

Helping our tenants to weather the storm



Financial Inclusion Officer, Clive Greenwood, lends a sympathetic ear



Scott Hall Square - families, elderly & disabled residents in a supportive community

Ashton Court
Local news update - January

Do you want to stop paying £3.57 a week for gardening?

It's not often that you get a letter from your landlord offering you a chance to reduce your rent, but this is it! Unity is consulting with residents of Ashton Court about what they want to do about the communal gardens.



Unity's local offers - giving people the chance to make a choice and lower their rents

The past year was a tough time for many of our tenants, with household costs rising and changes to the welfare benefits system threatening to reduce the income of many of our households.

In these times, it's more important than ever to be providing the best value for money for our tenants' rent. But our responsibilities don't stop there. As an independent, community-based landlord, we have a moral duty to care for our tenants and the communities in which they live.

That's why our focus over the past year has been on preparing for tougher times and putting measures into place to help our tenants to weather the storm.

This report shows you some of the services that we've put into place to protect and support our residents, and how we've listened to tenants to give them the services they want.

For more detailed information, you can read our **Annual Report 2012-2013** or our **Self-Assessment 2012/13**, which is full of performance information. You can find them online at www.unityha.co.uk or we will be happy to send you out a copy.

Annual Report
to Tenants
2012/2013

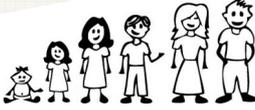

Homes & Enterprise

Supporting BME Communities
and Multi-Cultural Neighbourhoods

HB cuts from April 2013

You might already know that if you have spare rooms, your housing benefit could be cut from April 2013. However, if your children have their own room rather than sharing, you could also be affected - see page 8.

Kids under 16?
If they have their own rooms instead of sharing, your housing benefit



Unity saw the storm clouds on the horizon and started telling tenants about the housing benefit underoccupation reductions over a year before they started. Our early warnings gave tenants the chance to use our mutual exchange and transfer services to downsize before the cuts hit their wallet.

January 2012



[Right] The ongoing success of Unity's Tenant Panel meant that we could form a complementary Tenant Scrutiny Panel, to take a closer look at Unity's performance.

June 2012

Tenant Panel meeting 10th April 2012

Agenda

- 1.00 Introductions, expenses & refreshments
- 1.05 Matters arising from last meeting
- 1.10 Unity, Tenants and the Board - rights and responsibilities
- 1.20 Resident Involvement Strategy
- 1.40 Local standards
- 2.00 'Your views' survey results
- 2.20 Resident involvement 2012/13

1.10 Unity, Tenants and the Board - rights and responsibilities

Who tells Unity staff what to do?

- Tenants - through consultation and scrutiny
- The Board of Management
- The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)

July 2012



March 2012

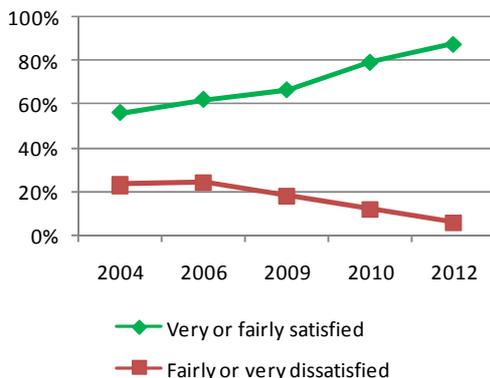
To mark Unity's 25th birthday year, our longest-term resident, Mr Thomas Woodburn, joined Chief Executive, Ali Akbor, in cutting a celebratory birthday cake. Sadly, Mr Woodburn passed away last spring.

May 2012

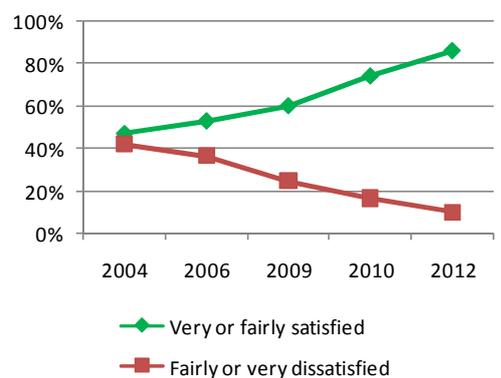
Our 'Your Views' survey showed record levels of tenant satisfaction with Unity's services. We used residents' views to bring in new 'local offers', for instance by partnering with other agencies to deal with anti-social behaviour on the Stonegates.



Tenant satisfaction with Unity's overall services



Tenant satisfaction with Unity's repairs & maintenance service



[Below] We launched two new services to make tenants' lives easier - the 'Unity to Unity' mutual exchange service and 'My Unity', giving tenants access to 24/7 online services.



[Above] West Yorkshire Police congratulated Unity on the sharp drop in anti-social behaviour and drug dealing on the Stonegates, following effective partnership action. Residents enjoyed a peaceful summer.

August 2012



January 2013



Unity's Tenant Panel set an ambitious programme of activities for the next year - getting out on estates, tackling areas where tenants feel neglected, and influencing Unity's next 5-year planned maintenance programme.

March 2013

September 2012

Clive Greenwood started work at Unity as our new Financial Inclusion Officer. He cracked straight on with contacting tenants who were in danger of losing money through the government's welfare reforms, offering them advice and support.

February 2013

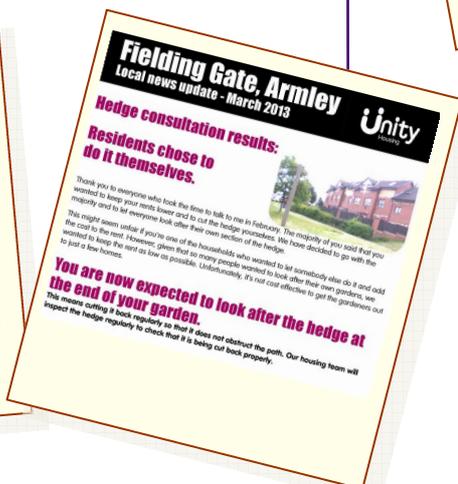
Fielding Gate tenants used their right to ask for a 'local offer' to look after a section of hedge themselves and keep their rents down, rather than pay a service charge. Ashton Court tenants made a similar choice in January.



March 2013

To help tenants cope when benefits go online, our Employment Team teamed up with Connect Housing to run computer courses, teaching the skills they need to claim benefits, look for jobs or get cheaper bills online.

Our Employment Team had a successful year, helping 35 people get jobs, arranging training for 36 and finding rewarding voluntary placements for another 14 people.



Facts & figures

How we spent each **£10** of your rent



For every **£10** of net rent our tenants paid...

...we charged another **48p** for service charges...

...and received another **£2.36** in other income.

So, for every **£10** of rent you paid, our total income was **£12.84**.

We took another **£1.14** out of our savings for our planned maintenance programme, giving us a total of **£13.98** to spend.

Out of this, we spent **£11.89** (**£3.26** of which was on repairs & maintenance). We put **£2.09** into our savings, to be used for future repairs and as security for loans.

So, for every **£10** of rent that our tenants paid, this is the breakdown of what we spent.

13p on repairing empty homes

93p on normal repairs

£1.06 on bigger repairs

£1.14 on our planned maintenance programme

94p on loan interest

45p on communal services

£2.97 on management costs

£4.27 on other costs



Programme area

Number programmed for the full year

Number ordered this year

Number completed this year

Programme area	Number programmed for the full year	Number ordered this year	Number completed this year
Kitchens	120	76	45
Bathrooms	31	101	88
Windows	11	29	20
Doors	11	72	59
Boilers	30	30	25
External painting	248	248	248
Upgrades to communal hallways and landscaped areas	5	9	9
Gas servicing	997	1014	1014

We ordered fewer kitchens this year as we were already ahead of the programme - all of the kitchens originally planned for this year (year 4 of our 5-year planned programme) were done this year or in previous years.

How much we spent on repairs in 2012/13

Voids	Repairs to empty homes to get them ready for the new tenant	£107,000
Day-to-day repairs	Everyday repairs	£318,000
Cyclical repairs	Maintenance that happens on a regular cycle, e.g. gas servicing, external repainting	£178,000
Planned repairs & improvements	Replacement kitchens, windows, bathrooms, boilers, roofs etc.	£827,000

How many homes Unity had and how much the rent was

Number of bedrooms	Number of homes	Average gross weekly rent at 31/3/13
1-bed	232	£70
2-bed	374	£84
3-bed	320	£92
4+ bed	211	£95

Rent arrears at 31/3/13: **6.35%**

Percentage of total rent collected in 2012/13: **100.25%**