of local authority grant. This funding also enabled us to buy back three flats in Arctic Road, Cowes, which we had previously sold under Right to Buy legislation. We now once again own all the flats in that complex, which also makes for more effective management.

By the end of the year, work on the three new houses at Garden Way, Pan, in Newport was approaching completion. These would eventually be tenanted in May 2010. We also received some

grant for this project, which helped to keep the rents down.

In the last two years the Association has provided almost thirty new homes for those who need them, at a gross cost of £3.2 million. The schemes have attracted grant from the government and the Isle of Wight Council amounting to just under £1.3 million in total. Whilst our working relationship with Source should not be understated, much of this success is down to the enthusiasm of the board, working closely with the staff, all determined to get things done, and to provide as many homes as we can for those who need them.

At the same time we acquired several more properties on lease, and extended the lease periods of others so that we were able to increase our stock of over fifty or so such properties in management. We continue to work with the Council to find cost effective ways of providing much needed decent and affordable temporary accommodation.

As a consequence of such extensive activity, I am delighted to report that we now manage over 350 homes, of which we own 297.

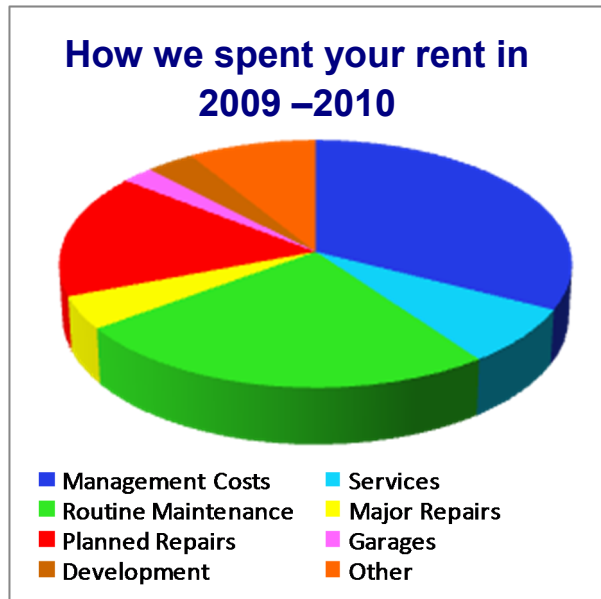


Best Value.....

We have always paid close attention to ensuring you get the best possible value for the rent you pay. We are constantly looking at better ways of doing things, and every year a report is prepared for the board which highlights what we have achieved. With the help of the tenant forum we will continue to explore all practical ways of improving.

In the last year we have:

- Continued with our extensive modernisation programme, which saves on day to day repairs
- Supplied energy saving devices, which save you money on utility bills
- Upgraded double glazed units, which reduce heating costs
- Installed full house ventilations systems, which save on energy costs, reduces condensation therefore saving money on repairs
- Restructured roles to provide new services without taking on more staff.
- Implemented new computer software, which enable us to spend more time supporting you with managing your tenancy



Service.....

In talking up achievement we never lose sight of the importance we place upon our day to day activities:

Tenant satisfaction.....

Results of the short 2009 survey indicated that ninety-five per cent of respondents were satisfied with our overall performance, ninety-two per cent with the choices they were offered from the services we provide, and seventy-five per cent with the opportunities to be involved in the work we do.

The survey also concluded that, unsurprisingly, repairs was the most important aspect of our service to you.

In July 2010, we updated this information with a further survey. The results are shown later in this report, and we are obviously now focussing our efforts based on those outcomes.

No formal complaints have been received by the Board of Management in the period covered by this report, and, by definition therefore, none have advanced to the Housing Ombudsman.

Tenant involvement.....

The one to one relationship we have with our residents underpins our approach to tenant involvement. In general, you have continually declined invitations to be more involved with what we do, and whilst this might bring us into conflict with the opinions of the Tenant Services Authority, we would always prefer to follow your views.

We will continue to work with the Tenant Forum on any issues in which its membership expresses an interest. We will also continue to encourage more of you to participate in its work.



Ten- mobility.....

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We believe we provide you with the best possible opportunities to find accommodation better suited to your needs and aspirations. Our officers are alert to these situations and work hard to find solutions to such problems. We promote and undertake transfers whenever the occasion arises, and as much as twenty per cent of our lettings during any year are of this nature, as indeed was the case in this particular period.

We remain active participants in the HomeSwapper scheme giving you free access to find homes that are available nationwide.

Our partnership with Medina and South Wight Housing Associations together with the Isle of Wight Council has brought about the launch of the Choice Based Lettings scheme known as Island Homefinder. This has given applicants greater choice in selecting where they want to live. Each week available properties are advertised and applicants can place an expression of interest in those they would like. Applicants therefore play a greater part in the allocation of homes. Although we have retained our internal transfer list, you can register on the scheme increasing your opportunities of being re-housed.

Anti-social Behaviour.....

Although your neighbourhoods are not immune from activity of this nature, the close working relationship we have with you enables us to keep its impact to a minimum. We act promptly to those reports we receive. Our Officers are usually able to resolve the matter the very same day. On the rare occasion that a more serious incident occurs, we work in close liaison with other local agencies, including the Police to offer support where we can.

“Financial Inclusion”.....

We have worked to provide services and advice for you to help maximise your disposable income.

We have continued to promote the home contents insurance scheme supported by the National Housing Federation.



This year we introduced the cooker installation service which has proved helpful to new and existing tenants alike.

Five of the new properties at Hawthorn Meadows are fitted with roof mounted solar panels, reducing utilities bills by at least 25%. The new properties at Garden Way have air source heat pumps and recycling units. The cost of running these homes will be significantly lower than for a traditionally built house.

We also want to help create opportunities for local employment, particularly in the skills we feel are most important to our tenants. In the coming year, therefore, we hope to sponsor an apprentice through a four-way partnership with Island Training, our principal electrical contractor, and a candidate from amongst our tenant communities. This is an exciting venture, entirely consistent with our rules, which we hope will prove to be a great success.

Repairs...

We continued to provide a responsive and effective repairs service. The cyclical and longer term programmes make sure the homes remain in good condition. All our properties currently meet the criteria required by the Decent Homes Standard.

Our homes become more energy efficient each year as new market innovations are researched and installed if approved. Official energy ratings remain high.

There were extensive works required to be undertaken at empty properties during the year. Unfortunately not all outgoing tenants leave their properties in quite the condition in which they found them, which delays the time before they can be re-let.

We continue with our programme of property inspections which gives you an opportunity to talk with Board Members and helps us to ensure that your homes are in good condition, and to plan ahead for major projects. Our own Maintenance Officer deals with minor repairs, fire alarm testing, and keeps an eye on the neighbourhoods as a whole.



surfaced, which was another planned ma-

ject successfully accomplished. The access road to the rear of our properties in Arctic Road, Cowes, together with surrounding footways, have all been re-

Partnering arrangements.....

Isle of Wight Council...

We have always played an active part in the various housing working groups set up by the Isle of Wight Council. The advance towards a choice-based system of allocations has been particularly challenging, and our representation on the project group has contributed in no small measure to ensuring that potential difficulties have been foreseen and countered so far as possible. We retain our membership of the Isle of Wight Strategic Housing Partnership, and contribute to the wider debates it highlights during its quarterly meetings.

Other agencies....

We continue to support, and help with measures to protect residents who are victims of domestic violence through active participation with the associated agencies. We have also funded additional security facilities at homes within the related *Sanctuary* scheme, and our officers continue to work with partner housing associations, the local authority, and other agencies on a range of community initiatives including anti-social behaviour and the environment.

Contractors.....

Our maintenance service is enhanced by the quality of our select group of partner contractors with whom we have worked so effectively over a good number of years. We know they have a good working relationship with you and are familiar with the homes they service. They also contribute towards planning major maintenance projects. We are pleased to be able to support the local economy in this way.



Performance comparison, our Benchmarking club.....

Our membership of, and active participation in, the benchmarking organisation *SHAPE* (Smaller Housing Associations Pursuing Excellence), which now comprises thirteen similarly sized associations in the south and east of the country, remains an important means of exchanging ideas of best practice and continuous improvement.

The performance indicators produced for the year under review placed Vectis “mid-table” in most of the activities compared. There is always room for improvement. We have included some comparisons in this report, but we do have a comprehensive report available covering all the areas of comparison, which we are happy to provide upon request.

Through working with *SHAPE*, the Association also has access to wider performance comparison through an agency called Housemark. Again, such information can be obtained through enquiry at the office.

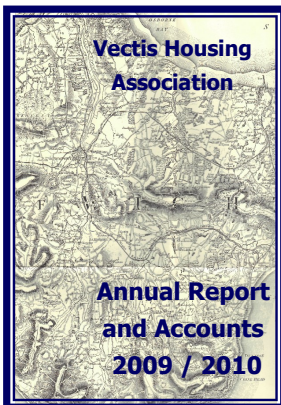


Board of Management.....

The Board continued to oversee the work of the Association. It usually meets formally five or six times during the year. Members recently undertook an updated skills appraisal from which it was concluded that the board remained well balanced in terms of the qualities required of a governing body. There are two tenants on the Board, who actively contribute to its work.



Financial strength.....



The audited financial statements indicate that the business continues on a sound footing. It is very important that this situation is maintained in order that services can improve, homes can be maintained properly for the long term, and that new ones can continue to be provided. We are grateful to our Chief Executive, supported by the Finance Committee, on the way they manage the Association's finances, particularly in these difficult times.

A copy of the audited financial statements is available from the office upon request.. Management accounts are prepared quarterly, and copies of these can also be provided if requested.

The future.....

In the current economic climate, there are certainly challenges ahead for us all, including the affordable housing movement generally. Throughout the coming months we will continue to work with you, in the way you prefer, to improve services, sort any problems you may have, and keep you properly informed over progress with our plans. In next year's report we will show how we have done.

Beyond these challenges, we will remain focussed on ensuring our day to day management and repairs services are of the highest quality.

*We do go the extra mile.....
we do care.....
and we do make a difference.....
together.*

**Kate Newman
Chairman
September 2010**

Local Offer

We wrote to you in June to ask if you wanted to help us put together the “Local Offer” which our regulator, the TSA, requires us to present to you by next April.

The “Local Offer” is a series of commitments on what services we will endeavour to provide for you during the forthcoming year, the standards we will try and achieve in providing them and how you can monitor our performance.

We did not have any replies to this enquiry, so we have continued to work with the volunteers of the Association’s Tenant Forum to decide what to put into the offer.

We want the “Local Offer” to fairly reflect your expectations of us, and the Forum has agreed the Action Plan shown below which will ensure that, by working together, we can achieve this within the deadline of April 2011.

The Forum would welcome new members to help with this, and indeed other aspects of its voluntary work, including the monitoring of what we do. Alternatively, if you would like to express a view about the “Local Offer” on an individual basis, please let us know.

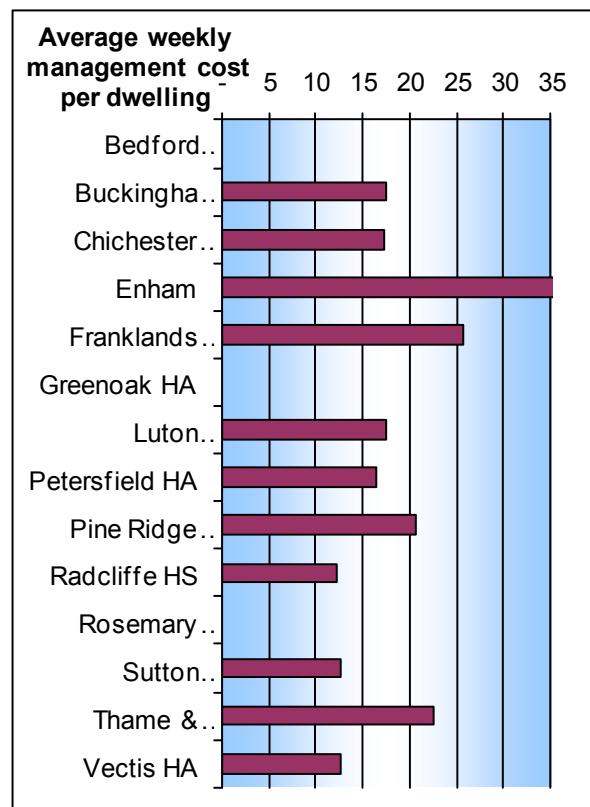
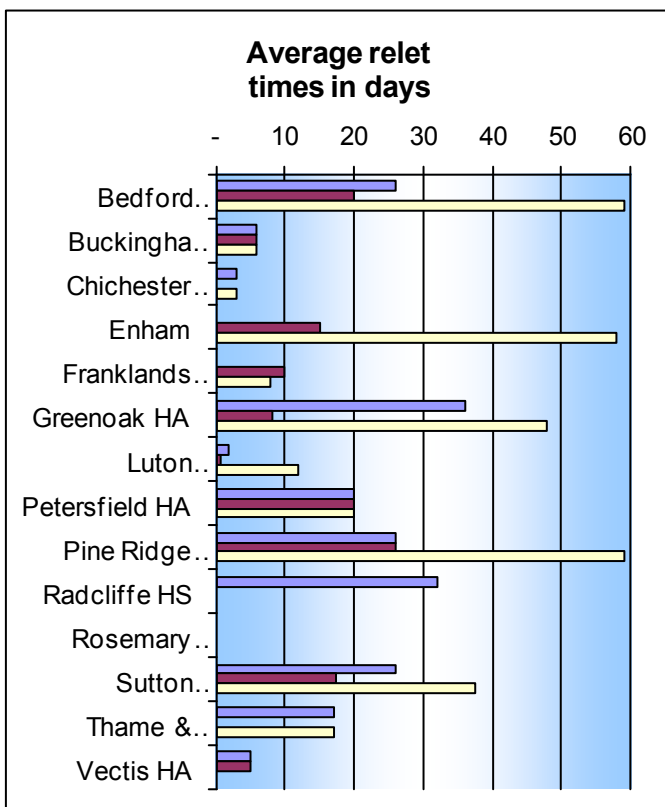
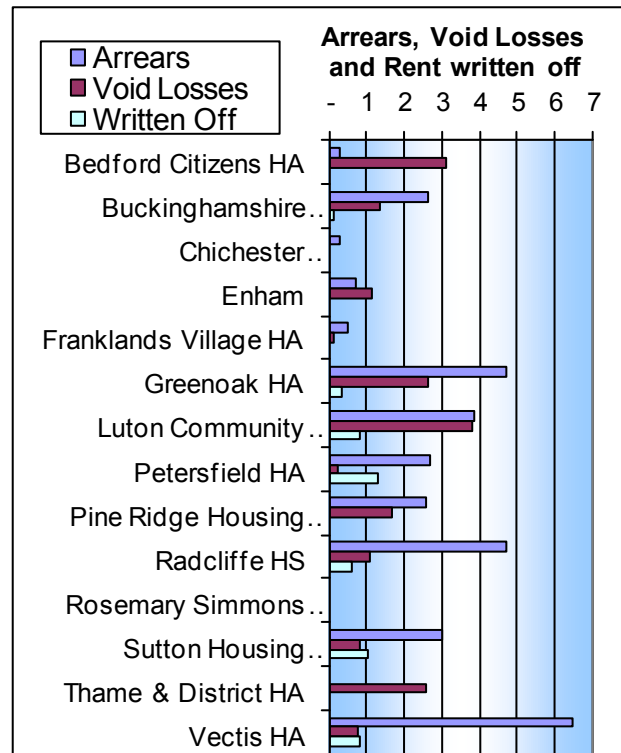
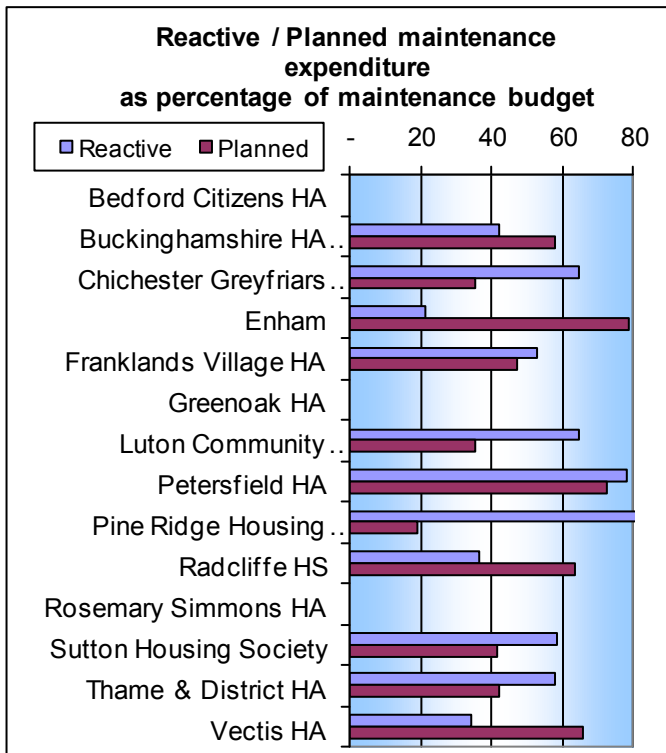
“Local Offer”

Action Plan

Meeting	Standard / Action
25 May 2010	Action Plan Agreed
13 July 2010	Involvement and Empowerment Standard reviewed
21 September 2010	Home Standard and Annual Report to Tenants reviewed
23 November 2010	Review remaining 4 Standards (Tenancy / Neighbourhood & Community / Value for Money / Governance & Financial Viability)
11 January 2011	Agree Draft Offer and send to all Tenants for consultation
15 March 2011	Agree Final Version of Offer and Publish

How we Compared

Some Comparisons with Members of SHAPE 2009 –2010

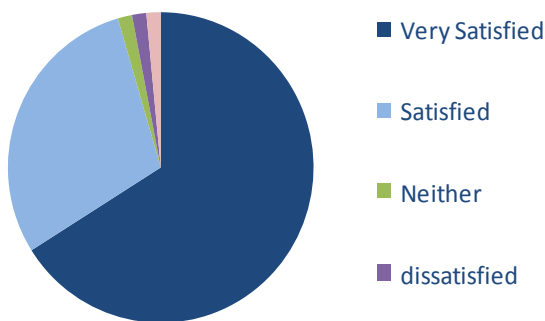


How we did

Thank you all who returned their survey forms and congratulations to the 4 prize draw winners who have each received a gift voucher of their choice.

The information provided will help us to look at the areas where we need to improve. This data will also be used by the Tenant Forum to create the "Local Offer" ready for consultation early 2011.

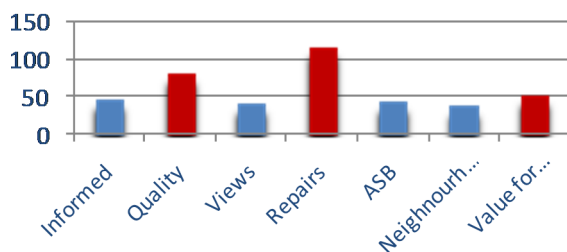
Overall Satisfaction



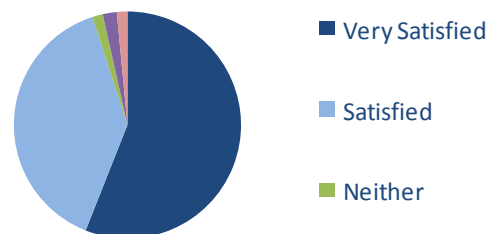
95.5% are satisfied or very satisfied with the overall service provided.

95% are satisfied or very satisfied with the repairs service

Most Important

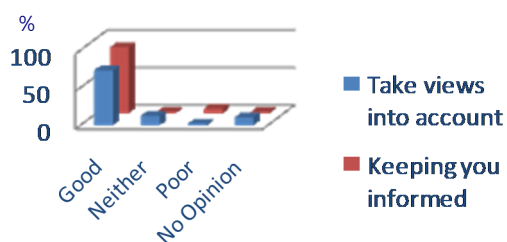


Repairs Satisfaction



- **95% are satisfied with the quality of their home**
- **89% feel their rent is good value for money**
- **88.5% think we are good at keeping you informed**
- **92% found Staff helpful**

Communication



How you like us to keep you informed



What you said

"I feel we are well informed and are extremely lucky to be members of an association who do look after it's tenants"

"very happy we love living here"

..We have had our views taken into consideration and have been 100% satisfied with Vectis Housing Association...

"I feel the association is very good and takes care of their properties and tenants. I was a tenant of a larger association before I did an exchange and Vectis are by far more helpful and pleasant, nothing seems to much trouble"

"the service that you provide as a housing association is excellent"

"I don't like being inspected here, but do understand the need for this, the people who come are always very pleasant"



Vectis Housing Association Limited

Registered as an exempt charity under the
Industrial and provident Societies Act 1965 no 21237R

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Member of the National Housing Federation
Registered with the Tenant Services Authority (L1005)
Member of the Independent Housing Ombudsman Service
Member of SHAPE (Smaller Housing Associations Pursuing Excellence)

Going the extra mile...