

Another Year of Improved Performance

We are delighted to report that our service performance has improved yet again. In most of the key service areas we are now amongst the best performing housing associations in the country.



The key results are as follows:

Rent Collected

- We collected 100.35% of all the rent due for the year (99.69% last year).

Repairs

- We completed over 99.5% of all repairs within the agreed timescale (98.4% last year).

Empty Homes

- On average we took just 18.8 days to re-let our empty homes (19 days last year).

We will provide you with more detailed information about last year's performance in our Annual Report. This will be delivered at the end of September.

Avenues TMO – Focusing on Young People

The Avenues in Brownhills is an estate of family housing and the TMO gives a high priority to providing positive activities for young people.

During the Easter school holidays a group of youngsters from the Avenues TMO enjoyed a day out at Drayton Manor Park. The TMO also organised an active day recently at the Outdoor Centre at Aldridge. These activities have been made possible by grant funding received from Walsall Youth Services.



Exciting New Developments in Birchills

Burrowes Street TMO is leading a major new project that explores extending the TMO model into a wider neighbourhood management role.

What is neighbourhood management?

Neighbourhood management is an approach to delivering local services in which one organisation takes a leadership role, coordinating the provision of all the most important services affecting an area. This helps improve a neighbourhood by ensuring that all service-providers

are working in a joined-up and coordinated way for the benefit of local people.

Burrowes Street TMO is working with the local Pakistan Muslim Welfare Association and Birchills Agenda 21 Group to establish a Neighbourhood Board and to draw up a Neighbourhood Charter.

In an exciting additional development, these groups are also working with Walsall Regeneration Agency to explore the implementation of a community-controlled fibre-optic broadband system for the Birchills.

What is fibre-Optic Broadband?

A fibre-optic broadband system works like normal 'copper wire' broadband but is enormously quicker and more powerful. Information is passed down glass cables using light. This enables all sorts of new services and activities to be offered through the broadband system (in addition to standard internet, cable TV and telephone services).

If this new initiative is successful in Birchills, we would like to see neighbourhood management and community-controlled broadband rolled-out to all other TMO areas.

A New Approach to Housing Allocations

On 30 June 2008 we introduced a new way of allocating our available homes.

From Points to Bands

In the new arrangements the points system has been replaced by a banding system. Each housing application is placed in date order in one of the following three bands:

- Band A – Applicants with a high level of housing need.
- Band B – Applicants with a low level of housing need.
- Band C – Applicants with no housing need.

In addition, if an applicant becomes a long-standing volunteer at a TMO they can also appear in a fourth band:

Band D – Active Volunteer Band.

The Allocations Cycle

As vacant homes become available they are allocated to applicants across the four bands. For example out of twenty allocations:

- Six will go to Band A.
- Five will go to Council nominations.
- Five will go to Band B.
- Two will go to Band C.
- Two will go to Band D.

The Benefits of Banding

The banding system is easier to understand than the complex points system and by placing applicants in a date-order list, people know where they stand.

A Home in Brockhurst House

Do you know anyone over the age of 50 who is looking for a home in Walsall?

If so Brockhurst House might be just what they are looking for.

The block offers self-contained accommodation with good communal facilities in the pleasant and safe surroundings of Burrowes Street TMO in Birchills.

Enquiries to Burrowes Street TMO, telephone 01922 471910.



Go Green to Save Money and The Planet



There are many ways that you can save money whilst doing your bit for the environment that don't need you to make dramatic changes to your lifestyle. A few small alterations can make a huge difference.

Green can also be cheaper, read our top tips to start saving now.

Use Energy Efficient Lightbulbs

Switching over to energy-saving light bulbs means saving money on expensive electricity bills. The bulbs are roughly the same price as conventional ones but use up to 80% less electricity whilst still providing the same amount of light as a standard bulb.

Wash At 30 Degrees

Higher temperatures use more energy and cost more to run so by washing on 30 instead of 40 degrees you can save money and help the environment.

Keep The Lid On

When you're cooking keep all lids, covers and doors closed. More than 20% of heat can be lost each time you open the oven door. Water boils up to 6% faster with a lid on the pan, so making this small change will help cut your energy bill on a daily basis.

Use The 'Off' Switch

Leaving appliances such as TVs, PCs, DVD players and set top boxes on standby is believed to waste 15% of the world's domestic electricity per year.

Anyone For Tea?

It's easy to just fill the kettle up to the top without thinking, but if just 15 families filled their kettles with only the amount of water they needed they would save one tonne of carbon every year.

Don't Drink Bottled Water

Britain's tap water is very good quality and costs next to nothing. We use 2.7 million tonnes of plastic to bottle water each year and only about 10% of the bottles are recycled. Most go on landfill sites where they take 450 years to break down.

Use Washable Nappies

The average price per disposable nappy is 16.9p and with six changes a day that's £7.10 a week or £922.74 over two and a half years. You can buy all the reusable nappies (including waterproof covers and fastenings) that you need for two and a half years for under £50 which makes a huge saving as well as helping to reduce landfill sites.

And Finally.....

Recycle, Recycle, Recycle!

Every resident in Walsall produces over half a tonne of waste each year with most of it ending up in landfill sites. These sites produce liquid and gases that can be harmful to the environment.

The more rubbish you put into your bin the more damage is done to your local environment.

Contact Walsall Council for details on their recycling schemes.

Walsall rubbish tips can recycle wood, garden waste, glass bottles and jars, food and drinks cans, plastic bottles, clothes and shoes, cardboard, newspapers and magazines, batteries, used engine oil, household chemicals, fluorescent tubes, fridges and freezers, televisions and computer monitors, spectacles, mobile phones, yellow pages, ink cartridges and CDs, DVDs and videos.



Bloxwich Carnival

WATMOS took part in Bloxwich Carnival on Saturday 2nd August 2008. The Tenant Panel worked with staff from WATMOS to arrange the day which included a float in the carnival parade and stalls at King George's Park.

The Carnival Parade

The highlight of the day was the Carnival parade. WATMOS' float was kindly provided by Burrowes Home Comfort which included the fuel and the driver, Clive. The float was decorated by Darren Clayton from Sandbank, his friends Jodie Astbury and Matt Chambers, Glen Martin from Chuckery and Sue Griffiths from WATMOS' Admin Team. The WATMOS theme for the float was Strength in Communities, with superheroes promoting the strength theme.



On the float were WATMOS Man (Dean Barker, Estate Manager from Leamore), Batman (Darren Clayton), Catwoman, (Jodie Astbury), the Penguin (Matt Chambers), Supergirl (Sue Griffiths), Wonderwoman (Sarah Lloyd, WATMOS' Housing Services Manager), Superman (Darren's son, Bodie) and a Power Ranger (Jodie's son, Shane). Helen Woodward (WATMOS' PA to the Chief Executive) and Glen Martin were marshals, collecting money for the Carnival's charity (Senior Citizens and other local community charities) and making sure the super heroes didn't fall off the float! The float received a certificate of commendation from the Carnival Committee in the best float competition, and then the parade proceeded around the streets of Bloxwich following the crowning of the Carnival Queen and Princess.



Thanks to:

Thank you to all the tenants, other volunteers and staff that took part in the day and the preparation for it, with special thanks going out to:

- Darren Clayton** (AKA Batman)
- Darius Burrows** (for the loan of the float and the driver)
- Jodie Astbury** (AKA Catwoman)
- Clive, the driver** (from Burrowes Home Comfort)
- Matt Chambers** (AKA the Penguin)
- Sandbank Committee** (for the use of the community room)
- Sue Griffiths** (AKA Supergirl)
- Chris Clayton** (for looking after the superheroes and tidying up after them!)
- Dean Barker** (AKA WATMOS Man)
- Lydney Clayton** (for baking and donating the superhero cake)

WATMOS Stalls at the Park

Throughout the day at King George's Park, WATMOS had stalls offering prizes and freebies to the public as well as information about WATMOS and tenant management. The TMOs taking part were the Avenues, Burrowes Street, Delves, Leamore and Sandbank, and the stalls were a bric-a-brac stall, guess the weight of the cake, guess the name of the doll, name the teddy (donated by the County Air Ambulance Trust), how many sweets in the jar and a Jenga tournament. Also on offer were therapeutic hand massages by Steph Rees, the Estate Director from Leamore TMO, and the superheroes joined the team at the park following the parade.

Other memories from the Carnival:

Stall Winners

Guess the name of the doll – Mrs R Newell of Bloxwich correctly guessed that the doll's name was Maggie and won the beautiful doll

Name the teddy – Ann Dunn from Blakenall named the teddy Norman and won the Air Ambulance bear

How many sweets in the jar – Ann Dunn also won the sweets, correctly guessing that there were 293 sweets

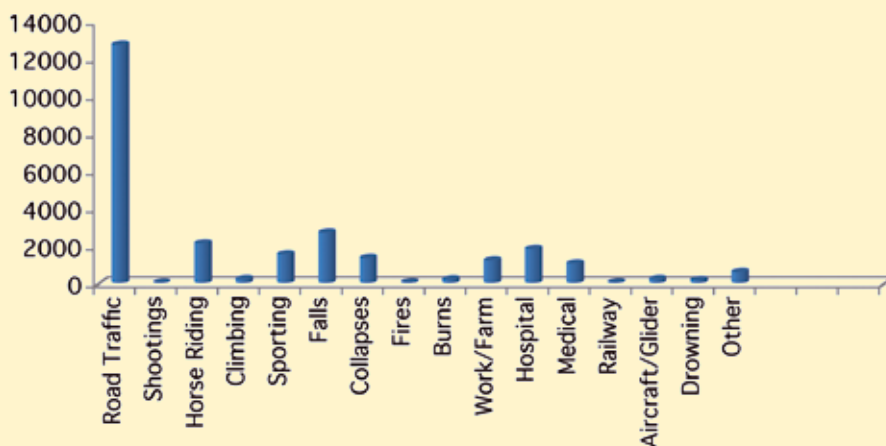
Guess the weight of the cake – Kelly Lowndes of Leamore TMO won the cake, guessing that it weighed 3 lbs 5 oz



The County Air Ambulance Service

WATMOS' chosen charity for the event was the County Air Ambulance Trust, with £400 being raised including £54 by Sue Griffiths the day after the Carnival, when she donned her Supergirl costume once more and collected money in her local pub! Very brave! The cost of operating

the County Air Ambulance Service is funded entirely through charitable support. To give you an idea of the life saving work carried out by the air ambulance, below are statistics to date outlining the number and types of incidents that they attend.



Help to find a home



On Monday July 14th, the Council together with WATMOS and other housing associations launched the 'Access to Housing' booklet at the Saddlers Centre between 10.00am and 3.00pm.

The booklet provides information about the housing associations in Walsall, which areas in Walsall the housing associations have homes in, the type, how to apply and how they are allocated.

It also includes information about affordable home ownership options how to access accommodation if you have a disability and information about accredited private sector landlords.

Repairs Service Improvements – *An Update*

In our last newsletter we told you about the outcome of a recent review of the Group's repairs and maintenance arrangements and our plans to adopt a new approach to improve services by setting up a long-term partnering contract.

Good progress is being made with this work. The new partnering contract will be advertised soon and potential contractors will be assessed and interviewed towards the end of this year. We aim to start the new contract in April 2009.

A number of important service improvements are currently being developed. These include:

- **The repairs service extended to early evenings and Saturday mornings.**
- **Repair appointments offered in 2 hour slots.**
- **Direct computer links between WATMOS and the contractor to speed up the transfer information and reduce paperwork.**
- **Repairs operatives authorised to carry out additional work to ensure that, where possible, a repair is completed at the first visit.**
- **All repair operatives to have a common identity card for your security.**

We are pleased with these exciting developments and hope that you will begin to notice the improvements next year. We will keep you updated on developments.

Satisfaction Levels Continue to Rise

We ask you to tell us what you think of our services on a regular basis and your feedback is telling us that your satisfaction is rising all the time. For example last year this is what you told us:

- % of overall satisfaction with routine repairs – 98.7% (06/07 – 97.6%)
- % of overall satisfaction with major works – 99.15% (06/07 – 91.9%)
- % of overall satisfaction with out of hours repairs – 100% (06/07 – 66.6%)
- % of overall satisfaction with gas servicing – 96.19% (06/07 – 88.2%)

We will provide you with more detailed information about last year's satisfaction feedback in our Annual Report. This will be delivered at the end of September.

Terry's Trip to the Palace

WATMOS Chair Terry Edis was awarded an MBE in the New Year's Honours List. On Thursday 3rd July 2008 he went to the Palace to receive his honour from Prince Charles. He even managed to get Kylie Minogue's autograph!

Here is Terry with a framed photograph that will hang in the WATMOS Board Room.

Congratulations Terry!



Tenant Panel News

Devonshire Tea Afternoon



On 25th April 2008, the Tenant Panel hosted a Devonshire Tea Afternoon. The afternoon was great fun and was attended by the then Lord Mayor, Melvin Pitt. We played Who Wants to be a Millionaire (and we reached a million – sadly Chris Tarrant wasn't there with his cheque book!) and Jenga, and the Lord Mayor painted tenants' and members of staff's faces!



We shared tea and cake and had a lovely afternoon, where tenants from different TMOs got to meet each other on a social basis. We hope that you will come and join us for future fun events!

Opportunities to Get Involved

We Need Your Views

We are currently reviewing our approach to getting tenants and residents involved running our organisation.

This review aims to achieve two main things:

- To ensure that we have enough tenants and residents who want to help run TMOs in future (we always need around 100 tenants and residents to act as TMO committee members across our 8 TMOs).
- To develop new ideas for participation that appeal to tenants and residents who are not currently involved in our organisation.

During the next few months we may ask you if you will attend a meeting to discuss these issues or to fill in and return a questionnaire. We would very much appreciate your cooperation with this work. We genuinely want to know what you think and will try our best to take your views into account when planning for the future.



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:

Avenues TMO
10/11 Second Avenue
Brownhills
WS8 6JA
Tel: 01922 427652
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
Fax: 01922 640841
Email:
chuckery@watmos.org.uk

Delves East TMO & Delves West TMO
West Bromwich Road
Delves
Walsall
WS5 4NW
Tel: 01922 720790
Fax: 01922 638658
Email: delves@watmos.org.uk

Leamore TMO
1 Dover House
Providence Close
Leamore
Walsall
WS3 2AW
Tel: 01922 493266
Fax: 01922 475181
Email: leamore@watmos.org.uk

Sandbank TMO
1a Clarke House
Bloxwich
WS3 2HF
Tel: 01922 400333
Fax: 01922 400219
Email:
sandbank@watmos.org.uk

Twin Crescents TMO
11 Grove Crescent
Pelsall
Walsall
WS3 4NG
Tel: 01922 682539
Fax: 01922 864109
Email:
twincrescents@watmos.org.uk

