



Changing. For the better.
Annual report 2010/11



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Changing times

They say that a change is as good as a rest. So this year we've decided to ring the changes by introducing a new member of staff; 'Uni' the caterpillar. 'Uni' is going to lead you through our annual report. But, before we start, here are a few things that you maybe didn't know about caterpillars.



There are over 30 different types in the UK. They've got some great names too; there's the fearsome sounding 'Death's Head Hawk', the furry 'Golden Tiger', a 'Poplar Kitten' and the 'Drinker'!

Caterpillars have around 4,000 muscles; puny humans like us have only 600. And we wouldn't advise inviting one for tea, because they have a

huge appetite. There's one type of caterpillar that increases its weight 10,000-fold in just 20 days. Quite a diet.

What they all have in common is this: after two or three weeks the caterpillar undergoes an amazing transformation, turning into a beautiful butterfly. And change and transformation is the name of the game at Unity

Housing Association. We're certainly working through some changing times right now which are reflected in this year's review. But that's not deflecting us from our main focus – transforming neighbourhoods and the lives of people who live in them.



Change management



Businesses that don't change don't survive. And that applies to housing associations as much as it does to any organisation. That's why we've chosen 'change' as our theme for this year's annual report.

There's no doubt that we are moving through changing times. To survive and prosper, we must adapt, change and move forward.

What is very clear, following last year's general election, is that we are working in a new environment – both politically and economically. The government's stated aim is to get people off benefits and into employment. The vehicle for this is the Welfare Reform Bill which includes the introduction of universal credit and reforms to other benefits.

The 'Localism' legislation will bring changes to incentivise the building of more new homes, which is to be welcomed. It will also introduce a new approach to tenancies for social landlords, allowing them the freedom to grant lifetime and fixed tenancies. A new 'affordable' rent – which can be up to 80% of market rent – will be part of this new approach. The aim of this is to increase social landlords' income and remove dependency on grant funding for new developments.

And, of course, the Tenants' Services Authority will disappear with much of its powers moving to the Homes and Communities Agency. Of course that's all in the

future; but what about last year? First and foremost, we've continued to build on previous improvements in service, clearly demonstrated by the year-on-year rise in tenant satisfaction and our performance indicators.

We also completed a review and updating of our rolling three year plan. Out of this came five key strategic objectives:

- Provision of high quality, affordable housing services.
- Provision of training, employment, and business support opportunities.
- Regeneration of target neighbourhoods and increased housing choice linked to the aspirations of BME communities.
- Fulfill a unique role as a BME housing association in Leeds.
- Be a progressive and expanding business with a sound resource base.

In this brave, new, housing world, we're pleased to report that some things haven't changed. Such as the strong and steady demand for Unity homes and our ability to deliver

a first rate housing service. At Unity our commitment to involving our tenants in the decision making process stays the same.

Our commitment to BME communities in Leeds is as strong as ever. It will continue to be the focus of much of our work, both in terms of housing as well as physical, economic and social regeneration. The latter is evidenced by our exciting and ambitious plans

for the refurbishment of two of our business centres.

Of course, none of our future or past performance would be possible without our devoted staff and board, to whom we offer our thanks for another successful year. Nor can we forget our partnership with Leeds City Council, other housing providers and the recently established Chapeltown Development Trust.



Ali Akbor
Chief Executive



Karen Morley
Chair of the Board



Catalyst for change



Our property portfolio meets the needs of a wide range of people, including families, singles, the older generation and those with special needs. We continue to focus our efforts on both BME and the wider communities where there are high levels of need. That's why we have submitted a bid to build 100 new properties over the next four years as part of the Affordable Housing programme.

A leading BME housing association, the Unity Group was originally established in 1987. From its base in Chapeltown Leeds, it now manages nearly 1,100 properties – a mix of houses, flats and bungalows.

Whilst our aim continues to be the provision of good quality homes at an affordable rent, ever spiraling property prices has made shared ownership an increasingly important element in our business mix. A developer of new affordable homes, Unity works in partnership with other local

and national partners including the Homes and Communities Agency.

Early in our history we recognised that creating sustainable neighbourhoods requires more than the provision of affordable quality housing. So we added Unity Enterprise to our remit. This arm of our operation offers affordable workspace to local businesses through three business centres.

We invest in the community in other ways too; regeneration in the areas in which we work and by actively encouraging tenant involvement in local activities.



Changing rooms



A listening landlord

Unity's Housing Management team listens to tenant feedback – and takes action on it. Examples of this over the past year include the selection of contractors for our Gas Servicing contracts. The new gas contractors, IDM, are delivering much improved levels of customer satisfaction. In fact 80% of annual gas appliance servicing for 2011 was completed during the first two quarters of the financial year.



When our Responsive & Planned Maintenance contract came up for review the Residents' Maintenance Panel were fully involved in the process – the first time its members were part of such a major decision. They told us what they wanted from the new contract, asked probing questions in interviews, checked prices and reviewed the final scores. Based on price and quality, the incumbent contractor, Forrest, were re-appointed and now offer a Saturday morning service for day-to-day repairs.

Painting contract saves money – and delivers new bathrooms!

Painting contractors, Bagnalls, won Unity's five year contract. As well as offering a day-to-day service and a choice of colours for residents' front doors, the new deal is resulting in cost savings. This means we can invest more money in other improvements to residents' properties – including new bathrooms.

Contracts that create jobs

One of the features of our contract negotiations is that, whenever possible, local people are employed on them. Forrest's have taken on two residents and gas contractors, IDM, one trainee. Bagnalls recruited four new people in Leeds and are looking to take on more local staff in the future.

Caring for the environment

Unity properties are amongst the most energy efficient homes in the UK. Thanks to a £75,000 annual investment spent chiefly on new energy efficient central heating boilers, they now have 72% SAP ratings – one of the highest in the country. But, with ever spiralling energy costs we can't stop there. Our 'affordable warmth' project is looking at other ways of making Unity homes even

more energy efficient. We're also educating residents to be more aware of how they can reduce energy costs.

Of course the environment isn't just about our carbon footprint. It's also about making our estates pleasant places to live. Working with the Tenant Environmental Improvement Panel, we're now into the second year of a £100,000 investment project delivering environmental improvements suggested by tenants.

Challenging challenging behaviour

Residents rightly expect to be able to enjoy the peace and quiet of their own home. When this is destroyed by anti-social behaviour (ASB) Housing Management have to take action. Working with other agencies they seek a successful resolution for all. During the past year, following the completion of a case, customers were asked to complete satisfaction surveys. In total, 22 were completed, showing a 100% approval rating and confirming that the respondent felt their ASB complaint had been dealt with satisfactorily.



Changing the landscape



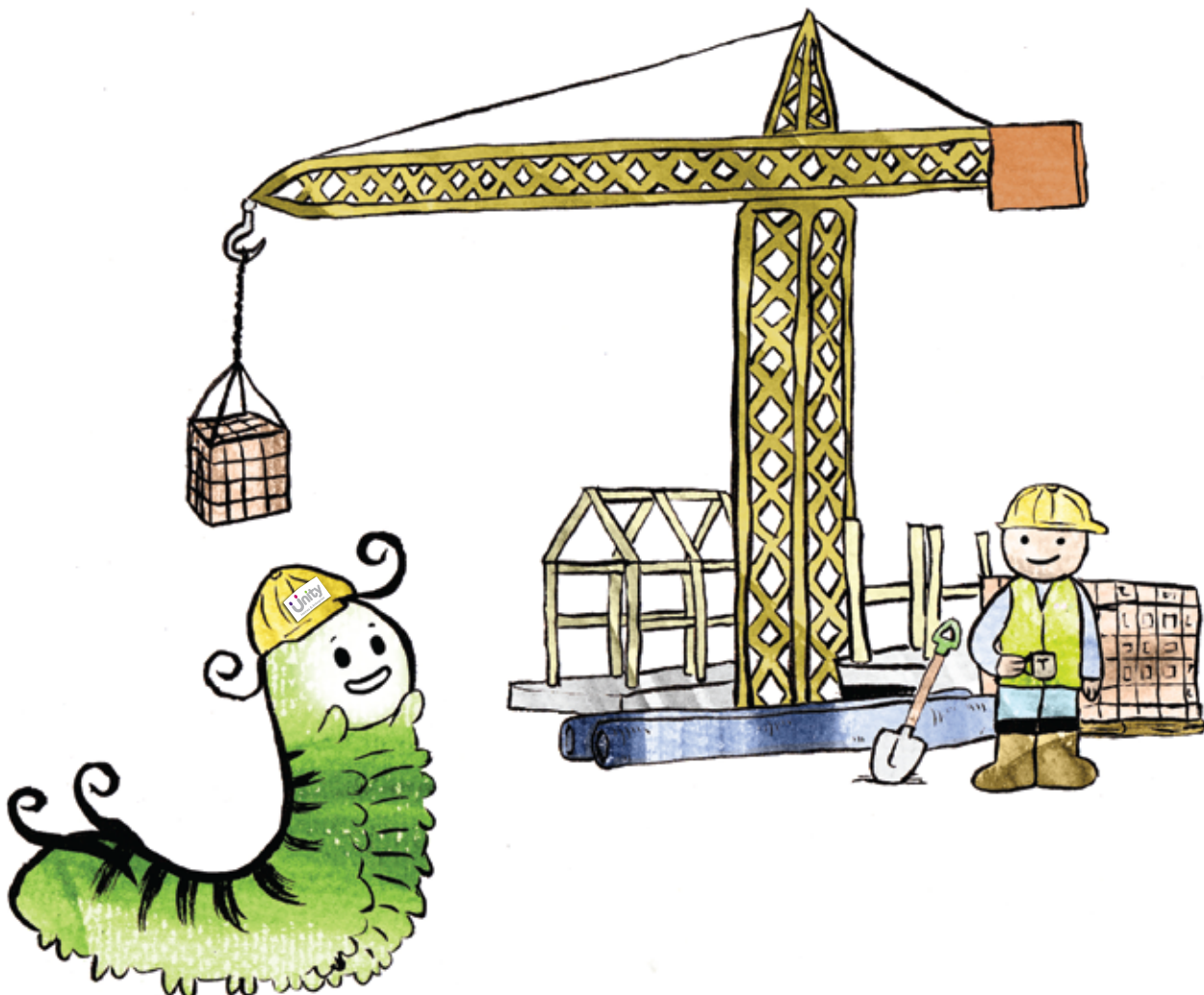
Changes that go beyond the cosmetic

Our development and regeneration team has enjoyed a busy and successful year. Thanks to smart new builds and refurbishments to existing properties, we've changed landscapes and transformed neighbourhoods. This includes the completion of our development of 11 new flats at Windrush Court on Chapletown Road. Of course Unity's objective goes far beyond the cosmetic; our aim is to increase housing

choice and regenerate areas of Leeds where there are high BME populations.

Fair shares

Property prices may have eased over the past few years, but for many first-time buyers they are still way out of reach. So the completion of our Highfield Gardens development in Wortley has proved to be a particularly popular addition to local housing stock. Developed in association with Accent Housing Association, Highfields has 22 units of family



housing, eleven of which were for shared ownership, the affordable route into home ownership.

Touching the voids

One of our key focuses over the past year has been to bring three long-term void properties back into our rent earning portfolio. All of them have been empty for over three years due, mainly, to poor internal layout. The flats in Harehills Avenue were converted into one large two bedroom maisonette; two flats at Spencer Place are now a large family house and a small semi-detached property at Hird Street in Beeston has been remodelled to create an attractive three bedroom house with a home office.

On site

During the course of the year Unity started work on a number of key developments:

- **Scott Hall Square:** This scheme complements Unity's Scott Hall Green development. It consists of 2,3 and 4 bedroom houses along with specialised accommodation for older people and the disabled. When complete there will be 24 properties, 11 for shared

ownership and the remainder for rent. Contractors are Frank Haslam Milan employing six local people.

- **The Beverleys:** In a prominent position in the heart of Beeston, this development is all part of the regeneration of the area. We are working in partnership with Chevin Housing Association. The completed development will comprise 55 two and three bedroom homes for either shared ownership or rent. Unity will own and manage 21 of the properties. As part of the contract with Bramall Construction, four local people are employed on this scheme as bricklayers, joiners and an electrician.
- **Brown Lane East:** This site was formerly home to 56 back-to-back houses in council and private ownership. We're working in partnership with Chevin Housing Association to redevelop the site.

CHIPs offers something tasty

The Chapelton Housing Investment Programme (CHIP) is a collective of local social housing providers. Its aim is to collate information on housing stock in

the area, including proposals for future developments, potential disposals, trends in re-lets and voids as well as ascertaining levels of customer satisfaction. Through CHIP a clearer picture of housing needs in the area is being developed. This will enable us to deal with issues such as under-occupation, housing provision for older people and for families.

We are now working in a similar collective on the Beeston and Holbeck Regeneration Plan.

Hot one hundred

The Affordable Homes programme is a government-led initiative to add more affordable homes to the country's housing stock. This programme fundamentally changes the way social housing is to be funded. Unity's proposal is to build 100 units over the next four years; a mix of 2,3 and 4 bedroom houses and apartments under this initiative.

Changing for the better



Doing the business

Unity Enterprise comprises three separate business centres: Unity Business Centre (UBC), Chapeltown Enterprise Centre (CEC) and Leeds Media Centre (LMC). Together they provide quality, affordable managed workspace.

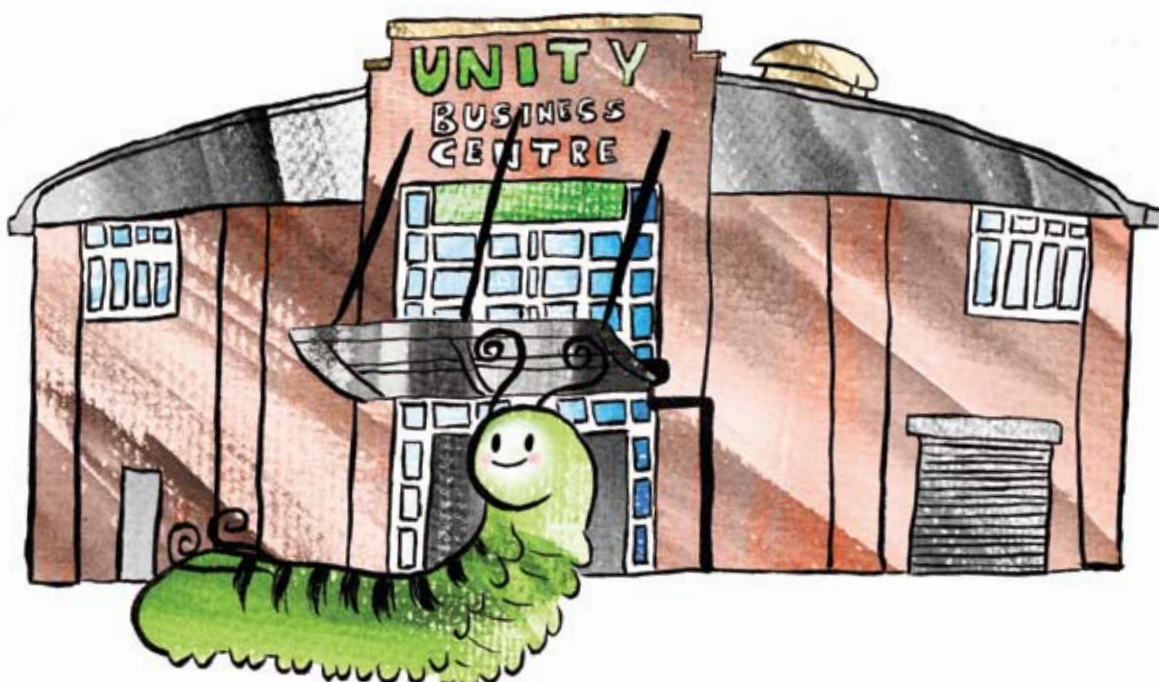
Tenants include fledgling local businesses and established national charities. They benefit from a reception and telephone answering service, as well as easy in, easy out rental deals and high levels of service. In what continues to be tough economic times, successful marketing which promotes the individual strengths of each unit, has enabled us to maintain high occupancy rates.

Enterprise in the economy

Enterprise plays an important role within the Unity Group. The three centres provide a commercial arm and allow us to fulfill our social obligations by providing opportunities for work. Unity Enterprise provides support for new businesses, which in turn creates jobs and stimulates the local economy.

Change is on the way

Over the coming years, Enterprise will become more integrated within the Group, using its financial and management strengths to extend its work in the community tackling worklessness. During the past year we took a massive first step in this direction when we



agreed a £310k inter-company loan and received grant approval for £310k funding from Local Economic Growth Initiative (LEGI) to refurbish UBC and the CEC. This has allowed us to apply for a further £620k from the European Regional Development fund.

Reaching out

We have also appointed an Employment Outreach Officer. The role is to help tenants who have indicated they want to find work to do just that. This is achieved by working on a one-to-one basis, and by connecting residents with employers and training providers and do all that's possible to help them into the world of work.



Changing lives



Getting involved

At Unity, tenant involvement is paramount. That's why Unity employs a dedicated Tenant, Neighbourhood & Involvement Officer to implement our tenant involvement strategy. For some, it can prove to be a life changing experience.

That's why we provide practical support for tenants who wish to be involved – such as use of computers and office equipment.



Small estates and a diverse tenant-base have meant that, in the past, the usual approach to tenant involvement doesn't work for us. So, as an independent, black and minority ethnic (BME) housing association we've had to create new ways of working within our communities. Over the past year this has resulted in a number of outstanding success stories.

Tenant panels: A new, exciting venture for us this year. Launched in September 2010, the Tenant Panel meets on the first Tuesday of every month.

Meetings are flexible and fun. Each one has a different focus, perhaps looking at repairs, neighbourhoods or mystery shopping. Depending on the topic, relevant Unity managers attend. To make it as accessible as possible, we run two identical sessions on the same day – one in the afternoon and one in the evening. This means that we attract a vibrant, multi-ethnic group of residents with a wide range of ages and personal circumstances.

Work experience: We want involvement to be a win-win situation for tenants. So the Tenant Panel is backed-up by a tailored work experience programme for active tenants. Unity provides supervised work experience placements to build skills in those areas tenants think will be of most benefit and improve their employability. Over the past two years, three residents have moved into employment following work experience at Unity. Whilst we don't want to lose them, in our book, that's a successful result!

Priority neighbourhoods:

Resident feedback from our STATUS survey helps us identify neighbourhoods where there are 'issues'. For instance, residents in Crossgates were concerned about drug dealing on their estate. We took the necessary action to deal with this and residents now tell us that the situation is 100% better.

Focus groups: They are great for pinpointing problems. For instance, some of our less mobile residents were having difficulties with stairlifts. Once this matter was highlighted at a focus group meeting, we were able to do something about it.

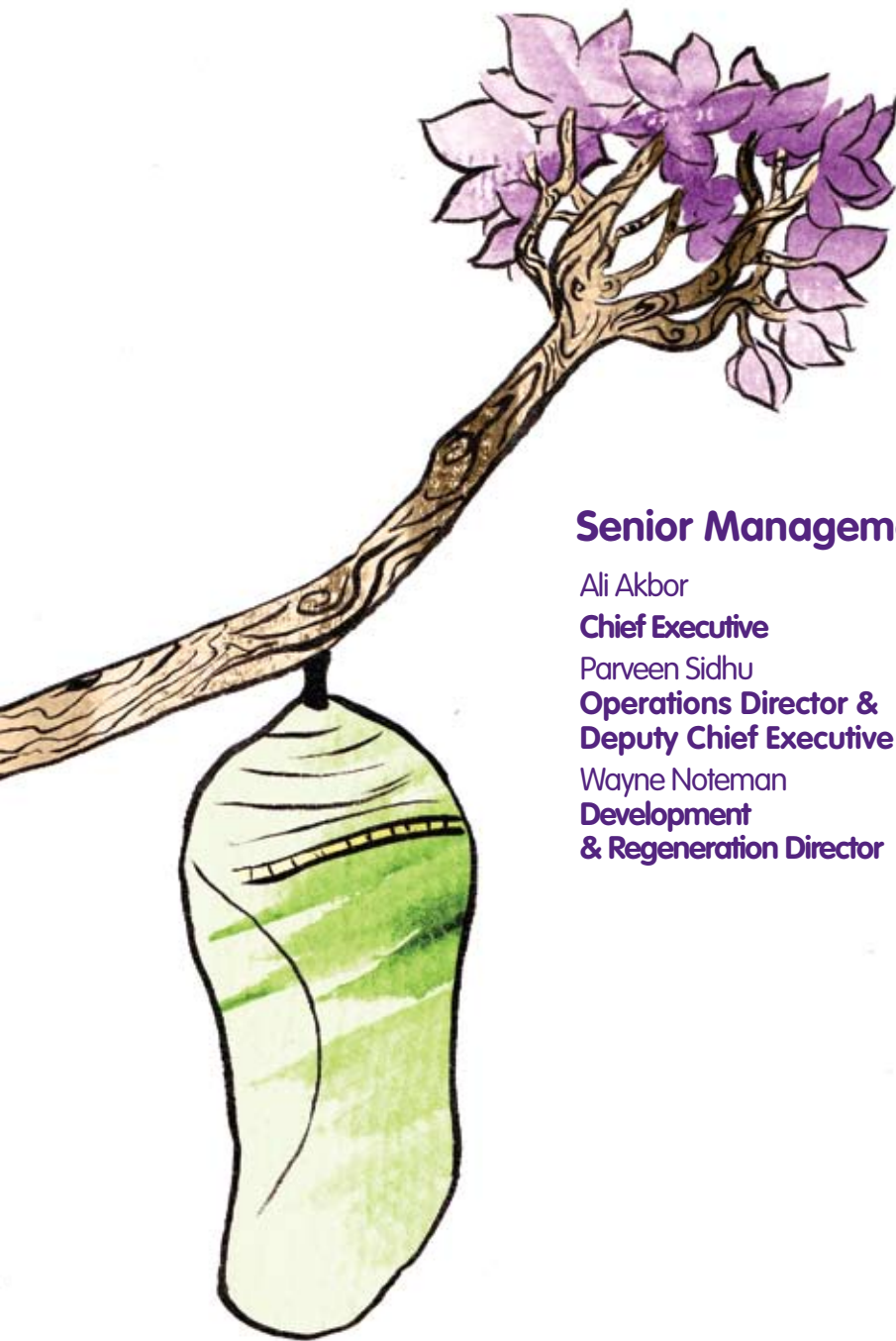
Children's play projects:

Working in partnership with a number of other landlords (who helped to share the cost) we ran a series of summer playgroups for young people living on our estates. Unity staff used this opportunity to get to know many of them which, in turn, has led to improved behaviour from the young people who attended the play projects.

Local offers: During the past year we've had extensive consultation with our tenants through the Tenant Panel, focus groups, questionnaires and 'Unity News', our tenant newsletter. As a result, we now have tenant selected local offers in place. They include improved target times for routine repairs, tighter repairs' appointment slots, new neighbourhood management standards, a quarterly resident involvement calendar and a gardening service for disabled tenants.



Team changes



Senior Management

Ali Akbor

Chief Executive

Parveen Sidhu

**Operations Director &
Deputy Chief Executive**

Wayne Noteman

**Development
& Regeneration Director**



The Board

Karen Morley

Chair

Shelia Saunders

**Chair of Audit & Risk
Management Committee**

Michelle Anderson

Chair of Operations Committee

Peter Dickeson

Chair of Unity Enterprise Board

Tom English

Terence Holness

Shazia Khan

Robert Pitt

Andrea Tara Chand

Tim Yeardley

Unity Enterprise Board

Peter Dickeson

Ali Akbor

Gurdev Dahale

Chris Hill

Robert Pitt

Andrea Tara Chand

Change for growth

With all our ingoings and outgoings totted up, Unity has enough change in its pocket to fund our future plans for growth. In fact our Group surplus of £572k exceeded budget. This figure includes £1M which was invested in the improvement and maintenance of our property portfolio. Looking ahead we have a clear idea of the areas we want to develop and will examine ways to utilise the proceeds of disposals and income from shared ownership to increase our investment capacity.

Group Balance Sheet

AS AT 31ST MARCH 2011

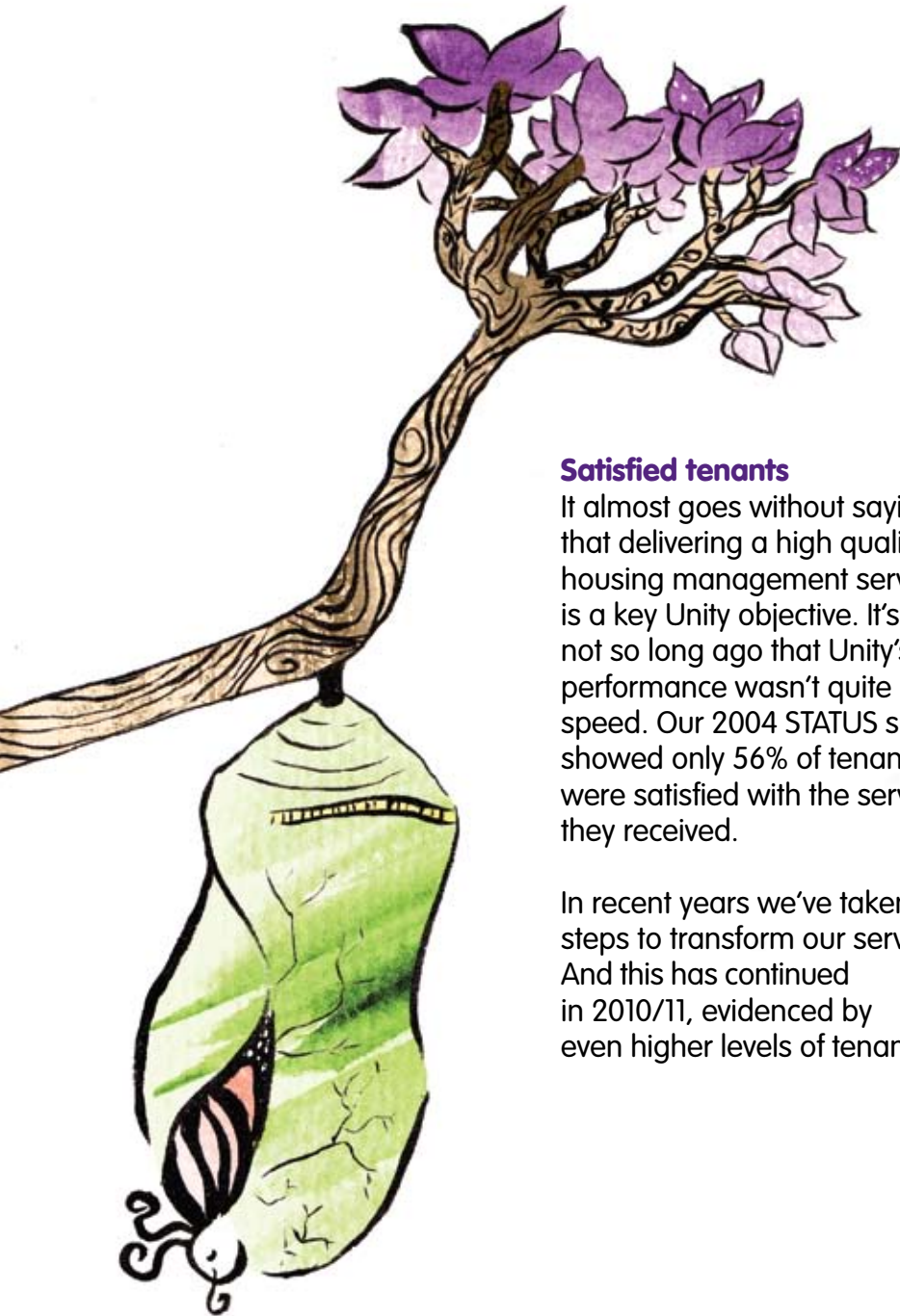
	2011 £'000	2010 £'000
Tangible fixed assets		
Housing properties	55,094	53,061
Social Housing Grant	(31,994)	(31,635)
Other grants	(3,267)	(3,152)
	19,833	18,274
Investment	5	5
Non-housing freehold properties	837	853
Other tangible fixed assets	105	75
	20,780	19,207
Current assets		
Debtors due within one year	314	361
Properties for sale	586	0
Cash at bank and in hand	4,147	5,110
Long term debtors	10	10
	5,057	5,481
Creditors, amounts falling due within one year	(1,788)	(1,358)
Net current assets	3,269	4,123
Total assets less current liabilities	24,049	23,330
Creditors, amounts falling due after more than one year	15,135	14,982
Capital and reserves		
Designated reserves	304	305
Negative goodwill	225	230
Revenue reserves	8,385	7,813
Group funds	8,914	8,348
	24,049	23,330

Group Income and Expenditure Accounts

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2011

	2011 £'000	2010 £'000
Turnover	4,859	4,762
Administrative costs	(1,164)	(1,154)
Direct property management costs	(2,661)	(2,578)
Exceptional Item	0	160
Operating costs	(3,825)	(3,572)
Operating surplus	1,034	1,190
Surplus on the sale of fixed assets - housing	12	0
Interest receivable & other income	42	20
Interest payable & similar charges	(516)	(531)
Surplus for the financial year	572	679

Gear change



Satisfied tenants

It almost goes without saying that delivering a high quality housing management service is a key Unity objective. It's not so long ago that Unity's performance wasn't quite up to speed. Our 2004 STATUS survey showed only 56% of tenants were satisfied with the service they received.

In recent years we've taken big steps to transform our service. And this has continued in 2010/11, evidenced by even higher levels of tenant

satisfaction. When asked to rate the standard of their new home, 93% of new tenants told us it was 'satisfactory' with 78% of that number saying it was 'good'. When it comes to overall service, just short of 80% of our tenants are happy with our service. And, it's equally pleasing to report that 89% of tenants moving out of a Unity property told us they would certainly recommend Unity as a landlord.

Null and void: Well, not quite. But, over the past year, our performance on re-let times has met target. Even better, for the second year in succession we've made inroads into the number of days Unity properties are empty. Thanks to a mix of improved communication and excellent teamwork we've reduced void times from 21 days to 18 days – putting us well ahead of our peers.

Performance Results

Current stock profile at 31/3/11

1 Bed	228
2 Beds	319
3 Beds	340
4+ Beds	199
Total	1086

REPAIRS

Emergency repairs completed in target time	95%	UHA TARGET 99%
Urgent repairs completed in target time	98%	98%
Routine repairs completed in target time	99%	98%
First time fix	96%	85%
Appointments made that were kept	97%	99%
Gas Service % completed	100%	100%
Failing decent homes standard	0%	0%
Average SAP rating of self-contained GN dwellings	72%	65%

Lettings by ethnic origin for 2010/11

Asian/Asian British	13%
Black/Black British	33%
Dual Ethnic Heritage	7%
White British	43%
White Other	4%

VOIDS

Voids as % turnover of stock	8.13%
GN Re-let times	18.2 days
Rent loss due to GN voids	1.15%
% of lets to nominations	81.6%
GN lettings to BME tenants	56.6%

TENANT SATISFACTION

Satisfied with landlord services	79.4%
Satisfied that views taken into account	63.9%
Satisfied with repairs & maintenance	74.3%

COMPLAINTS

Total number of complaints received	26
% responded to on time	100%

Average gross rents by property type at 31/3/11

1 Bed	£63 per week
2 Beds	£78 per week
3 Beds	£86 per week
4+ Beds	£92 per week

RENTS

Rent arrears	6.75%
Rent collection	99.74%

Year End 2010/11



Transformation



Just like Uni, Unity has undergone a massive transformation over the past few years. More important than ever is the experience of our customers. We give them a great housing management service, choice, involvement and help them into employment.

We are forging ever closer links with Unity Enterprise and the local community. And with our three year plan firmly in place, we're all set to meet a world of change and transformation in the years to come.



No change in direction

We will deliver:

**quality housing
services, socio-economic
development and
related neighbourhood services**

To:

**our tenants, BME communities
and neighbourhoods**

Aimed at:

**providing choice,
improved life opportunities and
addressing inequalities**



Unity Housing Association Ltd,
113-117 Chapeltown Road, Leeds LS7 3HY
T. 0113 200 7700 **E.** uha@unityha.co.uk
F. 0113 200 7701 **www.**[unityha.co.uk](http://www.unityha.co.uk)

Auditors
Grant Thornton UK LLP
No 1 Whitehall Riverside
Leeds
LS1 4BN

Bankers
Yorkshire Bank Plc
329 Harehills Lane
Leeds
LS9 6AX

Solicitors
Cobbetts
No 1 Whitehall Riverside
Leeds
LS1 4BN

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business for neighbourhoods



**INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE**