Vectis Housing

VECTIS HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

ANNUAL REPORT TO TENANTS

OCTOBER 2016

CONTENT

Chair's Introduction 3
Benchamrking 4
Star Survey 5
The Tenant Forum 6
Your tenancy 8
Your Home 9
Our work with communities 10
Value for money 11
Listening to Your Views 13
You said, we did 14
Contact Us 16

CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

This last year has been highly significant in the life of Vectis Housing Association.

Firstly, despite real pressures from Government to change the role and flexibility of housing associations, we took the unanimous view that what we have done in the past remains essential in the future. New homes remain critical for the Island community. So, on that basis, we updated our Business Plan for the next five years to include a programme of continued growth of affordable rented housing.

Secondly, our long-standing Chief Executive, Paul Hann decided to stand down and ease into a much deserved semi-retirement. We owe Paul a significant debt of gratitude for all his efforts over the last 25 years. However, he continues to contribute his services on a part-time basis as our Finance Manager. We have appointed in his place Martyn Pearl, who has been Deputy Chief Executive at VHA for the past two years. Martyn comes with a significant depth of experience in the housing sector. I wish him well for the future.

We have had a very dynamic year in terms of staffing activity. In addition to the significant change at the top mentioned earlier, we have also brought in a new Housing Services Manager, a new Communities Team and two apprentices.

Most importantly, we have continued to invest in your homes, provide you with the services you have indicated you want in a way that continues to offer good value for your rent. That seems to me like a year of sound achievement. It has been realised with your input and assistance, which we continue to value.

George Hibberd
Chair of the Board of Management
Vectis Housing Association

BENCHMARKING

Throughout this report, we compare our performance with two sets of other housing associations. The first is SHAPE, a small club of 14 associations operating in the South and South of England. These vary in size, with VHA as one of the largest, and include a number of special needs associations. The second and perhaps more representative grouping is SPBM, which comprises 106 national associations, owning less than 1,000 units. Both sets of data are collected by an independent organisation, Acuity.

STAR SURVEY 2015 - YOUR VIEWS OF VECTIS

Satisfied or Dissatisfied with:	Satisfied
Service provided by VHA	90%
Overall quality of your home	92%
Rent provides value for money	91%
With the way VHA deals with Repairs and Maintenance	86%
VHA listens to your views and acts on them	79%
Overall condition of your home	87%
Provides an effective and efficient service	92%

THE TENANT FORUM

The Tenant Forum has continued to meet regularly over the course of the last year. Members of the Forum have also been involved in neighbourhood walkabouts, policy review meetings and community events.

During the course of the year, two members of the Forum were elected to the Board of Management, John Maton and Jane Cullis.

Our commitment to tenants is based on our Tenant Engagement and Involvement Policy, which sets out that:

1. We will publish a policy and action plan every three years about how we will engage with residents and support involvement with *VHA*.
2. We will involve residents in making decisions that will affect them.
3. We will offer a range of choices to get involved with options to suit different lifestyles that meet the needs of individuals.
4. We will support new and existing residents both individually and collectively.
5. We will offer training and development support to help residents influence our services.
6. We will provide a range of opportunities for residents to monitor and scrutinise our performance and services.
7. We will look to tailored approaches to suit the specific needs and wishes of every individual resident and reduce or remove barriers, which may stop or dissuade you from becoming involved. However, these can only be fully implemented if you as tenants are prepared to respond to them and engage appropriately.

Your feedback provided through satisfaction responses, SMS text surveys, face-to-face communication and our Tenancy Health Checks remains invaluable to help get our services right.

We are keen to encourage using the Tenant Forum members as local representatives/ advocates. To date there has been relatively little interest however we will continue to run with this approach in the short term and to look to publicise the facility a little better.

You may recall that as part of their new role, Forum members can raise and champion individual or collective issues, attend neighbourhood walkabouts and contribute to projects and service developments specific to their areas.

If you would like to get involved in the Tenant Forum please contact us for details.

EAST COWES

JERRY FURNELL

EAST COWES

JOHN MATON

SHANKLIN, SANDOWN, LAKE & APSE HEATH

DON VINCENT

RYDE

DAVID SAVILL

NEWPORT & WEST WIGHT

JANE CULLIS

NEWPORT & WEST WIGHT

PAUL HULL

COWES, VENTNOR & WROXALL

IAN HOPKINS

YOUR TENANCY

You have told us in the past that you judge how good we are on how we deliver services to you. We are always mindful that we are responsible for our properties, but your homes.

The percentage of you who are satisfied with our services overall remains high (90%), broadly in line with both SHAPE (93%) and the sector generally (90%). We are consistently looking for ways to improve, and welcome views and suggestions from you.

OUR CORE ACTIVITY

Activity	Performance VHA	Performance SHAPE	Housing Associations	Rating
Re-letting property – average in days	27 (23)	21 (23)	22 (22.5)	✓
Rent Arrears (as % of annual rent debit)	3.96 (2.91)	1.9 (2.83)	2.56 (2.96)	✓
Percentage properties with Gas Safety Certificate	96.2 (100)	(100)	(100)	✓

**Figures in brackets for 2014*

In terms of our core performance, we improved our performance in relation to both re-let times and levels of rent arrears. In both areas, we are now achieving the sector average compared to SHAPE and SBPM.

Because we have a relatively low turnover of properties (around 50 per annum) re-let times can be skewed by a few properties that become vacant needing a lot of work. We have seen that this year where very long standing tenants have either died or moved on leaving homes requiring significant upgrading. We are trying to avoid this happening to some extent in the future by introducing our Tenancy Health Checks to pick up on poorly maintained homes.

YOUR HOME

We recognise that the condition of your home is very important to you and that repairs and maintenance is a key service for all of our residents.

We are fortunate to have a relatively new and well-built stock, but nevertheless there are still many issues that arise over the course of a maintenance year. In particular, during the winter months we had an unexpectedly high level of fencing repairs and replacement due to the bad weather.

However, we look to provide the most responsive and cost-effective programme of day-to-day repairs and planned maintenance. We are always looking to improve our service, but indication from our tenant survey is that 86% of our residents are satisfied with the quality of our repair service. This is on par with our other SHAPE colleagues (88%), and other housing associations generally (87%).

OTHER KEY PERFORMANCE DETAILS:

RESPONSIVE REPAIRS

- *We completed 2,170 day-to-day repairs*
- *Average days to complete a repair - 11.3*
- *Repairs completed within priority - 90%*
- *On-going satisfaction with repairs - 96%*

PLANNED MAINTENANCE

- *Properties painted - 39*
- *Site safety and fire equipment inspections - 832*
- *New kitchens fitted - 12*
- *New bathrooms installed - 4*
- *New boilers installed - 42*

OUR WORK WITH COMMUNITIES

We believe that supporting and promoting community cohesion is a vital element in being effective into the future. To that end we made a decision to create a Communities Team, operative from April 2016. We have set our sights high in terms of providing quality and we will continue to engage with our tenants through a wide range of methods to ensure that we hear your views and respond accordingly. The integration of a new Communities Team will help us do this.

COMMUNITY PROJECTS

We have begun a programme of Community Projects, designed to engage and develop our communities. We have built on the initial pilots at The Paddock, Greenfields and Kelsey Court as a result of which we have provided additional seating and raised beds at Greenfields, hanging baskets and plants at the Paddock and improved the central courtyard at Kelsey Court. The Communities Team also bring the Wild About Wight project to VHA. This Lottery funded project will offer a huge number of opportunities for residents over the next 3 years.

VALUE FOR MONEY

We provide services and invest in your homes based on the rent we receive. We fully understand that we need to spend this money in the most efficient and cost-effective manner and keep our charges as low as possible. ***We are now the only developing association on the Island to let our homes exclusively at lower, social rent levels.***

The indication from the recent STAR Survey is that the majority of Vectis residents (91%) believe that you receive value for money for the rent you pay. This is higher than the average for other SHAPE associations (87%) and other associations generally (84%).

Our key benchmark indicators show that:

MANAGEMENT COSTS:

Our average weekly cost per dwelling on management = £22.52

Average weekly cost per dwelling on management for SHAPE members = £17.77

Average weekly cost per dwelling on management for other housing associations = £20.56

Although our management costs have risen this year, we are still in line with the majority of smaller housing associations with fewer than 1,000 units. The reasons have related to some one-off investment in the way we operate and new key staff.

REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE COSTS:

We spent less on our properties per week (£28.33p) than our SHAPE peers (£29.21) and other housing associations (£28.91p) per week on maintenance. This covers all aspects of repairs and maintenance, including responsive, planned and void works. This includes a significant increase of investment in our planned programme based on needs indicated from our latest Stock Condition Survey.

Our split between responsive 44% (2015 - 43%) and planned maintenance 56% (2015 -57%) has also improved markedly over the last year. This means that the works we are carrying out are likely to be better value for money and better managed.

LAST YEAR WE SAID WE WOULD IMPROVE BY:

- Improving our procurement processes - we saved £101,065 last year on supplier costs based on baseline costs of 2014.
- Monitoring contractor performance to improve service delivery - you indicated that 9 out of 10 were happy with your repairs experience
- Streamlining property inspections and visits to reduce duplication
- Tendering larger works packages to drive down costs and increase satisfaction
- Undertaking more works “in-house” - we now deliver part of our planned works programme using our in-house resource
- Introducing a primary contractor to undertake responsive and void works - we are still looking to achieve this

OVER THE COMING YEAR WE INTEND TO IMPROVE BY:

- Reviewing our responsive repairs service including priorities, costs, appointments, targets and management processes to provide a better, more streamlined and cost effective service. This is in progress.
- Reducing the time it takes to repair an empty property to an average of eight days. It is currently at seven.
- Introducing a repairs schedule of rates to improve cost forecasting and budgeting, helping reduce costs further. This is now completed.
- Updating the repairs section of the Tenants Handbook to reflect current practices. This is in progress.

LISTENING TO YOUR VIEWS

We have continued over the past year to keep you informed and engaged in the work that we undertake on your behalf.

DURING THE COURSE OF THE YEAR WE HAVE:

- Produced three high quality, extended newsletters
- Continued to upgrade and extend our website
- Maintained a Twitter feed to post and receive comments
- Conducted two neighbourhood walkabouts per annum for each of our areas of property concentration
- Delivered our Tenancy Health Check programme, where we contact all tenants directly to make sure everything is ok and to listen to what you have to say
- Introduced local neighbourhood events, where we discuss with you what would make your area a better place to live
- Regularly sent consultations via SMS text messages
- Strengthened the Tenant Forum to enable the members to act as central contacts and advocates for tenants in their areas
- Requested satisfaction feedback following repairs and maintenance activities

We are always keen to improve and extend these engagement opportunities and will continue to develop and tailor activities to suit your needs and requirements.

The next section sets out more clearly how we have responded to the feedback you have provided to date.

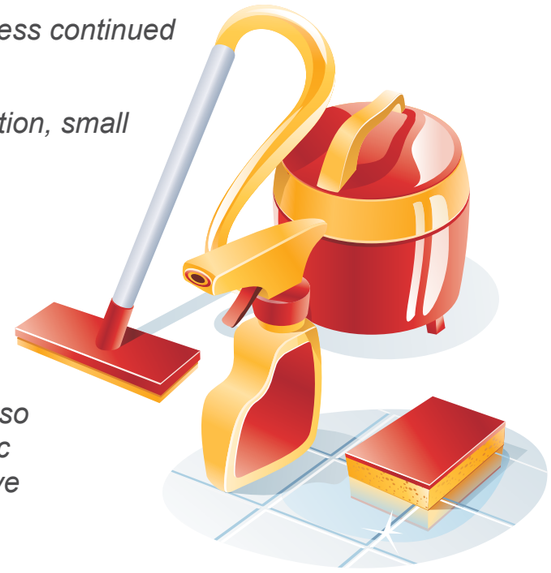
YOU SAID….WE DID

We are clear that the quality of our services to you have to meet consistently high standards and reach the levels agreed with you. Your feedback to us is very important in achieving this.

We have undertaken 17 separate consultation exercises by SMS message, held three community events, undertaken neighbourhood walkabouts and provided ongoing satisfaction checks against our maintenance activities.

We have taken your responses seriously.

WE ASKED YOU ABOUT…



- *Gas Servicing Satisfaction - you said the process continued to work well for you*
- *Grounds Maintenance - high levels of satisfaction, small issues that have been resolved*
- *Cleaning - see below*
- *Your neighbourhoods - we conducted 24 walkabouts, visited 73 individual tenants, involved Board Members, Tenant Forum members and local Councillors and identified a range of issues, which we addressed. We also held three community project events in specific locations to get views on how we could improve those areas.*

WE RESPONDED BY…

- *Introduced a new Cleaning Service based on your comments. Indications are that this has substantially improved satisfaction and the quality of services*

CONTACT US:

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Registration under the Co-operative and Community Benefits Act 2014
- registration with Homes and Communities Agency (L1005)
- membership of National Housing Federation
- membership of Independent Ombudsman Scheme
- membership of SHAPE

Designed by Monika Olek - www.olekm.com