

Annual Report to Tenants 2016/17





June 2016

We sponsored the annual Beeston Festival and Holbeck Gala to provide our tenants and the wider community with free advice on housing, employment and welfare.

August 2016



Residents took part in the Unity in Bloom gardening competition. There were 5 categories available to enter, with the winner from each category taking home a gift voucher as a prize



November 2016

Unity sponsored local rugby team, Chapeltown Cougars rugby league under 9s, with new branded hoodies to keep them warm as winter arrived.



July 2016



We had an official opening for our Brown Lane East development in Beeston. The event was attended by Hilary Benn MP and pupils from Ingram Road Primary School - who had helped name the flats 'Harding Villas'.



August 2016

Unity sponsored the 49th annual Leeds West Indian Carnival. Participants from the carnival also rented out space at our Business Centre to prepare and build their outfits.

September 2016



For our 29th AGM we were joined by Lord Patel of Bradford and Mark Arthur, CEO of Yorkshire Cricket. There was also a special visit from Father O'Higgins and the St Peters XI of the Pontifical Council for Culture from the Vatican.

November 2016



Our Holborn Court development in Little London was completed and tenants moved in. The site is comprised of 15 flats and two wheelchair accessible bungalows.



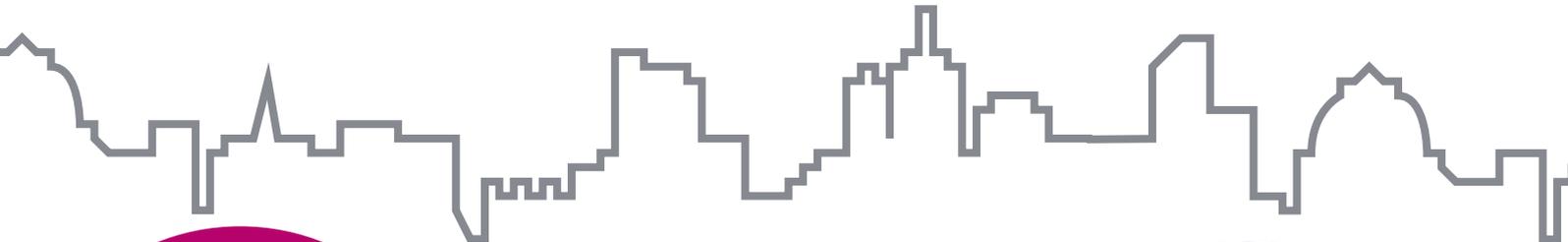
February 2017

Our £1.2 million scheme in Hunslet, Rocheford Court, was finalised with all tenants moving in. The development included nine houses – a mix of two and three-bedroomed properties – and two disabled-access bungalows

March 2017



Unity Homes and Enterprise celebrated 30 years of supporting BME communities while building sustainable neighbourhoods.



March 2017



December 2016

Members of our Tenant Panel visited our new development sites to give their feedback and monitor the progress being made. The Tenant Panel visited early in development and have followed the progress at different stages.



Unity's Affordable Homes Project continued with the completion of our Parkwood Road, Beeston (phase one) development. The scheme is comprised of 18 new homes. Phase two of the development (6 houses) is due for completion in 2017.



March 2017

Our business subsidiary, Unity Enterprise, had a web relaunch. The new site brought consistency with the housing website and improved the accessibility.

Contents



Tenancy Standard 6

includes how much rent we lose by having empty properties (voids) and how long it takes us to let empty properties to someone else, as well as whether our homes are let to those who most need them.



Home Standard 7

covers our performance on repairs satisfaction, repairs expenditure, gas safety, and the energy efficiency of our properties.



Neighbourhood & Community Standard 8

covers how we deal with anti-social behaviour, how many tenants we help access employment and our involvement in the communities we have properties.



Tenant Involvement Standard 11

covers how well tenant's views are taken into consideration and our handling of complaints.



Value for Money Standard 13

covers initiatives we are using to save the company money and the number of tenants who are satisfied their rent and service charges are fair.



Governance & Viability Standard 14

examines to what extent our business is properly run by our managers and governed by our boards.



Rent Standard 14

confirms that we adhere to rent charges set in accordance to the government.



A message from our CEO and Chair of Board...

Over the past year, Unity has continued its story of solid and steady progress. Financially sound our group profit for the year of £1.5m will, largely, be ploughed back into our ongoing development and regeneration programme. Over the past year we've added 46 much needed affordable rent homes in Chapeltown, Harehills and Beeston.

The provision of new homes such as these makes a real difference to people's lives. Our financial strength also enables us to improve Unity's existing housing stock. A wide range of home improvements were completed at 237 properties both cosmetic (new kitchens and bathrooms) and practical (installations of new energy efficient boilers). We're equally pleased to report that, despite some contractor-related challenges, our housing services' team scored highly on repairs.

To improve customer service in general we invested in IT and customer communications. All Unity's PCs were upgraded; as a result our staff can now access tenant information far more speedily. We also upgraded our broadband connection. On the communications front, our housing officers now have smart phones, giving them email access wherever they are. The introduction of a texting facility means that appointments with tenants can be quickly arranged and confirmed. And, finally, to ensure business continuity we now have a cloudbased telephone system.

Looking ahead Unity faces plenty of challenges. The housing crisis may perhaps have changed over the past thirty years, but it is still with us. The economic downturn and general uncertainty makes it harder to deliver our housing programme. But despite this and the paucity of subsidies for housing development, Unity continues to deliver. Indeed, over the coming year we'll be embarking on our biggest ever development programme.

Unity is indebted to its team of devoted and committed staff. The cohesive nature of our team is undoubtedly another factor in our success. We're an organisation in which everyone is pulling in the same direction, ably demonstrated recently when Unity was awarded Investors in People Silver Standard accreditation. Mention must also be made of our Board. Unity continues to appraise and review its governance arrangements and

board membership to ensure that people with the right skills and background are at the helm of the organisation.

Our future has never been brighter. Our vision is clear; the provision of good quality, affordable housing coupled with our wider strategy of achieving economic, social and physical regeneration of the communities which we serve.

Ali Akbor - Chief Executive

Shruti Bhargava - Chair of the Board





Tenancy Standard

Highlights

We have started to undertake tenancy HEALTH checks which includes regular visits to homes and keeping more up to date records on tenants and their homes.

Arrears cases have been reduced from 571 cases to 508 - showing a reduction of 63 cases.

We continue to work with other organisation to provide support and advice to tenants.

We have restarted monthly housing surgeries to provide housing advice to tenants and local residents.

Organisations such as Feel Good Factor and Leeds Black Elders remain partners to Unity and our tenants.

We support tenants in acquiring new essential appliances for their homes in order to sustain new tenancies.



KPI Benchmarking

We want to provide you with the best service possible, which is why we constantly monitor our performance. Unity Housing benchmarks its' performance against other housing associations throughout the region to ensure that our standards are similar to other organisations.

	Actual 2015/16	Actual 2016/17	Target 2016/17	Meeting Target	New Target 2017/18
Arrears					
Arrears (%)	5.56%	4.91%	4.75%		4.25%
Rent collected (%)	102.12%	100.49%	100%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	100%
Former tenant arrears (actual)	£230,260	£223,854	£338,669		£328,508

Voids & Lettings

% rent loss through voids	1.04% (0.79%)	0.68%	1%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1%
Turnover of stock	4.25%	4.2%	<10%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<10%
General needs re-let time	20.02 days	14.1 days	20 days	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	20 days
% lets to nominations	85.7%	94%	50%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	50%
% general needs lets to BME tenants	67.1%	78.1%	50%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	50%



Home Standard

Highlights

We conducted a stock condition survey of our housing stock, with over 300 homes surveyed. Results helped us to evaluate our forecasted maintenance spend and target underperforming stock.

Unity is currently in the process of retendering our maintenance service contractor to ensure we get the best deal and performance - due to be finalised in early 2018.

We made improvements to 237 of our properties, which equated to an £812k investment

All of our properties had a gas safety check and are compliant. Our SAP rating is 74 - which puts us amongst the most efficient in the UK.

We received 3,964 requests for repairs throughout 2016/17 and 99% of tenants were satisfied with the service.

Unity fitted 72 new boilers into properties - 27 more than planned. This has helped to reduce tenant's energy bills.



Our Performance

	Actual 2015/16	Actual 2016/17	Target 2016/17	Meeting Target	New Target 2017/18
Repairs, Servicing and Conditions					
Emergency	99.0%	99.3%	99%	☑	99%
Urgent	99.0%	98.1%	99%		99%
Routine	99.0%	99.1%	99%	☑	99%
First time fix	99.0%	94.6%	95%		95%
Appointments made and kept	99.0%	98.8%	99%		99%
Gas servicing	100%	100%	100%	☑	100%
Average rd SAP rating	73.7	74	73	☑	73
Tenant satisfaction					
Monthly maintenance satisfaction	99.5%	99%	95%	☑	95%



Neighbourhood & Community Standard

Highlights

Unity completed the development of 46 new homes in Leeds - including Parkwood Road, Rocheford Court and Holborn Court.

Our Employment Services Team had a successful year. They helped get 95 people into work, 149 into training and 26 into volunteering positions.

Unity Employment Services also networked with various partners to provide further training for clients: such as Learning Partnerships, YMCA, PATH etc.

Our Regeneration team work collaboratively with local organisations to improve communities. These organisations include: Holbeck Neighbourhood Forum and Chapeltown Housing Investment Strategy.

Our Affordable Homes Programme continued as 146 Chapeltown Road and Parkwood Road phase two near completion

Unity staff and tenants had a collection for local charities. Donations of food were made to the local foodbank and toys were also donated to disadvantaged children via the Radio Aire Mission Christmas appeal



Unity's Affordable Homes Programme 2015-18

Parkwood Road, Beeston



A £2.3m project comprised of 18 houses and completed in March 2017.

Rocheford Court, Hunslet



A £1.2m project which comprises nine houses and two bungalows, was completed in February 2017.

Holborn Court, Little London



A £1.8m project completed in November 2016, comprised of 15 flats and two bungalows.

Upcoming Developments

Parkwood Road (phase two)

Additional to the 18 houses already built, phase two of Parkwood Road will add an extra 6 houses. The development is due for completion June 2017.

146 Chapeltown Road

A conversion and new build development of 6 flats in Chapeltown. Work began in 2016 and is due for completion in December 2017.

Ancestor PH

Planning application has been submitted for 14 new homes (6 flats and 8 houses).

Unity Enterprise



Website revamp brings Enterprise up to speed

Unity Enterprise launched a new website following a major upgrade.

A not-for-profit organisation, Unity Enterprise currently provides 130 managed workspaces for around 80 local businesses, social enterprises and third sector organisations across three locations close to the city centre.

The new Unity Enterprise website features an array of professional photographs illustrating the full range of amenities and services available for lease or hire. These include office suites, shop units, meeting rooms and conference facilities.

Carnival spirit took over at Unity Business Centre

This year, Unity Business Centre let out four units across three different sites to designers so that they could create outfits for the West Indian Carnival. Despite the usual letting time for the business centre being a six month plus occupancy, Unity Carnival Arts were granted a short term, six week rental which allowed them to prepare for the celebration and design a first prize winning costume!



Unity's Employment Services

Unity's Employment Services team was set up in May 2011 to support Unity tenants and the communities in which they live to get back into employment and training. The Team can help tenants with practical job skills such as preparing a CV, guidance for job searching and applications and practising interview. Since they joined Unity they have helped hundreds of people!

MyWorkSearch

MyWorkSearch is a job search and training tool. It provides support for all aspects of looking for and securing a new job, and helps with day to day search activities.

Our Employment team have acquired this tool and use it at job clubs and consultations to assist clients in finding work opportunities.



UK Online Centre

Unity is now an accredited UK Online Centre! This means that we can provide better training and resources to tenants who are learning how to use computers. Being an accredited centre means that we have access to a vast amount of resources, which our tenants and customers can also access for free.

Modules include: Using your computer or device , online basics, internet skills, online safety, finding a job online, and many more.



Case Study

Kimberley*, two children under 5

Age: 25

Before meeting the Employment Team, Kimberley had been out of work for four years due to having her children. She had only 9 months experience on her CV, working within a hotel catering environment.

The team helped her develop her CV, build her confidence and assisted in negotiating with the DWP about her childcare arrangements so that Kimberley could attend a twelve week course to achieve a food hygiene certificate. She is thoroughly enjoying it so far.

The team helped her apply for jobs and explore different sectors. The team have recommended her for a placement with a guaranteed job at the end of it.

* Names have been changed to protect the identities of those concerned. Images do not represent those in the case studies.

How we performed

	14/15	15/16	16/17	Total
Employment	60	77	95	232
Training	61	120	149	330
Voluntary work	20	15	26	61



Our 'Employment Services Hub' was established in 2016 and continues to host the majority of services that our team provide



Tenant Involvement & Empowerment Standard

Highlights

Tenants continue networking with other organisations to ensure that Unity is maintaining best practice.

Following on from last year's success, Unity hosted another Unity in Bloom gardening competition. This encouraged tenants to take pride in their estates for a chance of winning prizes. Our Tenant Panel were involved as the Judging Panel.

Our Tenant Panel visited our new development sites with our Regeneration Director, giving constructive feedback and comments for future new builds.

We continue to sponsor the annual Beeston Festival to raise awareness of our services and provide free housing, employment and welfare advice to local people

We reviewed on involvement activities and reduced the Tenant Panel to bi-monthly, ensuring Value for Money and effectiveness of meetings.

We attained both Customer Service Excellence and Investors in People award. Both visits were only supervisions of our accreditation and their purpose was to ensure that we were maintaining the standards and expectations.

Tenant Panel

It's been a busy and meaningful year for the 22 members of our Tenant Panel. They've worked alongside Unity staff on a number of key issues including anti-social behaviour and Unity's repair service. Members have also given crucial insight into the tendering of our new maintenance contracts, ensuring that the final decision reflect the needs of our tenants.

The panel was also involved in Unity's development programme, helping ensure that the new homes we build continue to meet exacting quality standards. Visits were made to construction sites at an early stage and when the projects were nearing completion.

In line with our cost control policy it is appropriate, from time to time, to review every aspect of the Unity business to ensure that it delivers good value for money. So this year we undertook a review of the Tenant Panel.

When it comes to value for money, the Panel continues to deliver. However to further improve efficiency, meetings now take place on a bi-monthly basis. This has had a double benefit: the change has resulted in cost savings which are being used to enhance other services.



Sponsorship

Whenever we can, Unity provides financial support for local events and worthwhile local projects which will bring benefit to the whole local community. During the past year we supported Leeds West Indian Carnival as well as festivals and galas in Beeston, Holbeck and Meanwood.

Leeds Tenants' Collaborative

The Collaborative is a group of active tenants from three local housing providers. Meetings take place every six months. Unity is represented by two tenants and our Tenant Involvement officer. The Collaborative's main function is to facilitate the sharing of best practice, comparing approaches to customer service between the three housing associations.

Growing nicely

Gardening and growing have been to the fore of our tenant involvement agenda this year. Neat and well-tended gardens improve the look of our estates, creating a pleasant environment whilst fostering pride amongst tenants. Gardening also plays a role in a healthy lifestyle. It gets you out in the fresh air; a dose of double digging is a great way of keeping fit. And the benefit is even greater if you're growing your own fresh fruit and veg.

Members of the Tenants' Panel took two full days to visit and judge gardens across Unity estates. Entrants were invited to an Awards' Ceremony where the winners and runners-up were announced and prizes awarded.



Easter excitement

Following the 2014 'Your Views' survey, Unity aims to provide more activities for younger residents during the school holidays.

During the Easter months we visited our estates that have lots of children and set up a stall for some easter activities. The event began with some arts and crafts, with tenants able to create their own Easter bunny masks and Easter cards for their friends and family.

Arts and crafts was followed by an Easter egg hunt and our young residents searched for multiple chocolate eggs hidden on their estates. The tenants enjoyed the activities, with more engagement planned for the summer.





Value for Money Standard

Our approach to Value for Money

Unity's VFM strategy was first established by the Board in 2011 and has been recently refreshed in 2017. Quality is an important aspect of Unity's operation and we would not always seek the lowest price if it resulted in a reduction in quality.

In addition, we will normally plan to spend our entire maintenance budget each year. Any efficiency savings made allow us to complete

additional works with the intention of optimising the condition of our stock. We see this as a preferred outcome rather than a lower level of £ spend.

There is also a robust process of performance management within the organisation including regular performance reviews by the senior management team.

Value for Money Log

Description

Obtained a better tariff from changing utility supplier at Leeds Media Centre

Negotiating discount on last year's rates (pre IPT) - reduction in costs is £20,674 but after allowing for an increase in overall insurable values this is worth an additional £7,086

Ensured we had the best available tariffs for our electricity on our annual rate review

Ensured we had the best available tariffs for our gas on our annual rate review

We reviewed direct debit charges incurred when using telephones

Saving

£1,324

12 month contract

£83,280

over the lifespan of the contract

£1,054

annual saving

£3,085

one-off discount

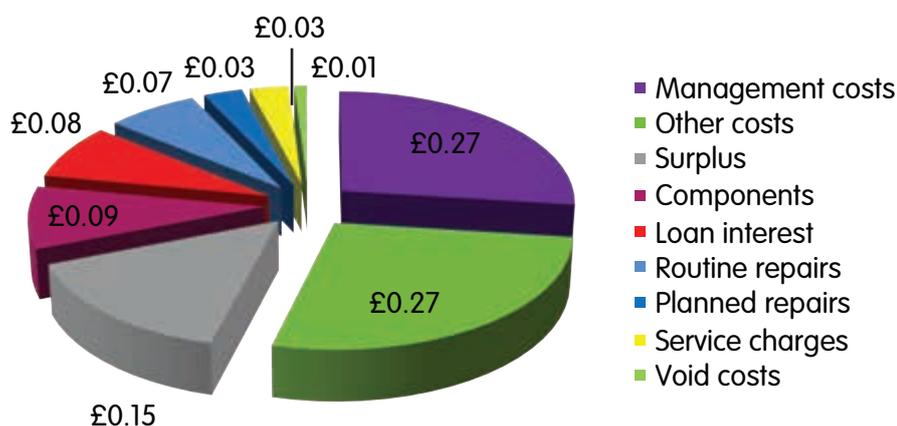
£288

annual saving over all accounts

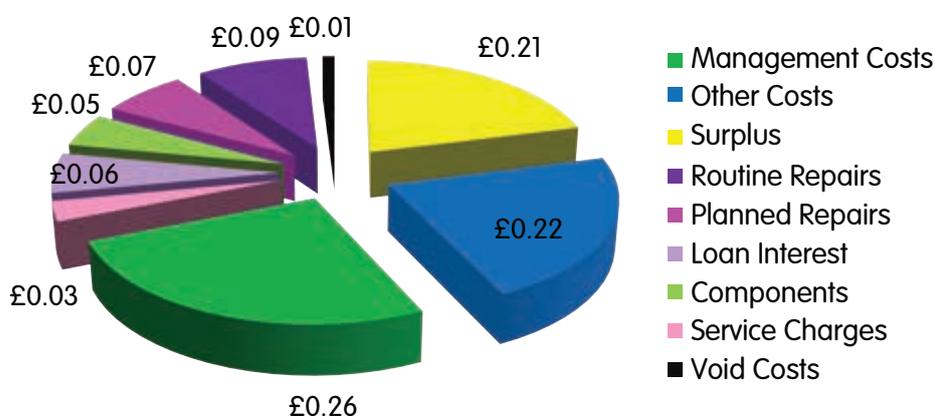
Total Savings:

£89,031

How each £1 of rent was spent in 2015/16



How each £1 of rent was spent in 2016/17



Financial Performance

GROSS TURNOVER

	2016/17 Target	2016/17 Actual
Unity Housing	£5,706k	£6,841k
Unity Enterprise	£550k	£560k

REINVESTED INTO THE COMPANY

	2016/17 Target	2016/17 Actual
Unity Housing	£724k	£1,423k
Unity Enterprise	£14k	£104k

Interest cover 415% 583%

Gearing ratio 35% 40%

Rent arrears 4.75% 4.90%

Voids 1% 0.69%

As a not-for-profit organisation, any money that Unity has left over at the end of the year is reinvested back into the company.

This goes towards improving services and the building of new homes.

Your suggestions for Value for Money

If you have any ideas about how Unity could save money, we'd be very keen to hear from you. One of the ways you can tell us your ideas is by joining the Tenant Panel.

The Tenant Panel are very good at keeping an eye on how Unity spends its money and have already come up with some great suggestions. Call Nathan on **0113 200 7751** for more information.

Want more detail?

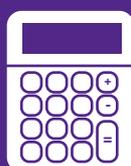
If you require any more information or clarification on anything in this report, or would like a hard copy to be sent to you, please call Nathan on **0113 200 7751**. Alternatively, you can download our 2016/17 Self-Assessment from unityha.co.uk which has more detail.



Governance & Viability Standard

Unity as a registered provider has to ensure it complies with all the requirements of the Homes & Communities Agency.

- Ensuring effective governance arrangements are in place
- Effective risk management, ensuring all assets are protected
- Being accountable to tenants, regulator and stakeholders
- Unity's status with the regulator in 2016/17 remains: **Viability - 1 Governance - 1**



Rent Standard

Unity charges its rents in accordance to the governments direction to the regulator.