



ASHFORD  
BOROUGH COUNCIL



# Housing Services Quarterly Performance Report

April 2010

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## **1. EXECUTIVE HIGHLIGHTS**

### **\* Housing Plus Trailblazer Conference (Owner Colin Green 01233 330431)**

Ashford Borough Council, in conjunction with Communities and Local Government (CLG) is hosting a one off special conference to share information about innovative approaches to delivering housing options and advice services. This conference planned for 21 May 2010 will be chaired by CLG and is designed to bring together Trailblazer authorities within the south east to showcase a variety of responsive approaches to housing and employment needs.

Ashford along with 11 other Trailblazer Extra councils across the country were selected to receive funding to offer a greater range of advice to people looking for housing, moving towards a personalised approach to advice and links to employment and training opportunities.

The Trailblazer Mentoring Conference aims to demonstrate and share a range of information and ideas about the innovative approaches to delivering housing options and advice services with different sized budgets and to share ideas on how to make a differences, with even the most limited funds.

### **\* Future Jobs Fund (Owner Tracey Kerly 01233 330607)**

Housing have taken the opportunity to support the future jobs fund initiative to appoint 4, 16-25 year olds that are currently seeking work and have been unsuccessful to date. This scheme will provide valuable work experience for the individual. They will receive funding from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and provide additional resources to support project work for the next six months which will allow us to hopefully move forward areas of work that can assist us in improving service delivery. Of the four individuals, 2 are in estate management helping with our profiling project and block inspections, 1 for planned maintenance and 1 to assist the whole building as a facilities assistance.

This is a great opportunity and there are at least 11 posts identified for the Council.

### **\* Housing Strategy update (Owner Tracey Kerly 01233 330607)**

In order to keep Members aware of the progress against the Housing Strategy action plan and the activities within the Housing Strategy team Housing will be producing a quarterly "e" newsletter to be sent to all Members, partners, developers thereby helping to answer many of the enquiries that are regularly received and keep people informed. This will cover such activities as affordable housing delivery, rural housing schemes, HRA new build progress and supported housing delivery.

### **\* HRA Subsidy Review (Owner Bob Smart 01233 330434)**

Original publicised plans by Communities and Local Government (CLG) to issue each stock holding authority with an "offer" to effectively buy out of the existing subsidy system during February have not materialised. It is currently unclear when this will be available though comments that details will be announced after the 24 March Budget statement have been muted.

The publication from Government of a summary of responses to the earlier consultation and its own response highlighted in the summer of 2009 as being due in early 2010 is also awaited.

### **\* Annual Report to Tenants (Owner Chris Tillin 01233 330483)**

An annual report highlighting all Planned Maintenance work in the year is planned to be issued in the June newsletter to all tenants. This will highlight the number of kitchens, bathrooms, electrical and roof refurbishments and disabled adaptations completed in the year and the associated costs.

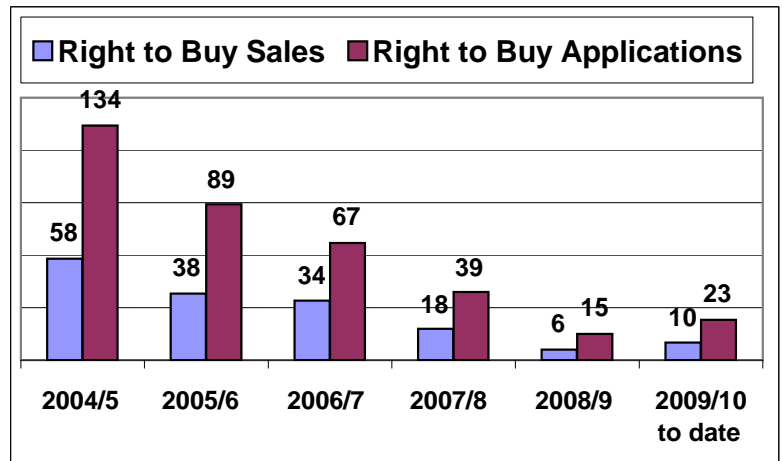
#### **In the next issue:**

- 1. Eviction rates**
- 2. HRA Maintenance & Repair spend 2009/10**
- 3. Update on the Housing Options preventative agenda**
- 4. Update on House Prices in Ashford**

## 2. RIGHT TO BUY (RTB) UPDATE (Owner Sue Major 01233 330531)

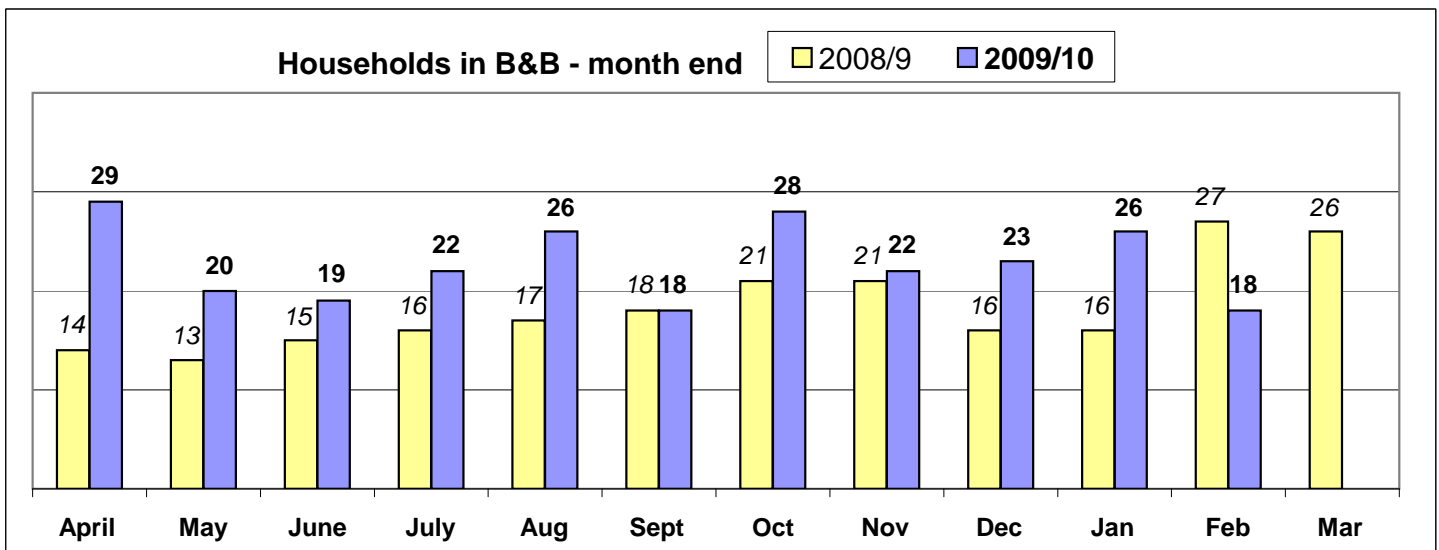
\* Right to Buy applications continue to rise compared to last year with 23 applications to the end of February 2010 compared to 15 for the whole of the last financial year - a real low point.

\* To the end of February, 10 Right to Buy properties were sold - compared with 6 for the last financial year. There is the potential for another completion during March. All properties sold have received the maximum discount of £38,000 each.

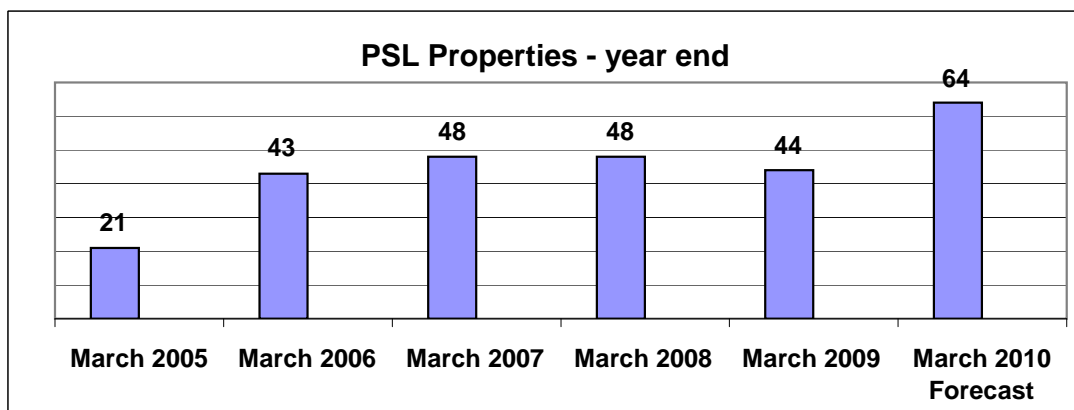


## 3. TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION UPDATE (Owner Sharon Williams 01233 330803)

\* At the end of February 2010 the numbers of Households in Bed & Breakfast (B&B) had reduced to 18 - the first month this year where the figure was below the previous years figure. However pressure remains in this area. In the current economic climate it continues to be very difficult to forecast ahead with any certainty. This area remains a continuing pressure point for the General Fund going into the new financial year.

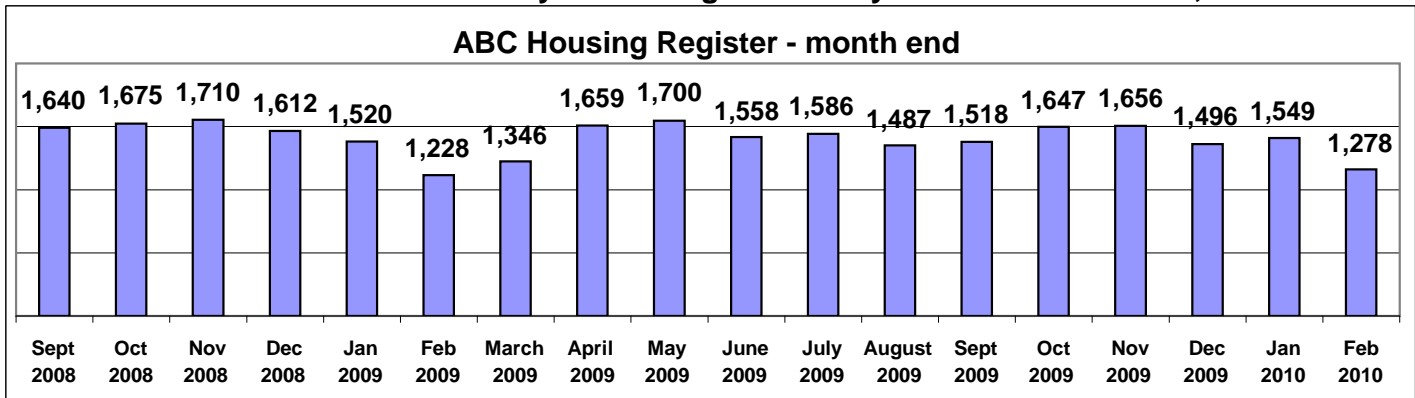


\* Number of Private Sector Leasing (PSL) properties at the end of February stood at 64. This is an increase of 20 (45%) over the year end figure at March 2009 of 44. The figure is currently budgeted to remain at around the 63 level during the new financial year. The contribution generated by this scheme continues to support the Housing Options agenda.

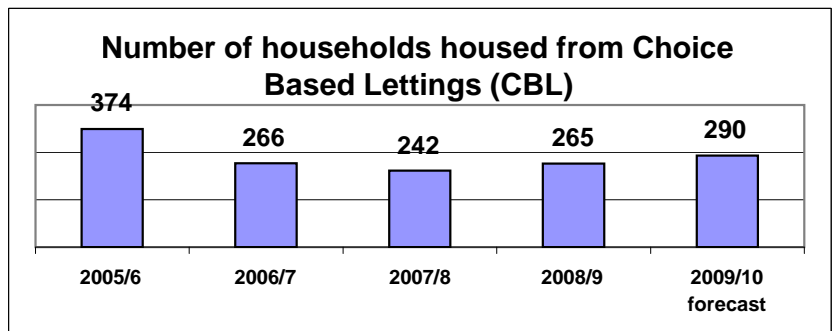


#### 4. HOUSING REGISTER AND CBL NUMBERS (Owner Sharon Williams 01233 330803)

\* Housing Register numbers at the end of February 2010 reduced to 1,275, though the reduction in the month is consistent with last year. Average over the year remains around 1,550.



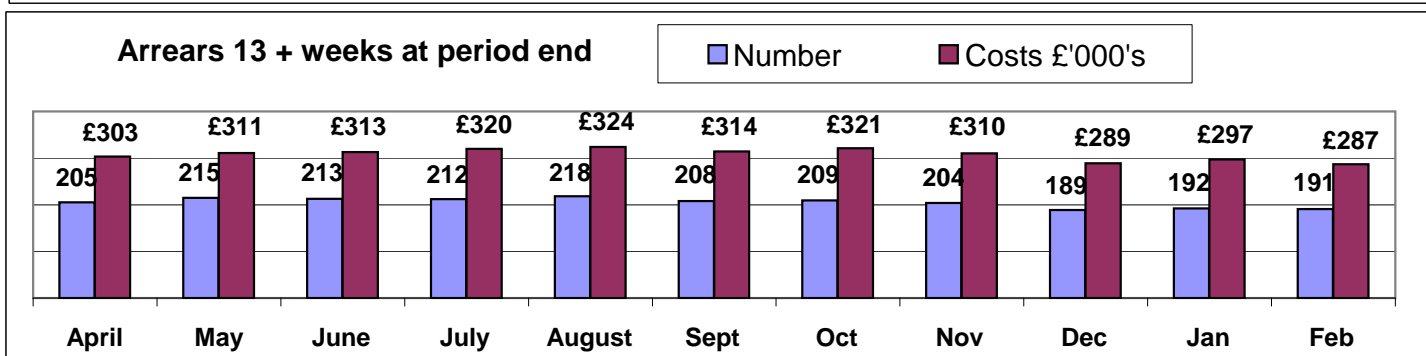
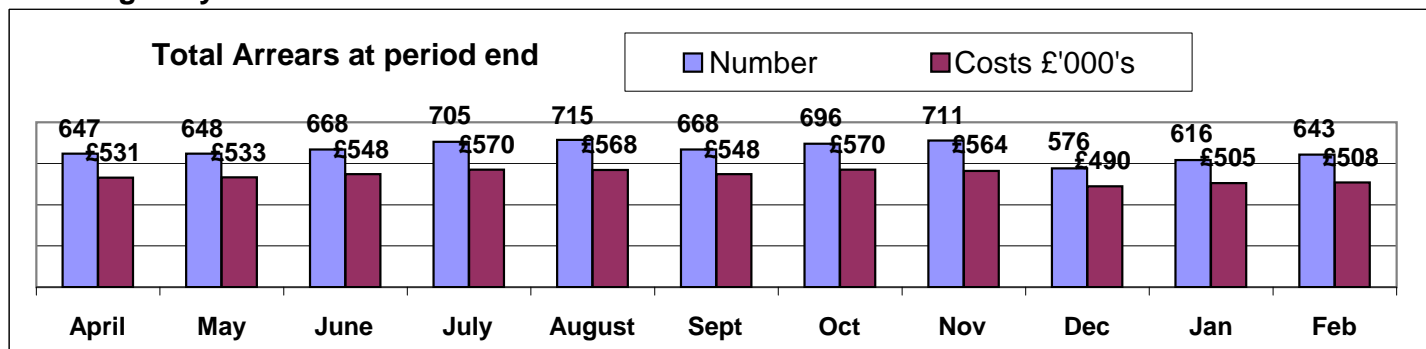
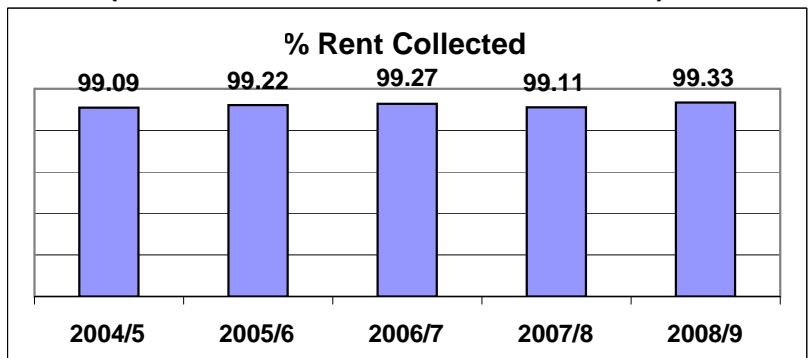
\* Numbers housed via Choice Based Lettings (CBL) stood at 260 at the end of February 2010, A 10% increase over last year.



#### 5. HRA RENT COLLECTION & ARREARS LEVELS (Owner Rebecca Wilcox 01233 330233)

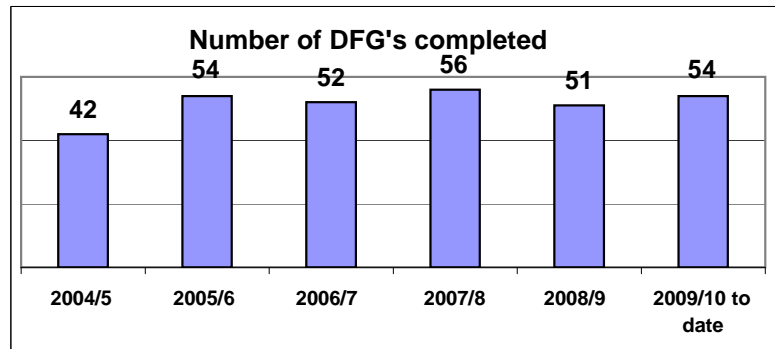
\* Total rent and charges collected from all HRA properties including Stanhope to February 2010 remained high at 99.95%, excluding prior year arrears - or 96.54% inclusive.

\* To the end of February 2010 arrears levels have marginally reduced both in financial terms + numbers of tenants during the year.



## 6. MANDATORY DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS (DFG) (Owner Sharon Williams 01233 330803)

- \* At the end of February the number of completed DFG jobs was 54 at a provisional cost of £362,990 with an agreed budget of £450,000.
- \* Details of the DFG capital allocations from CLG for 2010/11 are still outstanding and to date no reasons have been provided for the delay.

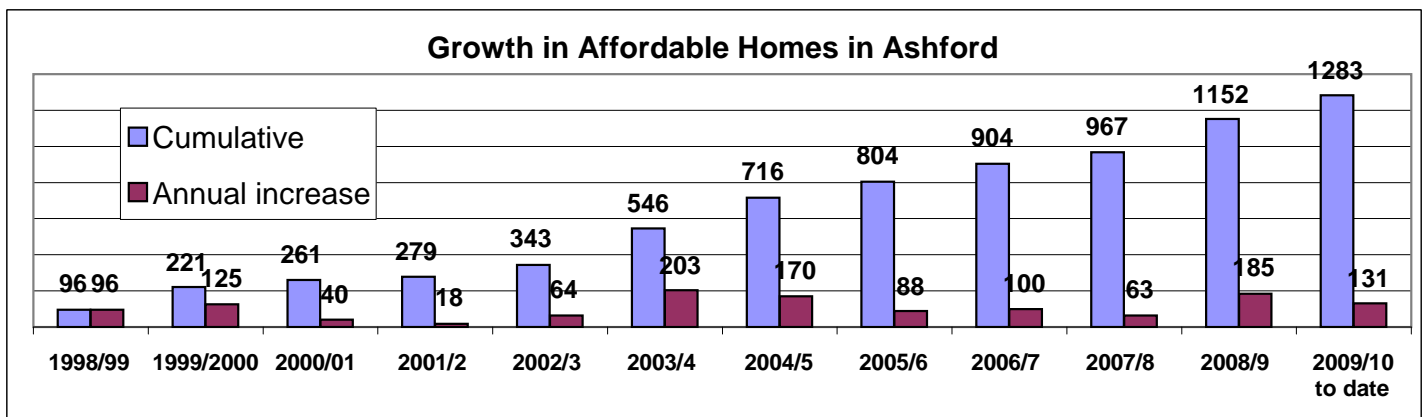


## 7. AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN ASHFORD (Owners Jennifer Shaw 01233 330451 and David Jeffrey 01233 330687)

- \* Up to the middle of March 2010 131 Affordable properties have been delivered to date this financial year, including over 90 for rent. The location sites are listed below:

Ashford Barracks	1
Belgar Farm - Tenterden	22
Hopkins Field - Joseph Hadlum Court	36
Park Farm South & East	9
Pattisons Farm	2
Singleton	19
Smarden - local needs	12
Springwood Drive	1
Stone - Forge Meadow	6
Wellesley Road	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>131</b>

- \* Rural schemes - Smarden completed + handed over in Dec, Charing + Godemersham with Crundale started on site Oct + Feb respectively. High Halden granted planning permission at committee in Feb, Belgar Farm, Tenterden (Tilden Gill Rd + Crutenden Close) completed Jan.
- \* Also during the year 119 replacement properties were completed on Stanhope as part of the PFI regeneration project.



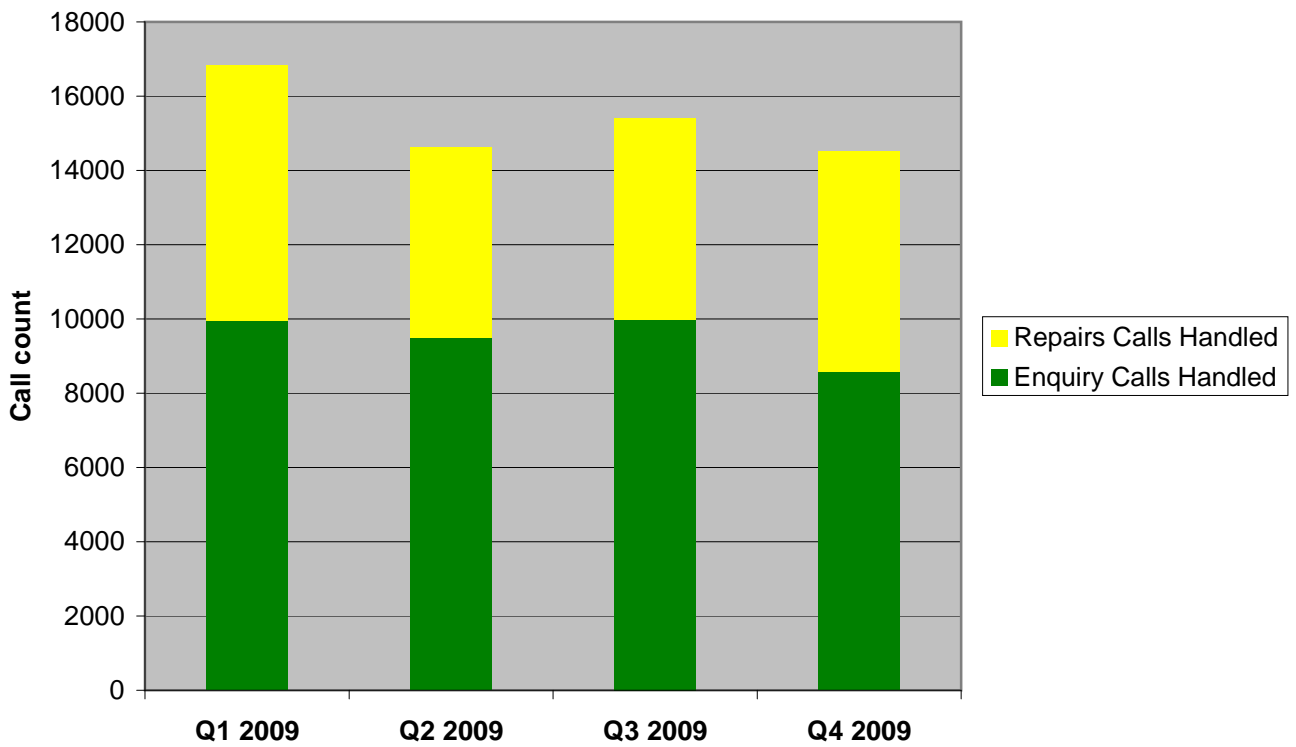
## 8. HOUSING TELEPHONY PERFORMANCE (Owner John Young 01233 330865)

The Housing Service provides its own dedicated phone service for tenants, covering repairs and general housing enquiries. The performance is highlighted below and shows in general a continued high level of performance. Last years reported figures are shown in (brackets) for comparison purposes. Highlights are:

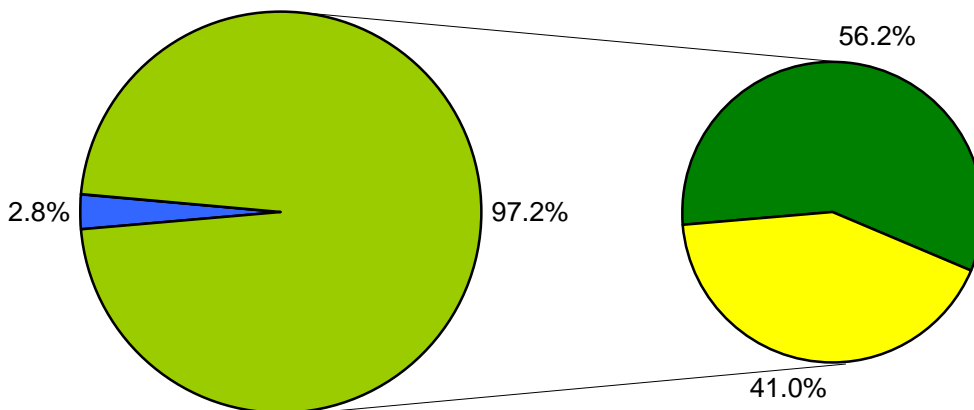
- 97% of all calls now answered within 2 minutes (96%)
- 41% of calls answered for repair enquiries (41%) with 56% for general housing enquiries (55%).
- \* Total call volumes marginally increased to over 60,000 in the year (58,169)

The next page includes the graphical representation of the overall performance.

### Housing Services Call Handling Number Of Calls Handled



### Housing Services Call Handling Q4 2009 Percentage Of Handled Calls Answered Within 2 Minutes



- All Calls Not Answered within 2 minutes
- All Calls Answered within 2 minutes
- General Enquiry calls answered within 2 minutes
- Repair calls answered within 2 minutes