

Aberdeenshire Council

Scottish Social Housing Charter

Annual Report to Tenants 2017

Councillor Anne Allan
Chair of Social Work and Housing Committee

I am pleased to present to you Aberdeenshire Council's third annual report to tenants, highlighting our performance across a range of measures. This is a requirement of the Scottish Social Housing Charter, and in this third year you will be able to look at our performance and compare it with the past two years, as well as with the average across all of Scotland's councils

This has been a difficult year for the Housing Service, with the sudden death last December of Douglas Edwardson, our Head of Service. Brian Watson (Tenancy Services Manager), took on the role in an acting capacity until a new Head of Service could be appointed, and I would thank him for stepping in so ably

The devastating floods, following the heavy rainfall at the end of 2015, has also impacted on our service, with some projects having to be delayed until things got back to normal. Many tenants were forced out of their homes by floodwaters and the ensuing work to get things back to normal has impacted on our day to day services.

Our tenants are at the core of our housing service delivery and many are actively involved through tenants groups and forums, attending tenant events, becoming a local tenant voice, or a member of one of our service delivery working groups. The council is committed to involving tenants in as many ways as possible to ensure continuous improvement within the Housing service and there are many opportunities for you to get involved if you wish to. Our Tenant Participation Promotion Team (TPPT) have been involved in producing this annual report and they have also added their comments to the information presented to you.

I would encourage you all to read this report and encourage you to comment on the performance of the Housing service over the past year.

Homes and rents

At 31 March 2015 the Council owned 12,874 properties.

The Council increased its weekly rent on average by 3.8%, Scottish Councils increased their rents by an average of 2.84%.

Average weekly rents

Size of home	Number	Aberdeenshire Council	Scottish Council Average	Difference
1 apartment	33	£65.17	£65.94	-1.2%
2 apartment	5,051	£68.50	£70.39	-2.7%
3 apartment	5,178	£68.42	£71.55	-4.4%
4 apartment	2,469	£79.25	£77.60	+2.1%

5 apartment

143

£89.46

£85.98

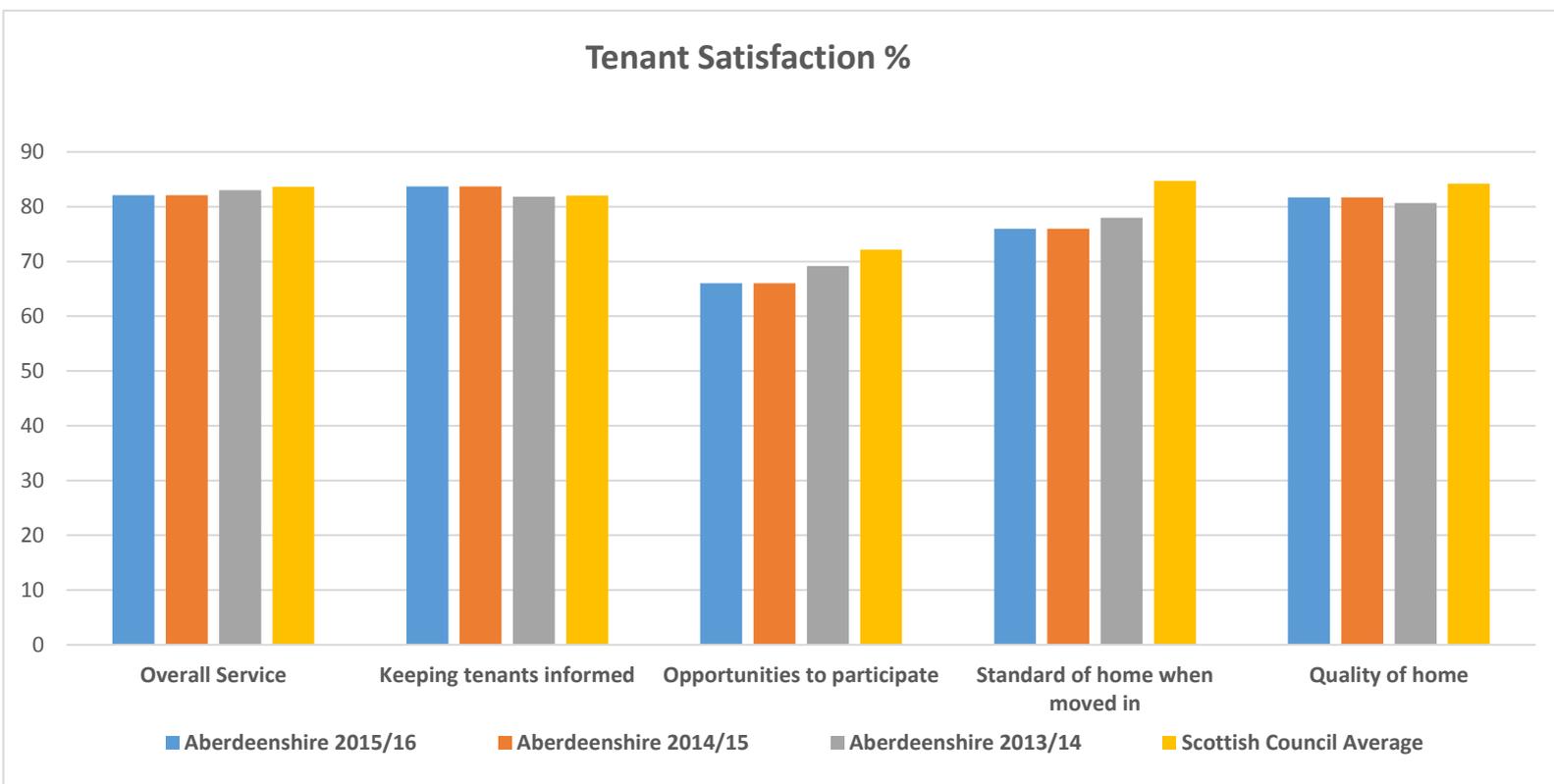
+4%

Tenant Participation Promotion Team (TPPT) comment;

TPPT appreciates the need to increase rents to facilitate improvements to the housing stock and build much needed new homes. However, in this difficult economic climate rents need to be reasonable and affordable particularly for those tenants on a fixed income. TPPT will act on behalf of all tenants and liaise closely with the Council to ensure that rent levels remain affordable and rent % increases are comparable with the Scottish Average. Compared to rents in the private rented sector Council house rents remain very competitive.

Tenant Satisfaction

No satisfaction survey was carried out in the last financial year so the following figures relate to the most recent tenant satisfaction survey carried out in February 2014;



TPPT Comments.

We are keen that up to date information about tenants' satisfaction with the Housing service is made available and welcomes new data to measure current tenant satisfaction. While overall tenant satisfaction is high TPPT will continue to work with the Council to improve tenant satisfaction.

Quality and maintenance of homes

The Council reported the following figures with regard to the maintenance and repair of properties last year;

	Council 2015/16	Council 2014/15	Council 2013/14	Scottish Council Average
Emergency repairs (hours)	8.1	7.9	8.39	5.51
Non-emergency repairs (days)	12.8	12	14.16	9.03

The Council does not currently operate a repairs appointment system.

On average across Aberdeenshire, performance is slightly down on last year. The main factor that has contributed to this is an increased workload, with the in-house repairs team taking on more work including kitchen and bathroom upgrades that were planned to be completed by external contractors under the capital works programme. The withdrawal of an external term contractor from one of our contractor areas with poor performance over the handover period; again, this contract area has now been taken in-house and performance has significantly improved. Another factor was the effect of flooding, with some areas of Aberdeenshire very badly affected. Routine works were put on hold in these areas, as all resources had to be directed to the emergency response, and to deal with the follow up works.

The Council is introducing a new Repairs & Planned maintenance System, due to be implemented in 2017 which will provide a repairs appointment system. The repairs service will be interactive and mobile allowing improved response to emergency works as well as scheduling of non-emergency repairs. The Councils specialist contractors (e.g. gas servicing and repairs) will be under contract to adhere to the same targets as our in house repairs teams giving a fully integrated repairs service which will improve the performance figures.

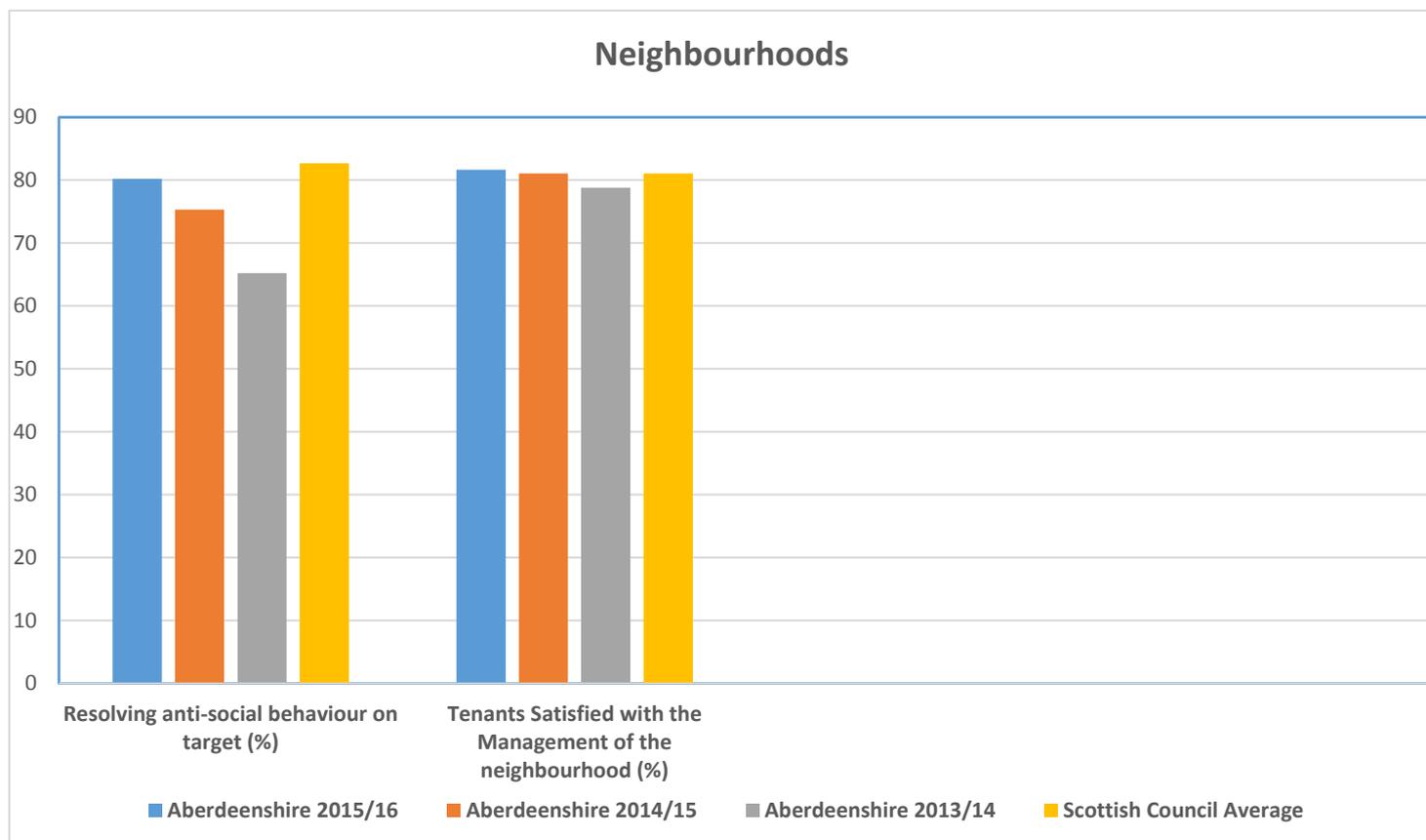
TPPT Comments

TPPT are hopeful that the new methods of delivering repairs introduced by the Housing Service will continue to see improvements and a high quality of work. The introduction of a repairs appointment system is eagerly awaited by tenants.

Neighbourhoods

For every 100 Council properties 5.4 cases of anti-social behaviour were reported in the last year compared to 5.3 in 2014/15. The Scottish Council average number of anti-social behaviour cases for every 100 properties is 8.8 cases.

Other figures relating to the neighbourhood and its management were:



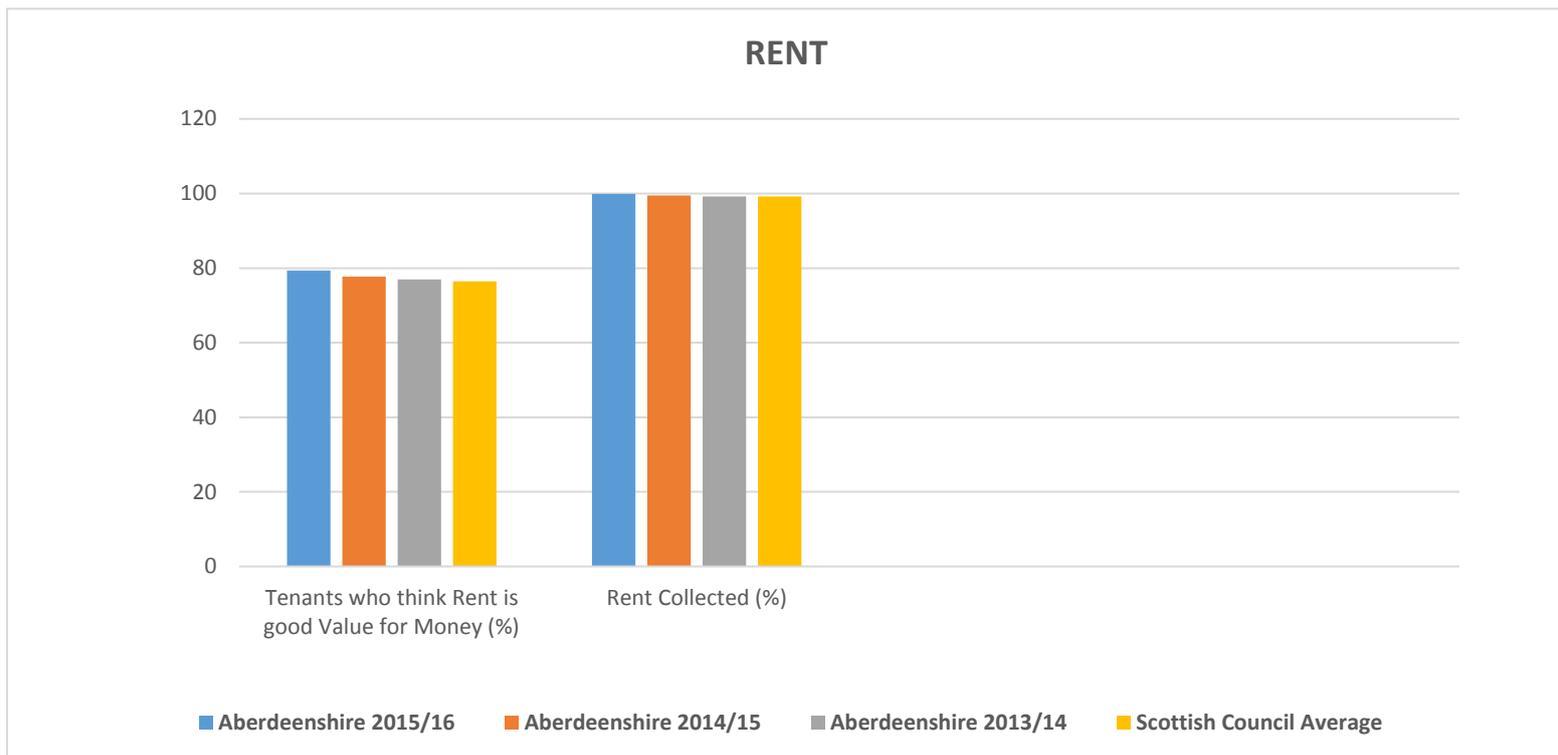
TPPT Comments

The increase in resolving more anti-social behaviour complaints over the last 3 years sooner is good news and TPPT appreciates the difficulty staff can have in dealing with complex cases. TPPT supports efforts by staff to ensure that tenants live in peaceful well looked after areas.

Value for money

The Council reported the following figures for rent collection, arrears, rent loss and tenants' satisfaction that rent provides value for money.

	Council 2015/16	Council 2014/15	Council 2013/14	Scottish Average
Rent Arrears (%)	4.58	4.2	4.47	6.4
Rent Loss due to empty homes (%)	0.8	0.6	0.9	0.99
Time to re-let homes (days)	35.8	37.4	33.9	39.73



TPPT Comments

TPPT believes that Council housing represents value for money. TPPT will continue to liaise with Housing staff to ensure continued improvements resulting in raised tenant appreciation that they are receiving value for money

Brian Watson – Acting Head of Service (Housing)

Rent

A detailed independent consultation exercise was carried out with all tenants in September/October 2015 and 16.5% of tenants responded, which is average for this type of survey. The outcome of this exercise was considered, along with the requirements to deliver the Business Plan, at a full Council meeting in February 2016 where it was agreed to increase rents by a fixed 3.75% per year for the three year period from 2016/17 to 2018/19. This level of increase allows the Business Plan to be delivered including the work required to progress towards ensuring the Council meet the Scottish Government’s Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing, thereby helping reduce fuel poverty and the number of hard-to-heat houses. It also has the potential to provide scope for further capital investment over the next 5 years, equating to around 53 new build Council houses, over and above the 250 new houses already included within the Business Plan. It will ensure the overall Business Plan remains affordable and sustainable in the long term.

Repairs Appointments

Good progress continues on implementing our new ICT Repairs system, and we will advise tenants prior to the new system becoming available. Implementation is planned for early 2017

Repairs right first time

The Council's 'Technical Hub' is now operational. When the new ICT system is implemented, the 'Hub' will ensure that the appropriate staff, with the correct materials, are sent direct to jobs. This will mean that more jobs are completed right first time, on time, minimising disruption for Tenants.

Anti-social behaviour

The Council will continue to work with TPPT, Police and other partners to maintain the safe environment that most tenants enjoy. Moreover, new legislation will enable the Council to take more effective action against those tenants causing real harm.

Tenant Scrutiny

The Housing Service has committed resources to enable tenants to effectively scrutinise the service being provided, in line with the expectations of the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR). Over the past year the Tenant Led Continuous Improvement Scrutiny Group have focussed their attention on our Options & Homelessness Service, looking at the processes around applying for and being allocated council housing. Their report is due to be launched at this year's Tenant Event in November. The Scrutiny Group will be discussing with the TPPT members what aspects of the Service they will examine in more depth for their next Tenant Scrutiny investigation, bearing in mind the performance outlined in this Annual Report and the wider Charter Indicators reported to the SHR.

Improvements to Housing

The Housing Service is committed to improving the condition of our Council Housing. To achieve our ambition we are investing around £50 million a year in upgrades to make sure that we offer high quality, energy efficient, healthy, safe and secure homes. We are currently planning a programme of improvements works to be carried out between April 2017 and December 2020 in order to meet the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH).

Want to know more?

If you want to find out more about the Council's performance, please complete and return the attached slip;

Further information is available on the Council's and other landlords' performance from the Scottish Housing Regulator - Visit www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk