



Customer
Annual Report
2011

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Our commitment to equality and diversity

Cotman Housing Association is proud of its achievements concerning equality and diversity. In March 2011, we took part in an Organisational Equality and Diversity Health Check. This was conducted on our behalf by the Places for People Group and the results showed that we were achieving strong performance in this area. We believe in a common-sense approach to equality and delivering quality services to everyone, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, disability, religion, sexuality, gender identity or any other characteristic. We value the diverse nature of our customers, staff and the communities we work with.

People face barriers because of their circumstances or experience. To tackle this, we treat people as individuals and try to create aspirational homes and inspirational places where they can live and prosper together. In this way, we will continue to raise awareness of equality and diversity within our communities, increase individual choice and improve local decision making.



Welcome to Cotman Housing Association's Customer Annual Report for 2011. This report has been produced for our customers and it is only fitting, therefore, that it has been developed and written with customer input. It is important to us that we continue to improve our services so that they meet your expectations. This report gives you information about what we achieved last year and how we performed against our targets. We have listened to what you have told us are your priorities for services in the coming year and this report sets out how we will achieve these. We hope you find the report a useful way to see what we do and we welcome your views on how we can continue to improve services.

Vivien Farrow, Cotman Managing Director

As a Cotman customer and Board Member, I am proud to say a few words to introduce the 2011 Annual Report. I am enthusiastic about the efforts that have been made in the past year to increase the number of customers who are formally involved in Cotman's business. The former Cotman Customer Liaison Panel (CCLP) has been dissolved to make way for two new panels with distinct remits. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the CCLP who contributed so much to service development over the years.

I would also like to welcome the new members of our Cotman Customer Body and Scrutiny Panel. Changes to the social housing sector mean that housing organisations are facing less external regulation by public bodies. The expectation now is that landlords will be held to account by their customers. To me, this makes sense as customers receive services and are best placed to judge their quality. It is more important than ever that there are formal channels for Cotman residents to be involved and to work with staff to ensure that the service given meets our expectations. I therefore think that the planning we have done to launch the

two new panels will stand us in good stead over the coming year. I am especially pleased that so many new people have come forward and expressed a willingness to get involved.



**Paul Watkinson
Cotman Board Member and former Chair of the CCLP**

Cotman Housing Association joined the Places for People Group in April 2009 with a stock of 1354 properties. We now manage over 3000 homes throughout East Anglia.

This report relates to the rented general needs and supported housing properties owned by Cotman, and to the 1700 properties we manage on behalf of the Places for People Group.

It sets out how the services we offer to customers meet the six national standards issued by the Tenant Services Authority (our Regulator). It details progress against the actions and measures you asked us to consider last year and our performance against each standard. It also outlines our plans to improve in the year ahead and additional measures you would like us to consider. At the end of the report, you will find details of our approach to local offers, which became a requirement in April 2011.

We have consulted closely with our customers to find out what matters most and what we need to focus on most to improve our services. This report has been signed off by our Cotman Customer Body.

The consultation process included:

- A Workshop with our formally involved customers
- Discussions with Residents Associations and at Open Forum meetings
- Feedback you gave us as we developed our Local Offers
- Consulting with customers at community events
- Ongoing customer satisfaction surveys and customer opinion surveys.

Separate annual reports for Places for People Homes, Individual Support and Places for People Homeowners can be found on the Places for People website.



David Hunt, Chairman



> The six standards

Tenant involvement and empowerment



> This standard covers the area of customer service, choice and complaints, involvement and empowerment, understanding and responding to the needs of tenants.

> In this section we have set out how we improved and how we did last year. It also details how we currently meet the standard and how we will continue to improve as well as future measures you would like us to consider.

85.7% of customers are satisfied with the overall Cotman service

What we did to improve in 2010/11

- We have reviewed our governance arrangements through shaping sessions with customers to develop a revised involvement structure which feeds directly into the Cotman Board of Management.
- We have reviewed arrangements for customer scrutiny.
- We have offered a programme of training to customers in partnership with Adult Education. We have offered training in computer skills, team-working and meeting skills amongst others.
- We carried out a full Customer Involvement Survey in May 2010 to seek your views on opportunities for involvement.
- Following this, we have widened our involvement opportunities. This has helped to increase the number of formally involved customers including younger and working households, and customers from supported housing.
- We have improved our systems for capturing customers' preferred method of contact.
- We have developed a system to capture the cost and outcomes of all involvement activities, allowing us to evaluate value for money.
- We have listened to your feedback about the Cotman Newsletter and ensured it is focused on local events in communities.
- We have introduced a new complaint satisfaction survey so we can continually improve the quality of our responses.
- We have carried out a Profiling Survey to gather information about customer requirements so that we can tailor services to meet needs.

How we will meet the standard and improve this year 2011/12

- Develop a Scrutiny Panel to allow customers to assess our performance.
- Invite expressions of interest in formal involvement from our new customers in Essex and Cambridge.
- Promote opportunities for joint working with customers of other social landlords so you can make informed service comparisons.
- Introduce an Induction Programme to support customers who are new to formal involvement.
- Review all customer service standards to ensure these reflect the priorities of our customer base.
- Offer training in complaints handling and appeals to customers.
- Develop on-line services for customers in relation to rents, repairs and housing applications.

Complaints in 2010/11 Summary of our performance

Type of complaint	%	No
Repairs and maintenance	38	8
Service received from staff	14	3
Estate management	5	1
Service charges	5	1
Lettings	0	0
Landscaping	5	1
Rent	5	1
Housing management	19	4
Other	9	2
<hr/>		
Total	100	21
<hr/>		
Number resolved at Stage 1	95	20
Number moved to Stage 2	5	1
Dealt with by the Independent Housing Ombudsman (IHO)	0	

Tenant involvement and empowerment

Future measures you asked us to consider in 2010/11

You said	We did
Improve the diversity of involved customers (especially younger people and working customers)	We have hosted involvement meetings in the evenings to enable working customers to attend. We invited younger customers to help us shape a 'Local Offer' for younger people but take-up was limited
Support the confidence building of customers	We have offered a training programme and also mentored individuals
Review our mechanisms for involvement so people can contribute in a way that suits them	We have carried out a full Involvement Survey, and developed a new tier of 'Resident Voices' who prefer not to attend meetings
Increase the number of involved customers	We have increased the number of involved customers through active recruitment via newsletters, mailshots and at sign-ups and walkabouts
Develop new platforms for involvement to focus on needs of particular groups of customers	We have hosted focus groups for older customers living in general needs accommodation, and for home-owners
Develop 'preferred method of contact' systems	We have carried out a full profiling survey to capture this information and have recorded it on our systems
Work with Residents Associations to raise profile and accountability in communities	We have supported Residents Associations to produce newsletters, and helped with distribution. We have also worked with them to shape our Local Offers
Update our website	We have not yet updated our website and recognise that it needs to be expanded. We have agreed with the Places for People Group that they will assist us with this task in 2011-12
Communicate our vision of Involvement to all staff	We made Customer Involvement the theme of a staff meeting and asked all staff to consider their role in it
Update and republish our Customer Handbook	In the knowledge that we were likely to take over stock in Essex and Cambridge, we decided to wait until our new area was consolidated. This will be a target for 2011-12
Review governance arrangements with customers	We hosted two meetings in March 2011 with customers to review governance arrangements and are currently shaping a revised involvement structure, feeding directly into the Board
Deal with complaints more efficiently and effectively	We have cut response times from 15 to 10 working days
Publicise our Complaints Processes and outcomes	We published details of these in our December 2010 newsletter.
Review scrutiny arrangements with customers	We have reviewed scrutiny arrangements and have agreed to form a separate group to focus on scrutiny

How we did last year 2010/11

Performance standard	Achieved 2011	Target	On target?	External benchmark [^]
Cotman Contact Centre calls answered within 20 seconds* ⁽¹⁾	72%	80%	X	75%
Customers satisfied with overall Cotman service	86%	82%	✓	Nat. average 82%
Customers satisfied their views are taken into account	65%	n/a	n/a	Nat. average 62%
Complaints acknowledged within 2 working days ⁽²⁾	100%	100%	✓	n/a
Complaints fully responded to within prescribed timescales	86%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Complainants satisfied that we responded to all issues	100%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Complainants satisfied with final outcome	66%	n/a	n/a	n/a

Future measures you would like us to consider in 2011/12

Action
Increase customer representation at Board Level and review maximum length of service
Formalise ways in which Residents Associations report back to wider communities
Promote more local estate based newsletters which are produced with customer input
Improve our website and consider use of new technology and social media to make involvement more appealing to younger people.
Ensure photographs in newsletters reflect the diverse range of client groups

Key to table

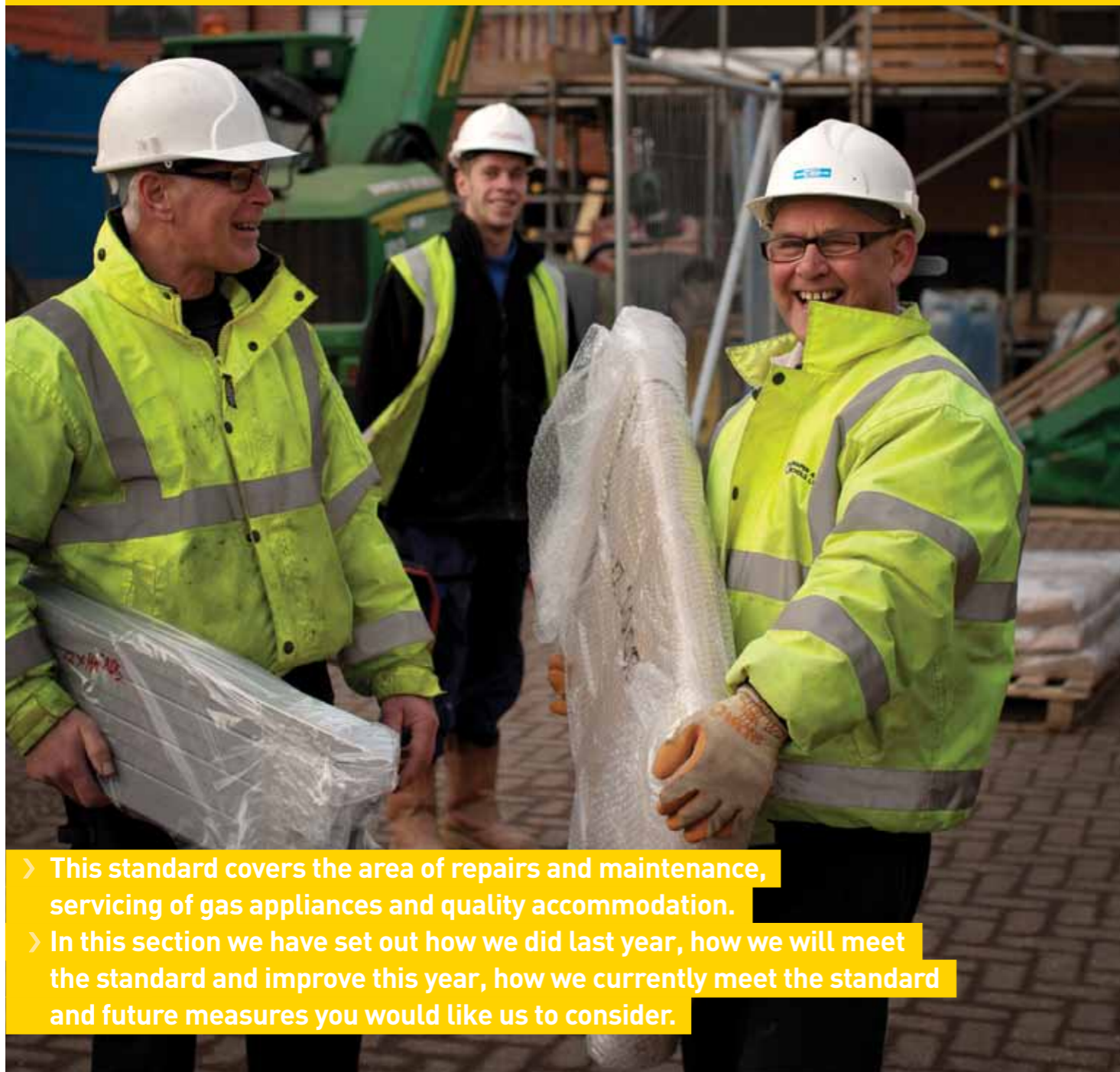
- [^] A benchmark is what we measure our performance against
- * The target is for the Places for People Group as a whole
- n/a Not applicable
- (1) Benchmark source – latest available Housemark figures (March 2010)
- (2) No benchmark available as this is a standard we have agreed with our customers

We have rounded some percentages for simplicity

100%

of complainants are satisfied we responded to all issues

> The six standards Home



- > This standard covers the area of repairs and maintenance, servicing of gas appliances and quality accommodation.
- > In this section we have set out how we did last year, how we will meet the standard and improve this year, how we currently meet the standard and future measures you would like us to consider.

99% of emergency repairs were completed within the target time

What we did to improve in 2010/11

- As promised, we completed the Decent Homes programme on time and within budget.
- Any homes that required works, but were not done because the customer refused access, will have the works completed when the property becomes empty.
- We are on course to analyse the costs of the responsive repairs service every two years.
- We have installed a computer module that will improve collection of data analysis and delivery of right first time repairs.
- We have procured new responsive repairs and gas servicing contractors across our areas of operations, with customer input to oversee and evaluate tenders.
- This year we made and kept repairs appointments 96.5 percent of the time.
- We have analysed satisfaction levels for the delivery of our responsive repairs and are proud that these have been consistently amongst the highest for any business unit in the Places for People Group.

How we will meet the standard and improve this year 2011/12

- **Landscapes:** Develop a suite of landscaping standards which are meaningful and appropriate to the business and its customers.
- **Major Works programme:** Deliver continuous Decent Homes work as well as Affordable Warmth.
- **Central contracts:** Deliver cyclical contracts including Health and Safety and painting.
- **Responsive repairs:** Evaluate the performance of our new contractors for responsive repairs and gas servicing with customer input.
- **Empty homes:** Deliver works to empty properties more efficiently to reduce our reletting times.
- **Value for Money:** Move to a fixed cost schedule of rates repairs ordering process to enable us to control costs better.
- **Northgate Gas Module:** Implement the gas module on our computer system to enable us to manage gas safety better.
- **Complaints:** Review any negative customer feedback about repairs services and learn lessons from any patterns which emerge.

Future measures you asked us to consider in 2010/11

You said	We did
Service 100% of our gas appliances every year	We have serviced 100% of appliances where we have been given access by customers and have capped supply where we were not
Update our property database to ensure it includes the condition of all properties in management	Work was in progress to achieve this last year although the task was not completed as at 31st March. We identified the need for a corporate new system, which went live in June 2011
Review our approach to aids and adaptations to take advantage of specialist expertise within the Group	We have linked up with key specialists in the Group and are making greater use of Disabled Facilities Grants as a consequence
We should make arrangements for reporting repairs more flexible to maximise customer convenience	We bought into the services of the Places for People Contact Centre from August 2010 to allow repairs to be reported 24 hours a day

How we did last year 2010/11

Performance standard	Achieved 2011	Target	On target?	External benchmark [^]
Cotman Contact Centre calls answered within 20 seconds * ⁽¹⁾	72%	80%	X	75%
Make and keep repairs appointments with customers ~ ⁽¹⁾	97%	n/a	n/a	97.2%
% emergency repairs completed within target time ^{(1) (2)}	99%	98%	✓	96%
% urgent repairs completed within target time ^{(1) (2)}	99%	98%	✓	96%
% routine repairs completed within target time ^{(1) (2)}	99%	98%	✓	96%
Average number of days to complete emergency urgent and routine repairs * ⁽¹⁾	5.8	8.1	✓	8.1
Repairs carried out which are 'right first time' ^{(1) (3)}	90%	90%	✓	88%
All homes to meet the government's Decent Homes standard by December 2011	100%	100%	✓	100%

99%
of urgent repairs
are completed within
target time

Key to table

- [^] A benchmark is what we measure our performance against
- ^{*} The target is for the Places for People Group as a whole
- [~] No target set for Cotman or the Places for People Group
- n/a Not applicable
- ⁽¹⁾ Benchmark source – latest available Housemark figures (March 2010)
- ⁽²⁾ Target set for Places for People Homes
- ⁽³⁾ Estimated performance for 2010/11 shown. We are putting systems in place to obtain more accurate figures next year

We have rounded some percentages for simplicity

Future measures you would like us to consider in 2011/12

Action
Ensure that our contractors consistently produce ID and take remedial action if they fail to do so
Make Digital TV a focus for a future newsletter as you are still unsure what is required
Provide better recycling facilities
Report to you regularly in newsletters on our repairs performance
Publicise information about planned major works

100%
of our homes meet the
government's Decent
Homes standard



> The six standards Tenancy



> This standard covers the area of allocations, rents and tenure.
 > In this section we have set out how we improved and how we did last year.
 It also details how we currently meet the standard and how we will continue to improve as well as future measures you would like us to consider.

100% of new customers are satisfied with the quality of their new home

What we did to improve in 2010/11

- We introduced a new agreement from June 2011. This gives a clearer definition of grounds for possession.
- We have increased referrals to other agencies on behalf of customers who are at risk of tenancy failure due to vulnerability.
- We have achieved an average reletting time of 25 days which is better than our target.
- We have achieved satisfaction of 100% with the lettings process amongst new customers.
- We have ensured that staff attend Partnership Meetings of all major Choice Based Lettings Schemes in our area of operations.
- We have consolidated our Starter Tenancies Appeals process with four Appeals being heard by the Review Panel, of which one was upheld.

How we will meet the standard and improve this year 2011/12

- Ensure we meet the new rent setting guidance when it is provided by the Government, as the current guidance comes to an end this year.
- Provide online access to rent statements for customers.
- Ensure our customers are informed, prepared and supported through the implementation of the government's Comprehensive Spending Review.
- Provide customers with access to an online application form, which can be used by new applicants for accommodation.
- Introduce Starter Tenancies for new customers in Essex and Cambridge.



Future measures you asked us to consider in 2010/11

You said	We did
Review tenancy agreement (with customers)	We listened to feedback that Starter Tenancies were seen as a useful tool. We used feedback from Places for People customers to review content and to make the format clearer
Review the staffing structure to introduce specialist roles to manage property allocations and voids	We introduced an Interim Post of Sales and Allocations Officer, and a Voids Co-ordinator. Full structural review was delayed due to the planned expansion of our area of operations
Review and maximise the information we publish on housing mobility systems	We have featured our membership of the specialist Homeswapper website in the Cotman newsletter
Explore the introduction of Local Lettings Plans and make customers aware of these	We negotiated the approval of a Local Lettings Plan for part of our Swaffham development following high turnover and incidences of anti-social behaviour. All customers on this development were consulted and advised of the outcome
Introduce customer scrutiny into our lettings procedures to ensure properties are let as quickly as possible and at our expected standard	As at March 2011, work was in progress to form a new Scrutiny Panel, and shaping sessions had been held with customers
Report the level and details of evictions	We reported on the number of evictions in our newsletter
Provide more flexible ways for people to pay their rent	Direct Debits for rent payments can now be collected on any date up to the 25th of the month. Customers can pay 24 hours a day using an automated telephone system

7.4%
of our Lettings are to **Black and Minority Ethnic** customers

Key to table opposite

- ^ A benchmark is what we measure our performance against
- (1) Benchmark source – latest available Housemark figures March 2010
- (2) Benchmark source – latest CORE lettings service reports published November 2010
- n/a Not applicable

We have rounded some percentages for simplicity

How we did last year 2010/11

Performance standard	Achieved 2011	Target	On target?	External benchmark [^]
% Rent collected from occupied properties ⁽¹⁾	101%	100%	✓	99.5%
% of our Lettings to Black, Minority and Ethnic customers ⁽²⁾	7.4%	4.6%	✓	7.1%
Average number of days taken to relet empty homes (including repair works) ⁽²⁾	25	28	✓	29
% New customers satisfied with the quality of their home	100%	90%	✓	n/a

101%
of rents were collected from our occupied properties



Future measures you would like us to consider in 2011/12

Action
Improve tenancy support partnerships in particular for older people in general needs housing
Work with new younger residents to help them sustain tenancies and to reduce number of evictions of this client group
Offer formal training in Appeals Processes to enable a wider pool of customers to hear Starter Tenancy Appeals
Publicise the successes of Local Lettings Plans
Report on Lettings Performance and give customers opportunities to assess standards and achievement against targets

➤ The six standards Neighbourhood and community



- This standard covers the area of neighbourhood management, local area cooperation and anti-social behaviour.
- In this section we have set out how we did last year, how we will meet the standard and improve this year, how we currently meet the standard and future measures you would like us to consider.

88% customer satisfaction with our neighbourhoods as a place to live

What we did to improve in 2010/11

- We purchased noise monitoring equipment to enable customers experiencing noise nuisance to make recordings as and when incidents occur, thereby making it easier for us to gather the evidence we need to take legal action.
- We introduced Noticeboards on all our estates.
- We worked with the Illegal Money Lending Team to conduct campaigns against loan sharks, and to promote alternative, affordable forms of credit.
- We consolidated relationships with the Police and other agencies through our attendance at forums such as Safer Neighbourhoods Action Meetings and Norfolk Hate Crime Group.
- Our Tenant Services Authority funded pilot to raise standards in Terrington St. Clement in partnership with three other landlords was deemed a success. It has achieved tangible outcomes in reducing anti-social behaviour and levels of turnover.
- During 2010/11, our Neighbourhood Officers received refresher mediation training. We also purchased additional units of mediation with an independent mediation company.

How we will meet the standard and improve this year 2011/12

- In 2011/12, we will introduce a specialist focus on Community Safety with the creation of a new in-house role of Community Cohesion Manager.
- We will review our literature so that customers are clear about how to report their concerns. We will also provide advice on how customers can avoid conflict with neighbours and how they might be able to resolve any disputes themselves.
- Tenancies granted with effect from 1 June 2011 incorporate a 'Respecting Others' document which contains specific and detailed information to assist customers in managing their tenancy appropriately.

in **October 2010** we introduced our **satisfaction surveys** for **anti-social behaviour**



› Neighbourhood and community

Future measures you asked us to consider in 2010/11

You said	We did
Develop service standards across all estates	We introduced service standards in September 2010 and these are publicised on Noticeboards
Invite customers to join staff on quarterly walkabouts	A programme of walkabouts is now in place for schemes with more than 40 properties
Introduce new computer software to allow us to keep track of progress with remedying community safety issues	We introduced REACT software in September 2010 to enable us to identify trends of anti-social behaviour and to help better track of cases
Respond to urgent community safety cases within 24 hours	Urgent community safety cases are extreme, and therefore rare, but this target was achieved
Increase the presence and availability of neighbourhood staff on estates	We have encouraged staff to spend more time in communities and have introduced staff surgeries where facilities exist
Publicise the outcomes of community safety issues	We have reported on details and numbers of evictions in our newsletter without revealing names or locations
Review our Strategy for working with partners over community safety issues and publish our policy to customers	We signed up to a new protocol of the Norfolk Crime and Disorder Partnership for sharing information between partners, and will review our full strategy in 2011/12
Introduce Satisfaction Surveys for Anti- Social Behaviour	We introduced Satisfaction Surveys for Anti- Social Behaviour in October 2010
Promote the availability of floating support and mediation services	We now offer all new customers a referral to a floating support service. We have produced a new leaflet about our mediation service

How we did last year 2010/11

Performance standard	Achieved 2011	Target	On target?	External benchmark [^]
Customer satisfaction with neighbourhood as a place to live ⁽¹⁾	88%	n/a	n/a	n/a
% customers who found staff to be helpful	87%	n/a	n/a	n/a
% of serious Anti-Social Behaviour responded to within 1 day	100%	100%	✓	n/a

Future measures you would like us to consider in 2011/12

Action
Improve communication regarding the times of Neighbourhood Officer Surgeries
Publicise our policies and strategies for working with partners over community safety issues
Insist that staff conducting walkabouts wear high-vis waistcoats with the Cotman logo on, heightening awareness and encouraging others to join in
Widen walkabout criteria, so that smaller schemes have at least an annual walkabout
Feedback outcomes of Satisfaction Surveys relating to the way we have dealt with Anti-Social Behaviour

87%
of customers found our staff were helpful with their enquiries

Key to table opposite

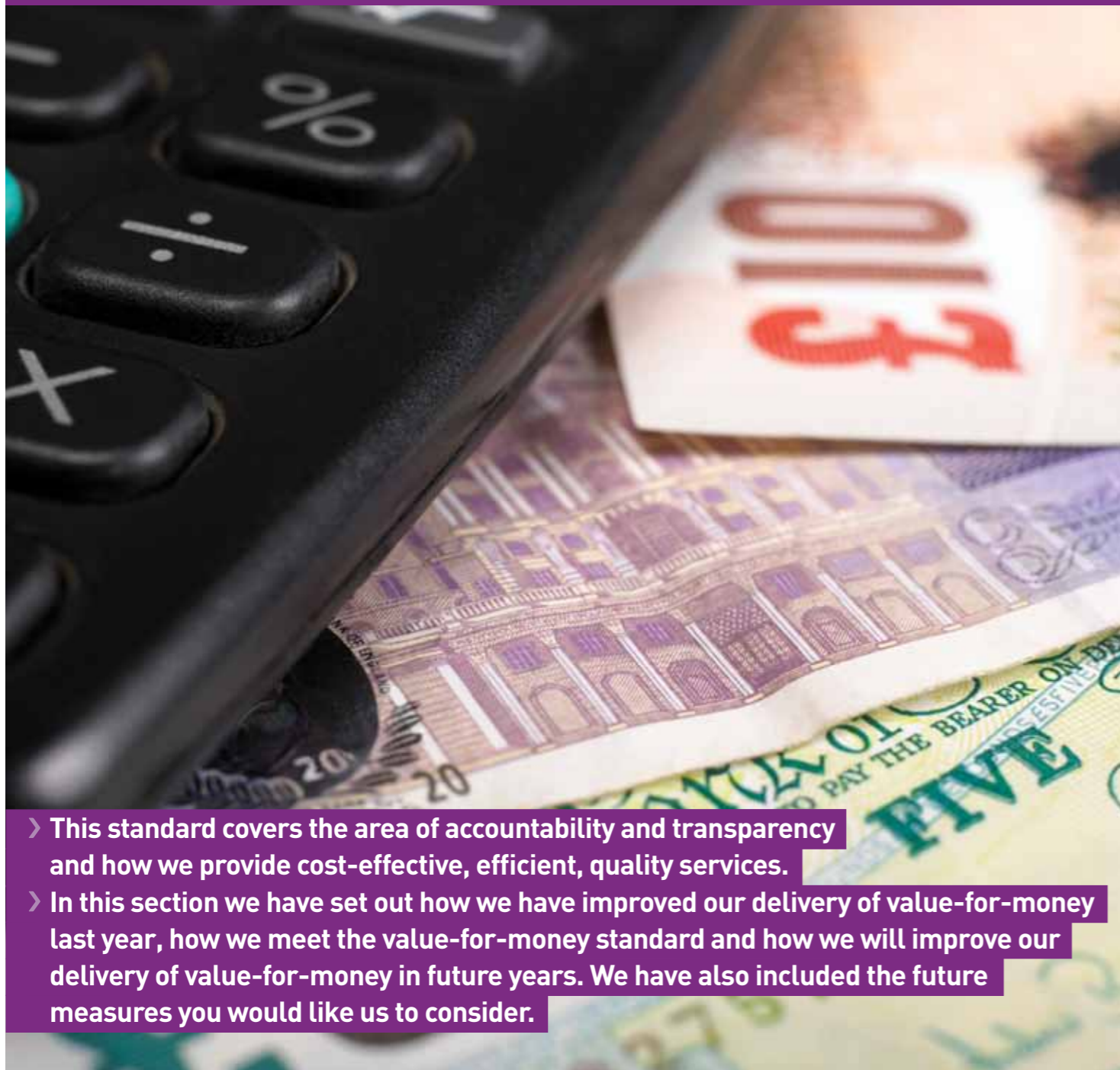
- [^] A benchmark is what we measure our performance against
- n/a Not available
- (1) No benchmark available

We have rounded some percentages for simplicity



100%
of serious anti-social behaviour responded to within 1 day

➤ The six standards Value for money



- This standard covers the area of accountability and transparency and how we provide cost-effective, efficient, quality services.
- In this section we have set out how we have improved our delivery of value-for-money last year, how we meet the value-for-money standard and how we will improve our delivery of value-for-money in future years. We have also included the future measures you would like us to consider.

€498 was the average cost per property of day-to-day (responsive) and empty home repairs

What we did to improve in 2010/11

- We have reviewed the way we deal with vacant properties. Through this, we have introduced robust processes and timescales to improve the efficiency of the way we manage empty homes.
- We have implemented new systems which will improve the delivery of our repairs service. We have introduced an improved way of diagnosing and scheduling the repairs reported by customers. We also have improved the management information we hold over our repairs service delivery and will use this to further increase the numbers of repairs we are able to complete 'right first time'.
- We have started to consult with customers over the costs and nature of services provided on estates at a local level. This has resulted in changes being made to the way services are delivered. For example, following customer consultation, we have changed the frequency of cleaning and gardening services at some schemes to provide greater efficiency.

How we will meet the standard and improve this year 2011/12

- We will deliver a standard where we will consult with customers, enabling them to influence the cost of services which are provided and met from the service charges paid.
- We will develop our website further to improve the information we publish on value-for-money. We will include information around our value-for-money performance including our income and how we prioritise our expenditure. We will also include good practice we have implemented to improve value-for-money for customers.
- We will use the benchmarking information we have to look at the cost of providing our services, how these compare to other Registered Providers locally and consider the overall outcomes we get from our service provision.



Future measures you asked us to consider in 2010/11

You said	We did
Improve our measurements of value-for-money and their frequency	We have improved measurements of value-for-money in key service areas such as cost of repairs on an individual property and scheme basis. We have introduced parameters to calculate the cost of involvement services. These indicators enable us to analyse the cost, efficiency and effectiveness of the service we deliver to ensure that our customers receive value-for-money
Improve and expand the value-for-money and cost efficiency information we publish on our website and in newsletters	We acknowledge that we could have done more here. We have published limited information on our website or newsletters. We will rectify this in 2011/12
Review and improve our reporting procedures on value-for-money issues to the Cotman Customer Liaison Panel (CCLP)	Our CCLP was disbanded in January 2011 so that we could introduce a new customer involvement structure, with separate panels to review service delivery and to scrutinise performance. We will improve the information we report about value-for-money with input from the new panels about the information they would like to receive
Work with local partners to seek competitive tenders for our repairs and maintenance service	This has been achieved through the tendering process for our day-to-day repairs contract and gas maintenance contract. We jointly led on this as part of Eastern Procurement Consortium. Tenders were evaluated with Cotman customer involvement
Review the way estate maintenance services are delivered to ensure they are cost-effective and time efficient	This has been done on a case by case basis as local needs influence delivery. For example, we took the decision in September 2010 not to replace our full-time caretaker at one estate as we were able to provide the service at lower cost through a contractor whilst maintaining our Estate standards
Undertake a review of rents for Cotman and Places for People properties and identify any significant differences in rent levels	This exercise was completed and did not reveal any significant differences in rent levels

£25
was the average cost per property of resident involvement

Key to table opposite

- ^ A benchmark is what we measure our performance against
- n/a Not applicable
- (1) Benchmark source – Housemark figures for March 2010
- (2) Target – Group target based on budget

We have rounded some percentages for simplicity

How we did last year 2010/11

Performance standard	Achieved 2011	Target	On target?	External benchmark [^]
Cost per property of resident involvement ⁽¹⁾	£25	n/a	n/a	£47
Average cost per property of responsive repairs ^{(1) (2)}	£498	£341	X	£436
Proportion of working days lost due to staff sickness or authorised absence ⁽³⁾	2.3%	3.6%	✓	3.3%

Future measures you would like us to consider in 2011/12

Action
Continue to involve customers in monitoring repairs services following the introduction of new contractors
Offer Financial awareness training to involved customers about how we spend the money we receive from rents
Compare the rents we charge with those charged by private landlords locally and publicise the outcomes to customers
Use the new Norfolk Housing Alliance Residents Arm to compare service charge costs within Norfolk schemes
Ensure that a Cotman customer sits on the Places for People National Customer Body so that he or she can feed into the national debate across our business about value-for-money measurements



only **2.3%** of working days were lost to staff sickness or absence

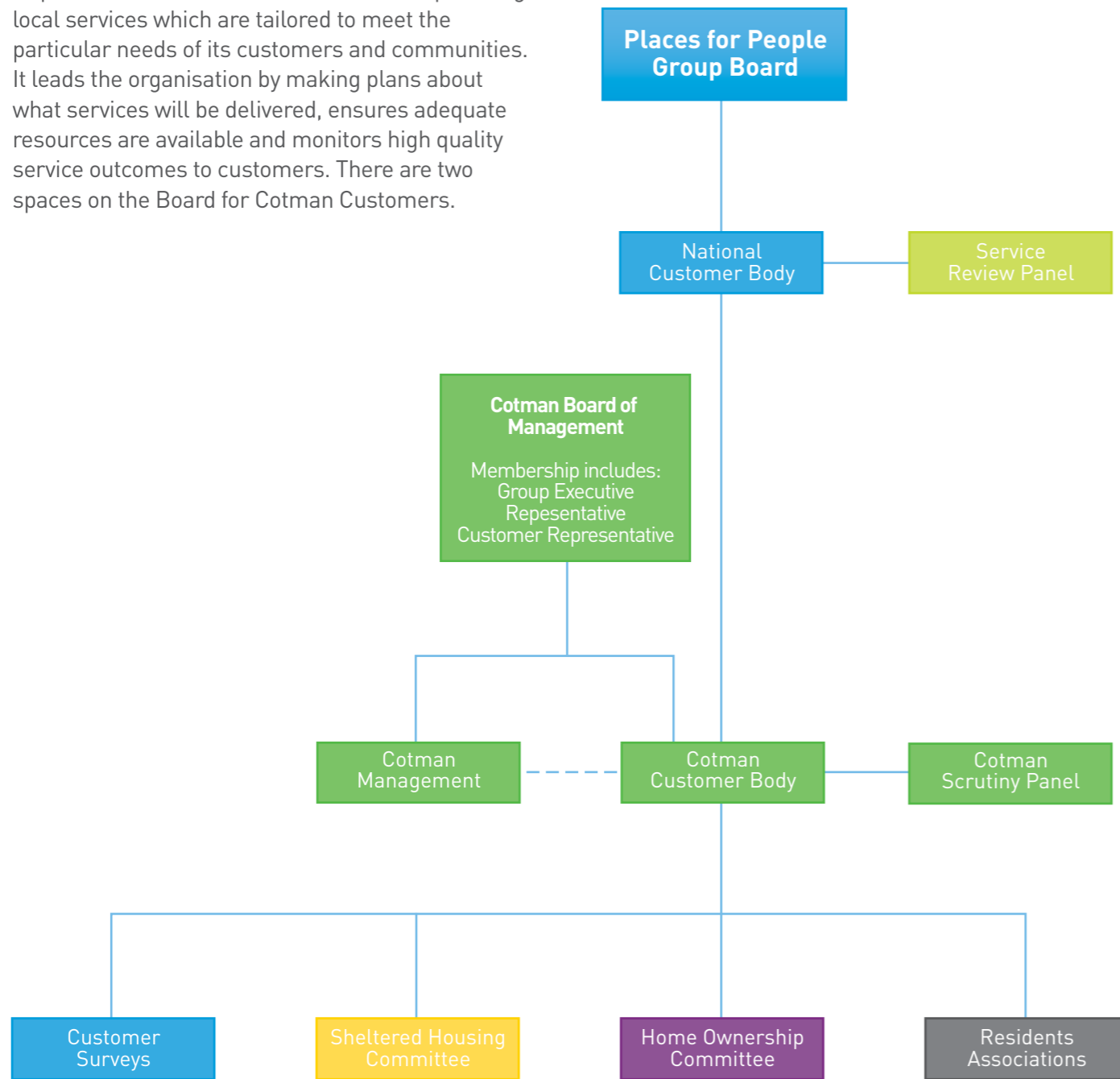
The six standards

Governance and financial viability

Governance

The affairs of Cotman Housing Association are directed by its Board of Management which meets to discuss formal business four times a year, and additionally holds strategic information days as required. Cotman's Board is committed to providing local services which are tailored to meet the particular needs of its customers and communities. It leads the organisation by making plans about what services will be delivered, ensures adequate resources are available and monitors high quality service outcomes to customers. There are two spaces on the Board for Cotman Customers.

Governance structure

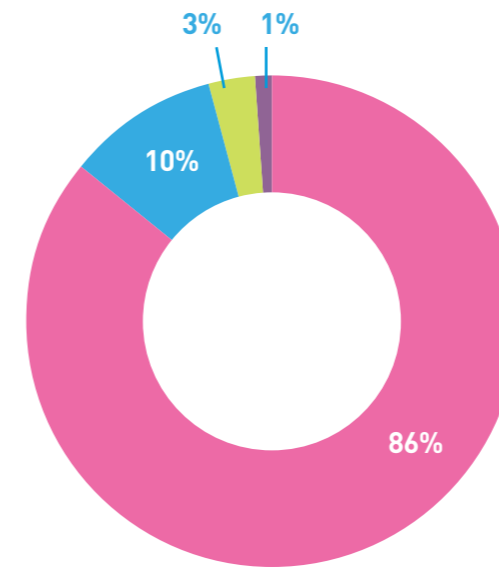


Financial viability

This was a successful year for us, with end of year figures indicating that we had met or exceeded all business plan targets in relation to rent collection, arrears, property re-let times and repairs. A surplus to budget was also achieved. The liquidity position of the Association is strong.

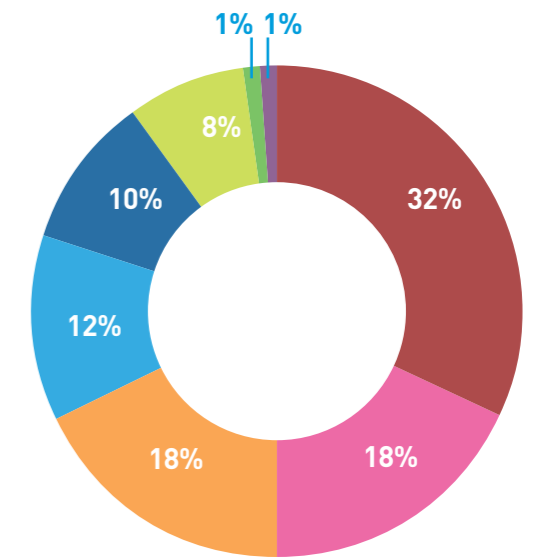
95.5% of our drawn debt has been made on a fixed rate basis, ensuring that Cotman has minimal exposure to interest rate risk arising from volatility in variable rates.

The overall judgement issued by the Tenant Services Authority for the Places for People Group, which Cotman is part of, showed that the Group met the expectations set out in the Regulatory Code in terms of financial viability.



Sources of income

Rents	86%
Service charges	10%
Other income	3%
Supporting people	1%



How did we spend our income?

Maintenance and repairs	32%
Interest	18%
Management	18%
Other costs	12%
Services provided	10%
Depreciation	8%
Supporting people	1%
Rent losses from bad debt	1%

Local offers

- › This section details the different ways our customers are able to access local offers.
- › 'Local offers' are about tailoring housing related services based on what tenants want. The Annual Report 2010 detailed how we would put local offers in place by April 2011.

The clear message customers gave us was that what really matters most was delivering a high standard across all services to all customers. By April 2011, we had also produced local offers for customers living at seven developments. We had developed a local offer for Customers aged over 60 years of age who live in general needs housing.

The Cotman approach was to address local offers through our existing close work with customers living in our neighbourhoods and communities.

We produced local offers for customers living in Broadside, Glenwood, Ashwell Court, Ashby Court, Cotman Fields, Swaffham and New Costessey. These were the areas where we received most feedback about local priorities. We also produced a local offer for older customers living in general needs estates.

As anticipated, the content of the local offers varied according to the themes that emerged in the consultation we undertook with customers. In Swaffham, the local offer addressed concerns about lettings by introducing a new Lettings Plan which aimed to provide a more balanced community. The Broadside local offer detailed how we would work with the Residents Association to build up trust. The New Costessey offer was about Local Services and working with partner agencies in the community.

For more information about local offers, please contact Amanda Marsh on 01603 731699.

Different approaches to local service delivery

The requirement to produce local offers was developed by our regulatory body, the Tenant Services Authority. We welcomed the opportunity to document how we will work with customers to address issues on individual developments, although this did not detract from the high standards of services we wish to offer all Cotman residents.

The local offers have now been displayed on estate noticeboards but please contact your Neighbourhood Officer if you would like a copy.

We are happy to produce more local offers where there is an identified need and please do contact your Neighbourhood Officer to give your views!

Cotman will also work in partnership with other local agencies to provide local offers where it is appropriate and where customers would like us to. We will also adopt the Neighbourhood Planning Approach developed by the Places for People Group, of which we are a subsidiary.

Local offers customer consultation – estate based

The views of our customers at a very local level were crucial to the shaping of our local offers. Between September 2010 and March 2011, we therefore liaised with all existing Residents Associations to canvas their opinions. We hosted open meetings on some estates. Estate walkabouts were another useful platform. We attended South Norfolk Council's Neighbourhood Community Consultation and Information Day to seek views of customers living in New Costessey.

We developed a written questionnaire which was sent out to all our formally involved customers. This focused on their vision of what mattered most in their neighbourhood. We invited further comment in our corporate newsletter and on our estate noticeboards.

We will continue this approach to ensure that our local offers are responsive and relevant to our customer's priorities.

Customer consultation – client group based

We were conscious that there are a growing number of older people living in general needs accommodation. We felt that this group of customers might require a broadly tailored service arising from particular needs common to their circumstances. With this in mind, we embraced the introduction of the local offers framework as an opportunity to find out where we could shape services for older people to help them remain independent. We therefore held a randomly selected and well attended focus group of older customers which shaped the local offer for older people. One of the outcomes was that the group would like to continue to meet to discuss Cotman's offer and delivery.

We would have liked to introduce a local offer for younger tenants but the focus group was poorly attended and we felt it unfeasible to create a tailored offer without wider feedback.

We would be pleased to develop new client group based approaches where customers identified a need to do so.

Partnership with Norfolk Housing Alliance

Throughout 2010/11, we worked with three other landlords under the umbrella of the Norfolk Housing Alliance to deliver a Tenant Services Authority local offers pilot initiative in Terrington St. Clement, near King's Lynn. We developed a charter detailing our common standards in respect of Neighbourhood and Estate Management standards. Set and monitored by local residents, these were primarily aimed at tackling anti-social behaviour, neighbourhood issues and a greener environment. Feedback from all local stakeholders was extremely positive and a tangible improvement in the appearance of the estate resulted as well as a quantifiable reduction in turnover.

We undertook a stock mapping exercise with all ten landlords who collectively form the Norfolk Housing Alliance. We will build on the positive experience and lessons learnt from the Terrington pilot to deliver joint initiatives and services where multi-landlord stock is held in neighbourhoods as part of our local offers framework.

➤ Action plan for local offers from 2011-13

Neighbourhood assessment

Places for People stock, including that managed by Cotman, has been analysed and grouped into meaningful "neighbourhoods".

A detailed dashboard will be produced for each neighbourhood. The dashboard will include turnover levels, arrears, void loss, re-let times, surplus per property, etc. Staff across the business will be able to access and analyse the data at any point in time.

The neighbourhoods will be banded into three key areas:
Green – neighbourhoods that are performing well and need less intensive neighbourhood management support.
Amber – under performing neighbourhoods. These will be the areas where the Neighbourhood Planning approach is applied.

Red – neighbourhoods where there is a question regarding the medium to long term future and the assessment criteria highlights the need for a detailed option appraisal.

Local service delivery

We provide specialist services to customers locally and detailed below are examples of what we offer:

Tenant involvement and empowerment

- Cotman Customer Body to commission service reviews by customers who make up the Scrutiny Panel to improve service delivery.
- Cotman Customer Body to monitor service delivery and work with staff to make improvements.
- Cotman Customer Body analysis of complaints with a lessons learnt approach to change procedures where patterns emerge.
- Through our approach to local offers, customers' feedback will be used to identify priorities in the neighbourhood, and residents can then be involved in agreeing actions to address issues and monitoring progress against them. This might involve responding to perception surveys, local residents' groups, open forums or carrying out estate walkabouts; or helping to select and manage contractors delivering services.

Home – repairs and maintenance

We have consulted with our customers and they have been clear that they do not want differing, local standards in the repairs service. They want a universal service which offers the standards listed below as a minimum.

- A repairs service which is offered to customers on an appointment basis.
- A comprehensive suite of contracts which offer periodic inspections to ensure the health and safety of our customers homes.
- As many as possible of our repairs completed in one visit for the convenience of customers.
- Routine repairs grouped into programmes where possible to ensure that we get better value for money for our customers.
- Contracts which are tendered for quality and value for money.

Neighbourhood and community

- Neighbourhood Officers – these are generally the first point of contact for the customer, welcoming them to their new home and visiting them again within the first few weeks of them moving in, co-ordinating delivery of services within the area and promoting local customer involvement.
- Local staff – we employ caretakers, cleaners and gardeners on our estates to provide a responsive and personable service to customers.
- If there are any arrears, our staff make personal early contact and offer a range of welfare/debt advice and support to all customers. We are also able to make referrals to a Places for People Income Maximisation Officer.
- Anti-Social Behaviour – should there be any incidents of anti-social behaviour, our Community Cohesion Manager will work with customers locally to resolve them. Preventative measures will be considered as well as the use of mediation and restorative justice.
- Health & Safety – our Estate Surveyor is responsible for ensuring that local equipment e.g. alarms and play areas in local areas are checked on a regular and appropriate basis.

➤ Reporting to customers

Each of the areas with bespoke local offers has a Customer Involvement Plan which details how customers can be involved and how they will be kept informed. These reflect each local area and can include:

- **Managing the local offer** – membership of the small team responsible for reviewing the delivery of the local offer.
- **Customer perception surveys** – occasional perception surveys will be carried out to assess satisfaction with areas covered in the local offer.
- **Cotman News** – the corporate Cotman newsletter will provide updates on local offers and associated initiatives.
- **Estate newsletters** – newsletters are produced locally with customer input. As well as local community news, these will detail progress made on delivering elements within the local offer.
- **Impact assessment** – at the end of each year a document will be produced which summarises the progress made with delivery of the local offers approach and the changes that have been delivered.

We believe that customers know what they want and expect from their landlord, and that it's our responsibility to encourage and enable you to get involved with us in helping us to deliver great services.

If you aren't involved, but would like to be, we'd love to hear from you. To find out more about how to make a difference, contact us:

By post:

Amanda Marsh
Customer Involvement Co-ordinator
Cotman Housing Association
Bowthorpe Hall
Bowthorpe Hall Road
Norwich
NR5 9AD

By phone:

0800 028 4240 Customer Contact Centre
01772 667075
01603 731699 Cotman Office

By email:

office@cotman-housing.org.uk

If you would like this document in another language or format eg. easy read, large print or audio, please telephone our Customer Contact Centre

By phone:

0800 432 0002

By email:

equalityanddiversity@placesforpeople.co.uk

We may share your personal information with other companies in our group.

We and the other group companies may send you information by post or email about products and services that we think will be of interest to you.

If you would rather that we did not do this, please let us know by ringing our customer contact centre on 0800 432 0002 or emailing us on optout@placesforpeople.co.uk

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