



# Annual Report

2009 - 2010



**Abertay Housing Association Limited**



# CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

During the year, Abertay's Management Committee rethought what the Association's vision should be. We have always believed that we should be more than simply a landlord and provider of homes, but how could we capture that belief in a simple way? After a good deal of thought, we summarised this in the statement:

*"Abertay aims to enhance the quality of life in our communities."*

We have, over the past months, worked hard to live up to the challenge in the words and to make sure this goal is at the heart of everything we do. I am proud to set out below some of the achievements in the year which we believe will help to enhance the quality of life of our tenants, and others in our communities.

## **Enhancing the quality of..... Our repairs service**

We looked at how we could improve the service we give our tenants when a repair is needed to their home. We decided that perfect service would be to agree an appointment time on the first contact, have the tradesman arrive at the agreed time, and fix the problem properly on that first visit. In partnership with our main repairs contractor, we introduced this appointments based service last November. While we have not reached "perfect" yet, it is very clear that our customers are overwhelmingly delighted with the changes.

## **Enhancing the quality of..... Our housing application service**

When people come to us looking for a home, we want to give them the best advice we can. We therefore overhauled our procedures to be sure we were doing this. While we don't have the properties to house everyone, we believe that we give the quickest response and the best advice we can.

## **Enhancing the quality of..... Our neighbourhoods**

During the year we changed the way our Housing Officers work to create "specialist" roles. While this did mean that tenants no longer had "their" Housing Officer, who dealt with everything, we are seeing the benefits of having our specialists when dealing with neighbourhood issues and antisocial behaviour. Much of this work depends on good links with other agencies. These links, and our effectiveness at tackling problems, have improved hugely through the work of our specialist officers.

## **Enhancing the quality of..... Our rent collection**

The creation of the specialist rent arrears team during the year has dramatically improved our collection of rents, with the level of arrears falling from 2.9% in March 2009 (which was similar to earlier years) to under 2.2% in March 2010- the lowest in Abertay's history. This improvement has generally been achieved through prompt action when problems first arise, and by looking to refer people for specialist debt advice. We have carried out fewer of the "negative" debt recovery actions – fewer evictions, fewer court actions and paid less in legal costs than previously.

### Enhancing the quality of..... Our homes

During the year, we spent over £1.5 million on planned improvements to our houses. This included the installation of over 200 new kitchens. We also looked in detail at how best to bring all of our properties up to and above the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by the year 2015. Depending on grant funding, this could involve us spending up to and above £10 million over the next five years to improve the energy efficiency of almost 1,000 homes. It is a lot of money, but the benefits to our tenants in terms of their warmth and comfort, and savings in fuel bills, would be considerable.

It is always good to add good quality, brand new homes to our housing stock. During the year we were delighted to complete 25 new homes in the Pitalpin and Charleston areas of Dundee. We have a further 29 which will be finished during the coming months.

Overall, we feel we have made progress during the year towards getting our core services not just "satisfactory" but "excellent". Key performance information on all Housing Associations is publicly available from the Scottish Housing Regulators' website, and these show that Abertay not only performs better than most on all these measures, but we do this at a substantially lower cost. This helps us keep the rents we charge our tenants as low as possible.

While I think these things show that we are doing our best to "enhance the quality of life in our communities", the year has not all been good news.

The economic downturn, and the Government's austerity measures, make it increasingly unlikely that we will have opportunities to develop new housing in the coming years. This is disappointing, but reaffirms our focus on making our core activities the best they can be.

Our family Community Block, which had run for many years in North Fintry, was seriously damaged in a flood during the year. While the activities have continued from temporary premises since then, whether we will be able rebuild the block, is still in doubt. Abertay is, however, an organisation committed to being more than just a landlord, and we remain fundamentally committed to providing wider community activities where we can.

We were all greatly saddened during the year by the death of one of our Management Committee members, Catherine Key. Catherine had joined Abertay in 2006, as a "General" category member. With her background in personnel management; her skills, interest and positive approach were of huge value to the Association, and she will be very sadly missed by us all.

Finally, I would like to thank all our staff for their efforts in making the past year such a successful one. There are challenging times ahead, but I am confident Abertay are in a strong position to cope with these. I would also like to express my appreciation of our Committee Members, all of whom give up their time on a voluntary basis to help in our aim of improving the quality of life in our communities.

**Russell Rowbotham**

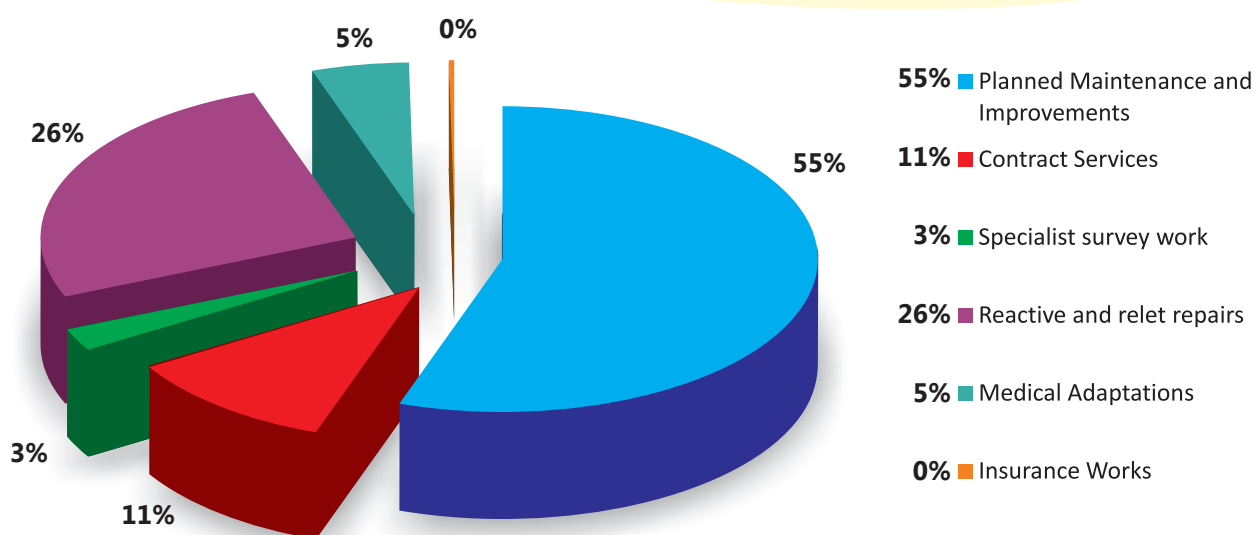
# Maintenance

We all know that maintaining and improving the quality of our tenants' homes is one of the biggest and most important aspects of the association's business. We pride ourselves in delivering a wide range of improvements every year to our homes, ensuring that our communities enjoy a safe and appealing environment whilst continuing to improve our repairs service. Our rolling programme of improvements during the year included:

- Installed new and vastly improved kitchens to 211 homes.
- 83 upgraded central heating systems
- New ventilation systems to 344 homes
- Improved common close lighting to 202 flats
- 82 flats benefitting from new and improved controlled door entry systems
- New fire alarms to 83 homes
- Continued our maintenance painterwork to 151 properties



*Our property at 22 Caldrum Street is a fine example of what improvements we have made with our kitchen replacement programme.*



During 2009-10 our busy medical adaptation programme continued unabated. With around 129 adaptations and over £142,000 in expenditure we remain one of the biggest investors in adaptations to tenants' homes in Scotland. We could not achieve this without the valued financial support of the Scottish Government. However, it is very rewarding to be able to support our more vulnerable tenants and make their lives more comfortable and bearable in their own homes.

## Day to Day Repairs

We are proud of the ongoing improvements we are making to our repairs service.

A major review of the service was carried out in the autumn of last year which focused on improving the way our repair services are delivered to tenants. This included a close examination of the tenant experience when using the repairs service and what was important to tenants when having a repair carried out.

Our examination showed quite simply that tenants want repairs to be carried out properly and professionally, where possible in one visit and at a time that suits them.

Since the review we have been working closer than ever before with many of our repairs contractors- QAPM, McGill and WRB Gas to enhance the delivery of the service.

Around 65% of repairs are now carried out by appointment. This has proved popular with tenants, with feedback surveys showing customer satisfaction with repairs is high.

Our computer systems have also been modified to record a range of new information:-

- **How good are we at fixing problems 1st time?**
- **Did we manage to keep the appointment we promised and if not why not?**
- **Are faults taking days, weeks or months to solve and if so why?**
- **Are tenants happy with the service and what could we do better?**

These changes in our IT system has allowed us to look more closely at our performance and more specifically continue to direct our efforts in-line with what's important to our tenants.

<i>Type of Repair</i>	<i>Target Time</i>	<i>Performance Target</i>	<i>Actual Time Taken</i>
<b>Emergency</b>	<b>2 hours</b>	<b>98%</b>	<b>94%</b>
<b>24 hour repair</b>	<b>1 day</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>88%</b>
<b>Urgent</b>	<b>3 days</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>85%</b>
<b>Routine</b>	<b>5 – 15 days</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>86%</b>

**Appointments** – we carried out 2,246 repairs through our new appointments system between November 2009 and March 2010.

### **Tenants Satisfaction**

We are aware that we had a low response rate to our tenants' satisfaction surveys. During the years we made encouraging improvements to the number of replies from our tenants.

At the end of the year this figure rose to 15% with a satisfaction score of 98%. Whilst this is very encouraging, we are striving to achieve at least 25% response rate. Let us know what you think of our repairs service and how we can improve.

# Housing Management

## The Housing Management Department

2009/2010 was a period of change in Abertay and this was especially so in the Housing Management Department. We employed June Mclelland as Housing Manager in June 2009 along with the employment of a Housing Assistant dedicated to arrears control. The duties of our Housing Officers were changed to specialist roles in September 2009. This was a significant change in their role and is working very well. For example, arrears of rent have reduced significantly since the changes were implemented.



We also changed how applicants apply to us for a house. Previously applicants completed and then submitted an application form and we would enter them on the housing list according to their priority. We now give applicants far more information by a process of staged interviews. This allows us to inform the applicant of their housing options and the likelihood of their being housed in the type of house, size and areas of their choice.

### Allocations

During the year we allocated 199 houses to applicants on our housing list, applicants nominated by Dundee City Council, homeless applicants, applicants requiring housing support and sheltered applicants. We are continuing to work with Dundee City Council and other local housing associations to develop a Common Housing Register.

Why have we made these changes? It is simply to improve our service and to offer the best service that we can.

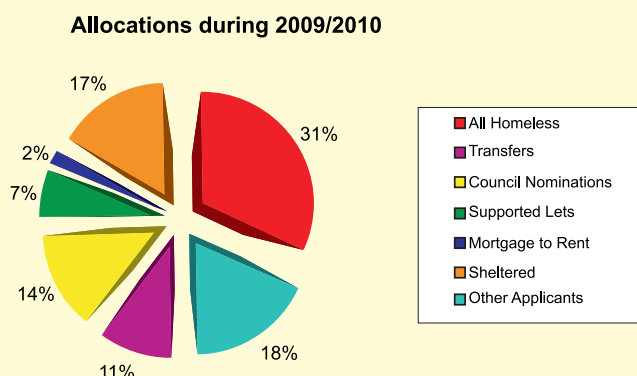
**We allocated a total of 199 houses during the year.**

#### Question:

So, what sorts of applicants became tenants during the year?

#### Answer:

The pie chart shows the categories of applicants that we housed.



### Sheltered Housing

We again carried out our annual roadshows throughout our sheltered estates. Tenants are generally very happy with the service provided and they understand the need to control costs as much as possible but without unduly reducing the level of service.

### ROSEBANK ARTS AND CRAFT GROUP



*Our arts and craft group meets on a Tuesday afternoon and is run by our volunteer Margaret Read who has the class between 1pm and 2.30pm. The group is made up of tenants and visitors there are also some families kids that participate on school holidays. As well as making cards, painting and doing crafts the group also helps many socialise in a safe and happy environment and it is also a good time for other tenants to come in for a chat and cuppy.*



*Rosebank received a lottery grant for a TV and wii and DVD recorder. The tenants enjoy playing with the wii just now and the TV was in good time for the world cup. We are hoping that in the winter we can get some competitions going and a film night or two.*

## Money Advice

Through our membership of the Tayside Wider Role Alliance we are able to refer tenants for Financial Health Checks involving the Money Advice Support Team (MAST) and energy advice through the Dundee Energy Efficiency Advice Project (DEEAP). We are optimistic that this will benefit tenants who are having difficult financial times.

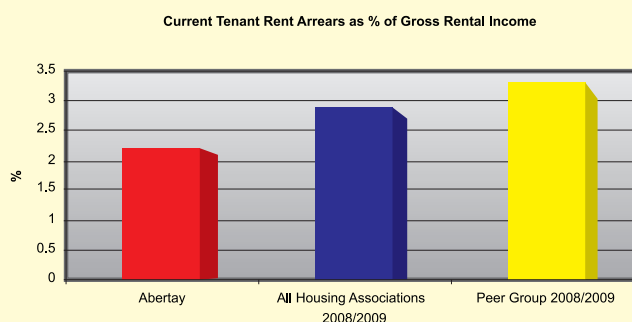
## Resident Participation

As well as regular meetings with Abertay Residents Organisation and our other Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs) in Craigiebank, Dryburgh, and North Fintry we formed 2 focus groups of interested tenants to review how we deal with anti social complaints and how we deal with estate management issues. We have reviewed both these policies with the unstinting assistance of the members of these focus groups.

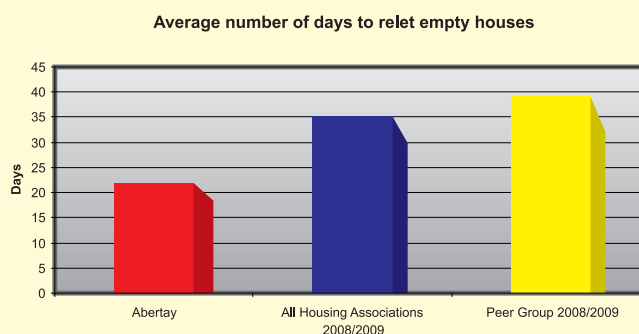
## Vital Statistics at the end of March 2010:

- We had a total of 1788 houses and flats, including 285 Sheltered dwellings.
- For the first time, no houses were sold through Right To Buy during the year.
- Our Gross Rental Income for the year amounted to £5,976,401.
- Our current tenants rent arrears amounted to 2.15% of our total rental income which is the lowest since 1998. The control of rent arrears continues to be given a very high priority.
- We obtained 13 Decrees for Repossession and evicted 4 tenants for substantial rent arrears.
- Our rent loss due to dwellings being empty amounted to 0.7% of total rental income. This rent loss includes the time houses are being repaired by our contractors. We continue to give the reduction in void loss a high priority and will be trying to do even better during the present year.
- On average it took 17 days to relet empty houses – that is the time in days between the previous tenant leaving the house and the new tenant taking over the tenancy.
- We re-let 199 houses and flats during the year.
- We had 1142 applicants for general needs housing on our housing list and 114 applicants for sheltered housing.
- We received and resolved 9 formal complaints over the year, 2 of these were regarding allocations, 1 was regarding owner landscaping costs and 6 were in relation to maintenance and improvement matters. The main lesson to be learnt is to ensure improved communication between Abertay, tenants and owners and the relevant maintenance contractors.

**Current tenant rent arrears compared to the average for all Housing Associations and to organisations similar to Abertay**



**Current number of days to let compared to the average for all Housing Associations and to organisations similar to Abertay**



# Finance Report

Our audited accounts show a surplus for the year of £1,246,000.

When setting the budget for 2009-10 we had anticipated a very challenging year due to the ongoing difficult economic conditions and an ambitious planned maintenance programme.

Looking firstly at the economic factors: Interest rates remained at extremely low levels throughout the year which combined with lower cash balances has resulted in significantly reduced interest income. During the year we have taken steps to improve costs control and this is reflected in lower management and administration costs. We have also however benefited from falling prices within the construction sector and the reduced VAT rate that applied to the end of December 2009. Despite the recession we have reduced rent arrears during the period as a result of moving to specialist roles within the Housing Management team.



Moving onto the planned maintenance programme: £1.6 million was spent on this in the year which includes £363,000 upgrading central heating systems, £704,000 on installing new kitchens and £103,000 on communal lighting and close door entry systems. We did experience some slippage on our planned maintenance programme during the year and consequently under spent against budget. This work has been carried forward into 2010-11 and is not expected to adversely impact on delivery of the current year programme.

Some of you may also remember that we consulted with all tenants earlier in the year on the proposal to be released from the Sale and Purchase Agreement. 88% were in favour of this proposal. We have subsequently had official confirmation from the Scottish Government that this agreement has been terminated. As a direct result of this we have been able to release the provision in respect of surplus proceeds on Right To Buy sales that we no longer will have to repay to the Scottish Government. This has increased the surplus for the year by £329,000.

The Association continued to develop new properties with £5.2 million having been spent during the year across two projects. Of this, £3.2 million was funded by Housing Association Grants. The 6 home development project in the Pitalpin area of Dundee was completed in October 2009. Work started on a 48 home development in the Charleston area in April 2009. The development work has progressed well and by year end 19 homes had been handed over and were fully let. We are on target to complete the development by the end of September 2010.

During the year we carried out a detailed energy efficiency review of our stock and the options available and costs involved to bring it up to the level required by the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) by 2015. The Association is committed to improving the energy efficiency of all our homes and is working towards a programme that will exceed the SHQS level. The surplus for the year was transferred to reserves where it will be used for future improvement works. This includes an anticipated spend of £4.0 million which has been set aside to bring our properties up to the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) by 2015.

We know that uncertain times lie ahead with wide scale cut backs expected across all aspects of the public sector. However we have entered 2010-11 in a strong financial position and the work that we have done over the last year in looking hard at how we deliver our services and manage our assets means that we are confident that we can rise to these challenges.

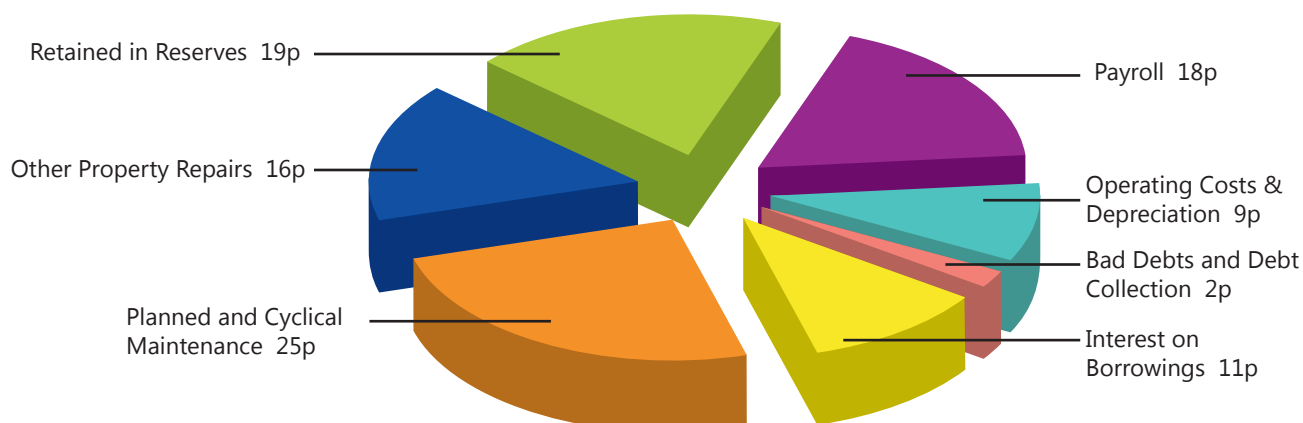
## How we Performed

	2010 £000s	2009 £000s
<b>Where Abertay got its money</b>		
Tenants Rents and Service Charges	5,831	5,597
Sale of Property	333	469
Owner Occupier Charges	182	195
Bank Interest Received	61	126
Other	264	202
	<b>6,671</b>	<b>6,589</b>
<b>How it was spent</b>		
Staff Costs	1,195	1,134
Repairs and Maintenance	2,751	2,905
Management and Administration	710	807
Cost of Property Sales	1	372
Interest Paid	768	711
	<b>5,425</b>	<b>5,929</b>
<b>What we had left over</b>		
Surplus for the period	<b>1,246</b>	<b>660</b>

### Balance Sheet - What we own and what we owe

	2010 £000s	2009 £000s
<b>Our Assets (what we own)</b>		
Capital items owned		
Housing Properties	17,162	15,164
Equipment and Furnishings	427	451
	<b>17,589</b>	<b>15,615</b>
Debts owed to Abertay	1,578	756
Cash and Bank Balances	3,127	4,907
	<b>22,294</b>	<b>21,278</b>
<b>Our Liabilities (what we owe)</b>		
All money owed, excluding loans	1,727	1,815
Pension Fund Deficit	2,098	790
Loans Outstanding	12,564	12,730
<b>Total Owed</b>	<b>16,389</b>	<b>15,335</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>5,905</b>	<b>5,943</b>
<b>Represented by</b>		
Share Capital	1	1
Reserve for Future Maintenance Costs	5,903	5,942
	<b>5,904</b>	<b>5,943</b>

## Where Every £1 of your Rent Went



# Our New Homes



Last year we completed 27 new homes in the west end of Dundee, 6 in Donalds Lane as part of the Pitalpin Regeneration and 21 within our new development with Bett Partnerships in South Road, Charleston.

Our small development in Donalds Lane boasts four 3 bedroom houses and two 4 bedroom houses. The houses are finished to a very high standard, have innovative heating systems and have a wonderful outlook. This is part of the joint development with private developers, H & H Properties, just off Buttars Loan in West Lochee.

Our newest development in South Road and Dunholm Road, built around Charleston Primary School reflects our biggest financial commitment yet to providing brand new homes. The 48 house development costs around £6.71 million and will provide a high standard of accommodation, primarily for families and tenants displaced from Dundee City Council's demolition programme.



There is a variety of house types ranging from 2 bedroom bungalows to large 4 bedroom family houses. There are also 5 purpose built, specially adapted houses for wheelchair users in the development.



As with many of our new build schemes, the houses boast several innovative features. We have managed to provide heating systems powered by air source heat pumps and each house has positive ventilation systems instead of traditional extract fans.

Last year we completed 21 houses providing a great deal of joy for many families. The remaining houses are due to be completed this year.

# Our People

## Committee of Management as at 31st March 2010

Russell Rowbotham OBE BSc FCIH  
Ken Dunn  
Kathleen Mands BA, Dip Ed, DCE  
Duncan Wood BA (Hons)  
Meryle Taylor  
Bryan Morris  
Helen Reeves  
Ian Mathers FCIBS  
Dorothy Taylor

Chairperson  
Vice Chairperson

## Senior Management Team

Ian Thomson BSc FCCA  
Donald Barnett MCIH  
Lesley Ferguson ACA  
Ron McArthur Bsc MRICS

Chief Executive  
Housing Services Director  
Finance Director  
Technical Services Director

## Solicitors

Thorntons WS  
Whitehall House  
33 Yeaman Shore,  
Dundee,  
DD1 4BJ

## Bankers

Royal Bank of Scotland PLC  
6-8 George Street  
Edinburgh  
EH2 2SA

## Auditors

Findlay and Company  
11 Dudhope Terrace  
Dundee  
DD3 6TS

# *'Abertay aims to enhance the quality of life in our communities'*

Abertay Housing enlisted the assistance of Fintry Parish Church Community Action Team, to help some tenants help themselves to bring their gardens back under control.

This has been very beneficial to the residents, who had struggled for a variety of reasons to maintain their garden in accordance with their tenancy agreement. The volunteers also provided the necessary equipment to tackle the job.

Headed up by Helen Brough, the hardy group of volunteers assisted a few residents who did not meet the criteria to be included in Dundee City Council's Garden Maintenance Program, and as such, have enabled these residents to bring their gardens back (and in some cases beyond) their former glory!



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Scottish Charity SC 030152