

# Norwich City Council

## Annual report to tenants 2014-15



Tenant  
approved



NORWICH  
City Council

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### Key



Anywhere you see this logo in the report – indicates the service has generated savings or improved value for money.

The traffic lights that appear in this report indicate how the service is performing in relation to targets:



A green light means – target achieved.



A yellow light means – close to target.



A red light means – target missed.



*Annual report focus group - left to right: Jonathan Smith (tenant involvement officer), Eunice, Dorothy, Vic and Christine.*

## INTRODUCTION

**Welcome to our sixth edition of the annual report to tenants, which shows you what your housing service at Norwich City Council has delivered between April 2014 and March 2015.**

The report is produced by the annual report focus group, which is a group made up of council officers and tenants working together. As this is your report the emphasis has been on providing information of use to you and on presenting it in as friendly a way as possible.

We hope that you will find the following information in the report particularly interesting and useful.

This year saw the completion of the first council-owned homes to be built in Norwich for over twenty years. You can find out more about this exciting milestone in the 'New Homes' section on **page 10**.

A number of estate improvement projects (detailed on **pages 13 and 14**) were completed across the city and your neighbourhood housing officers are keen to hear from anyone who would like to improve where they live.

Speaking to tenants face-to face at local events and fun days helps the council to gain valuable feedback and understand what really matters to you. The information gained helps to shape the services you receive and is just one of the many methods being used to improve communication with tenants - **page 6**.

Local events would not be possible without the hard work of housing staff and tenant volunteers, and the generous support of contractors and partner organisations.

If you would like to know more about how the housing service is performing you will find details of the recent STAR (Survey of Tenants and Residents) on **page 8**.

We hope you find this report useful.

### Annual Report Focus Group

**If you have any comments you would like to feedback on this report to improve next year's publication or you would like more information please contact us at [involvement@norwich.gov.uk](mailto:involvement@norwich.gov.uk) or by calling 0344 980 3333.**







Tenants and staff on a site visit to Eglington Mews.

# TENANT INVOLVEMENT, EMPOWERMENT AND CUSTOMER CARE

## TENANT INVOLVEMENT – Delivering Local Offers

Local Offers are a set of pledges we have made to you based on what you have told us is important with regard to keeping you involved.

The following four sections detail the pledges which make up each Local Offer and the steps we have taken to achieve them.

### 1 Getting involved

**We will provide a variety of opportunities for you to get involved in shaping the service you receive:**

Over fifteen hundred people attended our housing related events in 2014-15.



We have increased the ways in which you can be involved by forming:

- **The Materials Advisory Group** comprising involved tenants who are consulted over the selection of materials to be used in tenant's homes as part of our housing maintenance and refurbishment programmes. They make recommendations for the benefit of all tenants.
- **The Sheltered Housing Involvement Panel** influence sheltered housing policies and procedures, making recommendations for the benefit of all sheltered housing tenants.
- **The NPS (Norwich) Liaison Board** has representatives from both the Tenant Involvement Panel and the Tenant Scrutiny Panel, working with staff and councillors to monitor the performance of our largest contractor.





Our tenant empowerment work won us an ARCH award earlier this year.

We have provided a variety of training and learning experiences:

- Involved tenants have been on seven visits to the Council's housing contractors
- The 4th round of tenant training TTfN (tenant training for Norwich) took place
- Involved tenants went behind the scenes and spent time shadowing the customer contact team.

Number of tenant involvement activities	85
Number tenant scrutiny meetings	10
Number of tenant involvement meetings	16
Number of new tenant and resident associations formed	2

We have celebrated your achievements through:

- Winning the ARCH Award\*
- Holding our second tenant summit - providing an opportunity for involved tenants to meet face-to-face and compare notes on their activities.
- Running our annual Good Neighbour Awards.

\***Norwich City Council** were recognised at the ARCH (Association of Retained Council Housing) Tenant Conference in September with the 'Putting Tenants First' award for being the council that has done the most to encourage and support tenant empowerment.

### CASE STUDY Tenant Training

Charmain Woollard, was elected as a Councillor for Mile Cross ward last year.

She is heavily involved in improving housing services.

Her journey began when she attended "Tenant Training for Norwich" the free training academy for City Council tenants.

"More than anything, the training gave me confidence. It made me more outgoing and rekindled my passion for wanting to help others. I also developed my communication skills and gained a greater understanding of tenant empowerment".

"Following the training, I joined the tenant scrutiny panel and helped set up a Rainbows unit for young Girl Guides. Then the opportunity to stand as a candidate for the City Council came up".



Charmain Woollard

Charmain's advice to others thinking of getting involved is:

"Just go for it! Everyone has the ability to make a positive difference to where they live.

Even if you don't wish to be directly involved with the council, the free training on offer can give you confidence and valuable new skills".

To find out about tenant training opportunities, email [involvement@norwich.gov.uk](mailto:involvement@norwich.gov.uk) or call **0344 980 3333**.



## 2 Listening and Learning

We will improve the way we communicate with you by:



Creating more opportunities for you to speak to staff face-to-face in your neighbourhood:

- We have increased the number of patch panels
- Held family fun days at Christmas and Easter (attended by over thirteen hundred people)
- Held an open consultation event on the future design of our new build properties
- Housing staff were also available to answer questions and promote involvement at city events such as the Lord Mayor's Procession, Norwich Pride and the Mile Cross Festival.

Ensuring that we communicate with you and provide feedback in a variety of methods which are clear and easy to understand:

- We have delivered three editions of TLC Magazine to your door
- Content for each edition has been previewed and approved by the tenant involvement panel
- The panel reviewed a further 11 council documents and awarded the Tenant Tick
- Regularly updating you on how the housing service is performing through performance scorecards.



Increasing opportunities for tenants and staff to work and train together:

- Through tenant representatives shadowing our customer advisers and visiting our contractors.

TLC magazine – just one of the many ways we communicate with you.



## 3 Safer neighbourhoods

We will work with you to make your neighbourhood cleaner and safer:



Involving you in ways to monitor and improve the neighbourhood you live in:

- A total of 39 estate improvement projects were completed (see page 14)
- All improvements projects were monitored by the tenant involvement panel.

## 4 Repairs and maintenance

We will offer you more chances to be involved in the delivery and monitoring of the repairs and maintenance service by:



Involving tenant representatives when we re-let major contracts:

- The tenant involvement panel influenced a number of Eastern Procurement\* contracts and an enforcement agent's contract.
- The sheltered housing involvement panel were involved in selecting a contractor to carry out the refurbishment of St James House sheltered housing scheme.

### \*Eastern Procurement

Eastern Procurement (EP) is a not-for-profit procurement consortium for social landlords in the east of England.

Providing organised opportunities to meet our contractors and ask questions:

- Tenant panel contractor visits
- Materials Advisory Group
- Norwich Norse Liaison Board.

Involving you in setting performance targets and the monitoring of how we are doing against them:

- The tenant scrutiny panel agrees target setting and performance scorecard measures with council officers.



Staff and tenants on a visit to Gasway.

## TENANT EMPOWERMENT

### Tenant Scrutiny Panel

Together with senior managers the tenant scrutiny panel set the performance targets for the housing service and decided what targets should appear on the performance scorecard.

### Tenant Involvement Panel

The tenant involvement panel reviewed and amended the following policies and procedures:

- Garden enforcement procedure
- Fire safety plan
- Asbestos safety plan
- Communal area procedure
- Mutual exchange incentives policy
- Mutual exchange - rent arrears policy

They also reviewed and approved content for each addition of TLC magazine and numerous leaflets, as well as making decisions on the future of the clear rent account prize draw and the good neighbour award.

### Terms of Reference

Both the tenant scrutiny and tenant involvement panels also made a number of amendments to their terms of reference.

### Materials Advisory Group

Chose lighting products for kitchens and bathrooms that will help to reduce tenants' utility bills.

### Sheltered Housing Involvement Panel

The newly formed sheltered housing improvement panel:

- Agreed a work plan and recruited seven panel members
- Agreed content for the sheltered housing tenant handbook
- Participated in the tender process to pick the contractor to redevelop St James House sheltered housing scheme and influenced the design plans for the refurbishment of Silkfields sheltered housing scheme.



## CUSTOMER CARE

In December 2014 we appointed independent market research company Wyman Dillon to carry out the STAR (Survey of Tenants and Residents) on our behalf.

The survey is designed to measure our performance in terms of tenant satisfaction across key areas of our housing services and uses standard questions that enable us to benchmark our performance against other similar housing providers across the country.

In early 2015, Wyman Dillon called a cross-section of tenants to gauge their views. 975 tenants took part in total, answering seven questions relating to their customer satisfaction within specific areas of our housing services. The results showed some fantastic improvements compared with the last survey in 2012.

We've improved in six out of seven key areas, making sizeable percentage point increases in many, including an 11 percentage point increase in overall satisfaction with housing services in general.

At the time of our submission we were one of 13 local authorities taking part in the survey who manage 10,000 homes or more. Out of this group we were placed joint third in terms of our score for overall tenant satisfaction, which is another great achievement.

A full breakdown of our STAR results can be found in the summer 2015 edition of our tenants' and leaseholders' community magazine, *TLC*.

### Customer contact team

- Increased staff training has led to improvements in the quality of the service and reductions in call waiting times.
- The introduction of computer software which identifies required repairs from the initial enquiry has increased the number of repairs completed at the first visit and led to better customer satisfaction.



Average time taken to answer all housing related calls	95 seconds
Number of housing related complaints	239
Percentage of complaints resolved within target of 15 working days	92%



An artist impression of St James House.

### The families unit

Specialist intensive support to families with multiple and complex needs is provided by the families unit. In 2014/15:

- a new three-year partnership was formed with Norfolk County Council to deliver family support under the government's Troubled Families Programme
- a new youth mediation role was created to prevent homelessness among 14-18 year olds
- short-term, targeted interventions were developed to reduce the number of children being taken into care
- a new webpage was developed for the service to increase engagement with service users.

### Sheltered housing

- The refurbishment of St James House sheltered housing scheme is due for completion in March 2016 and will set the standard for future scheme development.
- Sheltered tenants moving to alternative city council accommodation as part of the transformation received properties refurbished to an enhanced standard. This now happens in all cases where sheltered housing properties become vacant.
- Communal lounges and the guestroom at the Silkfields scheme were refurbished.
- The former scheme manager's accommodation at Harry Perry Close was redeveloped to create two, one-bedroom sheltered flats.






*New Council homes at Eglington Mews.*

## YOUR HOME

### UPGRADES, ADAPTATIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS

We have completed the third year of our five-year programme to deliver the Norwich Standard to all homes by 2017. Here are this year's stats:

<b>£18.7 million</b>	Spent on upgrades and improvements
<b>£875k</b>	Spent on adaptations
<b>1,546</b>	New kitchens installed
<b>1,062</b>	New bathrooms installed
<b>863</b>	New heating systems installed
<b>2,650</b>	Properties received new front and back doors
<b>288</b>	Homes had their windows replaced
<b>92%</b>	Percentage of council homes that now meet the Norwich Standard 

#### Average costs per property

<b>New kitchen</b>	<b>£5186</b>
<b>New bathroom</b>	<b>£3660</b>
<b>New heating system</b>	<b>£3987</b>
<b>New doors (front and back)</b>	<b>£762</b>

Further upgrades as part of the Norwich Standard programme are already planned for 2015/16 (see table on next page), along with a programme of re-roofing, painting and structural works.

Energy efficiency improvements will meanwhile see a programme of loft and cavity wall insulations carried out, along with external wall insulation to 80 homes and the installation of solar panels at a further 200 properties.





*A newly upgraded kitchen.*

Planned upgrades and maintenance for 2015/16	Number of homes
New kitchen	1575
New bathroom	1049
New heating system	999
New front door	1358
New back door	713
Painting	2650
Re-roofing	86
Re-pointing / structural works	77

## REPAIRS PERFORMANCE

**99%** of our repairs appointments are kept by our contractors.


**98%** of repairs are completed right first time.

**95%** of our customers are satisfied with the quality of repairs.

**99.92%** of homes have an up to date gas certificate.



## NEW HOMES

- The completion of eight one-bedroom flats at Eglington Mews became the first council-owned homes to be built in the city since 1992.
- Plans were submitted for the second phase of the Three Score development, featuring 172 new homes, 48 of which will be for social rent.
- Plans were drawn up for the redevelopment of Goldsmith St – featuring 105 new homes.
- A deal was made to purchase 23 council homes on the Brazen Gate development. 
- Work started on converting former sheltered housing scheme, Britannia Court into two separate blocks of refurbished flats that will be let through Home Options. Due for completion in Summer 2016.
- A public consultation was launched for the development of 10 new flats on the site of the former area housing office at Hansard Close.

### Your safety is our priority

Please ensure we can access your home to carry out your annual gas safety inspection, which is a legal obligation to keep you safe. Always ask callers for identification.



*Artist impressions of Hansard Close.*



## YOUR TENANCY

*The tenants' handbook.*

### HOUSING MANAGEMENT

A total of 80 per cent of tenants have now had a tenancy health check in the last five years. As part of this process we're taking optional photos of existing tenants, which is now standard procedure for all new tenancies to help reduce tenancy fraud.



Number of new introductory tenancies	644	
Introductory tenancies successfully completed	98%	

	2013/14	2014/15
tenants arrears as % of total rent due to the council	2.65%	3.14%
average amount owed	£222	£294
evictions for non-payment of rent	19	13

### INCOME AND RENTS

In 2014/15 the team have:

- successfully piloted the use of a computerised texting service to improve communication with customers
- provided money and budgeting advice to more than 800 tenants facing financial difficulties
- worked closely with other council teams to help tenants with multiple council debts
- continued to provide a variety of support to tenants affected by welfare reform, including help completing Discretionary Housing Payment claim forms.

### HOUSING OPTIONS

In 2014/15 the team have:

- maintained a high performance in dealing with the public. 75% of phone calls to housing options are answered within 20 seconds, with an average overall wait time of just 45 seconds. The average waiting time to see a specialist housing adviser at City Hall is just 8 minutes, with 60% of clients seen within 5 minutes.
- processed 99 per cent of all new applications for housing within one day of receipt
- increased opening hours for the specialist housing advice drop-in service, enabling more clients to be helped than ever before





An adapted bathroom.

- introduced a text reminder service for property viewings
- introduced the attendance of occupational therapists at viewings for adapted properties so they can advise on suitability and further potential adaptations based on the client's specific needs
- prevented 596 instances of potential homelessness, with only 8 per cent of clients that present as facing homelessness, going on to make a homeless presentation.



In March 2015 the housing options team were invited to give a presentation on their work in the field of homelessness prevention at the national Shelter Conference in London.



### CASE STUDY Occupational Therapist

Sara Ellis is the Occupational Therapist (OT) for Norwich City Council.

Her role is to enable disabled tenants to live in a home that maximises their safety and independence in everyday tasks, such as washing, dressing, food preparation, parenting, accessing the wider community and working.

Sara matches disabled tenants to suitable adapted properties through the choice based lettings process and designs disabled adaptations that will meet the long term needs of our tenants.

Adaptations are recycled wherever possible so that the budget can assist the maximum number of people.

In 2014/15 378 major adaptations were provided in council homes. Adaptations included the provision of level access showers, ramps, rails, stair lifts, wash and dry toilets and structural works to facilitate wheelchair access.

#### Examples of Sara's work include:

- Assisting a tenant who was unable to return home from hospital when he became dependent on a large electric wheelchair
- Assisting a tenant with a degenerative spinal condition to remain independent in her home. In addition to ramped access and a level access shower, Sara helped to design a wheelchair accessible kitchen. The work tops, sink and cooking hob can be electronically raised and lowered to suit the user. The tenant is now able to independently prepare meals for her family.



Sara Ellis

*Estate improvements at  
St James and Barrack Street.*



## YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

Several of our key services are delivered at a neighbourhood level.

Under our neighbourhood model, Norwich has four neighbourhood teams; north, south, east and west.

The neighbourhood teams work closely with residents, housing officers, police and other agencies to address ongoing local issues and improve where you live.

Housing officers meet with police and Councillors every three months to agree priorities for each area.

Walkabouts and estate inspections are just two of the many ways residents and the council work together.

<b>Walkabouts</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Estate inspections</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Estate improvement projects</b>	<b>37</b>

## ESTATE IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

These projects benefit the community at large and are designed to include measures that will improve accessibility, reduce antisocial behaviour and generally improve the physical environment.

The estate improvement projects carried out across the city include new pathways, walls, railings, benches, bollards, improved parking facilities, gates, shed makeovers and the introduction of playground games. A full list of the individual projects and their locations can be found on the next page.

All requests for improvements are considered on their individual merits and approved by the tenant involvement panel, subject to funding being available.



## Estate improvements completed 2014/15

Location	Improvements
Anchor Close	New tree pit
Barrack Street/Bargate Court	Tidy and redesign
Brewers Court	Tree planter
Bull Close	Replanting and new benches
Bull Close	Walls
Cadge Close	Clearance and new fence
Coach and Horses Row	Bollards and pathway resurfacing
Cowgate	Replanting and new benches
Cramworth Gardens	Gulley replacement
Devonshire Street	Gates
Dolphin Grove	Bollards
Douro Place	Bollards
Earlham Road	Wall
Foster Road	Wall Repair
Gertrude Road	Fencing
Gildencroft	Wall
Graham Square	Wall
Heathgate	Signs
Heigham Street	Communal area garden
King Street	Fencing and railings
Leopard Court	Replanting and new benches
Talbot Square	New railings and repointing of walls
Mousehold Street	New boundary walls
Music House Lane	Fencing and railings
Northfields	Gulley replacement
Watson Grove	Bollards
Raven Yard/Stepping Lane	Wall
Rouen Road	Fencing and railings
Sherbourne Place	Fencing and railings
Southwell Road	Walls, communal area
St James/Barrack Street	Communal area redesign
St Stephens Square	Boundary walls
Swaffied Street	Communal garden
Vale Green	Bollards, no ball game signs
Victoria Street	Boundary walls
Woodside Road	Gulley replacement
Wortham Close	Brick work repairs





Two of our ABATE officers.

## ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

All reports of antisocial behaviour are recorded and investigated, with the most serious cases referred to the antisocial behaviour and tenancy enforcement (ABATE) team. Most cases reach successful outcomes without the need for court action, but some statistics on action taken in the most extreme cases are included below:

Reports of antisocial behaviour (ASB)	3060
Reports of housing-related ASB	2071
Most common complaint type	Noise
Cases referred to the ABATE team	191
Evictions	6
Possession orders	9
Injunctions	4
Demotion order	1
Closure orders*	6
% cases successfully closed	92%

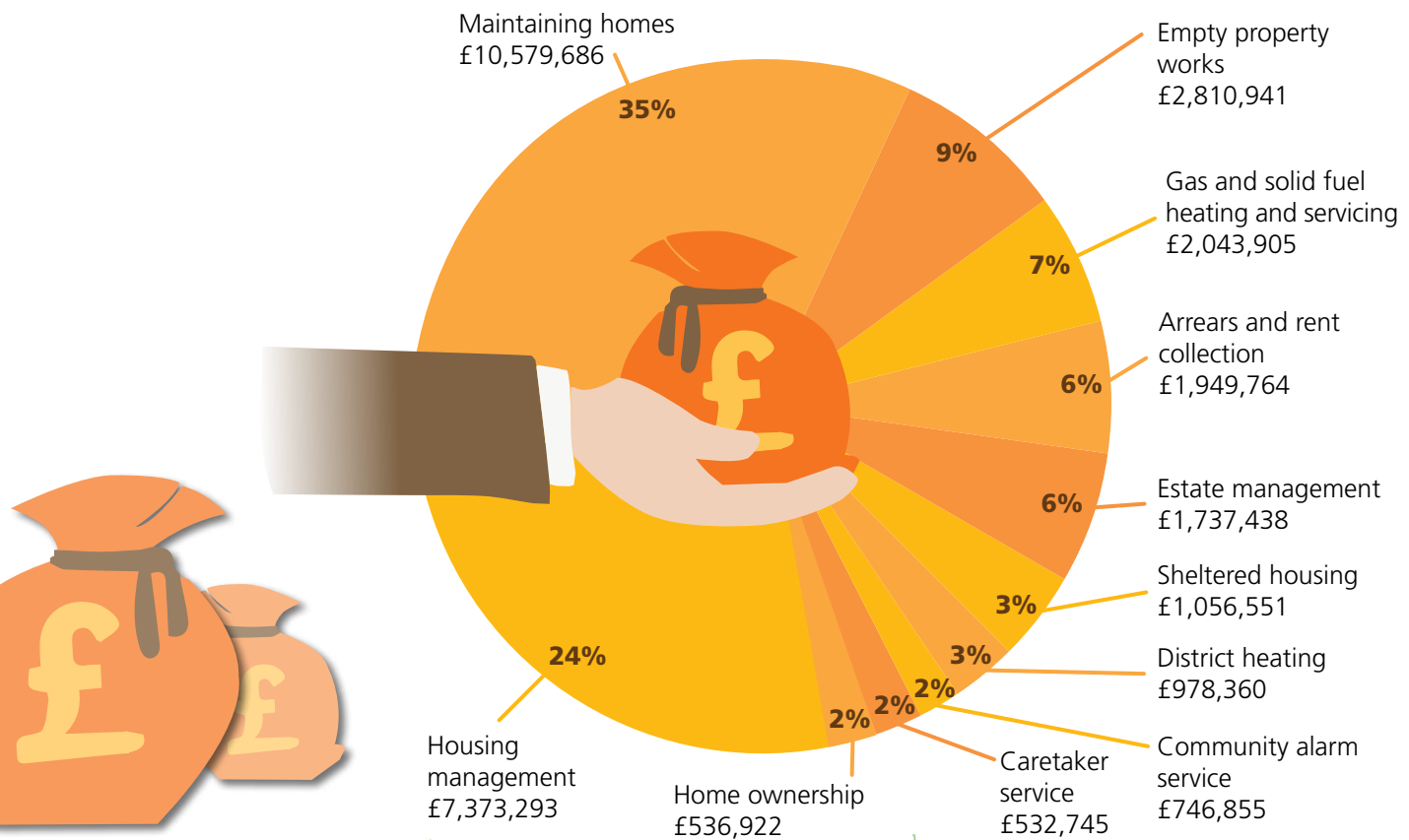
\***Closure orders** are civil orders which stop anyone entering, or residing, at a property. They require close partnership working with local police to obtain.





# VALUE FOR MONEY

## How your rent and service charges were spent



In 2014/15 we have made savings of £2.8 million across housing services.





*Councillor Gail Harris, Norwich City Council's deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and wellbeing.*

## LOOKING AHEAD

I am delighted to see that overall tenant satisfaction with our housing services is increasing and this is something we will look to build on over the coming year.

Working closely with tenants is key to finding ways to improve further. It is fantastic that we have been recognised for our tenant empowerment activities through winning the ARCH award. We have since won the Customer Scrutiny Inspection Award 2015 for tenant involvement in our communications and merged our tenant involvement and tenant scrutiny panels together. We will most certainly be continuing our focus on involving tenants in shaping our services.

We have prevented nearly 600 households from becoming homeless over the last year and we will continue to address housing challenges facing the city and its residents. The Greater Norwich Homelessness Strategy for 2015-20 sets out a new co-ordinated approach with local authority partners, health and support agencies, to help us target our resources at helping those most at risk.

We have provided money advice to over 800 tenants facing financial difficulties and will continue to support people dealing with financial hardship in any way we can.

Keeping residents safe will remain one of our top priorities for the coming year and we will continue to work closely with the

police and community groups to tackle anti-social behaviour.

We are looking closely at the changes that the new government are planning to put in place and how this could affect the services we provide to our tenants. There will be more information on this in future editions of TLC.

Over £18 million has been invested in improving and upgrading tenant's homes. I look forward to seeing the refurbishments carried out to St James House and Don Pratt Court and we will continue to build new homes when we can.

Our resources will undoubtedly become more stretched but we will do everything we can to protect frontline services. Achieving greater efficiencies and working more effectively will play a big part in this. Our desire to excel in this area is already displayed in our 99% one-day turnaround of all new applications for housing and through making more of our services available online.

Our new head of neighbourhood housing, Lee Robson, joined us in November, bringing with him, a wealth of housing experience to the organisation. I know that Lee is very keen to get out and meet tenants as soon as possible and identify ways we can further improve our services. I am looking forward to working with him.

**Councillor Gail Harris**





**CONTACT:**

t: 0344 980 3333  
e: [info@norwich.gov.uk](mailto:info@norwich.gov.uk)  
w: [www.norwich.gov.uk](http://www.norwich.gov.uk)

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To find out how you can get involved in next year's report or for more information on any of our involvement opportunities email: [involvement@norwich.gov.uk](mailto:involvement@norwich.gov.uk)

