

Our performance: Moving in the right direction!

Overall, we made good progress in improving our performance during 2006/7.

Here are some of the most important results:

Rent collection

We made some progress in this area during 2006/07.

- We successfully collected 99.7% of the rent due, up from 99% in the previous year.

Repairs response

We improved our performance in all repairs categories last year completing:

- 97.7% of emergency repairs within 24 hours (up from 89% in 2005/6)
- 97.7% of urgent repairs within 5 days (up from 88% in 2005/6)
- 99.80% of routine repairs within 25 days (up from 92% in 2005/6)

Managing empty properties

This remains an area of excellent performance for us.

- On average we took just 19 days to repair and re-let empty properties.

Want to know more?

Further performance information for last year will be published in our Annual Report in September.

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How satisfied are you?

During the past 12 months we have begun to measure your satisfaction with services in many more areas. Here are some of the key results for this year.

1. New tenants happy with the process of applying for a home

2005/06 – 100% 2006/07 – 100%

2. Percentage of tenants leaving who enjoyed being a WATMOS tenant

2005/06 – 75% 2006/07 – 100%

3. Percentage happy with major works carried out

2005/06 – 85% 2006/07 – 94%

4. Percentage happy with the way responsive repairs were carried out

2005/06 – N/A 2006/7 – 97.7%

5. Percentage happy with the way the gas service was carried out

2005/06 – N/A 2006/7 – 89.2%

Comparative data will be available for items 4 and 5 next year.

Meeting our promises to you!

Before the ownership of your home transferred from the Council to WATMOS in 2003 we made a number of important promises about what would happen if this change went ahead.

This is how we are doing so far against the main promises made.

Promise 1

Your TMO will remain responsible for the day-to-day management of the homes.

How are we doing?

- WATMOS is meeting this promise. It has maintained its commitment to delivering local services through the eight TMOs.

Promise 2

WATMOS will be run by a tenant majority Board with eight tenants (one from each TMO) and four independent people

How are we doing?

- WATMOS is meeting this promise. We remain a tenant controlled housing association with a Board of eight tenants and four independent people.

Promise 3

WATMOS plans to spend £15 million in housing repairs and improvements in the first five years and bring all homes up to a modern standard.

How are we doing?

- We are on target to meet this promise. So far WATMOS has spent £14.6 million on major housing repairs and improvements. In 2003 only 10% of our homes met the Government's Decent Homes Standards. By April 2007 this had risen to 96%.

Promise 4

For the first five years after transfer the overall budgets for repairs should exceed the current level of budget for such maintenance

How are we doing?

- WATMOS is meeting this promise. Repairs allowances have been maintained and uplifted annually to take account of inflation.

Promise 5

All existing tenants transferring will have a legally binding guarantee between 2003 and 2007 this will include:

- Rents will increase no more than once a year.
- There will be no rent increases for repairs and improvements.
- Rents will increase annually by no more than inflation + 1.5%.

Could you be making the news?

Would you like to contribute an item to our newsletter? Is there something interesting going on in your local TMO area?

If so we'd like to hear from you. Please contact the Editor at **WATMOS Community Homes, 29 Stafford Street, Walsall, WS2 8DG** or telephone **01922 471910** or email **info@watmos.org.uk**

tenantsnews

watmos
COMMUNITY HOMES
creating strong communities
through tenant management

One Star and Promising Prospects for Watmos!

We are pleased to tell you that the Audit Commission's inspectors report about WATMOS, that was published on 10th March 2011, concludes that we are providing a 'top' one star service that has promising prospects for improvement.

The Audit Commission have praised WATMOS and the eight TMOs for our excellent service, high levels of tenant involvement, the success of the housing improvement programme and the high standard of our estates. The report however, also identified the need for improvement

in a number of areas including service standards, service information, a more strategic performance management and a stronger approach to ensuring value for money.

Our response to the findings is to go to work that the real success of WATMOS as the first landlord in the country based on tenant management. We are still working to improve but we are determined to give priority to the services that really matter to residents such as the right housing, high quality neighbourhoods and good security measures. In particular we are proud to have increased the number of our homes meeting the Government's Decent Home

Standard from 10% to 94% in the last four years without the need for any extra borrowing. WATMOS Chief Executive, Stuart Moxham said: "Thanks to the positive approach of the inspection team, we have the opportunity to address the inspection findings. We are delighted that they have concluded that, due to effective leadership and robust improvement planning, we have promising prospects for improvement. As the Audit Commission's service improvement recommendations have been incorporated into our Service Improvement Plan and over years within the organisation, both tenant volunteers and group employees, are working together to meet the challenge that lie ahead."



"Creating strong communities through tenant management"

How are we doing?

- ☑ WATMOS is meeting this promise. We apply one rent increase in April each year and these have all been capped at inflation + 1.5%.

Promise 6

The rent guarantee will be protected for moves of transferring tenants between WATMOS and whg.

How are we doing?

- ☑ WATMOS is meeting this promise. All transferring tenants between WATMOS and whg have retained the rent guarantee.

Promise 7

WATMOS will make a positive contribution to the borough-wide anti-poverty strategy.

How are we doing?

- ☑ WATMOS is meeting this promise. During the last 12 months we have funded a project with the Council's Welfare Rights Service that has secured around £220,000 in extra benefits and about £17,000 in lump sum payments for residents on WATMOS estates.

Promise 8

WATMOS will show service charges separately from rent charges and will not make a profit from service charges.

How are we doing?

- ☑ WATMOS is meeting this promise. The annual rent increase notification shows rent and service charges separately. Currently costs are higher than charges.

Promise 9

The rent guarantee will apply to rent and service charges.

How are we doing?

- ☑ WATMOS is meeting this promise. Combined rents and service charges have not increased annually by more than inflation + 1.5%.

Promise 10

New tenants will pay the target rent with annual rent increases of no more than inflation plus 0.5%

How are we doing?

- ☑ WATMOS is meeting this promise. Rent increases for new tenants have been capped at inflation + 0.5%.

Promise 11

All transferring tenants will have a Preserved Right to Buy

How are we doing?

- ☑ WATMOS is meeting this promise. During the last four years 87 tenants bought their homes under the Preserved Right to Buy arrangement.

Promise 12

WATMOS will use a housing allocation policy broadly based on the council's and priority would continue to be given to people in the greatest housing need.

How are we doing?

- ☑ WATMOS is meeting this promise. During the first four years WATMOS has allocated available homes using a policy developed by the Council based on an assessment of housing need.

Promise 13

WATMOS will operate a clear and simple complaints procedure for tenants who are unhappy with any aspect of their housing service.

How are we doing?

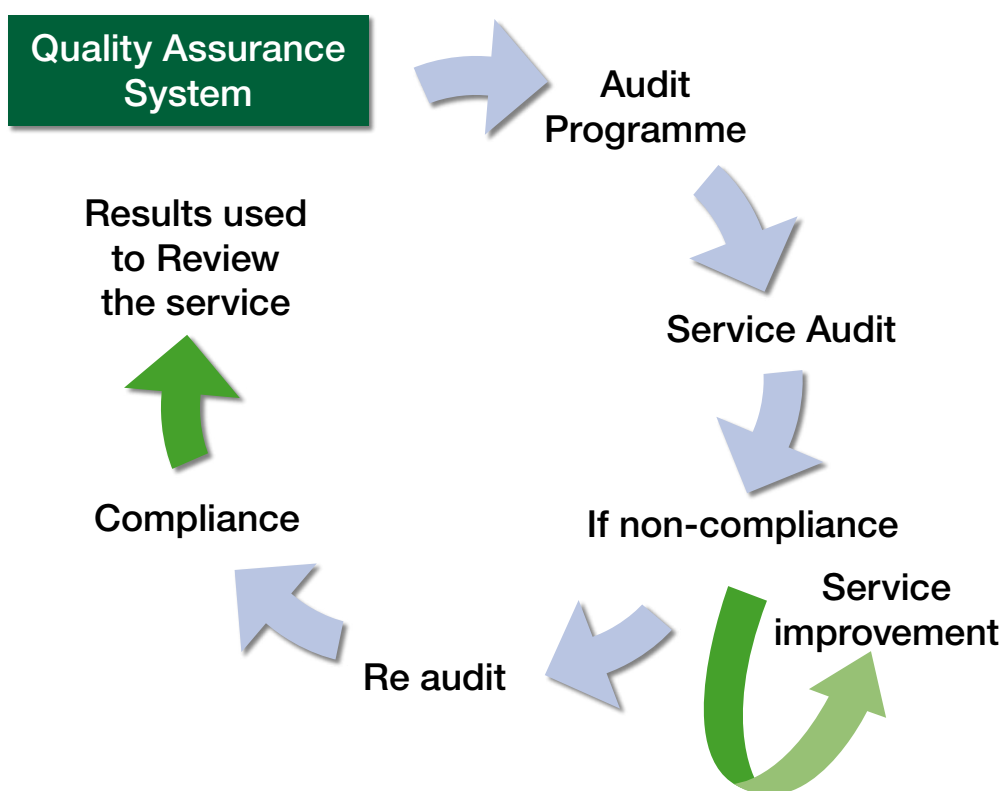
- ☑ WATMOS is meeting this promise. We use a complaints procedure that adopts current good practice and is approved by the Independent Housing Ombudsman.

WATMOS: Quality Assured

We are in the process of setting up a quality assurance system to ensure that the services you receive are consistent and reliable.

The system will use a programme of audits at each TMO to ensure compliance with documented procedures and policies.

Between now and September we will be focusing our attention on complaints, rent arrears management and dealing with anti social behaviour. However, by this time next year all our main service processes will be part of the system.



Reviewing our repairs services

We have put together a 5 year service review programme to help us achieve continuous improvement and value for money in all our services. The first area to be reviewed is day-to-day repairs.

This review began in May and is being led by a steering group made up of tenants, employees and contractors.

Over the next 6 months we will be;

- Consulting you on the current service and how you would like to see it work in future.
- Comparing our service with the best performing housing organisations.
- Analysing costs to see how we can improve value for money.
- Challenging the way we do things and considering whether they could be done in a better way.

This is an opportunity for you to make a real difference to the repairs service and how it is delivered. There are a number of ways you can get involved in the review:

- If you have been sent a repairs review questionnaire please complete it and return it to us.
- Volunteer to become a member of the steering group
- Attend the workshops that will be taking place over the next 6 months
- Write to us with your views and ideas.

If you are interested in any of these opportunities to get involved please phone the Project Officer Dave Simpson on 01922 471910 or email dave.simpson@watmos.org.uk

Twinnies help build childrens' playground



Local Pelsall School, St Michael's, received a fundraising boost when Twin Crescents TMO presented them with a £300 Community Grant to help build playground climbing equipment.

Pauline and Len Duckhouse from Twin Crescents TMO present a cheque for £300 to staff and pupils at St Michael's School.

Brownhills youngsters benefit from the brain gym

The Avenues TMO have awarded their £300 Tenant Panel Community Grant for this year to St Bernadette's School in Brownhills.

The school have used the money to purchase 'brain gym' equipment, books and a digital camera.

Avenues TMO Committee Member, Samantha Graham presents a cheque for £300 to St Bernadette's Deputy Head Teacher, Mrs Sleigh while pupils show off their new equipment.



Sandbank Golden Wedding Celebration

We would like to send our congratulations to Margaret and Dennis Davenport of 2 Clarke House, Sandbank on their Golden Wedding Anniversary. Margaret and Dennis have been residents at Sandbank TMO for the past 13 years.

Maybe they celebrated with a beer at home?



RSPCA Walsall Neutering Scheme



Walsall RSPCA is currently running a scheme to help people on low incomes with the neutering of their pet animals. The Walsall area has a lot of stray and feral animals and many problems occur when the breeding of pets gets out of control.

For example:

- Stray animals often spread disease and cause nuisance in the community
- Too many pets in a home can lead to their neglect and damage to the property
- Stray and abandoned animals have a poor quality of life

This is why the RSPCA wants to publicise their neutering scheme as widely as possible. The main points of the scheme are listed opposite;

- The neutering scheme covers residents of the WS1 – WS5 and WS7 – WS10 areas.
- Residents in receipt of state benefits qualify to have male or female cats neutered for free (see note 1).
- Residents in receipt of state benefits qualify for low cost neutering for dogs, male

dogs cost £17.50 and female dogs cost £25 (see note 2).

- Residents in receipt of state benefits, working tax credit or pension credit qualify for low cost neutering for rabbits, male rabbits cost £13.50 and female rabbits cost £18 (see note 3).
- Residents in receipt of working tax credits or pension credits qualify to have male or female cats neutered for £10.
- Residents in receipt of working tax credits or pension credits qualify to have female dogs neutered for £40 and male dogs neutered for £30.
- People in receipt of state benefits, working tax credits or pension credit can have male Guinea Pigs neutered for £11.37 (females cannot be done).

Note 1

Normally in the region of £40 for a female cat and £35 for a male cat.

Note 2

Normally in the region of £75 for a male dog and £125 for a female dog.

Note 3

Normally in the region of £40 for a male rabbit and £50 for a female rabbit.



If you would like to know more about this scheme you can phone Lucy Hayreh on 01543 454571 or email rspcawalsall@aol.com

Tell us what you think!

We would really like to know what you think about our newsletter. Please fill in this response form and hand it in at your local TMO office.

I think that the general presentation of the newsletter is:

- Very Good Good OK
 Poor Very Poor

I think that the general content of the newsletter is:

- Very Good Good OK
 Poor Very Poor

Other Comments about the Newsletter

Is there anything else you would like to see in future newsletters?



Money Advice Service for WATMOS Tenants

Worried about rent arrears? In debt and don't know which way to turn?

Talk to your TMO about how you can arrange an appointment to see a Debt Caseworker at Walsall Citizens Advice Bureau.

We have teamed up with WATMOS to provide a Money Advice Service to WATMOS tenants.

Loss of work, ill health, relationship breakdown, loss of Tax Credits or benefits can hit anyone at anytime and lead to money problems.

We know it's difficult when you are in debt to take that big step and get help but taking advice could make things easier to cope with in the long term and you will know what your choices are to sort things out.

Walsall CAB has a team of Caseworkers who work with clients with their money problems. We can

explain what your creditors can and can't do and what options you have. This might even include an Administration Order or Bankruptcy but there are other ways of doing things such as making manageable offers of payment to your creditors. We can explain the implications of Bankruptcy and Administration Orders and they are choices which can give you light at the end of the tunnel.

The Bureau can also tell you whether there are any benefits or Tax Credits you can claim as this could help. Prioritising your debts and ensuring you can pay key household bills is the next step. In many cases we then go on to negotiate acceptable and affordable payments with other creditors.

Paying the rent has to be the most important priority. Failure to pay

the rent often leads to Possession Proceedings being started, placing your home at risk and Court costs are added to the debt. This may be around £260.00.

Even if you have no rent arrears but are in debt and want to find out your options, talk to your TMO about how you can arrange an appointment to see us.

We are here to help and advise you. Our service is free, independent and confidential and we will only discuss issues with your TMO if you give us permission to do so.

**Walsall Citizens Advice Bureau
139-144 Lichfield Street,
Walsall
WS1 1SE**



Contact Details

You can find **WATMOS** at:
29 Stafford Street
Walsall
WS2 8DG
Tel: 01922 471910
Fax: 01922 612967
Or email us on
info@watmos.org.uk

You can contact each of the TMOs as follows:

The Avenues TMO
10/11 Second Avenue
Brownhills
WS8 6JA
Tel: 01543 453659
Email: avenues@watmos.org.uk

Burrowes Street TMO
Burrowes Street
Walsall
WS2 8NN
Tel: 01922 613292
Fax: 01922 746949
Email:
burrowes@watmos.org.uk

Chuckery TMO
2 Brookes House
Tantarra Street
Chuckery
Walsall
WS1 2HS
Tel: 01922 644456
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Email:
chuckery@watmos.org.uk

Delves East TMO & Delves West TMO
West Bromwich Road
Delves
Walsall
WS5 4NW
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