

Norwich City Council

Annual report for tenants
2019-20



NOR CH
City Council



Welcome to the Annual Report 2019-20 Introduction from Councillor Gail Harris

Norwich City Council's deputy leader and cabinet member for council housing

Last year was an extraordinary one for our housing service due to the sheer number of awards we received for one for our builds. Goldsmith street, the city's ground-breaking development of eco-efficient housing received or was shortlisted for 12 different awards – perhaps the most prestigious among these was being crowned winner of the esteemed Royal Institute of British Architects Stirling Prize, a first for social housing. However, what mattered more than any prize, was that our tenants were happy in good quality energy efficient homes.

Although it's lovely for our proud history of building quality homes to be recognised so publically, the hard work that goes on throughout the year on issues such as managing our existing housing stock, ensuring tenants' safety and empowering independent living, is just as important. You can read about all our achievements in this report, as well as get an overview of where money is spent.

I'd like to say a big thank you to all tenants who have got involved in shaping

services, whether that's by attending conferences, providing feedback, or helping us with the launch of our 100 Years of Housing celebration. It's great to have you on board and your contributions help us know what's going well and where we can improve.

This annual report covers the period between April 2019 and March 2020. Therefore the full implications of Covid-19 on our housing work will not be seen until next year's report. However, I'd still like to acknowledge here the impressive way our housing service team have

responded from the outset, from setting up new ways of supporting tenants to finding accommodation for rough sleepers.

Our housing service is run by a team of dedicated people, who as well as delivering on everyday services, have proved they can also react quickly to a crisis situation and I'd like to thank them for their valuable contributions. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for your understanding and patience whilst we redesigned our services to cope with the restrictions that Covid-19 imposed upon us all.



VALUE FOR MONEY

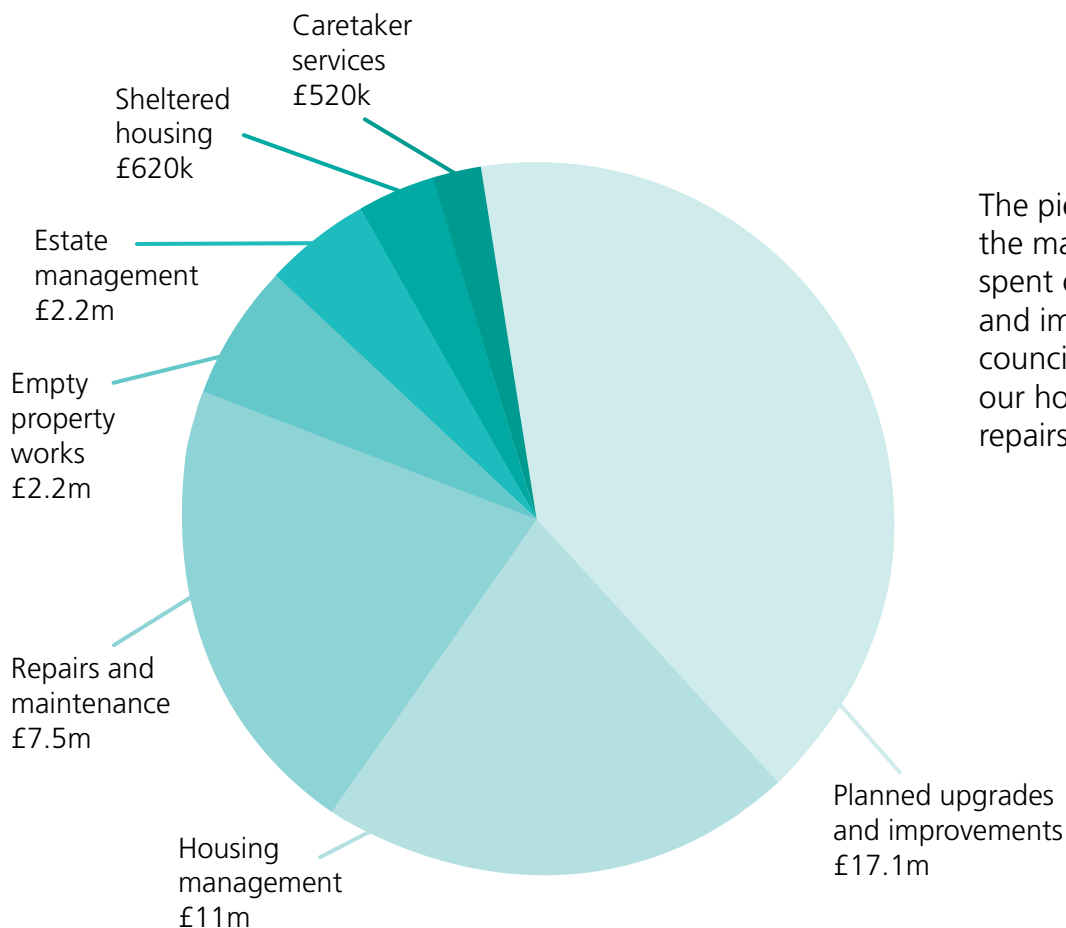
Affordable homes

Living in a council property is considerably cheaper than renting privately, as shown below.

Size of property	Norwich City Council home: average weekly rent (based on 52 week rent year)	Norwich private sector home: average weekly rent (based on 52 week rent year)*
1 bed	£67	£137
2 bed	£72	£172
3 bed	£80	£206
4 bed	£85	£322

*Information sourced from Hometrack

Expenditure 2019/20 financial year



The pie-chart shows that the majority of money is spent on planned upgrades and improvements to council homes, managing our housing stock and repairs and maintenance.

YOUR HOME

Breakdown of our housing stock

14,657

properties, made up of:

7,211

flats

(99% are 1 and 2 bedroom properties)

6,093

houses

(majority are 3 bedroom properties)

870

bungalows

(majority are 1 bedroom properties)

483

maisonettes

(majority are 3 bedroom properties)

157

homes sold through Right to Buy initiative

Repairs and upgrades

99%

of homes have achieved the Norwich Standard*

31,481 repairs completed

(non-urgent and emergency)

587

new **bathrooms** installed

674

new **heating** systems installed

158

homes had new **roofs** fitted

294

new **kitchens** installed

80

council homes had new **windows** fitted

658

electrical upgrades completed

There was disruption to all upgrade work late in the financial year, due to Covid-19 lockdown.

Average costs per property

New kitchen

£4,824

New bathroom

£3,350

New heating system

£3,463

£857,276

was spent on major adaptations to homes to make them suitable for people with disabilities.

There was a much higher spend than in previous year (£585,725). This was because a lot of wet-room and ramps were installed.

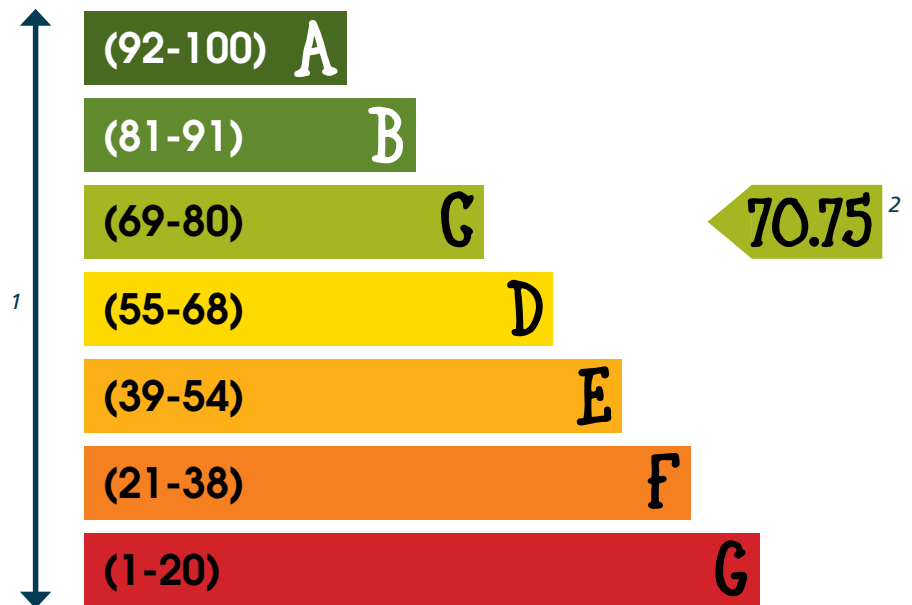
*The Norwich Standard means all kitchens are less than 20 years old, all bathrooms are less than 30 years old and all boilers are less than 15 years.

Energy efficiency

- **146** thermodynamic hot water systems were installed
- Continued programme of boiler, window, door replacements and insulation improvements, targeting the lowest performing stock in terms of energy efficiency.
- The upgrades programme in 2019/20 improved the average Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) to **70.75**.
- **80%** of NCC council homes have a SAP score of A-C.

Energy performance of our homes Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) score

Very energy efficient – lower running costs



Not energy efficient – higher running costs

¹ SAP rating bands, ² Council average

Fire safety in tower blocks

Completed:

- All entrance doors and doors to sheds located in communal areas have been replaced.
- Where necessary, smoke detectors have been changed to new hard wired detectors.
- All of the internal glazed screens are now complete (old glazed and timber frame partitions have been replaced with safety glass and a fire door).

On-going:

- The replacement of the timber-framed service duct wall panels (which conceal plumbing pipework in bathrooms) with metal-framed panels is continuing in the Heartease area.
- The work on upgrading the electrical risers and laterals in the communal areas was delayed, due to Covid-19, but is now being programmed.



YOUR TENANCY

Housing advice and allocating homes

- **497** introductory tenancies started
- **1,410** social housing properties were allocated by the council's Home Options team.
- **Average re-let time for council homes** was 18 days ie the number of days a property was empty between tenants.
- Local lettings plans, which help create sustainable communities, were used to allocate new homes at Bullard Road to local residents and tenants eligible to transfer.
- Through our Home Options scheme, we allocated new build accommodation for housing association partners at the Canary Quay Works and St Anne's Wharf development to clients on our housing register.
- **85%** of households who approached us about facing homelessness were prevented from becoming homeless, helping our clients and saving money on temporary accommodation.
- The number of people sleeping on the streets reduced, compared to the previous year, from 22 to 18 (government endorsed rough sleeper count, November 2019).
- As part of the response to the Covid-19 public health emergency, we accommodated over 100 clients at risk of rough sleeping over the six months March to September 2020. NB The vast majority of these have already moved into hostel accommodation so that they will not have to return to the streets.

Housing-related complaints received by Norwich City Council

Rent collection

Over **96%** of all rent and arrears due was collected.

The table below shows the number of housing-related complaints received by the council over a three year period.

Financial year	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Number of complaints related to housing service (Stage 1)	422	469	548
Average number of working days to respond (Stage 1)	12	12	10
Reason for complaint:			
• Failing to provide an agreed service	62	66	86
• Standard of service provided	248	244	326
• Service requested but not provided	33	93	57
• Not following an agreed procedure	16	22	29
• Employee/contractor – attitude or conduct	61	43	46
• Service provided but no powers to do so	2	1	4
Justified complaint Stage 1 (yes)	108 (29%)	95 (24%)	178 (34%)
Justified complaint Stage 1 (no)	266 (71%)	298 (76%)	346 (66%)

Please note: not all complaints were recorded as justified or unjustified, so the figures do not match the total number of complaints received.

YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

Estates – maintenance and improvements

£361,535

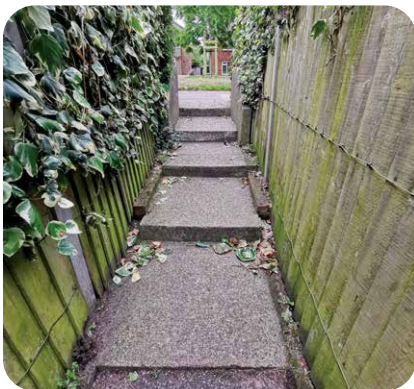
was spent on estate improvements

£111,599

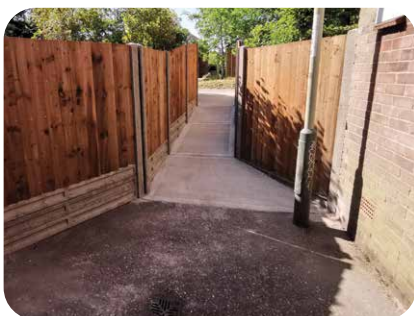
was spent on keeping estates tidy

Pathway between Morello Close and the Avenues

- **Before** – A well-used pathway with a narrow stepped path at the Avenues end. This made it difficult for buggies/mobility scooters/wheelchair users to navigate.



- **After** – path was widened and a slip-resistant ramp was installed, to make it more accessible for all, and the overgrown vegetation was cleared.

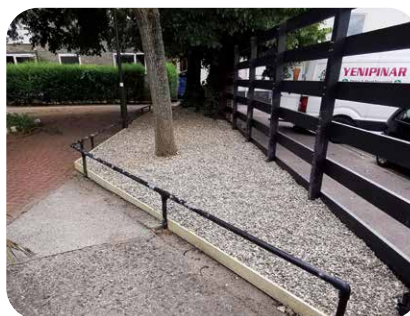


Alderson Place shrub bed

- **Before** – an overgrown shaded shrub bed, where few plants grew. Without constant maintenance this bed was quickly taken over by weeds which encouraged house vermin.



- **After** – a weed membrane was installed, and then covered in shingle. A rotting timber screen was replaced with a new low-maintenance recycled plastic fence.



Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

- The council's antisocial behaviour and tenancy enforcement (ABATE) team work closely with the police and other partners to tackle serious ASB and hate motivated cases in the city.
- 16 legal notices served for serious cases.
- Two tenants were evicted for ASB.



TENANT INVOLVEMENT

Tenant Involvement

- **Six** meetings
- Ongoing scrutiny of the performance of housing services
- Contributed towards celebration ideas for 100 years of council housing
- Discussed a wide range of topics with council officers, including fire

safety in tower blocks and the introduction of Universal Credit.

- Consulted on the rent increase.
- Tenants from TIP attended **six Eastern Procurement meetings** to help develop criteria for contractors applying to provide services to council homes.

New Build Group

- **Three** meetings held. Group members were updated on current and future council housing developments.



Association of Retained Council Housing (ARCH)

- **Tenants' Group meetings in London** – **Six** meetings attended by ARCH tenant representative. Wide range of topics relevant to council tenants discussed.



ARCH annual conference in Bridlington



Tenants enjoying some downtime after attending the ARCH annual conference

- **Six** tenant representatives attended from Norwich. Theme was keeping your home safe, reflecting tenants' concerns in the aftermath of Grenfell disaster.

Workshops were held on:

- the future of sheltered housing
- housing complaints.

Other events



- Members of TIP and SHIP were invited to attend the launch event of the **100** years celebrations.
- **Five** tenants from TIP and SHIP attended the Parks and Open Spaces forum to discuss how strategy will affect community groups and stakeholders and how it achieves joint objectives.

TENANCY SUPPORT

Sheltered housing

- **923** SH properties across 26 schemes
- Support officers help tenants maintain their independence
- Support officers do a wide range of tasks, such as:
 - helping tenants access relevant care and support
 - conduct regular welfare checks
 - provide general advice and help with filling in forms etc.

Customer service

- The majority of council services, including non-emergency repairs, can be accessed through simple forms on our website.
- Visit **www.norwich.gov.uk/councilhomes** to access information relevant to council tenants and leaseholders.
- All tenants can sign up for their own personal customer account to:
 - keep track of rent payments
 - report issues quickly
 - avoid having to repeat basic information each time they contact the council.
- **Free** digital support and access to computers is available to all Norwich residents at 'digital hubs' located in buildings throughout the city. Details can be found here: **Digital Hubs**

Specialist support team

- This team works with tenants who are:
 - struggling to manage their tenancy
 - at risk of losing their tenancy, through eviction or abandonment.
- The team supported **227** residents this year.
- Many issues impact on tenants making it difficult for them to manage/maintain tenancies, which include unmanaged mental health issues, domestic abuse, social isolation and social anxiety.
- The team works closely with colleagues and partners to make sure tenants have access to a range of relevant support organisations.
- The Specialist Support Team also made welfare calls to **245** residents on a weekly basis during lockdown to ensure that they were supported.



NEW COUNCIL HOMES

Goldsmith Street



• **Total of 105 new homes and flats**

- **49** were completed in 18/19.
- **44** units completed in 19/20, which sees the completion of phase 1.
- A further **12** flats will form a second phase at a later date.
- This ground-breaking development of eco-housing received or was shortlisted for twelve different awards this year. Perhaps most notable among these was being awarded the prestigious Royal Institute of British Architects Stirling Prize. This was the first time a council housing project had been nominated for this prestigious architectural award, so an amazing achievement.

Rayne Park, Bowthorpe

- First phase of development complete. Council purchased further 31 homes from Norwich Regeneration Company on Rayne Park.



Bullard Road

- Completed the conversion of the old area housing office into six new council homes (mix of two, three, and four bedroom homes). Properties have now been allocated to tenants.



Enabling work

- In addition to the direct delivery of new homes, the council provided grants of retained Right to buy receipts to local registered providers of affordable housing. This enabled 105 new affordable homes to be completed in 2019/20. Cabinet also approved a further grant in the year that will deliver another five new homes in the coming months.

TENANT FEEDBACK

1,000

tenants took part in a survey conducted by Viewpoint, a market research company, on the council's behalf.

STAR (Survey of tenants and residents) results	2018/19	2019/20
% of tenants satisfied with the housing service	81%	80%
% of tenants satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live	65%	65%
% of tenants satisfied with the way the housing service deals with repairs and maintenance	70%	69%
% of tenants satisfied with the overall quality of their home	77%	77%
% of tenants satisfied that their rent provides value for money	85%	84%
% of tenants satisfied that their service charges provide value for money	68%	67%
% of tenants satisfied that the housing service listens to their views and acts upon them	59%	58%

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