

# Pentland Housing Association **ANNUAL REPORT & HEALTH CHECK 2017**





# Positive developments and walk around visits

## The Chief Executive's Report

**I am pleased to introduce our Annual Report for 2017 which, this year, is combined with the Annual Health Check.**

We have combined the two so that we can provide you with information about our performance in the year all in one publication. I hope you will agree that this approach is more practical and cost effective.

The financial statements show that there was a surplus of £297,055 and there was positive news regarding rent collection with a reduction in gross rent arrears as a percentage of rent due.

We invested nearly £270,000 in tenants' homes, an increase from last year of over £39,000, and completed boiler replacement and kitchen and roof works. There have been improvements in getting repairs right first time and satisfaction with our repairs service. These are outlined in more detail in the Health Check along with other aspects of our performance.

It is encouraging to see that there has been a significant increase in the view that our rents are regarded as being good value for money and that more people are satisfied with the opportunity to participate.

However, there are areas where we still need to do better so, for example, we will be working hard to shorten the average length of time taken to complete non-emergency repairs and will endeavour to reduce the time taken to re-let vacated properties.

I am very appreciative of all the efforts of the board and staff who work extremely hard to help us to achieve our objectives.

**There have been a number of positive developments in the last year:**

- We continue to take a key role in the promotion of Choice Based Lettings in

Caithness, and support its extension to houses in Thurso. This gives us the opportunity to provide homes better matched to tenants' requirements.

- We have continued to strive for improved use of our resources and have retained a strong commitment to reducing management costs while continuing to invest in our properties.

- We have developed a rolling programme of "walk around visits" to meet tenants personally and consider their suggestions and opinions. This valuable insight will be used to guide us when we provide our services.

- We have developed our Pentland Tenant Review Group and we recognise the valuable work they do in improving our services.

- To support our long term business planning there have been operational improvements in our asset management systems and finance function.

- We have maintained strong links with the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) which has raised our profile nationally.

We now need to build on these achievements and I look forward to working with everyone involved to further improve our services.

In the coming year we intend to further involve the Pentland Tenant Review Group in a number of key areas and also improve the efficiency and methods of communication.


I hope you find the Annual Report useful and informative and would welcome your views on any aspects of the running of the Association. You can do this either in person or by being involved in your Pentland Tenant Review Group or Board of Management.

*Richard Armitage*  
**Chief Executive**



Chief Executive Richard Armitage outside one of our Thurso properties





## Board Members at 29th March 2017

### PENTLAND HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD

Andi Wakeman, *Chair*  
Jim Hair, *Vice Chair*  
Bob Bell  
Jenny Lawless  
Colin MacDonald  
Ian McElroy  
Elaine Forbes  
John Perry  
Colin Earnshaw  
Kirsty Gordon *Casual vacancies*  
Gavin Powell *Casual vacancies*  
Bob McGechan (resigned  
during the year)

### PENTLAND COMMUNITY ENTERPRISES

Neil Robertson, *Chair*  
Bob Bell  
Jim Hair  
Colin MacDonald  
Jim Kelly  
John Perry

### GROUP AUDIT COMMITTEE

Jim Hair, *Chair*  
Elaine Forbes  
John Perry  
Neil Robertson

### STAFFING COMMITTEE

Jenny Lawless, *Chair*  
Bob Bell  
Colin Macdonald

### HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE

Jim Hair, *Chair*  
Colin Earnshaw  
Colin MacDonald

# A challenging year but performance in key areas maintained

## Chairs Report on behalf of the board

### Welcome to the Pentland Housing Annual Report for 2016/17.

The past year has presented us with challenges, both internally and externally, which we needed to focus our attention on, but despite this, our performance in key areas, in particular customer service, continued to be maintained.

The results of the Tenant Survey are included in the Health Check section of this Annual Report, and where issues have been identified, even by a small minority, we will endeavour to address them.

Our focus for the coming year is to achieve our planned visits to our tenanted properties, to help staff and tenants get to know one another better so that our services can be better tailored to specific needs, and we will be working more with our tenant focus groups, concentrating this year on rent arrears, repairs, and customer service. We will also be seeking feedback on how to improve our digital communication with service users, and will be enhancing our website to help achieve this.

During the past year we have had several changes to the membership of the Board. I am very pleased to have welcomed several new members, including John Perry, Ian McElroy and Elaine Forbes, who were elected at our last AGM, and Kirsty Gordon and Gavin Powell, who filled casual vacancies during the year.

Sadly we have also lost some Board members (including Bob McGechan) and I thank them all for their invaluable contribution to the Association.

To all the Board, I would like to express my sincere thanks for the support you have shown both myself and the staff, as well as the Association generally.

My sincere thanks also go to our Chief Executive, Richard Armitage, and to all the staff at Pentland Housing Association, for their continued dedication, hard work and support. We rely on them to keep the Board informed and up-to-date, and also to make our decisions and strategies work in practice. We set the goals very high to ensure that our tenants receive an excellent service, and we appreciate the efforts put in by all the staff to try to achieve this.

*Andi Wakeman*

Chairperson





# Care & Repair Caithness

We continue to act as agents for the Care and Repair service delivery in Caithness which is funded by The Highland Council (HC). We employ Gary Parker as our Project Officer who's key aim is to help owner occupiers gain grant funding to help with adaptations or repairs such as low access showers, ramps, roof and window renewals or electrical rewires.

The HC sets targets in terms of approval and spend and these were exceeded this year ensuring that clients received valuable funding to aid them in carrying out works. In total there were over 50 projects completed and nearly £220,000 spent in carrying works within Caithness.



Gary Parker

# HandyPerson Services

Another service we deliver on behalf of the HC and NHS is the HandyPerson Service covering Caithness and some parts of North West Sutherland. Tasks for any tenure of home include small repairs, adaptations, telecare installations and maintenance, adaptation equipment delivery, fitting and pick up as well as the storage, cleaning and ordering of equipment.

Dennis Simpson and Bob Strachan our two handypersons undertook 1893 referrals and 1756 tasks last year with a near 100% approval rating for the works carried out. Funding has been confirmed with the commissioners and a fully funded service is in place until March 2018 where by a new service level agreement will be drawn up for an expanded service which we will hope to be able to provide.



Dennis Simpson and Bob Strachan



A Pentland Housing tenant and her family in the garden of their Thurso home





# Pentland Community Enterprise

Pentland Community Enterprises (PCE) aims to develop, support and encourage sustainable business ventures and also to contribute to the wider economy of Caithness and the North Highlands. We work closely with our parent company, Pentland Housing Association, and reinvest all of our profits to increase our social impact.

## **GARAGES:**

The mainstay of the business is the renting of garages. Any surpluses from this are used to supplement other services and develop new ventures. We rent 332 domestic garages, across 37 sites and are working with local residents to develop our unoccupied sites.

## **MID-MARKET RENTAL:**

When we first piloted accommodation at mid-market rent levels we saw this as a way to address a specific need as well as a solution to low-demand properties. We lease low-demand properties and rent them out at mid-market rent levels as an alternative to our social housing rented properties.

Further investigation has allowed us to get a better understanding of the type and location of accommodation sought, and we hope to increase the mid-market rent accommodation service which will work alongside the social letting agency service.

## **FACTORING:**

We operate a small scale factoring service but there is potential to develop this utility should there be sufficient demand from householders, other landlords and commercial businesses.



# Pentland Energy Advice



Pentland Energy Advice (PEA) provides householders, landlords and businesses with the information, tools and advice that will help them to manage their energy needs efficiently and effectively. We believe that through empowerment communities will be able to develop the solutions that work best for them and their environment. There are two energy projects that we oversee, Climate Challenge Fund and The Big Lottery Money Matters Project.

Both concentrate on home visits to help reduce energy consumption. The Climate Challenge project can be delivered to any property in Caithness and the Money Matters project is for tenants of social housing throughout the Highlands. PEA works closely with Highland Council, social landlords, energy providers, professional protocol organisations and referral agencies to promote fuel energy awareness in line with government strategy and our long term targets.

# Finance: Income and Expenditure

The Association is financially robust and fully committed to strong management systems and procedures, which supports the achievements of our financial and strategic objectives.

We are pleased to report an excellent year end position against 2015/16, providing a good grounding for the Association to move forward.

Our good cash management will enable us to maintain sufficient resources to meet our future commitments.

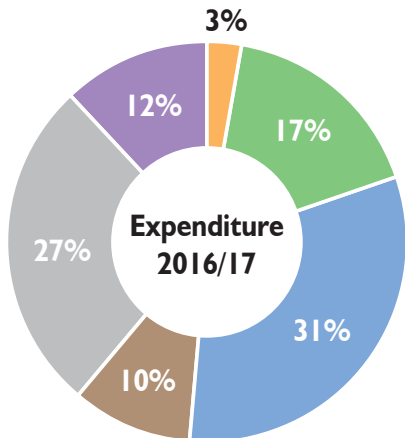
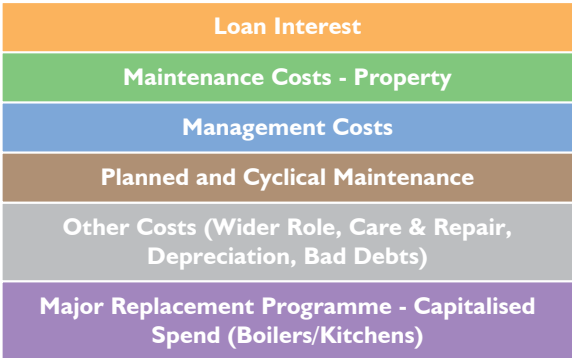
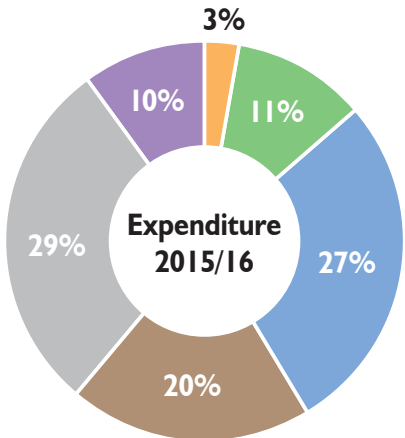
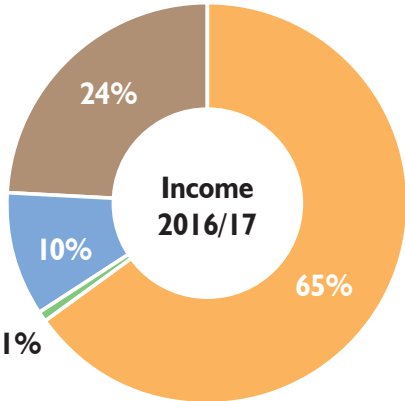
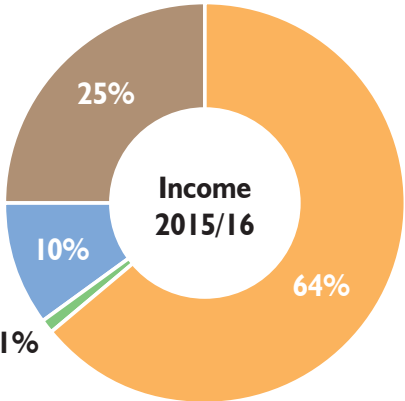
**Our financial priorities are:-**

- **The provision of high quality and effective management information**
- **Maintaining comprehensive budgetary control**
- **Robust treasury management**

This will involve critically reviewing and developing our management information systems and reporting, and will ensure we continue to manage our budgets and performance effectively.



Corrine Mackay Finance Manager



**These charts summarise the outcomes of our operations over the 2015/16 and 2016/17 financial years**

**Solicitors:**  
T C Young, Glasgow and BBM, Wick.

**Auditors:**  
Findlay & Company, Chartered Accountants, Dundee.

**Bankers:**  
Bank of Scotland.

# The Pentland Housing Health Check 2016/17

Welcome to this year's Pentland Housing Association Report on Performance or "Health Check". This document is produced to show how we are performing as a housing association and how we compare to the national Scottish average and to our own performance from last year.

## HISTORY

In 2013 the Scottish Social Housing Charter was introduced by the Scottish Government. Part of this charter details a list of our services that have to be reported on to the Scottish Housing Regulator by way of the Annual Return to the Charter (ARC).

From the data we provide the Regulator publishes its Landlord Report which is specific to Pentland Housing Association. This is available online on their website and available as a link on our own website and enables you to use an interactive tool to compare our results against last year's and with any other social landlord in Scotland.

## YOUR INVOLVEMENT

This consultation document is our fourth Report on Performance, and it has been produced as previously agreed with a number of our tenants who expressed an interest in being involved as part of the **Pentland Tenant Review Group**.

The group agreed on their preferred style and on the content for the Report on Performance – which is as you see it here. As we received good feed back in terms of how the information was

presented in previous years we have decided to reuse the format again this year.

## OUR PERFORMANCE

The main aim of the publication of these results is to allow tenants to assess our performance as landlords in 2016/17 and compare it against results from other Scottish landlords.

Our results from 2015/16 have also been recorded and our performance is compared against the national averages of the housing sector in Scotland.

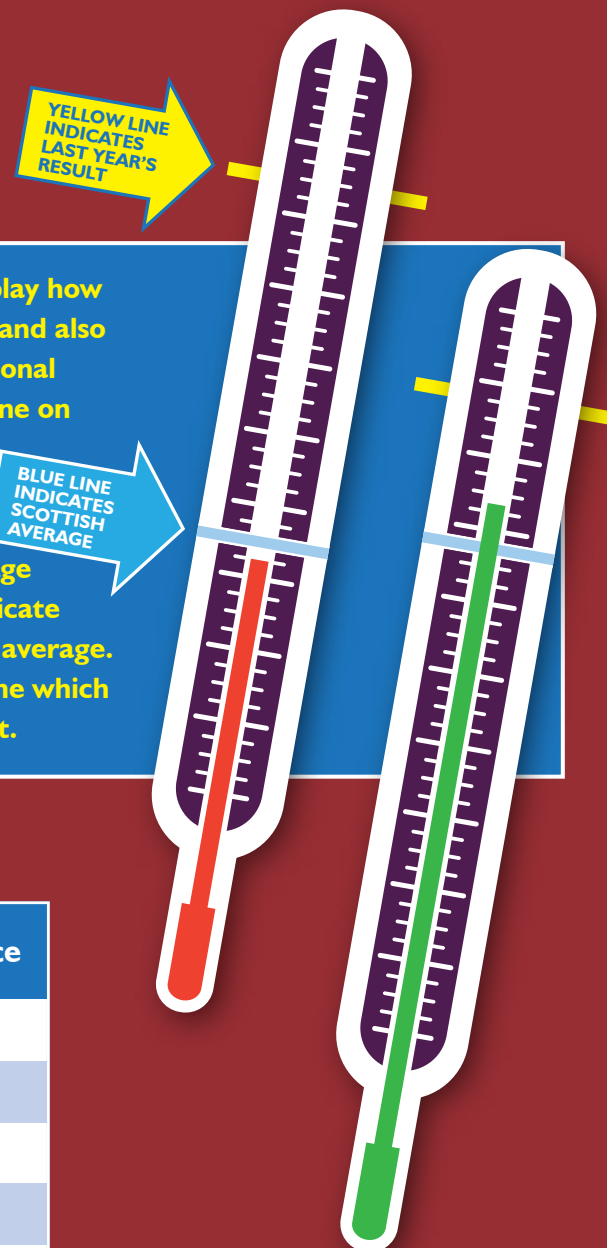
## YOUR OPINION

We hope that you find the Report on Performance a useful document that is clear, concise and relevant to what is important to tenants while living in a Pentland Housing Association property. We would welcome any comment on this presentation, the information contained herein or anything you feel is missing.

Useful website links:  
[scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk](http://scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk)  
[pentlandhousing.co.uk](http://pentlandhousing.co.uk)

Our health check graphics display how well we are doing in key areas and also show the comparison with national averages, indicated by a blue line on each thermometer.

Results shown in red indicate performances poorer than the national average and results shown in green indicate those better than the national average. We have also added a yellow line which shows our previous years result.

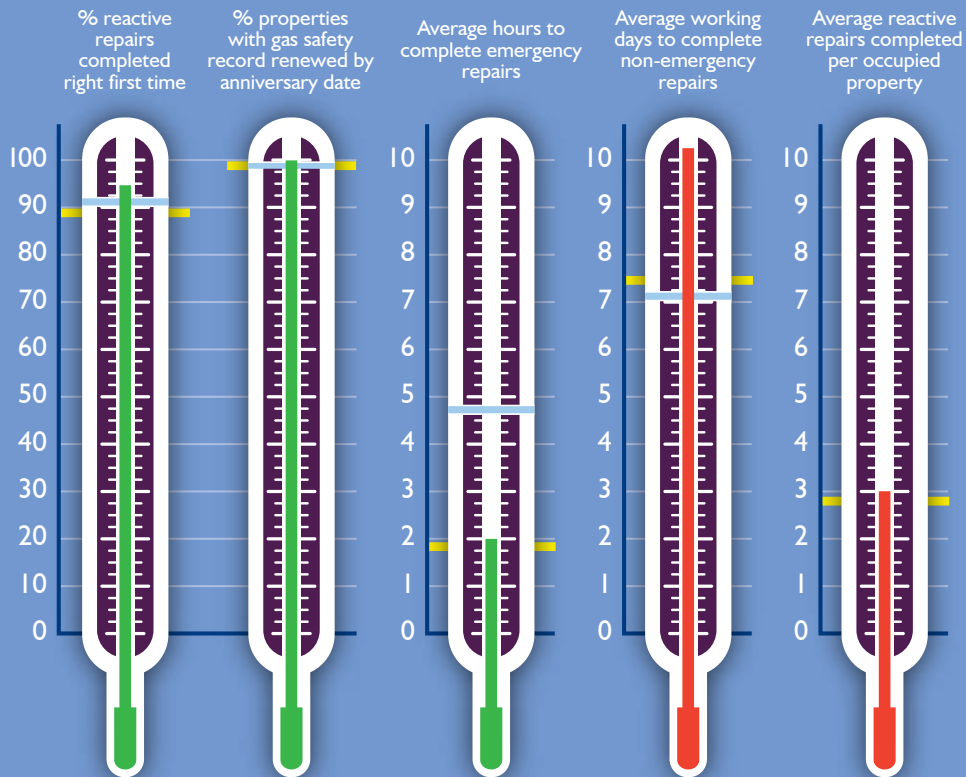


## AVERAGE WEEKLY RENTS

Size of Home	Number Owned	Pentland Housing	Scottish Average	Difference
1 apartment	0	£0.00	£68.55	-%
2 apartment	11	£55.76	£71.67	-22.6%
3 apartment	143	£65.26	£73.13	-11.6%
4 apartment	266	£81.34	£79.42	+2.3%
5 apartment	72	£92.86	£88.02	+5.4%



# Repairs & Maintenance

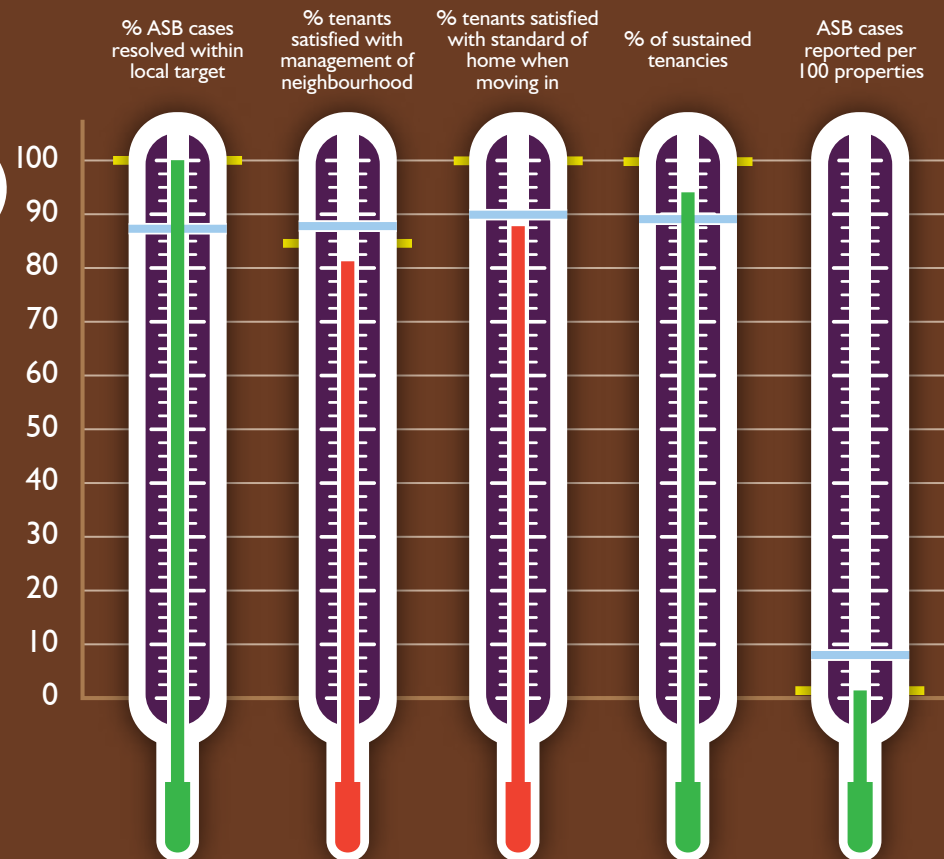


## REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE

Our results for repairs and maintenance have improved over the last year, our figures for the last quarter of 2016/17 have increased compared to 2015/16. In most areas we are managing to improve and are above the national average. We are slightly disappointed that the time taken to respond to non-emergency repairs has shown an increase, and whilst there were some mitigating factors in terms of workloads and staff cover, it did highlight to us (and in turn the contractors) a need to step up our performance. To that end we have reviewed how we work with the contractors and set about improving how we communicate both with each other and also you. We have instigated better recording of information between ourselves and are adding more to the works order "diaries" to chart progress. It also highlighted however, that access can be a stumbling block to completion times

and you may now receive more letters advising that, should access be denied, works orders may be cancelled. We have added a texting satisfaction response to allow you to quickly advise us how the job has gone and, if necessary, we can investigate any failures. Your comments are always welcome and we also need them as a basis for our returns to the regulator. Importantly, our results highlight that when you do need us, we have a very effective repairs service in an emergency. Gas boiler servicing is also an important area where we, the landlord, are duty bound to ensure that every boiler is serviced within 365 days. We aim to achieve 100% success but this can only happen with the help of you, the tenant and we ask that you continue to ensure that appointments are kept and that there is gas in the meter to allow the service to take place.

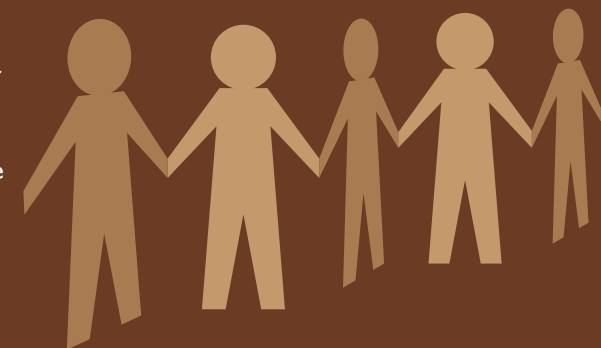
# Your Neighbourhood & Home



## YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD & HOME

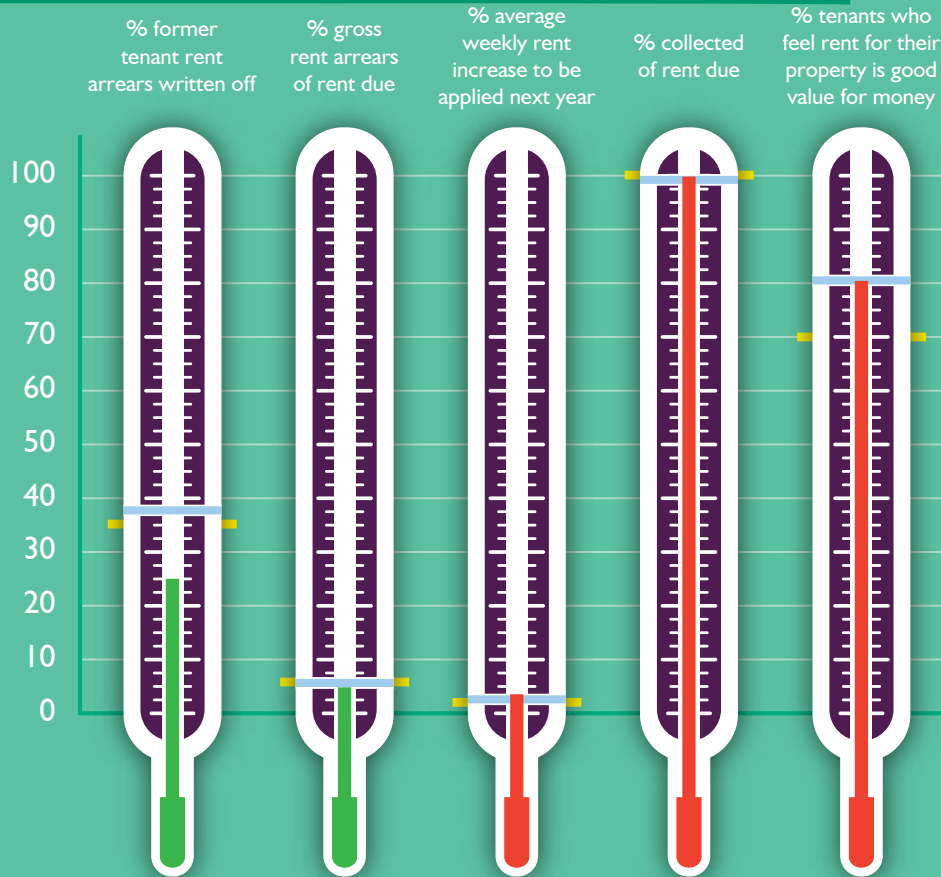
Pentland Housing Association records all reports of anti-social behaviour (ASB) – no matter how small or trivial the incident, however you will see from our data that we still have significantly less reports of anti-social behaviour than our peers. We are also dealing with the reports we receive in good time. The number of tenants satisfied with the management of the estates and the standard of their home when moving in has fallen this year and is below the

national average so these are areas we will have to investigate and try to improve upon.





# Rents

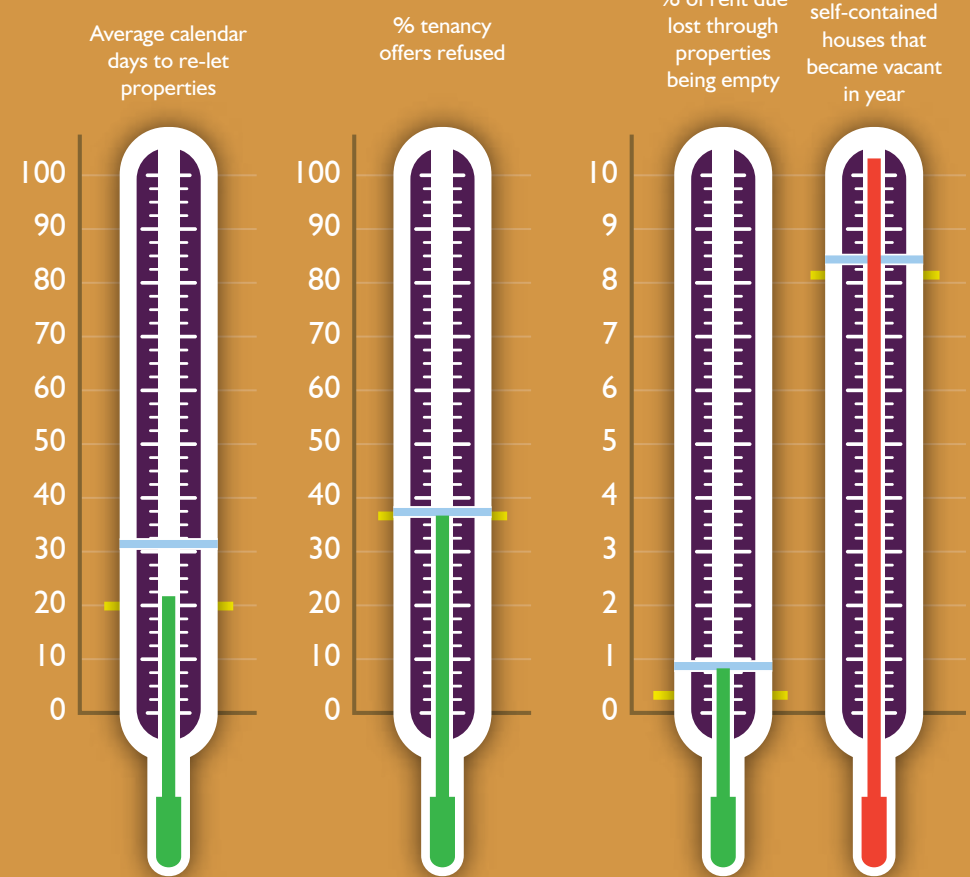


## RENTS

Rent is by far the largest area of income that Pentland Housing receives, so it is important that we collect as much of the due rent as promptly as possible. This year we collected 99.4% of current and former rent due, this is very slightly down on the 100% from last year but is still in line with the national average. Arrears are always a concern and are closely monitored by the regulator on our arrears statistics and this year we have managed to reduce the level of arrears to 4.9% although we are still above the national average and this is an

area where we are looking for continuous improvement. As advised in previous years, Pentland Housing Association has, with its partners, been successful in gaining grant funding to help with financial advice, benefit advice and money management advice. We wish for you to sustain your tenancy and remain in your home and, should you have any pressures affecting your ability to pay your rent, please come forward and speak to your housing officer. A referral to an advice worker is only a phone call away.

# Re-lets

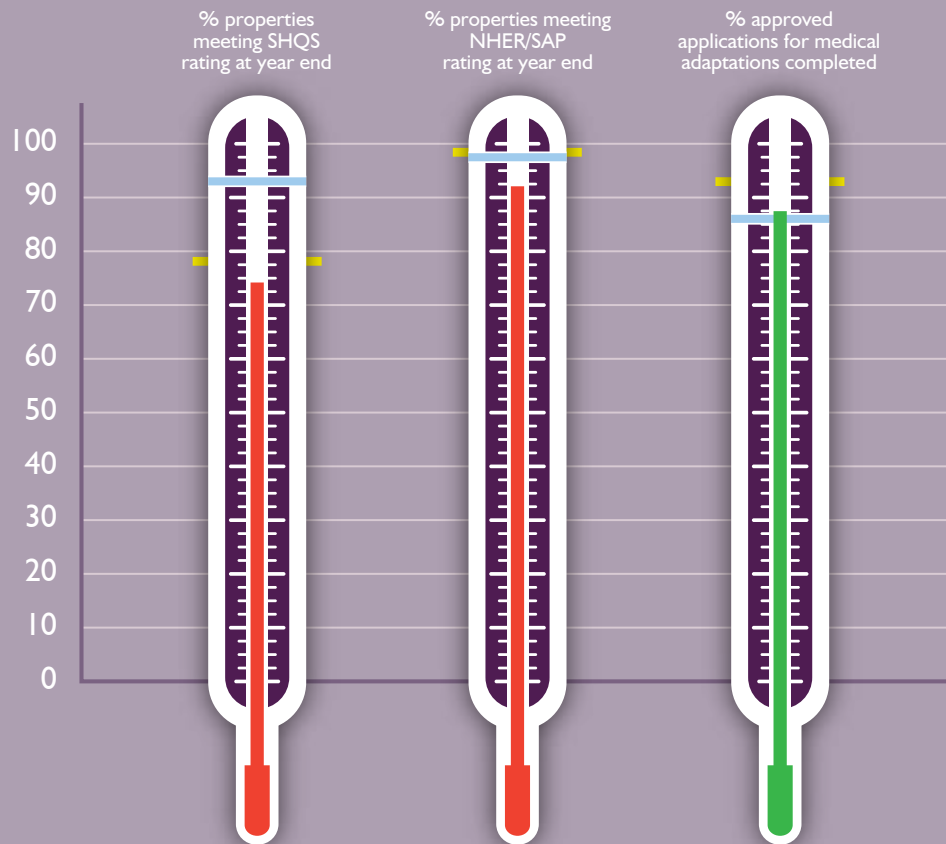


## RE-LETS

Another area that has an effect on all of our tenants is the length of time it takes to re-let a property once it becomes vacant. While the properties are empty we are not receiving rent, therefore, as with the non-collection of rent, this impacts on the money available to spend on our other properties. We have been working hard to keep the time taken to re-let properties to the minimum and during the last year we took an average of 21 days which is one more day than we achieved in the previous year but is still well below the national average.

Caithness has an oversupply of properties compared to those applicants in housing need. Caithness is, as previously reported, deemed as a Low Demand Area and this has an effect on property turnaround times as often we are searching out eligible applicants. We believe however that the implementation of the Choice Based Lettings (CBL), whereby prospective applicants can choose the houses and flats they wish to live in, has helped to keep the property turnaround times down.

# Quality of Housing Stock



## QUALITY OF HOUSING STOCK

In 2004 the Scottish Government introduced the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) which meant that social landlords had to ensure that their stock reached a certain standard. Some of the 55 criteria were fairly basic, such as having a WC and running water, whilst others, such as energy efficiency were extremely challenging. The Government recognised that, for either technological or financial reasons, it was not possible to improve all

properties so the standard was split into three categories: a **PASS**, a **FAIL** or an **EXEMPTION**. On one criterion, Pentland Housing Association has sought exemptions. Insulation in the timber framed cavity cannot be done due to technological reasons. This, however, skews our result in the indicator Properties Meeting SHQS, as an exempted property is not regarded as failed property but also not regarded as a pass.

# Energy Performance Certificates

**Very energy efficient - lower running costs**  
**EPC BANDING 92+**

**VALIDATED 0 CLONED 0**

**A**

**TOTAL 0  
0% OF STOCK**

**EPC BANDING 81-91**

**VALIDATED 24**

**CLONED 12**

**B**

**TOTAL 36  
7% OF STOCK**

**EPC BANDING 69-80**

**VALIDATED 118**

**CLONED 85**

**C**

**TOTAL 203  
41% OF STOCK**

**EPC BANDING 55-68**

**VALIDATED 193**

**CLONED 47**

**D**

**TOTAL 240  
49% OF STOCK**

**EPC BANDING 39-54**

**VALIDATED 11**

**CLONED 4**

**E**

**TOTAL 15  
3% OF STOCK**

**EPC BANDING 21-38**

**VALIDATED 0**

**F**

**CLONED 0**

**TOTAL 0  
0% OF STOCK**

**EPC BANDING 1-20**

**VALIDATED 0**

**G**

**CLONED 0**

**TOTAL 0  
0% OF STOCK**

**Not energy efficient - higher running costs**

**TO DO = 148 PROPERTIES**

This graph shows the current efficiency of our properties, taking into account both energy efficiency and fuel costs. The higher this rating, the lower fuel bills are likely to be.

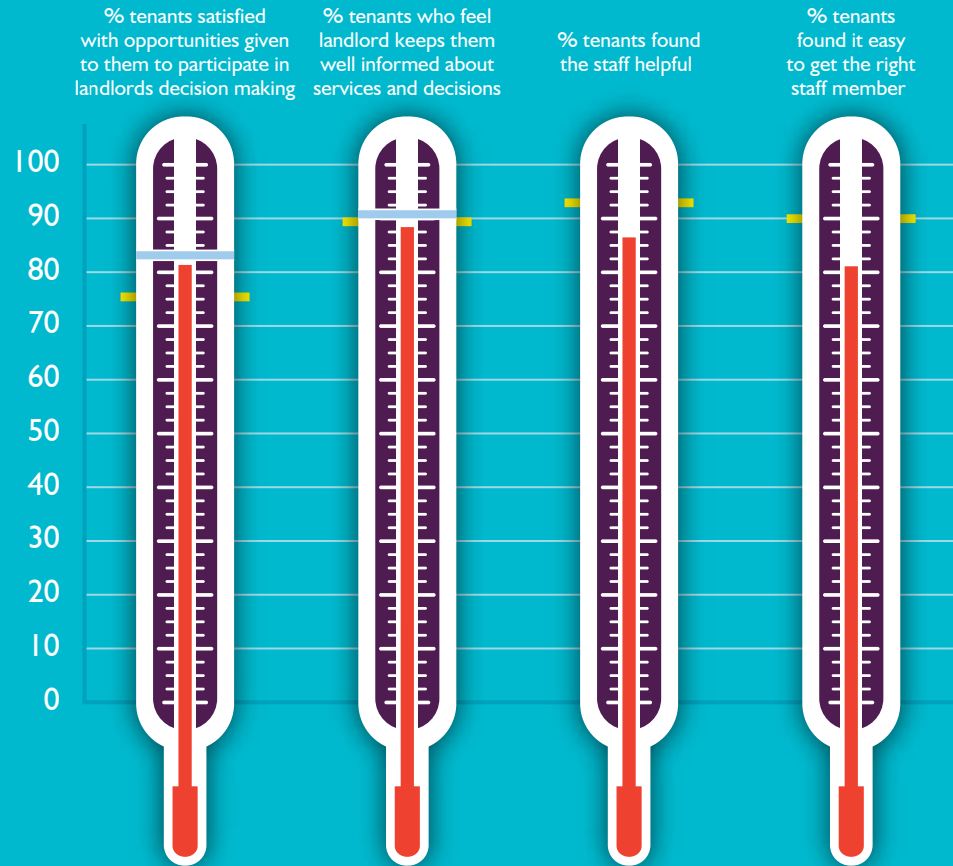
## ENERGY PERFORMANCE

It is clearly important to retain heat in properties as this provides a comfortable environment for you to live in and ensures that heat generated and paid for is not wasted. We are making inroads in replacing ageing gas boilers with energy efficient condensing wall hung boilers, last year we replaced a further 14 and this, together with the previous replacements, is helping us achieve the targets as set out by the Energy Efficiency Standard for Scottish

Housing (ESSH). We aim to renew more boilers this year and this will help us further with this challenge. During 2015/16 Pentland Housing Association was successful in being awarded grant funding from the Energy Savings Trust (EST) to externally clad 30 electrically heated properties with insulation. These works carried out by Energy Solutions and Innovations Scotland (ESI) have also aided us in trying to achieve the ESSH targets.



# Tenant Involvement

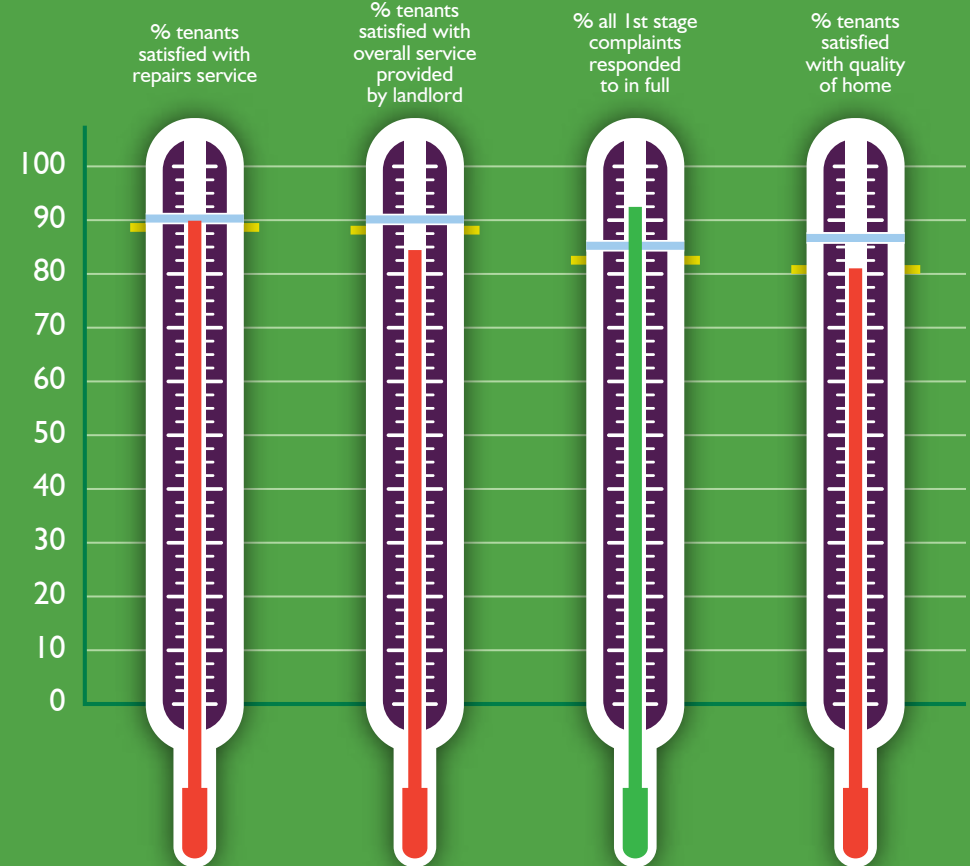


## TENANT INVOLVEMENT

Tenant involvement means tenants taking part in the decision making process and influencing our housing policies, conditions and other housing related services. Involvement or “taking part” can mean different things to different people. Therefore there are lots of ways tenants can get involved in the management of their homes and neighbourhood. This could be from putting their name on our interested tenants list to becoming a member of the tenant review group or a member of the

board, they can be involved as much or as little as they choose. For more information speak directly to our Housing Manager, Carol Treasurer. From the data we have, it would appear that our tenants are fairly satisfied with the opportunities given to participate in decision making and with us keeping them informed. However, we have slipped a little with how helpful you find our staff from the time of the previous global survey, this is obviously an area of concern and will be investigated.

# Overall Satisfaction



## OVERALL SATISFACTION

In 2016/17 we carried out a satisfaction survey which sought the views and opinions of all our tenants. This achieved a 40% response rate and gave us an insight into your expectations. The survey sought the satisfaction levels on several subjects including communication and participation with us, interaction with staff, complaint experiences, homes, the repairs service, rent levels and arrears and the neighbourhood. These results are reflected in this year’s Health Check.

In the last two months we have started our “walk around visits” in order to carry out door-to-door visits by members of the team. The primary purpose of this is to introduce ourselves and to get a better understanding of any issues that may be concerning you. At the same time we are going to use this exercise as an opportunity to update our contact and household make-up details to ensure we have all relevant information.



## **PENTLAND HOUSING ASSOCIATION**

37-39 Traill Street, Thurso, Caithness, KW14 8EG

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**[www.pentlandhousing.co.uk](http://www.pentlandhousing.co.uk)**

Front cover: One of our Wick tenants outside her house.  
Back cover: Pentland Housing staff.

