

# Self Assessment

2013/14



Homes & Enterprise

Supporting BME Communities  
and Multi-Cultural Neighbourhoods



**Our Mission**

We will deliver:  
quality housing services, socio-economic  
development and related neighbourhood  
services

To:  
our tenants, BME communities and  
neighbourhoods

aimed at:  
providing choice, improved life  
opportunities and addressing inequalities



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and Multi-Cultural Neighbourhoods

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# Our Objectives

## **Provide and continue to develop good quality mixed tenure housing which reflects needs and aspirations**

We will ensure the highest standards of repair and maintenance of our existing stock. We will continue to develop new high quality stock in geographic areas of Leeds where members of the BME community would choose to live. Our new development programme will consist of the type and tenure of unit for which we know there is a growing need.

## **Provide high quality affordable housing services**

We aim to achieve the highest level of tenant satisfaction through the delivery of a range of flexible high quality services which respond to the needs of our current tenants. We will take account of emerging needs of new tenants and redesign our services accordingly. We will be sensitive to the needs of existing and new tenants in regard to the current economic climate and the Government's legislative programme.

## **Involve and work with our tenants and the communities we serve to inform and improve services**

We will engage with our tenants and BME communities to develop a good evidence base to help us design our services and influence the policy and delivery of services to others. On this basis we will seek to represent BME communities, and others, in the multi-cultural neighbourhoods within which we work.

## **Provide training and employment opportunities and promote financial inclusion.**

We will carry out programmes of work aimed at ensuring our tenants have the best advice and access to training and sustainable employment opportunities. This will include training and employment opportunities with our contractors in relation to repairs, servicing, planned maintenance and new developments. We will undertake complimentary programmes of work with our tenants aimed at promoting and sustaining financial inclusion.

## **Provide business support services and encourage local enterprise**

Through our Unity Enterprise company we will offer affordable managed workspace to support the needs of a wide range of small businesses and other organisations. We will provide direct support to encourage local enterprise and we will offer business advice to our existing business tenants.

## **Work with partners to encourage the regeneration of our target neighbourhoods**

We will work in partnership to deliver physical, social and economic regeneration programmes to help create and sustain neighbourhoods where BME communities want to live. We will focus our efforts in those neighbourhoods where our tenants live and where there are high percentages of BME communities.

## **Be a progressive and expanding business with a sound resource base**

We will be a strong and forward-looking organisation. Our governance and performance management arrangements will be of the highest standard and we will be a place where people want to work.





Unity celebrates the completion of the refurbishment of our office on Chapeltown Road.



Unity is the proud sponsor of the Beeston Festival owing to the number of the properties we own in the area and our presence in the local community.



Unity becomes one of the many housing associations in the North involved in the Real Life Reform project - aimed at highlighting the impact of the Welfare Reform on the health and wellbeing of public-sector tenants.



April 2013

June 2013



May 2013

July 2012



An iconic Blue Plaque is unveiled at Leeds Media Centre, marking the building's importance in local history.

The summer kicks off with a series of workshops aimed at encouraging people to take care of their homes and gardens, grow their own fruit and vegetables at home, promoting healthy lifestyles and also encouraging residents to get to know one another.



Unity has a presence at the annual Holbeck Gala to promote affordable rent and shared-ownership opportunities on our next-planned development on Brown Lane East, Holbeck.

The craftspeople at Unity Business Centre host an exhibition to display their work and showcase the facilities the business centre has to offer those wishing to start their own businesses and enterprises.



Major refurbishment works commence on Unity Business Centre and Chapeltown Enterprise Centre, improving the service we are able to offer existing tenants and attracting new businesses and enterprises.



November 2013

Unity celebrates another year of providing housing choice, improving life opportunities and addressing inequalities at our AGM. Police & Crime Commissioner for West Yorkshire is chief guest at the event.



September 2013

January 2014



February 2014

Unity is nominated for the CIH Award 'Small Social Landlord of The Year' owing to the work of the Employment Services Team and our dedicated Financial Inclusion Service.



December 2013

Work opportunities become available for local people due to the construction of Unity's new development on Brown Lane East. Unity helps local people to apply and as a result 10 people are offered work placements.



October 2013

The second report from the Real Life Reform project is published. MPs and policy-makers are presented with the findings.



August 2013

Unity is present at the Meanwood Olympics - an event aimed at promoting healthy lifestyles to local people. At the weekly event we were able to offer free advice to the general public on housing, welfare and employment.





# Home Standard



## 2012/13 Highlights

We appointed a handyperson to carry out minor repairs and works on our properties. By using our in-house staff skills set we are saving the organisation money. Each lock change carried out by our handyperson saves the organisation up to £120.

We introduced the handyperson for hire service. Tenants are encouraged to make use of our handyperson service for a small fee.

We hosted an energy efficiency workshop to offer tenants advice as to how to cut their energy bills by switching their supplier, understand their fuel bills, change their method of payment and use energy more economically.

Tenants are now offered advice about energy tariffs at the start of their tenancy and are now referred to the BillsCutter service.

All staff have benefitted from training on energy tariffs led by Groundwork's Green Doctor service. Guidance about energy tariffs has been published in our quarterly staff newsletter.

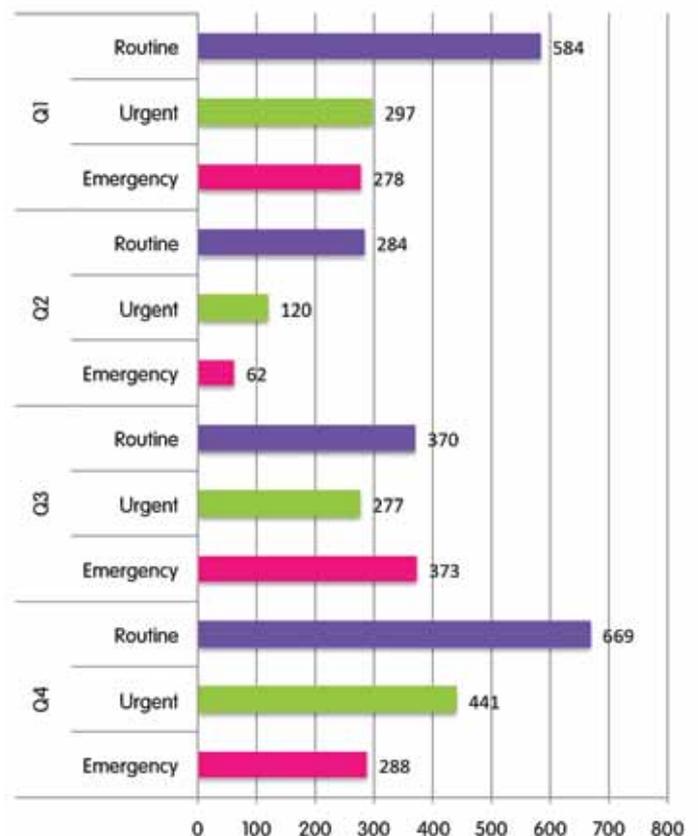
## Repairs - Key Performance Indicators

	UHA Target	Year End 2012/13	Year End 2013/14	Top Quartile National
Emergency repairs completed on target	99%	99.2%	99%	99.1%
Urgent repairs completed on target	99%	98.6%	98.6%	97.2%
Routine repairs completed on target	99%	98.2%	99.1%	97.5%

## Planned Works 2013/14

Programme Area	Number programmed for the full year	Number ordered this year	Number completed this year	Number over 5 year programme
Kitchens	138	100	85	527
Bathrooms	26	90	78	416
Windows	4	14	13	567
Doors	14	73	57	
Boilers	23	28	25	189
External painting	200	216	216	All stock
Communal painting	12	13	13	All stock
Gas servicing	1035	1035	1035	All stock

## Number of jobs logged



## KPI Benchmarking Data

	Unity Housing Association	Leeds Federated	Leeds & Yorkshire Housing	Sadeh Lok	Manningham Housing Association	Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing	Incommunities
% emergency repairs completed on time	99% 13/14	98.7% 12/13		98% 12/13	98% 12/13	96% Q1 13/14	
% urgent repairs completed on time	98.6% 13/14	99.2% 12/13		97.7% 12/13	97.7% 12/13	96% Q1 13/14	99% 12/13
% routine repairs completed on time	99.1% 13/14	99.7% 12/13		97.6% 12/13	97.6% 12/13	96% Q1 13/14	100% 12/13
% homes with a valid gas safety record	100% 13/14			100% Q1 13/14	100% Q1 13/14	100% Q1 13/14	99.8% 12/13
% tenants with overall quality of the repair	97% 13/14		95% Q1 13/14	95.2% 12/13	95.2% 12/13	97% Q1 13/14	
% first time fixes	92.9% 13/14		99% Q1 13/14	80% 12/13	80% 12/13		

## Planned Maintenance Satisfaction Levels

	Service from Unity	Service from contractor	Quality of work	Quality of materials
<b>Kitchens (47/85 returns)</b>				
Happy	96%	96%	96%	96%
Okay	4%	4%	4%	4%
Unhappy	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Boilers (11/25 returns)</b>				
Happy	82%	82%	82%	82%
Okay	18%	18%	18%	18%
Unhappy	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Bathrooms (49/78 returns)</b>				
Happy	93%	93%	93%	93%
Okay	4%	4%	4%	4%
Unhappy	2%	2%	2%	2%
<b>Painting (62/216 returns)</b>				
Happy	90%	90%		
Okay	10%	10%		
Unhappy	0%	0%		

## Aids & Adaptations

	2012/13	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Minor Adaptations</b>	22 (£7,207)	6 (£1,333)	5 (£843)	3 (£1140)	10 (£2025)
<b>Facilities Grants</b>	11	2	4	3	4

## Energy Performance Certificates

	2012/13	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>EPCs</b>	65	18	16	16	12

## Appointments Kept

Target: 99%

	2012/13	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Appointments made and kept</b>	99.7%	99.2%	99.9%	99.6%	99.7%

## First Time Fixes

Target: 85%

	2012/13	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>First time fixes</b>	92.9%	98.5%	99.7%	99.3%	98.9%

## Variation Orders

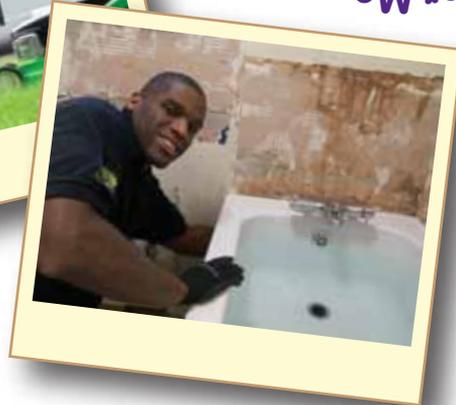
Target: 10%

	2012/13	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Variation Orders</b>	15%	22%	8%	9%	10%

We have appointed a Maintenance Administrator and a Handyman. Our Maintenance Team now has the capacity to manage work normally undertaken by nominated sub-contractors (for example door and window frame renewals) in-house. This represents a saving of 12% on management costs.

We have let our communal and commercial alarm servicing and testing contract and made a saving of 34% against our budget.

We have entered a joint grounds-maintenance contract with Leeds Federated. This is the fifth year the contract has remained at the same price with no inflationary increase.



### Aim identified in last self-assessment

### What we did...

Reduce wrong job descriptions on orders raised by Customer Services

Maintenance Officers have delivered training to Customer Services and the Maintenance Assistant. Variation orders have fallen to 10%.

Unity may be able to save money by solving problems pertaining to heating in-house.

Staff have benefitted from training led by Groundwork's Green Doctor Service and specialist training in affordable warmth.

Improve communication with tenants who are waiting for a repair to be carried out.

108 tenants are now using 'My Unity' - an online facility used by tenants for monitoring their rent accounts and repairs ordered against their properties.

Increase the number of repairs satisfaction slips returned.

% of repairs satisfaction slips returned increased to 38.6%. We continue to incentivise the return of the slips by entering respondents into a prize draw.

Involve tenants in setting the 5-year planned maintenance programme and the end of year contract reviews.

Tenants views have been taken into consideration by means of the 5-year planned maintenance programme survey questionnaire. Tenants who expressed an interest in shaping the programme will have the chance to preview the programme and recommend improvements.

End of year contract reviews will be conducted in July and tenants will have the opportunity to attend.



# Tenancy Standard

## 2013/14 Highlights

### Help tenants maintain their tenancy

We have partnered with debt charity Step Change which offer free practical advice on overcoming problems with debt. We have a dedicated page on 'Money Worries' on our website with links to the service.

We appointed two Income Support Officers who aim to help tenants who are struggling to keep up with rent payments find a solution to meet their needs.

We have identified at least 47 tenants who could benefit from some IT training, to help them apply for jobs and to claim benefits online. We have delivered our own tailor-made training to 17 Unity tenants.

Prospective tenants are asked to complete a housing needs assessment which will include examining their income and outgoings. This will help us to identify tenants who could benefit from some help from our Employment Team or our Financial Inclusion Service.

## KPI Benchmarking Data

	Unity Housing Association	Leeds Federated	Leeds & Yorkshire Housing	Sadeh Lok Housing	Connect Housing	Incommunities	Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing	Chewin Housing Association
Rent Collected	100.18%		97.71%	100.2%	100%	97.99%	96.8%	99.00%
Date	13/14		13/14	13/14	13/14	13/14	13/14	2012/13
Rent Arrears	6.84%		4.87%	3.20%	2.5%	4.78%	2.11%	5%
Date	13/14		13/14	13/14	13/14	13/14	13/14	2012/13
Average re-let times	23.4 days	28.3 days	28.4 days	38 days	60 days	67 days	36.05 days	22 days
Date	13/14	13/14	13/14	13/14	13/14	13/14	13/14	2012/13
Rent loss through voids	0.81%	1.2%		1.12%	1.9%	3.25%	1.8%	
Date	13/14	13/14		13/14	13/14	13/14	13/14	

## Case Study

Jacqueline\* is an example of a tenant who has benefitted from some free IT training for beginners. One of the reasons she was interested in the course is because she wanted to make sure that she was claiming all the benefits she was entitled to - she thought that the Internet might be a good place to look for answers.

Jacqueline arrived at the class on the first day not knowing how to type with the keyboard, use a word processor or an Internet browser. She can now do all of this, as well as use email and register for services using her email address.

Jacqueline said that she had learned 'not to be afraid of the computer' and that it was 'a valuable tool for every day living'. Unity has identified a number of other tenants who might be in a similar situation to Jacqueline. We endeavour to help offer them our own in-house training or find a course for them to suit their needs.

\*Name has been changed for the purpose of this case study.





## Clive Greenwood, Financial Inclusion Officer My year in Unity

There have been

# 71

successful outcomes for tenants using my help

I have supported

# 49

successful applications for DHP

# 18

tenants were able to claim back-payments of Housing Benefit

Staff have benefitted from training on loan sharks and pay-day lenders so as to warn customers of the dangers of using such services.

Staff have also received training on debt advice services so as we are better equipped to refer customers to external agencies where appropriate.

# 10

tenants were transferred to a more suitable property following changes to legislation

# 15

successful appeals against 'bedroom tax'

### Aim identified in last self-assessment

### What we did...

Reduce re-let times

We now have a dedicated member of staff who deals exclusively with lettings and allocations.

We now have a more cohesive service when turning void properties around: we identify a tenant who is match for the property and fit any aids and adaptations this person or family may require while the property is void. Unity aims to make our properties attractive to prospective tenants by bringing cyclical works forward (if appropriate) when a property becomes void.

If we have a tenant waiting to move into a property, we will aim to turn it around as a matter of priority.

Utility supplies for void properties are transferred to Unity before being passed onto the new tenant. This makes the moving in process as smooth as possible and reduces the potential for dissatisfaction.

Reduce rent arrears and assess the way in which we are contacting tenants who are in arrears.

We have two dedicated Income Support Officers whose aim it is to support any tenants who are struggling to pay their rent by signposting them to other services including our in-house Employment Team and our Financial Inclusion Service.

Our new lettings policy takes into account the Government's Welfare Reform - we only offer tenants properties that match their needs in terms of number of bedrooms.



# Tenant Involvement Standard



## Highlights

Our Customer Services Team have benefitted from four-weekly training in sessions led by our Customer Services Team Leader

We identified 110 tenants who expressed an interest in involvement opportunities.

We contacted all our shared-owners informing them of the services and opportunities that they had free access to.

We hosted a tenant Scrutiny Taster session in order to recruit tenants interested in helping influence decision-making at Unity at a more strategic level.

We sponsored the annual Beeston Festival to highlight our presence in the community and offer local people free advice on housing, welfare and employment.

We are able to send news-bulletins to tenants via email, informing them of events and opportunities that may be of interest to them, including upcoming job opportunities.

We publish our performance data quarterly on our website.

Tenants have been involved in inspections of all communal areas on our estates and making recommendations for improvements.

## Tenant Panel pushes for perfection

In March 2013, Tenant Panel members inspected the Fielding Gate estate in Armley, following reports from residents that it was in need of improvement. The estate comprises of good quality housing, but when they inspected it, it looked as if both Unity and the residents living there needed to take better care of it.

The following action was taken in response to the inspectors' findings:

- ✓ The Housing Officer attended a Tenant Panel meeting to hear their concerns and explain her approach to estate management.
- ✓ The Maintenance Team ordered repairs, including renewing some fencing and repointing the roof valleys.
- ✓ The Tenant Neighbourhood & Involvement Officer held a weekend gardening day, where she brought gardening tools, tidied communal areas and encouraged tenants to tidy their gardens.
- ✓ Following encouragement from the Tenant Neighbourhood & Involvement Officer, residents got together and tidied the paved area.



# Ways of 'Getting Involved' Services & Opportunities

## Tenant Panel

Our Tenant Panel is a fun, friendly group of Unity residents that meets up monthly to discuss issues affecting the business, our homes and our tenants. Joining the Tenant Panel is a great opportunity for tenants to put across their views, share their ideas and help us shape the services that they tenants receive.

In addition to the monthly meetings, members can take part in:

- ✓ Practical on-site inspections
- ✓ Joint inspections with tenants from other housing associations
- ✓ Interviewing and assessing contractors
- ✓ Community consultations with staff and residents
- ✓ Editing the newsletter and annual report to tenants
- ✓ Influencing the planned maintenance programme

## Surveys & Focus

For residents who take an interest in what's going on at Unity but are unable to attend regular meetings, we hold focus groups or consultations to find out what they think.

This could be about changes we are thinking about making from anything within the business including our service delivery, our policies and procedures, our homes and neighbourhoods and the way that we communicate with tenants.

## Joint Estate Walkabouts

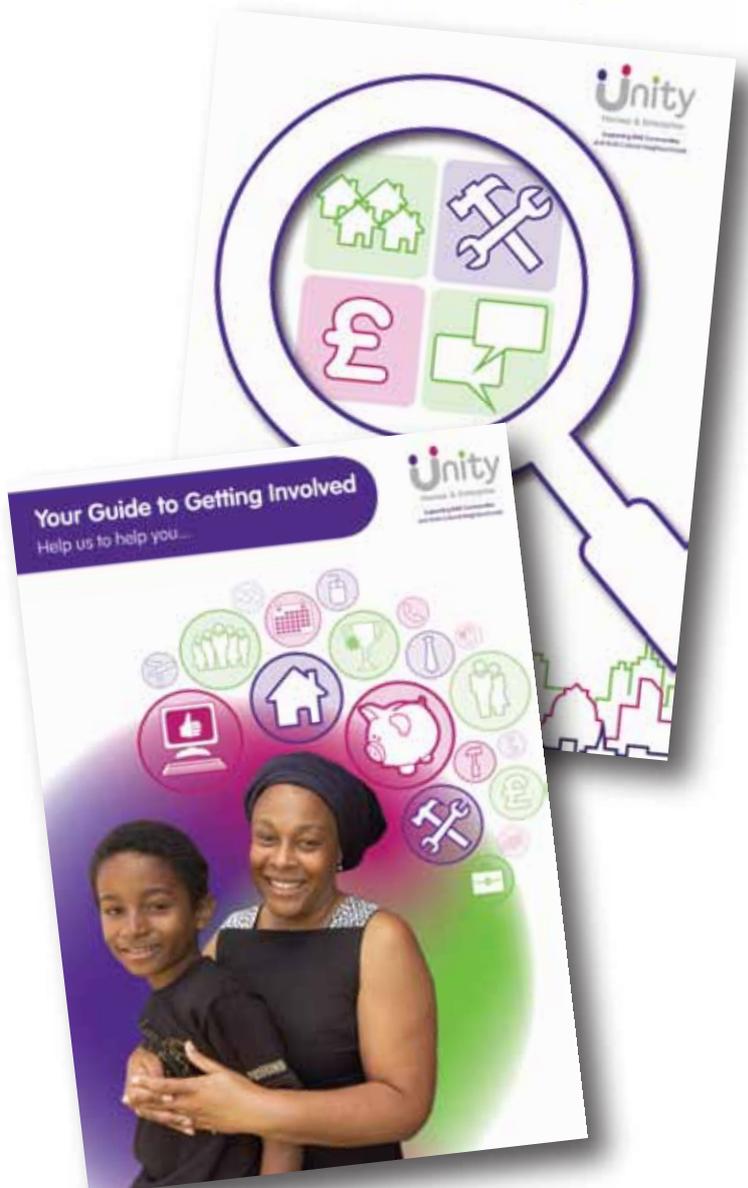
If we are thinking about making changes to a particular neighbourhood we will actively seek local residents' opinions.

However, if tenants would like to be involved in decision making processes that affect neighbourhoods and communities other than their own, they can join our officers on estate walkabouts.

Tenants will help us decide what action to take, where improvements are required, and will help us to assess the work of our contractors.

## Mystery Shopping

We constantly monitor the quality of our contractors work including the cleaning and gardening services provided to tenants. We want to make sure that they are receiving value for money when it comes to their service charge.



Tenants can help us keep an eye on our contractor's performance by becoming a 'mystery shopper'. This involves giving the contractors work a performance rating each time that they visit and highlighting possible areas for improvement.

## Tenant Scrutiny Panel

Tenants who want to challenge and influence how Unity's housing services are influenced are encouraged to join our Tenant Scrutiny Panel.

Tenant scrutiny of services is a cornerstone of ensuring that Unity is properly run. Our Scrutiny Panel meets every three months to closely examine how Unity is performing. Because it is a more committed role that requires particular skills, tenants have to apply to join the Scrutiny Panel.

# Complaints

Unity is open in its complaints handling and reports its performance at every Operations Committee and at year end to tenants.

Unity sees complaints as an opportunity to learn from mistakes and as an opportunity to improve service delivery. The recording of complaints is therefore encouraged. The organisation received 18 complaints in the financial year 2013/14.

	Number of complaints	Responded to within the timescale
Maintenance (day to day)	7	7
Planned maintenance	1	1
Staff	3	3
Service standards	4	4
Service charge	1	1
Estate management	1	1
Lettings	1	1
Overall performance		100%

Post complaint satisfaction - Outcome of a formal complaint	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	No response
Maintenance (day to day)	6	1	
Planned maintenance	1		
Staff	1	1	1
Service standards	3	1	
Service charge	1		
Estate management		1	
Lettings		1	

Post complaint satisfaction - Handling of a formal complaint	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	No response
Maintenance (day to day)	6	1	
Planned maintenance	1		
Staff	1	1	1
Service standards	3	1	
Service charge	1		
Estate management		1	
Lettings	1		



## Emma Oates, Resident Involvement Officer My year in Unity

Unity has 645 properties that pay some kind of service charge, which is just over half our homes. Tenants have the right to ask for a 'local offer', which is a tailored variation of the service they receive. Increasing numbers of Unity tenants are choosing to do this for their service charges.

The challenge for Unity is to get service chargeable costs down as low as possible, while maintaining an acceptable standard of services.



### March 2013

Tenants at Fielding Gate chose to maintain hedges themselves rather than pay a service charge.



### October 2013

Cowper Grove tenants chose to pay a service charge for maintaining their communal car park

### October 2013

Emma carried out grounds maintenance specification consultation with 120 households, offering them options for saving on communal gardening costs by altering their service levels. Many chose a reduced or less frequent service to cut their service charge.



### Gifting of white goods

Some of Unity's properties are let with the white goods in situ. Tenants pay a service charge which covers repairs and replacement costs.

Unity carried out a consultation with tenants who are renting white goods from us with a view to gifting them to the tenants, as it was found that the cost of repairing and replacing them was greater than the amount we were able to recover through a service charge. Some tenants accepted the white goods for free and became responsible for maintaining them, saving the organisation money.

### Lanscaping contract

Tenants have been involved with reviewing Unity's landscaping contract. They have seen the work of other contractors and found that Leeds Federated gardening services represented best value for money. Tenants agreed that the quality of the work was good and the contractors were able to match the price Unity currently pays - so we adopted their services. This is the fifth year the landscaping contract has remained the same cost with no inflationary increases.

## Aim identified in last self-assessment

## What we did...

We need to encourage participation in involvement activities from tenants in Beeston.

We sponsored the Beeston Festival and ran a stall on the day to offer local people free advice on housing, welfare and employment.

We conducted neighbourhood outreach work in the area which resulted in the recruitment of one new tenant panel member, 5 referrals to the Financial Inclusion Officer and 11 referrals to Employment Services.

28 Beeston residents responded to a questionnaire concerning neighbourhood priorities.

We need to make it clearer to our tenants and residents how they progress, in terms of their level of involvement, from one stage to the next so as they can have a greater impact in the way Unity delivers its services.

We now have two tenants who regularly attend the Leeds Collaborative Group (a group of involved residents from a number of housing associations who meet every six weeks to compare best practice).

At least two Tenant Panel Members have expressed an interest in joining our Tenant Scrutiny Panel.

For Tenant Panel members to inspect all communal grounds on our schemes with a view to making recommendations for improvements.

The Tenant Panel inspected all communal areas. They produced a landscaping audit report and identified areas of needs of improvement.

For Tenant Panel members to scrutinise the standards of our estates and to collect satisfaction data.

Tenants have been involved with assessing the performance of our contractors through the Leeds Collaborative Group.

The work of Leeds Federated's contractors was deemed to be good value for money thus Unity is adopting their services in 2014/15.



# Neighbourhood & Community Standard



## Highlights 2013/14

### Regeneration:

We converted a disused hostel back into use. Umoja House, as it is known, provides accommodation for 6 older people, all of which are happy with their homes and neighbourhood.

### Helping tenants into employment:

We have developed an Employment Services Strategy which specifies the targets and aims for the Employment Team in 2014/15.

We appointed a Network Business Advisor to support tenants and individuals in the communities in which we work to start their own businesses and enterprises.

10 local people were offered work placements through our contractor Keepmoat to work on our next planned development on Brown Lane East, Holbeck. A further 6 local people have been offered work placements through our contractor Esh to work on another planned development, Stratford Court in Chapel Allerton.

### Creating harmonious neighbourhoods:

All tenants are now required to sign 'Good Neighbour Agreements' before moving in to their new homes.

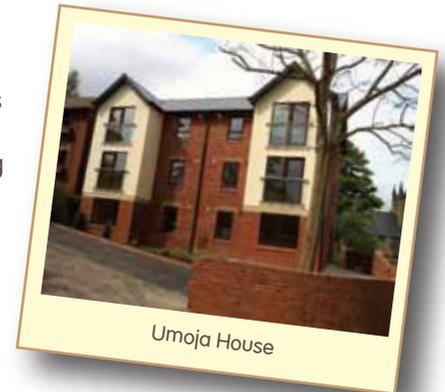
We have changed the structure of our Housing Team so that we have dedicated officers to tackle neighbourhood issues and anti-social behaviour.

Our Tenant Panel has helped us to review and update our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

## Partnership working

### Leeds City Council & HCA

We have worked in partnership with Leeds City Council and the HCA to build and bring back into use a number of properties in 2013/14. We have plans to create another 120 homes between 2015-18.



Umoja House



Refurbished property on Sholebroke Avenue

### Chapelton Housing Strategy

We play a lead role in delivering the Chapelton Housing Strategy which concerns bringing empty properties back into use.

### Chapelton Development Trust

We are working in partnership with Chapelton Development Trust as part of the ERDF submission to refurbish a number of enterprise units. We have appointed a Network Support Advisor to offer people advice about starting up a business from scratch.

### Holbeck Neighbourhood Forum

We are part of the Holbeck Neighbourhood Forum which is aimed at bringing stakeholders including businesses together to complement the wider regeneration of Holbeck.



Proposal for Brown Lane East

**Noma Moyo, Employment Outreach Officer & Kelly Jennings, Outreach Support Worker**

**Our year in Unity - Working in partnership**

**'Untangling the Web' - Computer Course**

We work in partnership with Connect Housing to deliver tailored IT training to tenants so as they are able to apply for jobs and make sure they are claiming all the benefits they are entitled to.

**GOALS Workshops**

We work in partnership with Leeds Federated to deliver GOALS training to tenants aimed at boosting their confidence and equipping them with the skill they need to become job-ready.

**PATH**

We work in partnership with PATH to help people from BME communities to access training and employment.

**Forrest**

We work with our contractor Forrest to identify roles that tenants may be able to apply for when they become available.

**Local schools**

Two local schoolchildren were offered work experience placements lasting one week in our offices to give them experience of working in an office environment.



**Quarterly Breakdown**

	Total prior to March 2012	Total 2012/13	Target 2013/14	Q1	2013/14				Total 2013/14	Target 2014/15
					Q2	Q3	Q4			
<b>Employment</b>	38	35	35	5	12	11	16	44	50	
<b>Training</b>	69	36	50	3	7	20	15	45	60	
<b>Voluntary</b>	2	14	50	2	6	2	2	12	20	

**Value for Money**

We have tendered all building contracts (including the refurbishment works on Unity Business Centre) to five contractors.

We have benchmarked building costs and consultant's fees with similar organisations.

We share resources with IT resources with Connect Housing to deliver to enable us to deliver IT training to more tenants in one class.





# Value For Money Standard

Unity is committed to achieving Value For Money (VFM) and to focus on embedding good practice into the whole organisation. VFM has been defined as the relationship between economy, efficiency and effectiveness. VFM is high when there is an optimum balance between all three - relatively low cost, high productivity and successful outcomes. VFM is about running a viable social business and looking to continuously improve it. It is about doing the right things for the least cost by doing these things right first time. In short, VFM should be the driving force behind everything we do.

## 2013/14 Highlights

We continue to publish information regarding our Value for Money savings in our quarterly newsletter and Annual Report to Tenants. Our Value for Money Statement is also published on our website.

Tenants have been involved in setting the five-year planned-maintenance programme and have had a say as to where Unity should spend the budget available.

Our Tenant Panel continues to review the services Unity and our contractors provide to ensure tenants are getting good value.

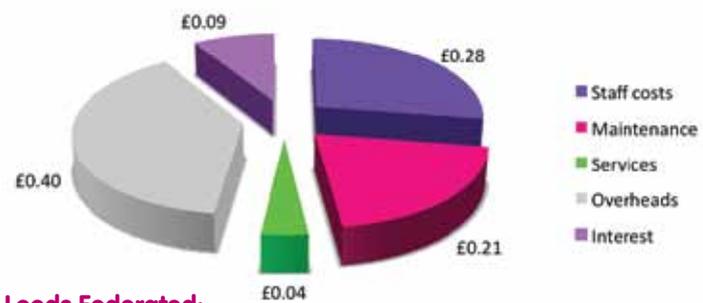
## Procurement of Contracts

- ✓ The tendered price of the routine maintenance contract represents a cost saving of 6.67% per annum over the life of the contract compared against the previous contract.
- ✓ The tendered price of the gas repairs and servicing contract represents a cost saving of 2.1% per annum over the life of the contract compared against the previous contract.
- ✓ The tendered price of the external and internal (communal) painting contract represents a cost saving of 3.9% per annum over the life of the contract compared against the previous contract.
- ✓ The review and subsequent renegotiation of the ground maintenance contract has resulted in further years work being awarded to the incumbent contractor with no annual inflationary increase to cost.

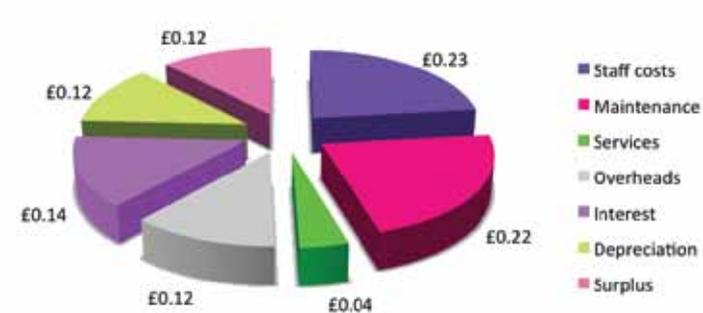
- ✓ The review and subsequent renegotiation of the communal area cleaning contract has resulted in a further years work being awarded to the incumbent contractor with an increase to cost of that is 0.3% below the rate of inflation.

## Expenditure: How do we compare?

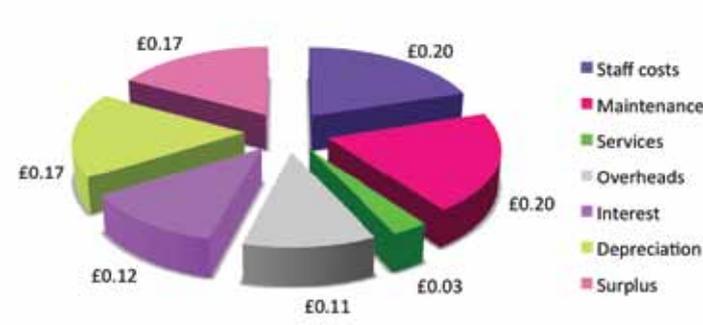
**Unity Housing Association:**  
Where each £1 of rent was spent in 2012/13



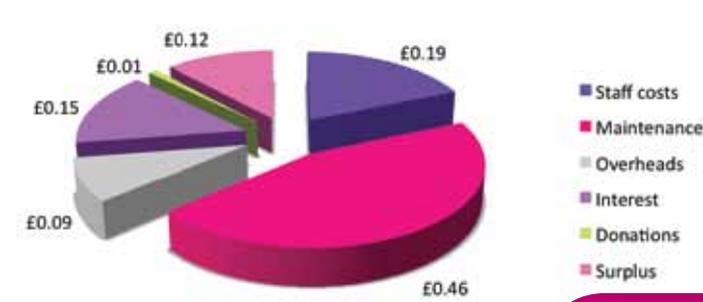
**Leeds Federated:**  
Where each £1 of rent was spent in 2012/13



**Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing:**  
Where each £1 of rent was spent in 2012/13



**Incommunities:**  
Where each £1 of rent was spent in 2012/13



## Value for Money Initiatives

### Financial Inclusion Officers

- ✓ New posts have delivered £58k savings over 2012/13 and 2013/14

### Landscaping Standstill Costs

- ✓ This is the fifth year that our landscaping costs have stayed the same

### Key Performance Targets

- ✓ We maintained a tight grip on voids, keeping our results well below our 2% target in 2013/14

### Local Enterprise Initiatives

- ✓ We negotiated a further 99 year lease for Chapeltown Enterprise Centre.
- ✓ We secured a £1,100k grant from Leeds City Council and ERDF securing financial security for Unity Enterprise in the medium to long term.

### Re-tendering

- ✓ We achieved contract savings of over £24k in 2013/14 and annual savings of £512k in the five previous years.
- ✓ Savings of £847k will be achieved over the life of the contracts.

### Robust Financial Performance

- ✓ In 2012/13 we recorded a surplus of £959k against a target of £453k
- ✓ In 2013/14 we recorded a surplus of £1,071k against a target of £488k
- ✓ In 2012/13 our gearing was 32% against a target of 30% and in 2013/14 it was 42%
- ✓ In 2012/13 interest cover was 439% against a target of 350% and in 2013/14 it was 417%

### Development

- ✓ We delivered 78 new homes and acquired and brought back into use 13 homes as part of the 2008-2011 National Affordable Homes Programme (NAHP)
- ✓ We are building 86 new homes as part of the 2011-15 Affordable Homes Programme (AHP)

### Other Value for Money Savings

- ✓ We continue to look for cost savings and we use our VFM log record these
- ✓ Since March 2012 we made savings of well over £200,000.

## Targets

The targets set are built into our financial plans and need to be met to ensure business viability and high levels of tenant satisfaction. The financial targets will be monitored regularly by the Board and form part of the quarterly management accounts reported to the Board.

	2012-13 Target	2012-13 Actual	2013-14 Target	2013-14 Forecast	2014-15 Target
<b>Gross Turnover</b>					
Unity Housing	£4,994k	£4,937k	£5,017k	£5,005k	£5,325k
Unity Enterprise	£542k	£463k	£422k	£420k	£550k
<b>Surplus for the year</b>					
Unity Housing	£453k	£959k	£488k	£868k	£584k
Unity Enterprise	£(80)k	£(102)k	£77k	£(73)k	£(37)k
<b>Interest Cover</b>	350%	439%	330%	361%	250%
<b>Gearing Ratio</b>	30%	32%	34%	43%	40%
<b>Rent Arrears</b>	5.5%	6.32%	6.0%	6.5%	6.75%
<b>Former Tenant Arrears</b>	6.0%	4.76%	6.0%	5.6%	6.0%
<b>Bad Debt Provision</b>	£82k	£56k	£254k	£183k	£261k



# Business Planning Assessment



We review our objectives and related priorities on a regular basis. By their nature, some of our priorities carry forward from one year to another whilst others represent new ambitions and our approach to changing needs, demands and the environment within which we operate.

**Chief Executive, Ali Akbor**

## Objective 1

### Provide and continue to develop high quality mixed tenure housing which reflects needs and aspirations

Ref	Priority	What we set out to do	Progress	Task achieved/ on course?
1.1	Maintain our levels of investment and our planned approach to repairs, servicing and maintenance	Develop and implement new 5-year planned programme utilising stock condition information from IBS and financial component accounting system.	The 5-year planned maintenance programme has been set. Customers have had the opportunity to influence the structure of the programme and interview the contractors.	
1.2	Continue our approach aimed at tackling fuel poverty and introduce a programme to increasing the SAP ratings of our harder to heat properties.	Bring low target properties to band C EPC rating via targeted investment from existing budgets and external funding where applicable. Ensure EPC information available on all properties and begin targeted investment to bring all properties currently above target but still in band D rating up to new band C target.	We have accurate rd SAP information on 87% of our stock. Of the properties we have information on, only 1% (13 properties) are below target rating. These will be worked on during 2014/15 to bring them up to the highest energy performance rating possible for their type.	
1.3	Maintain our planned new development programme	Develop and implement 2011-2015 development programme, develop and maintain development programme for 2015/2016 and review and maintain Preferred Consultants list.	Works that are in progress are due to be completed on time.	

Ref	Priority	What we set out to do	Progress	Task achieved/ on course?
1.4	Carry out appraisals of the demand and opportunity to develop specialist accommodation for older people.	Identify suitable sites for potential Extra Care development.  Undertake research on demand for Extra Care facility in Chapeltown  Undertake appraisals and feasibility studies.	Appraisal is currently in progress.	

## Objective 2

### Provide high quality affordable housing services

Ref	Priority	What we set out to do	Progress	Task achieved/ on course?
2.1	Review and confirm our policy on social and affordable rents	Review and update policy information relating to rent including shared ownership properties.	Up to date policy document in place.	
2.2	Analyse the results of our range of tenant satisfaction measures, including the planned full survey for 2013/14, and redesign and continue to improve our services accordingly.	Tailor a questionnaire which examines all areas of our service delivery. Retrieve satisfaction data from the majority of tenants.	The tenant satisfaction survey is currently in the design process.	
2.3	Review our approach to sustaining demand for our properties, managing turnover and minimising void levels.	Make properties attractive to prospective tenants by bringing cyclical works forward (if appropriate) when a property becomes void.	Re-let times have fallen from 31 days to 24 days. Rent loss through voids has fallen accordingly. However, we continue to fall short of our re-let time target of 19 days.	
2.4	Review and confirm our approach to offering the most secure form of tenancy.	Compare our policies with those of similar organisations and consider making changes if necessary.	Tenant handbook has been updated accordingly. Up to date policy documents are in place.	
2.5	Consult with the Council and others regarding lettings and confirm our policy.	Consider updating our lettings policy.	Up to date policies in place. We now have a dedicated member of staff to deal exclusively with lettings and allocations.	
2.6	Be sensitive to the needs of our tenants regarding the size of accommodation taking account of new Government legislation and take appropriate action.	Consider updating our lettings policy.	Prospective tenants are asked to complete a housing needs assessment which will include examining their income and outgoings. This will help us to identify tenants who could benefit from some help from our Employment Team or our Financial Inclusion Service.  We have changes our lettings procedures to ensure that tenants are only offered properties which have the number of bedrooms they require, so as they are not penalised by the under-occupation sanctions.	

Ref	Priority	What we set out to do	Progress	Task achieved/ on course?
2.7	Ensure a proactive yet balanced approach to rent arrears and confirm our policy regarding evictions.	Appoint Income Support Officers.	We now have two dedicated Income Support Officers who intervene when new tenants fall into arrears or when existing tenants fall into arrears for the first time. This should help prevent arrears cases from escalating and leading to evictions.	
2.8	Deliver advice programmes aimed at supporting our tenants to minimise fuel poverty.	Review the ongoing pilots with CDT and Ground Work Trust in respect of cost and quality of existing advice programmes and move to one provider.  Review costs against training of and delivery in house staff.	Guide to 'Cutting your fuel bills' produced and published on website. Advice and guidance given in quarterly newsletter.  We are able to refer tenants in need of advice or minor alterations to their home to improve energy efficiency to Groundwork.  All staff have benefitted from external training.  Affordable Warmth Strategy document updated to reflect above.	
2.9	Work with local voluntary organisations and other partners on a pilot programme in Chapeltown and Harehills to support older people to live healthily and independently in their own homes.	Maintain our relationships with partners and consider working with other community organisations.	We continue to work with Feel Good Factor and support projects aimed at helping people to remain healthy and independent in their own homes.	

### Objective 3

#### Involve and work with our tenants and the communities we serve to inform and improve services

Ref	Priority	What we set out to do	Progress	Task achieved/ on course?
3.1	Continue to develop our range of tenant involvement panels and provide further support and encouragement to the recently introduced Tenant Scrutiny Panel.	Recruit more members for Tenant Scrutiny Panel and offer support and guidance to new and existing members.	Our Tenant Panel continues to meet on a regular basis. We have garnered interest from a number of tenants about our Tenant Scrutiny Panel - 5 tenants attended a 'taster' session to find out more.	
3.2	Undertake a full tenant satisfaction survey during 2013/14.	Tailor a questionnaire which examines all areas of our service delivery. Retrieve satisfaction data from the majority of tenants.	The tenant satisfaction survey is due to be conducted imminently.	
3.3	Review and develop the work of the Leeds Alliance of Housing Associations on tenant involvement	Encourage tenants to attend the group and feedback examples of best practice.	Two Unity tenants attend the group regularly. The Group has been examining 'affordable warmth'. They have also conducted a comparison of good practice on scheme improvements.	

Ref	Priority	What we set out to do	Progress	Task achieved/ on course?
3.4	Work with partners and introduce revised programmes aimed at understanding the wider needs and aspirations of the communities in the neighbourhoods within which we work.	<p>Continue to play an active role in the communities of Chapeltown and Harehills.</p> <p>Build on our community presence and involvement in Beeston and South Leeds.</p> <p>Liaise with community groups in Holbeck to alleviate any concerns they may have about the upcoming development.</p>	<p>We are one of the organisations involved in delivering the Chapeltown Housing Strategy which concerns bringing empty properties back into use.</p> <p>We are part of the Holbeck Neighbourhood Forum which is aimed at bringing stakeholders including businesses together to complement the wider regeneration of Holbeck.</p>	

## Objective 4

### Provide training and employment opportunities and promote financial inclusion

Ref	Priority	What we set out to do	Progress	Task achieved/ on course?
4.1	Review our current programme of work aimed at securing training and employment for our tenants, determine its effectiveness and set new targets	Develop Employment Services Strategy	Employment Services Strategy produced. Employment Services Action Plan includes clear strategy for the team and delivery targets set.	
4.2	Review and keep up to date our new programme of work aimed at promoting financial inclusion and supporting our tenants with the impact of welfare reform and wider cost of living issues	Appoint Income Support Officers to assist customers who struggle to pay their rent and other bills.	We continue to work with customers experiencing financial difficulty and are able to identify vulnerable new and existing customers who could benefit with assistance from our Income Support or Financial Inclusion Service.	
4.3	Review alternative banking/credit facilities for our tenants	Offer training to front-line staff.	Staff have benefitted from training on loan sharks, pay-day lenders and debt advice organisations.	

## Objective 5

### Provide business support services and encourage local enterprise

Ref	Priority	What we set out to do	Progress	Task achieved/ on course?
5.1	Progress the bid for external funding to refurbish the units within our business portfolio	Secure funding to refurbish Unity Enterprise units.	The bid was successful and work on the refurbishment of the Enterprise units is currently underway.	
5.2	Negotiate and agree the leasing arrangements for Chapeltown Enterprise Centre and the Leeds Media Centre	Secure long-term future of Chapeltown Enterprise Centre and Leeds Media Centre.	The lease for CEC has been transferred to Unity Enterprise for a further 99 years. A grant of £300k from Leeds City Council will secure CEC's long-term future. We continue to manage LMC on a flexible annual basis.	

Ref	Priority	What we set out to do	Progress	Task achieved/ on course?
5.3	Establish the Chapeltown Enterprise Network model underpinned by a robust and realistic business plan and risk strategy	Establish Chapeltown Enterprise Network model.	We have established a support service for social enterprises and aspiring entrepreneurs in partnership with Chapeltown Development Trust. ERDF funding has ensured the sustainability of the partnership.	
5.4	Review the original wider objects of Unity Enterprise and agree our future ambitions	Ensure long-term viability of Unity Enterprise.	We are hoping to increase the type and the quality of support services available to tenants at our Enterprise centres. The Introduction of a Network Business Advisor is an example of this.	

## Objective 6

### Provide business support services and encourage local enterprise

Ref	Priority	What we set out to do	Progress	Task achieved/ on course?
6.1	Work with partners to encourage the regeneration of our target neighbourhoods	<p>Develop and implement consultation and community consultation plans.</p> <p>Play an active role in existing initiatives, partnerships and neighbourhood working groups.</p>	The new development on Brown Lane East consisting of 42 units will complement the wider regeneration of Beeston and Holbeck. We have been able to offer 10 local people work placements through our contractor, Keepmoat. It is hoped that the regeneration of this area will attract more local shops and business and that there will be further job outcomes.	
6.2	Respond and react to neighbourhood issues identified by our tenants and by our partners on an on-going basis	<p>Deliver actions identified as part of local neighbourhood strategies.</p> <p>Protect Unity's assets and play a larger role in the neighbourhoods in which we work</p> <p>Develop Unity's position and reputation in the areas we work and strive for cohesive neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>Our Housing Officers now deal exclusively with neighbourhood and community issues and are able to take a more proactive approach to tackling anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>Our Tenant Panel has been involved in assessing the outcome of some cases of ASB and scrutinising satisfaction data.</p> <p>All tenants are required to sign a 'Good Neighbour Agreement' before being let a Unity property.</p>	
6.3	Support emerging regeneration initiatives in Beeston.	<p>Attend and play active role in local regeneration initiatives and partnerships such as the Inner South Area Committee Employment &amp; Skills Board.</p> <p>Participate in local activities e.g. Galas and community events.</p> <p>Play an active role in developing the Action Plan for the area.</p>	We were the major sponsor for the Beeston Festival and were able to offer tenants and visitors free advice on housing, welfare and employment.	

Ref	Priority	What we set out to do	Progress	Task achieved/ on course?
6.4	Review our current activities in Chapeltown and Harehills, determine progress and agree future 'success criteria'.	<p>Attend and play active role in local regeneration initiatives / partnerships such as the Chapeltown Housing Investment Strategy (CHIS) Group.</p> <p>Deliver targets set in the CHIS Action Plan. Develop Unity's position and reputation in the areas we work, strive for cohesive neighbourhoods and improve our housing standards.</p>	<p>We have identified a need for housing for older people in the community of Chapeltown. We converted a disused hostel into 6 units for older people .</p> <p>We are one of the organisations involved in delivering the Chapeltown Housing Strategy which concerns bringing empty properties back into use.</p> <p>We are working in partnership with Chapeltown Development Trust as part of the ERDF submission to refurbish a number of enterprise units. We have appointed a Network Support Advisor to offer business support.</p>	
6.5	Extend our reach into Holbeck taking account of need and opportunities	<p>Attend and play active role in local regeneration initiatives/partnerships such as the Inner South Area Committee Employment &amp; Skills Board.</p> <p>Participate in local activities e.g. galas and community events.</p> <p>Play an active role in developing the Action Plan for the area.</p>	<p>We attended the annual Holbeck Gala to promote opportunities for rent and shared-ownership on our next development at Brown Lane East.</p> <p>We are on the Inner South Employment &amp; Skills Board and attend regular meetings aimed at identifying work opportunities for people living in the area.</p>	
6.6	Consider our approach to digital inclusion	<p>Identify the need for training opportunities of our customers.</p> <p>Develop and deliver training opportunities where applicable.</p> <p>Ensure our customers have same opportunities.</p>	<p>We conducted a tenant-wide survey to establish where there is a dearth of digital inclusion among our tenants.</p> <p>We work in partnership with Connect Housing to deliver our own tailor-made IT courses.</p> <p>To date, 17 Unity tenants have benefitted from the course as well as a number of Connect tenants and members of the general public.</p>	

## Objective 7

### Be a progressive and expanding business with a sound resource base

Ref	Priority	What we set out to do	Progress	Task achieved/ on course?
7.1	Agree our policy on Board Member remuneration, recruit to current and future Board Member vacancies and carry out regular Board member appraisals	<p>Update the relevant policies.</p> <p>Recruit chairpersons for our Housing and Enterprise boards.</p>	<p>We are hoping to interview chairpersons for our Housing and Enterprise Boards. Given that the roles and level of responsibility has increased for our Board Members we will appraise our Board in 2014/15.</p>	

Ref	Priority	What we set out to do	Progress	Task achieved/ on course?
7.2	Adhere to our agreed financial plan, review available security and analyse potential longer term funding arrangements.	Review of Financial Plan and longer-term funding arrangements.	Financial Plan and targets have been published in our Business Plan.	
7.3	Review and confirm our future approach to value for money	<p>Publish a Value for Money Statement.</p> <p>Publish details of our Value for Money initiatives in our annual 'Self-Assessment'.</p>	<p>Our Value for Money statement has been published on our website.</p> <p>We include details of how, as an organisation, we have saved money in our Self-Assessment and our Annual Report to Tenants.</p>	
7.4	Review and confirm our future approach to benchmarking	Measure our performance against that of similar organisations.	We continue to share KPI data with organisations comparable to our own to learn from other practices.	
7.5	Further improve our management and staff development programmes and implement the recommendations of the recent IIP assessment	Improve means of communication and staff consultation.	<p>It was noted in the IIP assessment that communication between departments could be improved which is why we issue a quarterly staff newsletter.</p> <p>Personal Development Plans will take a new format this year and will fall in line with the objectives of the Business Plan.</p> <p>We have reviewed and updated our policies on Lone Working and Health &amp; Safety.</p> <p>We are integrating Housing and Enterprise staff by ensuring that our policies and procedures complement one another.</p>	
7.6	Review staffing requirements, in particular those arising from the Government's welfare benefit reform.	Streamline our staffing arrangements so as we are able to deal with issues such as rent arrears more effectively.	We have appointed two Income Support Officers who deal exclusively with arrears so that the Housing team is able to offer a more streamlined service. We continue to employ a Financial Inclusion Officer.	
7.7	Maintain an up to date and reliable ICT infrastructure	Review our IT policies.	We have updated our IT strategy to ensure that our IT infrastructure is robust and reliable.	
7.8	Consider the adoption of additional service and performance 'gold standards'	Highlight the areas in which we are exceeding our targets and consider applying for accreditation.	In 2014/15 we are aiming to achieve the 'Customer Service Excellence Award' which examines insight, the culture of the organisation, information and access, service delivery, and timeliness and quality of service.	
7.9	Consider and confirm our position in regards to entering the private/market rent sector	Consider opportunities to enter the private rent sector and the benefits of doing so.	We have no plans to enter the private/market rent sector in the near future.	

Ref	Priority	What we set out to do	Progress	Task achieved/ on course?
7.10	Consider working with The Runnymede Trust on racial equality policy issues		The opportunity was explored but it was not deemed to be beneficial to the Association.	
7.11	Review our agreed role as a BME organisation and undertake a gap analysis	Review aims, mission statements and objectives.	Aims, mission statement and objectives were reviewed by senior management and the Board at the annual away-weekend.	
7.12	Update and regularly monitor the organisation's current 'Self Assessment' and service improvement plan.	Produce Self-Assessment.	<p>The 2012/13 self-assessment was scrutinised by our Tenant Panel and made available to customers who requested a copy.</p> <p>The 2013/14 self-assessment reflects on both the previous year's findings and also on our objectives and priorities.</p>	



**Our Mission:** Provide housing choice, improve life opportunities and address inequalities.



**Homes & Enterprise**

Supporting BME Communities and Multi-Cultural Neighbourhoods

### Integrity

being honest, transparent and sincere with strong principles

### Respect

in the way we treat people, service users and each other

### Flexible

in how work for the benefit of our tenants, other people, the organisation and each other

### Equality

in the way we work and deliver our services

### Commitment

to provide service to meet the needs of our tenants, local people and local neighbourhoods



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