



Housing Services

Service Standards

These Housing Service Standards comply with the Tenant Services Authority's regulatory framework. The Housing Service also delivers tailored services, known as the Local Offer, which have been developed in consultation with tenants. A copy of the Local Offer is provided with these Standards.

These Service Standards cover the various activities within Housing Services which contribute to the Council's priority of 'a properly housed community.'

The department provides a comprehensive range of housing and other general Council services to Arun's community and is structured in a number of functional groups.

- **Land lord role:** managing the Council's own housing stock and the surrounding area to make it a pleasant place to live. This includes tenancy management, rents, and repairs
- **Housing Needs:** dealing with the statutory homelessness function and managing the Housing Lists through which the Council's housing stock is let.

Aims /mission statement:

"To deliver a high quality, cost effective housing service to all tenants and leaseholders. Promote customer involvement in shaping the service to meet the needs and requirements of leaseholders and tenants".

Standard 1 - Tenant Involvement and Empowerment

This covers customer service, customer involvement, equality, accessibility, and diversity.

CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS

General contact:

Our Corporate Performance Targets

- We aim to answer your telephone calls in less than 10 seconds
 - We aim to greet visitors to our offices within 10 minutes of their arrival
 - We aim to respond to your letters and e-mails within 10 working days
- When dealing with your enquiries face to face we will wear identity badges at all times so that you know who we are
 - When dealing with your enquiries over the telephone we will clearly identify ourselves by name and service area
 - We will require Contractors to carry ID and to clearly identify themselves when visiting tenants' homes and estates
 - We will be respectful and courteous.
 - We will be sensitive to your individual needs, dealing with all enquiries in a fair and equal manner
 - We will try to deal with all enquiries at the first point of contact. If we need to pass your enquiry to a colleague within Arun District Council, we will let you know which department will be dealing with your enquiry
 - We will always use plain English and avoid or explain jargon words and abbreviations
 - If we are unable to provide a full response to your enquiry within the stated target time timescales, we will provide you with a time scale for a full response.

Tenant Participation – we aim to:

- Provide a range of opportunities and methods by which tenants and leaseholders can get involved
- A member of Housing Services will attend Arun Tenants and Leaseholder Organisation meetings
- Give advance notice of meetings that tenants are invited to attend
- Issue written reports in advance of meetings wherever possible
- Attend Residents' Group meetings and provide information where requested

Standard 2 - Home

This covers quality of accommodation and repairs and maintenance.

Maintenance Services – we aim to:

- ensure that at least 95% of all reactive repairs are completed within contractual timescales which are:-
 - Emergency repairs : respond within 2 hours
 - Next Day repairs : respond within 24 hours
 - Urgent repairs : respond within 5 working days
 - Routine repairs : respond within 20 working days
- Accept repair requests by telephone, letter, in person, by e-mail, via the I-Housing website respond to requests for repairs, where prior inspection is required, within 10 working days
- where applicable, carry out inspection of completed works within 15 working days of receipt of contractors' invoice
- Provide tenants and leaseholders with Customer satisfaction forms to comment on the standard of service and quality of work
- Monitor and publicise tenant satisfaction with reactive repairs and discuss issues raised with the Contractors
- Publish in advance cyclical and planned programme of internal and external works for all tenanted and leasehold properties (where appropriate) and communal areas
- Consult tenants and leaseholders in advance about proposed cyclical and planned works programmes
- Carry out Health & Safety Rating System inspections and Stock Condition Surveys on an annual planned programme
- Carry out Fire Safety inspections and works in accordance with Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Actively encourage tenants and leaseholders to comment on the standard of service and quality of works within cyclical and planned works programmes.

Gas

- organise annual testing of all Council owned gas appliances and issue Landlords Gas Safety Certificates to all tenants
- take all appropriate legal actions to obtain access to tenanted properties where gas servicing contractor has been unable to enter
- prepare and implement an annual programme for heating replacement and new installations.

Electrical

- prepare and implement an ongoing/rolling 7-year programme for testing, and upgrading if necessary, of electrical installations in all tenanted properties and communal areas of blocks of flats/maisonettes
- organise annual safety checks of portable electrical appliances provided in the communal areas of the Council's Sheltered Housing Schemes
- organise annual servicing of communal and domestic lifts and fire alarms (where installed)

Disabled Facilities Grants – we aim to:-

- carry out site visits with an appropriate contractor within 14 days of receiving a completed Grant Application
- provide quotations for Disabled Facilities Grant works applications
- place orders with Contractors for Disabled Facilities Grant works within 1 day of receiving an approved grant application
- inspect all Disabled Facilities Grants works upon completion

- actively encourage tenants & leaseholders to comment on the standard of service and quality of works within cyclical and planned works programmes by returning a completed Customer Satisfaction Survey form after works are completed.

Voids – we aim to:

- carry out testing and necessary works to meet the Council's Lettable Standard before a new tenancy begins
- carry out an inspection of potential asbestos-containing materials within 1 working day of being notified

Standard 3 - Tenancy

This standard covers tenancy, the allocation of properties and rents.

Allocations – we aim to:

- allocate properties in accordance with the Council's Allocations Policy
- allocate properties which are suitable for the applicant's needs
- advise results of appeals within 10 working days of the appeal hearing
- visit all new tenants in their home within 2 months of tenancy start date
- process applications for change of tenancy from sole to joint (or joint to sole) within 10 days of receipt
- process application for successor tenancy within 10 working days of receipt of all applications
- process applications or enquiries regarding lodgers or sub tenants within 10 working days of receipt of application
- process applications for Mutual Exchanges within 38 days of receipt of application
- investigate reports of squatters or unauthorised occupants within 2 working days of being made aware
- investigate reports of abandoned or unoccupied properties within 2 working days of being made aware.

Tenancy - we aim to:

- Provide a user friendly tenancy agreement and tenants handbook
- explain the tenancy agreement and your rights and responsibilities as a tenant before you sign up for your new home
- commence investigation of tenants who fail to comply with their conditions of tenancy within 5 working days
- investigate and give an initial response to serious harassment within 5 working days
- investigate and give a written response to nuisance complaints within 10 working days.

Rent Accounting – we aim to:

- issue quarterly rent statements to all tenants
- on request, provide detailed rent statements within 10 working days
- notify all tenants of the annual rent increase prior to the required 28 days statutory notice
- Issue clear and accurate information to enable tenants to pay their rent on time.

Rent Arrears – we aim to:

- Notify all tenants when their rent account goes into arrears of £10 or more
- Assist with simple household budgeting
- Interview all tenants who are subject to Notice of Seeking Possession or Notice of Possession Proceedings
- Signpost free debt advice services
- Keep tenants advised of key arrears stages Court proceedings have commenced, Court Hearing date, Possession Order granted, eviction date when notified, Notice of Clearance of goods from property after eviction.

Rechargeable Works – we aim to:

- Publicise in advance which works or services will be rechargeable
- Provide prepayment methods
- Advise the customer of estimated costs of rechargeable within 10 working days of costs being identified
- Advise customers of final costs to be recharged within 20 working days of works being completed. (This includes time for final inspection and settlement of Contractors' invoice)
- Notify Sundry Debtor Department to raise account within 20 working days of all processes being completed.

Buying your property – we aim to:

- Issue the necessary application form within 10 days of receipt of a Right to Buy (RTB) request
- Send an acknowledgement of a customers Right to Buy form within 10 days of receiving the application form
- Value the property within 4 weeks of the application and make an offer under section 125 within 8 weeks of application for houses/bungalows and 12 weeks for flats/maisonettes
- Provide a 5 year estimate of service charges for flats/maisonettes within 12 weeks of the application
- Arrange a full current market valuation of Shared Ownership properties where customers wish to purchase the remaining or additional shares and provide a purchase price for the remaining share in writing within 6 weeks of the customer's application
- Advise all leaseholders at the time of Right To Buy purchase that service charges will be based on estimates and provide details of estimated service charge costs for the first 5 years
- Provide all new enquirers for home buy/shared ownership with advice/information within 10 days hours of their application.

Standard 4 - Neighbourhood and Community

This covers neighbourhood management, local area co-operation and Anti-social behaviour.

Anti-Social Behaviour and Neighbour Nuisance – we aim to:

- Acknowledge all complaints made in writing or by e-mail within one working day
- Respond to complaints made to the Housing Services Department within
 - 2 working days for Category A Behaviour (This includes; threats of, or actual violence against persons, drug dealing, intimidation or harassment on grounds of race, sexual orientation, religious belief or disability, criminal activity)
 - 5 working days for Category B Behaviour (This includes; loud and frequent parties, regular and loud noise particularly late at night or during the day, regular and frequent noise from vehicles, vandalism, incidents of damage to property)
 - 10 working days for category C Behaviour (This includes 'one-off' activities such as a party, car repairs in communal areas)
- Notify the complainant in writing of what action, if any, will be taken within ten working days of receipt of the complaint, provided further investigation is not required to determine which category the behaviour falls into.
- Within ten working days of receiving the written evidence requested, the Housing Officer or Manager will make an assessment and notify the complainant of the outcome.

Neighbourhood management – we aim to:

- Arrange for removal of obscene or racist graffiti from Council properties within 24 hours
- Respond to exceptional requests for cleaning of communal areas within 24 hours of receiving the request
- Ensure communal areas are cleaned and properly maintained
- Carry out cyclical inspections of communal areas and estates with tenants or individuals

Feedback

We welcome your feedback. Please let us know when you receive good service and advice, and let us have your comments and suggestions on how we can improve our service.

Complaints

If we don't measure up to your expectations, you have the right to complain using the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure. Forms can be obtained from our reception areas or from our website www.arun.gov.uk.

Local Offer

These Service Standards, known as the 'Local Offer', have been developed in consultation with tenants and in accordance with the requirements of the new Housing Regulator, the Tenant Services Authority.

The consultation process which was used to develop the Local Offer has been comprehensive. It has involved gathering feedback through questionnaires and work with a Tenants Focus Group. The consultation began in October 2010 when a questionnaire was sent to tenants asking for feedback and suggestions for improvement. The proposals for the Local Offer were based on the feedback from the questionnaires with the help of the Focus Group. In December we sent a second questionnaire to tenants with details of the proposed Local Offer. Over 400 tenants responded and of those over 90% agreed with the proposals for the new Local Offer. In light of this response we have been working to set up the new systems required to deliver the new services.

Working with tenants we will monitor our performance against the Local Offer. We will also send you an Annual Report every October, which will contain details of how we have performed and we will ask for your views on our performance.



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