

Housing

Annual Report 2012-13



**Residents
Approved**



GOSPORT
Borough Council

INTRODUCTION



Councillor Graham Burgess
Chair of Community Board

Welcome to our Annual Report for Tenants and Leaseholders, which aims to bring you up to date on what has been another busy year for Gosport Borough Council.

You will see that the information presented in this Annual Report covers the period from April 2012 until March 2013 and explains how the Housing team has delivered services to you over the last year. It is my responsibility to ensure that you have access to the highest quality of service and the best value for your money.

Some of the successes during 2012/13 included the refurbishment of Woodlands House, one of our sheltered schemes and over this coming year we will be upgrading Fortune House and then Gloucester House. Summer 2012 also saw the opening of the Agnew Family Centre; an invaluable facility which provides 54 units of temporary accommodation to families, reducing the need for expensive bed and breakfast.

I am pleased that your feedback in the STAR survey that was carried out last year indicated that tenant satisfaction remains good overall. However, we will focus on those areas of the service that require some improvement and will report back in 'At Your Service' housing newsletter on how we are doing and hope to continue to provide the very highest levels of service.

Kind regards



Corinne Waterfield
Housing Services Manager

My first year at Gosport Borough Council has been very interesting and enjoyable. There have been and will continue to be many changes affecting the way we deliver services to tenants. Last year, the Government re-organised the way all Council housing is financed which has meant that we have had more control of our finances. Work is underway to plan better for the future and improve our homes in a more efficient way.

We have continued to listen to your views and aim to deliver services that are responsive to your needs. We remain focused on improving the ways for you to get involved, to assist us to provide a housing service that both customers and officers are proud of. Throughout the year, many of you have given up your time to help us improve the services we provide and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have worked with us over the past year.

I hope you will enjoy reading this Annual Report and that it gives you the confidence to see that we continue to try and deliver a high quality service.

Kind regards



CONTENTS PAGE	Page
How did we do last year?	4
What else has been going on?	5
Home Standard <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quality of accommodation• Repairs and maintenance	6/7
Tenancy Standard <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allocations• Mutual Exchanges• Tenure• Rents	8/9
Neighbourhood and Community Standard <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Neighbourhood Management• Anti-social Behaviour	10/11
Resident Involvement and Empowerment Standard <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Customer Service, choice and complaints• Involvement and Empowerment• Understanding & responding to diverse needs of tenants	12/13
Council Contracts Update	14
The year ahead	15

HOW DID WE DO LAST YEAR?

We've included these symbols to provide an 'at-a-glance' view of our performance in each area. Here's what they mean:



We have met or exceeded our target



We have narrowly failed to meet our target



We have significantly underachieved on this target

STAR Survey - Throughout this report, we refer to the 2012 STAR Survey. This is a customer Survey to find out how satisfied you are with our services. It tells us what is most important to you in terms of the services that we provide and then we use this information to see what changes we need to make in the future.

M.E.L. Research, an independent company carry out this confidential survey on our behalf. They randomly telephone approximately 500 residents in total.

The last survey was carried out in May 2012 and we would like to take the opportunity to thank all of you who took part in this survey. There will be another survey carried out in September 2013. This will enable us to compare how we are doing and where we need to review our services.

	What we said we would do during 2012/13	How we did in 2012/13	
	Community Clean Up Days We said that there would be 'Community Clean Up Days' in Autumn 2012	We had difficulty identifying funding. This has now been resolved and the community clean up days will take place in 2013/14.	
	Personal Profiling We said we would send out personal forms to check details about yourself and all those living with you.	3,135 Tenancy profiles sent 2,160 (69%) Tenancy profiles returned	
	Why people refuse a property? We said we would investigate why people refuse a property and consider what action to take?	A survey was carried out to find out why sheltered housing accommodation is refused. Responses included unsuitable room sizes and layout. More than half of those who responded to the survey said that a visit to a sheltered housing scheme before placing a bid would help them to make the right housing choice. Two successful 'Open Days' took place at Woodlands House and Alec Rose House and more open days are planned for 2013/14.	
	Telephone Calls We achieved our target to answer at least 90% of calls within 20 seconds	2011/12	2012/13
		We received 78,539 calls We answered 94.7% (74,372) calls within this time.	We received 78,275 calls We answered 96.9% (75,833) calls within this time.

What else has been going on?

Housing Benefit Changes

From April 2013 the Government introduced new rules that set out the number of bedrooms that Housing Benefit will pay for. Also known as the 'bedroom tax', this tax applies to working age housing benefit claimants who under-occupy their property. This meant that from April 2013, housing benefit was cut by 14% for one spare room and 25% for 2 or more spare rooms. Leading up to April 2013, the Council were working towards preparing tenants and staff for these changes.

Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy Policy Changes

Under the Localism Act 2011, every housing authority in England has a duty to prepare and publish a tenancy strategy. The strategy must set out the matters that must be taken into consideration in putting together tenancy policies relating to:

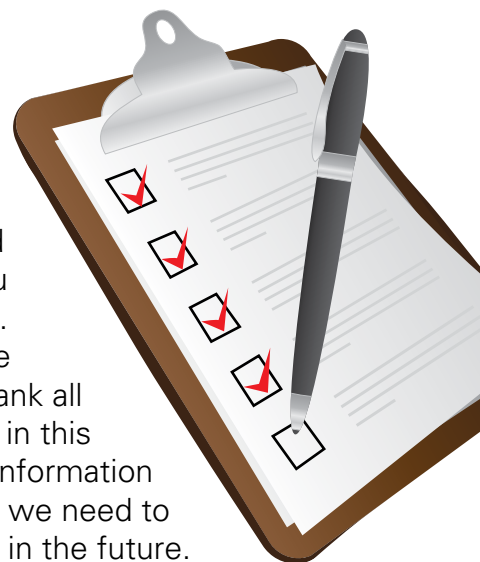
- The kind of tenancies they grant
- The circumstances in which they will grant particular tenancies
- The length of any fixed term tenancy they may grant
- The circumstances in which a further tenancy will be granted at the end

Preparation took place to introduce a policy to offer secure (also known as lifetime) and/or flexible (fixed term tenancies) by April 2013. The Council have opted to continue with a 1 year introductory tenancy after which a 5 year flexible or secure tenancy will be offered depending on circumstances. It is hoped that Councils and other housing providers will be able to manage their homes more efficiently; reducing under-occupation and increasing stock turnover.



STAR Survey

This customer survey is carried out every year to find out how satisfied you are with our services. We would like to take the opportunity to thank all of you who took part in this survey. We use this information to see what changes we need to make to our services in the future.



Tracker Survey

In October 2012, we introduced a monthly survey which is carried out by M.E.L. Research (an independent company) to find out how satisfied you are with the day to day repairs service or planned programme of works. We use the data from these surveys to monitor and improve the service accordingly.

In addition to this, a survey is also being carried out by M.E.L. Research to monitor the satisfaction of tenants moving in to our empty properties.

Garages Update

In June 2009, Housing Board approved a strategy and action plan for investment and development of garage sites. Since 2009:

- 312 of the garages in the worst condition have been demolished
- 75 new garages have been built on sites in Bridgemary, Town and Lee-On-The Solent
- created off-street parking areas on 6 sites (providing approximately 56 parking spaces)
- considering options on 7 sites

We currently own and manage 525 garages.



HOME STANDARD

As at March 31st 2013:

Housing Services own 3,193 properties and manages 292 leasehold properties:

Houses	1,307
Bungalows	441
Flats	1,207
Maisonettes	192
Bedsits	46

In last year's Annual Report, we reported 3,186 properties were owned by Housing Services. Since this time, 10 properties have been purchased under Right To Buy but additional units created at Agnew Family Centre, St Vincent Road have increased the numbers of properties that we own.

Quality of Accommodation

We have continued to invest in improving our homes. In the last year we have:

- installed 23 kitchens
- installed 121 bathrooms
- externally insulated 49 properties (this included Nyria Way and Forton Road Flats)
- topped up 300 mm of insulation in 117 properties
- replaced 32 windows
- gained access to 99.65% of our properties and serviced our gas appliances

Bathroom Replacements



Before



After

STOCK CONDITION SURVEY






We are carrying out stock condition surveys on all our homes in order to build up a comprehensive and complete picture of our stock. This information will enable us to programme future planned improvements work to our properties.

Repairs and Maintenance

		2011/12	2012/13
↑	Total number of day to day repairs carried out	8,703	9,784
↑	Average cost per repair	£91.76	£160.84
↓	Average days it took to complete a repair (this includes all day to day jobs except call outs)	7.07	3.8

There was a modest rise in the number of repairs carried out in 2012/13 and although the main reason is likely to be changes in the way these figures are calculated probably the wet summer followed by a harsh winter also contributed to the increase in numbers.

The increase in the average cost of repair is likely to again be a technical issue with the method the figure is calculated, with some bigger and therefore expensive jobs being included in the figures falsely inflating the final figures. We hope to correct this by the time of the next Annual Report.

	Satisfaction with the service prior to the work being carried out	78%
	Workers keeping appointments and also keeping dirt and mess to a minimum	94%
	Happy with the repair being done 'right first time'	79%
	Workers kept to the appointment	94%
	Attitude of the workers	92%

The 2012 STAR survey revealed that repairs and maintenance remains the top priority for tenants (54%), followed by the overall quality of your home (35%):

We know how important having your repairs done quickly and completed first time is to you. So we have and will continue to focus on improving this part of the service and the tenants who are involved in the Contract Monitoring Group will continue to monitor us and help us to do this.

Gas Servicing

Every year we need to gain access to all our properties and carry out gas safety checks on our gas appliances. During 2012/13, we achieved 99.70% compliancy. Our target is 100%! We have a duty of care to all our tenants, so we have improved our processes to help us achieve 100% compliance. We not only have more legal options to help us gain access to our properties if required but we also contact tenants sooner to arrange appointments.

Legal action is time consuming and costly, so it is important that you allow us to access your home every year to service your gas appliances and ensure you remain safe.

TENANCY STANDARD

Allocations

Gosport Choice Scheme advertises Council and Housing Association properties that have become available for rent. The Choice Based Scheme gives prospective residents a choice of which homes they would like to apply for rather than have homes allocated to them.

		2011/12	2012/13
↑	Number of bids on properties	28,079	29,167
↑	Number of people on the waiting list	3,598	3,803

Mutual Exchange

With the recent changes in welfare reform more tenants have applied to join Homeswapper. The service is free to Gosport Borough Council tenants.

For those currently registered on Homeswapper, 38 are overcrowding their properties and 35 are under occupying.



		2011/12	2012/13
↑	Number of tenants signed up to Homeswapper	141	228
↑	Number of tenants who swapped homes using Homeswapper	7	23

If you are a secure tenant (introductory tenants are ineligible) and you wish to register with homeswapper or for more information then please visit the website www.homeswapper.co.uk

If you do not have access to the internet, please contact your Housing Officer.

Tenure

All new tenants moving into a general needs home are issued with an introductory tenancy for the first year unless they have transferred from another Council or Housing association. After the introductory period, they become a Flexible or Secure tenant. We have a range of comprehensive policies and procedures which sets out how we manage our properties. **Existing secure tenants are not affected by these changes.**

We have a team of Housing Officers whose role it is carry out the day to day management of our properties and ensure that tenants are adhering to their tenancy agreements. Your Housing Officer is the first point of contact if you have any queries or concerns relating to your tenancy. They work in partnership with support agencies including the police, adult and children services and other agencies to help you to maintain your tenancy.

Leaseholders





There are 292 Council leasehold flats. Each year, an Annual Leaseholder meeting is organised and all leaseholders are invited to come along to discuss issues affecting them. The Council has a dedicated Leasehold Management Officer who is responsible for the management of the leasehold service.

Empty Properties

		2011/12	2012/13
↓	Total number of empty (void) properties	266	243
→	Average number of days to re-let a property	32	32
↓	Amount spent on empty properties	£1.15 million	£385,320

Explanation of these results

In August 2012, we introduced changes to the empty property process. We no longer carry out large capital works during the void period (unless a health and safety risk). The installation of kitchens and bathrooms, as well as the installation of heating systems is now incorporated into the planned improvement works, reducing both the time taken to complete works at an empty property, as well as reducing the cost. As you can see from the figures in the table above, it also means that average cost per empty property has fallen over the year.

		2011/12	2012/13
	Average rent for our accommodation	£66.89	£72.12
↑ 	Collection Rate Target 99.20%	99.66%	99.54%
↑ 	Average debt per property	£49.45	£52.59
↑ 	Total amount of rent arrears (exclusive of court costs)	£150,541	£160,759
↑ 	Average Debt against persons in arrears	Average debt against 528 persons in arrears was £285.12	Average debt against 542 Persons in arrears was £296.60

**In 2011-12 Annual Report, we reported that £72.12 was the average rent for our accommodation. This was incorrect.*

Rents/Income Recovery

The table above shows a slight increase in arrears debt. This still remains a very good result nationally. Generally, Gosport Borough Council tenants remain committed to paying their rent. Our rents are reviewed in October each year in accordance with government guidelines. Our Income Recovery Team is responsible for collecting rent arrears for homes, garages, community alarms and repair charges. Should you experience difficulty in paying your charges, please contact our Income Recovery Team on 02392 545286.

In 2011/12 there were 23 repossession warrants issued by the court which resulted in 7 evictions taking place.

In 2012/13 there were 23 repossession warrants issued by the court which resulted in 5 evictions taking place.

NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY STANDARD

Neighbourhood Management

We understand how important it is to keep our neighbourhoods clean and safe so that you are happy in your home. The most common neighbourhood problem felt by tenants is car parking (46%), followed by rubbish and litter (32%) and noisy neighbours (24%). We are looking at ways to improve our services to you.

Your Neighbourhood

Key findings of the Star Survey:

	2012/13
Satisfied with the overall appearance of their neighbourhood of neighbourhood	89%
Satisfied with the grounds maintenance service	82%
Satisfied with the cleaning of the internal communal areas	77%
Satisfied with the cleaning of the external communal areas	79%
Satisfied with the value for money for the overall estate services	83%

Results in this section are very positive however, we would like to see an increase in satisfaction with the cleaning of the internal and external communal areas.

40 estate walkabouts took place during 2012/13. By carrying out estate inspections with residents, we can check the standard of cleaning and identify any communal repairs that are needed. We continue to pick up issues such as flytipping, overgrown gardens, structural issues and general

repairs. We actively encourage residents to become involved and report issues to us so that we can deal with them, not just on walkabouts but at any time.



**Gosport
Tool
Library**



We have 3 Estate Wardens who work hard to provide the best service they can. They can also deliver tools from our tool Library to our tenants FREE OF CHARGE. It is free to hire these tools and you can hire them as often as you like. The Estate Wardens will deliver and collect the tools and can also give a demonstration on how to use them. For more information about the tool library, please contact Anna Brooks on 02392 545257.

Anti-social Behaviour (ASB)

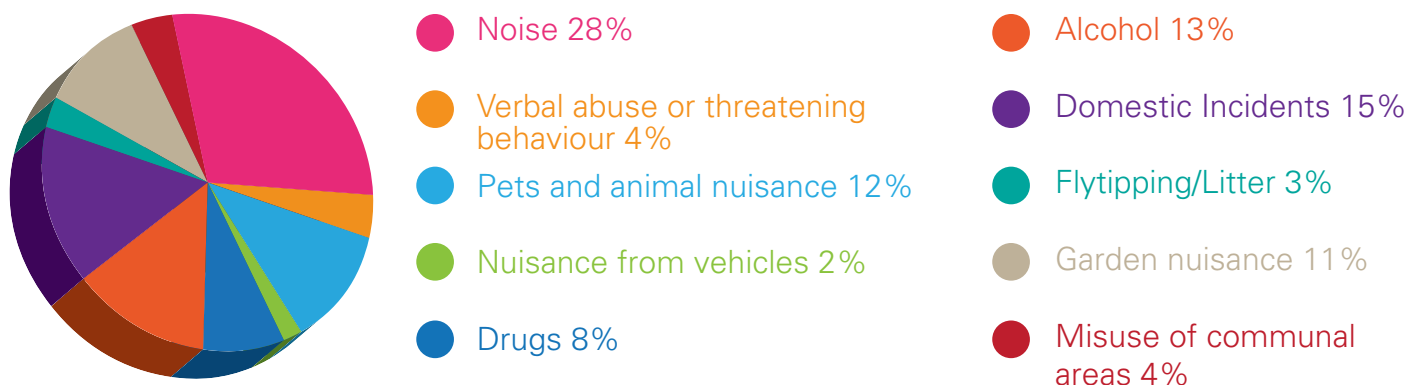
Our 2012 STAR survey suggested that only 10% of those who responded to the survey had reported ASB to Gosport Housing Services in the last 12 months. Satisfaction with the aspects of the service tenants range from 43% to 53%, whilst dissatisfaction ranges from 33% to 46%.

		2011/12	2012/13
↑	Number of cases reported	185 (135 of these were new cases)	318 (194 of these were new cases)

Of the 194 new cases that were reported, noise nuisance is the highest reported nuisance.

2012/13:

Of the 194 new cases, these were dealt with in the following ways:



cases offered advice and/or mediation	130
cases were identified to have noise monitoring equipment installed	9
Notices of Seeking Possession served	11
extensions to introductory tenancies	3
Anti-Social Behaviour injunctions	2
referrals for additional tenancy support	26
referrals to the Anti-social behaviour panel	13

**Multiagency partnership that includes, education, police, environmental health, housing providers, intervention groups (Youth Offending Team, Motiv8)that regularly meets to discuss individuals or groups of people that are known to cause, or have caused previously, or have been associated with antisocial behaviour*



Less Notices have been served than the previous year, as more close working has been undertaken with tenants. This has also meant that the average number of days to resolve ASB issues has decreased.



Many of the cases involved joint working with the Police and other agencies such as Social Services and Support Workers to try and successfully resolve them. In working closely and speedily with these cases has meant that it has taken an average time of 38 days to resolve as opposed to 56 days the year before.

RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT STANDARD

Customer service, choice and complaints

Over the past year we have been committed to putting tenants at the heart of everything we do and we will continue to do this. Our Resident Involvement Team will focus on the areas that you tell us are important to you and which you rate us as needing to improve.

There are many reasons why people get involved. We want to make it as easy as we can to fit in with busy lives and also give you an opportunity to become involved in a way that makes you feel comfortable. We want you to help influence, shape and improve the housing service.



Tenants enjoying a workshop at the South Coast Training event



Tenants from the Contract Monitoring Group inspecting one of the Council's empty properties



To monitor the customer service you receive, an independent company called MEL Research may telephone you on behalf of us to ask for your views on how satisfied you are with any day to day repairs that are carried out to your home or any planned improvement work such as new kitchens or bathrooms. Our new tenants may also receive a call from MEL Research to find out how our empty property (void) service is performing, from bidding for a property to moving in.



Complaints

We recognise that one of the best ways to improve our service is to learn from our mistakes. The STAR survey revealed that although 78% of customers are satisfied with the way Gosport House Services deals with enquiries generally, only 52% are satisfied with the way we deal with complaints. We would like to improve this next year.



Communication with you

The most popular way for you to contact us is by phone (78% prefer to contact us in this way). And last year we answered 78,275 calls from you and 96.9% of these were answered within 20 seconds.



During 2012/13 we sent 79,324 letters to our customers. We monitor letters and emails that you send to us that require a response. Last year we logged 497 letters/emails of these, 456 (92%) were responded to within the 10 working days. Our target was 95%. Numbers were low due to letters not being logged in the first 6 months.



Involvement & Empowerment

There are many ways you can become involved from completing surveys to attending meetings with us and our contractors. Through meaningful involvement, you have a real opportunity to influence the service that we provide. Therefore, the Council has a dedicated Resident Involvement Team who is willing to visit you and discuss the ways you may want to get involved.




Important:



- You can be involved in as little or as much as you like
- You don't need any experience to join in with any of the activities or groups
- We can provide support and training to encourage your involvement

If you are interested in getting involved, please contact Denise or Sam in the Resident Involvement Team on Freephone 0800 328 6958/02392 545686 or email rit@gosport.gov.uk

Local Offers and last year's report update:

A local offer is a written contract which after consulting with our tenant and leaseholders sets out a service you have said is important to you it will be monitored, delivered and responded to. Based on feedback you gave us last year, we have continued to focus on the outstanding Repairs and Maintenance and Resident Involvement local offers. The tables below provides you with an update as to where we are with these:

2011/12 - Outstanding Repairs and Maintenance Local Offer	
	Promote Resident involvement for sheltered Housing All tenants living in sheltered housing have the opportunity to be part of the 'Sheltered Housing Forum'. This group met for the first time in February 2013. They have the opportunity to focus on all aspects of the service which affect those tenants living in Sheltered Housing.
	Introduce a Scrutiny Workshop as part of the annual celebration event Although we have not set up a specific 'Scrutiny Group', the housing service is being monitored and held accountable by tenants and leaseholders on the following groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 'Contract Monitoring Group' who meet quarterly to monitor and challenge the performance of Repairs and Maintenance, planned programme of work and the Void (empty) properties.• Customer Opinion Panel who meet quarterly to discuss all aspect of the housing service.
	Introduce Mystery Shopping to check our customer care This will commence when training has been given to the Resident Involvement Officer.

2011/12 - Outstanding Resident Involvement Local Offer	
	Develop a new system to monitor resident satisfaction with resident inspectors. From October 2012 an independent company called M.E.L. Research began carrying out satisfaction surveys on day to day repairs and planned programmes such as new bathrooms and kitchens. They provide quarterly reports on the results of the surveys and this is reported and discussed with the Contract Monitoring Group and the Customer Opinion Panel . The results are published in our housing Newsletter 'At Your Service'.
	Agree a minimum percentage of jobs to be inspected Gosport Borough Council and Kier are currently working towards achieving at least 10% post inspections.

Understanding & responding to diverse needs of tenants

Personal Profiling

Gosport Borough Council is committed to equal opportunities for all. Last year we began contacting all our tenants by post to make sure we have up to date information about you and the people living with you. Collecting this information will help us to ensure that our services are sensitive to your needs and will then enable us to communicate with all of our tenants more effectively. Although we have managed to contact 2,160 (69%) of you, we aim to make every effort this year to contact those of you we have not heard from to update the information we hold about you and the people who live with you.

SODEXO

'2012/13 has continued to see the Horticultural Services team at Gosport consolidate their service delivery. Working closely in partnership with the council we have innovated with flexible working hours, routes and team structure, and invested in new machinery to improve our services. We still have many challenges to meet stakeholder expectations, but have a strong dedicated team to enable us to deliver this. Training, development and investment in our staff remain core to our cultural beliefs and long-term success.'

URBASER

April 2013 marked the start of the 3rd year for Urbaser's Contract with Gosport for the provision of waste and recycling collection services, street cleansing, public convenience and pavilion cleansing. Whilst continuing to work in partnership with the Council, we receive compliments from residents and visitors alike regarding their service standards.

Urbaser have seen the biggest changes in the use of new technology to improve customer responses. All refuse collection vehicles have been fitted with 'real time' data logs which are linked to the Streetscene team at the Town Hall. This enables an immediate response for anyone who contacts the department to enquire about problems with their refuse or recycling collections. Details of where a vehicle has been and what it has encountered are all at the touch of a button. This new system in conjunction with refresher training in customer service and recycling schemes, supports Urbaser's commitment to provide a continually improving service to residents of Gosport.

KIER

Kier have just entered the 3rd year of a 10 year contract with Gosport Borough Council, providing the overall repairs and maintenance service to the Council's housing stock. Working closely with Gosport we have pioneered several improvements since the start of the partnership, including improved customer satisfaction and performance scores across the board.

We've implemented many innovations on the contract, from improvements to our repairs letters, to a reduction in turnaround times to our void (empty) properties. 2013 has already seen us win a Green Apple award for transforming the councils waste transfer station, an internationally recognised award which confirms we are a leader in environmental practice.

Our open and honest relationship with Gosport is ensuring mutual goals and objectives are continually worked towards and achieved.



The year Ahead

Agnew Bungalows	Consider the options to re-develop this part of the site.
Anti-social behaviour	Review our anti-social behaviour policies and procedures
Allocations Policy	Review the Allocations Scheme to make sure that our housing meets the needs of local people
Barclay House	A decision has been made to refurbish existing short stay accommodation
Clean Up Days	These will take place during 2013/14
Computer Software	Direct Debit is an increasingly popular way to pay your rent, so we are looking at new computer software to improve this part of the service, making it quicker and smoother to pay your rent in this way
Disabled Aids & Adaptions	Review this service, looking at the best way to provide disabled aids and adaptations to those residents who require help because their home needs adapting maybe because of a disability
Garages	The programme of work for 2013/14 includes proposed demolition of garages in Lawn Close, Norman Road and Wavell Road, with repair or demolition being carried out on Claudia Court, Bracklesham Road and a second site in Prideaux-Brune Avenue
Floating Support	Introduce Floating Support Service: the proposal to extend the Supporting People service in sheltered schemes to older people living in the Borough regardless of the type of accommodation they live in
Information Packs	In partnership with the tenants on the Contract Monitoring Group, we will be producing 'Information Packs' for all of our tenants who will be having a new kitchen or bathroom installed; electrical upgrade work or a new heating system
Mobility Scooter Policy	Produce a mobility scooter policy which will look at how we can accommodate mobility scooters in our sheltered schemes with the minimum of disruption to residents
Personal Profiling	Contact the 31% of our tenants who have yet to complete the personal profiling forms which will help us to update our records and improve the way we consult with all our tenants
Rented Accommodation in the Private Sectors (RAPs)	Review our landlord scheme to see what the future holds for this service which brings tenants in housing need and private landlords together
Sheltered Schemes	Upgrade Fortune House to include new ceiling, fire alarm system, fire stopping, communal lighting and decoration of the communal areas. Gloucester House communal redecoration will follow in 2014-15
STAR Survey	In September 2013, MEL Research will be carrying out a confidential telephone survey to find out how satisfied you are with the service that Housing provides
Tenant & Repairs Handbook	We will be updating the handbook and sending this out to all our tenants
Empty Properties Standards	We will be reviewing this aspect of our service with the tenant Contract Monitoring Group

Gosport Borough Council is committed to equal opportunities for all.

If you need this document in large print, on tape, CD, in Braille or in another language, please ask.

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