



**Castle Vale**  
Community Housing  
*Part of The Pioneer Group*



# Annual Tenant Report

2019-2020

# Who CVCH are and what we do

Castle Vale Community Housing Association (CVCHA) was set up in 1997, initially to develop and manage new homes on the Castle Vale estate after residents voted to create a Housing Action Trust post regeneration. In 2015 a group structure was created with Castle Vale Community Housing (CVCH) at the heart of the organisation with, by far, the largest housing stock of The Pioneer Group. CVCH has strong values and works alongside partners within Castle Vale to ensure we deliver on our strategic goals within the community:

- **Provide great homes and excellent services**
- **Help people to reach their true potential**
- **Empower communities and identify community driven solutions**
- **Build a strong and value driven organisation**

## Introduction from CEO

*2019/20 was a year where we built on the changes of 2018/19 and started to put in place the foundations that we hope will lead to real service improvements moving forward. The most important of those was the work that went into contracting with two new providers within our Repairs and Asset Management department.*

*In autumn 2019 we moved to our new gas repairs provider, Status Heating. We were pleased with the smooth introduction of this new contract and the improved performance that has been delivered.*

*At the same time, we were exploring the options for how we could work with a new responsive repairs provider, and looking to enter into a more collaborative, partnership arrangement in this really important area of activity. We spent a lot of time, working with colleagues from our Scrutiny Panel, to look at the options, and ultimately decided to enter into partnership with Wrekin Housing Trust. The contract went live on 1 April 2020, but the work to get that point took place behind the scenes throughout the course of the year.*

*A highlight of 2019/20 was surely the Castle Vale Festival which took place in glorious sunshine on 30 August 2019. Pages 8 & 9 of this report remind us of the fantastic participation and the fun that was had that day.*

*The year ended in the most unusual of circumstances as the Covid-19 lockdown began. I am proud of the teams who worked incredibly hard to ensure that services could still be maintained while the staff were working remotely. I'm also incredibly proud of the volunteering and community spirit that sprang up across Castle Vale during this time.*

*In the year ahead we will be making sure that we are listening more to views and opinions of tenants and residents across the estate – so watch this space and we look forward to hearing more from you in the months ahead.*

**Simon Walker**  
Chief Executive of CVCH



# Meet CVCH Board

As a community-driven organisation we are proud to have retained a resident/tenant majority board with the chair of our board being a resident of Castle Vale. Our CVCH board is embedded in everything we do from policy to complaints and we are committed to retain this majority. The voice of the customer is what keeps us delivering to our strategic goals and in a way in which is aligned to our strong organisational values. Our independent board scrutinise and approve our policies, procedures and our performance to ensure that we deliver according to our service standards.



**Carmel Hill**



**David Pipe**



**John Whitman**



**Fern Watson**



**Ken Sims**



**Gary Dulson**

## **A message from Chair of CVCH Board, Sue Spicer**

*"The big area of focus for the board last year was the discussions and implementation of the new repair contract. The new allocations scheme and our approach to income management were also quite significant pieces of work that the Board had input into and signed off. We are closely monitoring arrears and the ongoing impact of welfare reform, this is an area where we have made good progress over the past 12 months.*

*During the year we said goodbye to Wendy Walsh, Carmel Hill and Amy Mullins-Downes, we would like to thank them for their input into the Board and their commitment to the tenants. We are now working hard to recruit new Board Members and welcome interested residents to get in touch to find out more.*

*Who would have thought that we would find ourselves in the position we are in now at the start of the past year. We are heading into uncertain times but we want to assure residents that our communities remain a priority in all that we do. All teams are reviewing new ways of working to provide as much support as possible and we will endeavour to work with our residents and communicate these important updates regularly. We may have a different year ahead of us as we adapt our service deliveries to the current climate, however, CVCH's commitment to the safety of residents remains very much the same."*

**Sue Spicer**  
Chair of CVCH Board



# Resident involvement

**Here at CVCH we are really keen to hear what our residents think about the services we provide, and as a resident-led organisation we are passionate about getting residents involved; there are many important roles our residents play in the running of our organisation and the voice of our customer is vital.**

**We are always looking for residents to be involved in shaping the organisation and the services we offer to our tenants. As part of the community, we recognise it is important for tenants to be part of both our governance structure and important decisions we make as an organisation.**

**Whether this be part of our board, a member of our scrutiny panel or even letting us know we can check in with you now and again to see how things are going, please get in touch.**

*If you are interested and would like more information, please contact **Becki Winkless** on **Rebecca.Winkless@cvch.org.uk** or on **07956 007 696***

## Scrutiny Panel

The scrutiny panel is a tenant run panel which supports CVCH to drive efficiency. This panel ensures that policies and procedures are fit for purpose our performance is looked into and challenged if required. The scrutiny panel work alongside our CVCH board in our resident majority governance structure and are the eyes and ears within the community.

This year also saw CVCH concentrate on our income service and the processes and policies within that service area. We firstly asked our Scrutiny Panel members to come in and undertake a desktop review of the whole service. They shadowed the team, interviewed the officers, and quizzed them on each scenario to fully understand the structure of the team and the processes followed. A recommendation came out of the review for the way our arrears are processed so we set to work on updating the policy and procedure. The Scrutiny Panel were involved at every stage in shaping the procedure to ensure it worked effectively for both the business and the residents – CVCH Board approved it and its now in action!



## Block Champions

One of the important roles is our Block Champions; these are residents that live in blocks and monitor the cleaning and gardening services for us; alongside our Estates Team they grade the blocks and report back to us on the standards of both of those services from a resident's point of view. We use these reports when processing complaints about services, when reviewing contracts, and share the reports at contractor meetings to help them improve their service or use as a compliment if they are doing a great job!

## Tenants' Voice

We have signed up as an early adopter of the new national Together with Tenants initiative. The national aim of Together with Tenants is to build a collaborative, balanced relationship between housing associations and their tenants & residents. The Resident Inclusion Strategy will help deliver a plan that involves clearly setting out what tenants can expect from CVCH. It also seeks to give residents a strong role in scrutinising their landlord in the future.

As part of the Matrix Housing Partnership, we helped support the initiative in the Midlands by participating in an event at Millennium Point involving residents from all over the region. We organised for eight of our tenants to attend the conference to hear about the project, give their thoughts and feedback and chat to and share ideas with other Housing Associations from across the country; the event was a great success and we are still working with the project team to see how this can move forward and improve resident involvement across the whole of the UK.



This year we also introduced new ways for Residents to get involved; we launched Community Chat; this is an interactive session held at various locations across the estate for Residents to pop in, grab a cuppa and a slice of cake and have a chat with us. This year we were visited by Jack Dromey MP, Councillor Suzanne Webb, Our local neighbourhood police team, HS2. Our staff also attend the event to showcase the work that we are doing throughout The Pioneer Group and give

residents the opportunity to tell us what they think; so far we have built a great partnership and together we have looked at ways of tackling the trolley issue on the estate, we have discussed how HS2 is going to affect the community and how we can benefit from it along with consulting on some services that really matter such as repairs, gas services, environmental issues, property allocations and youth services.



## Castle Vale Community Pledge

*In 2015 we made a 10 year promise to the Castle Vale community to demonstrate our commitment to our values and invest in the estate's long-term sustainability. We recognised that there needed to be clear financial commitment to continue delivering a range of 'added value' services that are beyond our core landlord responsibilities. Therefore, each year a minimum of £500k investment is made into the community to fund these services.*

**Compass Contribution:**

**£300,000**

Funding for support services such as an open access job clubs, family support, youth activities, and much more.



**Community Safety / CCTV:**

**£106,468**

Operating 79 cameras throughout the estate, reporting incidents to the local police team.



**Debt Advice:**

**£40,000**

Access to debt advice service for Castle Vale tenants & residents to help anyone who finds themselves in a financial crisis.



**Digital Inclusion:**

**£24,110**

Offering help to all Castle Vale residents to increase confidence with computers and accessing services online.



*This year's contribution has provided the community with over*

**£700,000**

*of funded services for residents including:*

**Castle Vale Stadium:**

**£98,953**

Maintaining Castle Vale Stadium as a community facility for club, resident and school bookings with a fully operational team.



**Neighbourhood Partnerships:**

**£41,066**

Enabling residents, community groups, and partners to work together to make Castle Vale a better place to live.



**Estate Services:**

**£63,857**

Helping keep our community safe and clean by reducing litter, fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour.



**Apprentices:**

**£26,623**

Offering two year placements that provide successful local candidates with a formal qualification, work experience and a clear career path.



# Castle Vale Festival

*From listening to our residents, we heard that our residents missed events such as Castle Vale Carnival and the fun it brought having family, friends and neighbours all together in one place. We wanted to bring our residents together again, to have that sense of community spirit, and so worked with all our teams, stakeholders and partners to deliver Castle Vale Festival.*



Hosted at Castle Vale Stadium, it was a great opportunity to launch the new look of the Stadium as well as share local information and celebrate our partners who do great work on the estate.

To make it accessible as possible for our residents, the event was free for attendees to get involved with activities, meet new people, learn about Castle Vale's assets and have as much fun possible!

We had food, inflatables, face painting, football matches, the animal man, prize draws, arts and crafts and Castle Vale's very own beach!



showcased the amazing conservation area and the great work they do across the estate; and Castle Vale Scouts who put on a small camping session for youngsters.

Luckily the weather was on our side for the day which ensure that Castle Vale beach went down a storm with families relaxing in the deck chairs with an ice cream while the kids built sandcastle and had a great time playing! A great day was had by all and it certainly put the Stadium well and truly on the Castle Vale map.



Our first ever Colour Run was also held during the festival so that participants could get involved on the day and spend the day with their friends and family. This was Birmingham's only free colour run and we had more than 180 participants vibrantly representing the vale throughout the day.

We worked in partnership with some great organisations across the estate such as Switch Radio to provide free entertainment and live broadcasting throughout the day; Romulus Football Academy to provide free football training; Communitality Environmental Trust who



## Let's get Digital

This year we teamed up with Compass Support and, with £10k of funding from The Good Things Foundation, we were able to launch a brand new Computer Course for beginners. One of the most essential skills for life has been identified as digital skills and the ability to use a computer so we recognised it was important to be able to offer these skills to our residents.

We have created a session every Friday morning for residents to access The Sanctuary and log on to our ELearning portal Learn My Way; this teaches the basics of using a computer, right through to job searching, managing money and keeping in touch with family & friends.

We start off by finding out a little bit about the resident and what they enjoy, what interests they have and what they would like to learn from the sessions, we then tailor the course to them using Learn My Way and other digital platforms such as YouTube, gaming, digital colouring, bingo and much more. This course enabled us to teach just over 250 residents the basics of digital and we encourage them to continue with their learning.



## Community Organisers

During 2019 we were approached by residents who wanted to get more involved with community activities and residents who wanted to access community activities – a perfect match! We teamed up with Compass support and Ageing Better to ensure their Community Organisers got more involved with The Pioneer Group/CVCH and to support these connections.

Firstly we launched an Arts & Crafts group. Based at Phoenix Court residents from across the Tyburn Ward come together every Thursday afternoon to get creative; they chat and laugh over a cuppa and produce some of the most amazing art work; we have seen Easter Bunnies from paper plates, miniature canvases, Halloween Decorations from crepe paper and old fashion Christmas paper chains produced in their masses...along with the odd birthday, anniversary or get well soon card.

We then launched our very popular Community Café. We trained five residents and all they gained their Food Hygiene certificate! Every Monday morning a flurry of activity comes from the commercial kitchen



in Phoenix Court ready for opening at 12 noon; the café is visited by residents in Phoenix Court, those across the estate and further afield and also some of our very own staff members. The café is a hive of activity for 2 hours with residents chatting to each other, chatting to staff or simply listening or reading a paper whilst soaking up the vibrant atmosphere whilst enjoying a filling jacket potato, a fresh healthy sandwich or the special of the day!

Everyone knows the best way to get people involved is with food so we continued with our regular events at both of our older persons blocks but with a few extra tasty treats to get the wider community more involved. By showcasing the schemes introducing residents to each other, great friendships blossomed from sharing fond memories of Caste Vale. This year has seen a beach themed party with fancy dress, mocktails and a barbecue; a valentines evening with a singer and buffet; and of course the famous Christmas dinner with a three course sit down meal, carol singing and a visit from Santa Claus himself!

# Estate Services

The Estates Team are responsible for ensuring Castle Vale remains a clean, safe and secure place for the community. We have been improving the way we work and see how we can better utilise the teams' practices to make sure the estate is kept to a high standard.

*This year we have;*

- Worked closely with tenants to ensure we are delivering a good service and tailoring our approach to areas where issues have been highlighted;
- Developed relationships with Jaguar Land Rover which resulted in their staff volunteering to assist with community activities;



- Built better relationships with our contractors in both cleaning and grounds maintenance to ensure that the service is been delivered to the specification set out and implementing changes for to deliver a better service;
- Delivered in-depth refresher training on fire safety for all our estates team to ensure their knowledge is up to date and compliance is maintained;
- Co-ordinated the external railing programme to be delivered by our internal team;
- Commissioned 'Keep Britain Tidy' to undertake a Local Environmental Quality survey of the area;



Removed  
**114 tonnes** of  
bulk waste and  
collected **1765**  
bags of litter;





- ***Got involved with local community projects to support arranged litter picks and clearing of pathways with other organisations;***
- ***Developed better usage of the IT system to communicate and report issues more effectively; and***
- ***Formed closer relationships with other departments and partners to identify areas of improvement and concern across Castle Vale.***

Our Estates Team have a wide range of projects they are focussing on next year to offer more improvements to the Castle Vale community. This includes working closer with other departments as well as West Midlands Police and Birmingham City Council to deliver an Environment, Education and Enforcement campaign; Engaging with the community to identify first-hand the issues residents are facing and support them with a great service delivery; Detecting minor repairs and addressing them straight away and where this is not possible making safe; Additional training; and working alongside the housing team to support the delivery of the Community Action Plan.



**9** arrests made in 2019/20 where CCTV was directly involved.

## CCTV

The CCTV system is recording 24 hours a day and is regularly maintained to ensure it is always functioning as it should be. There are 80 cameras operating throughout the estate in various locations and we have started working even closer with ASB, Neighbourhoods, and West Midlands Police to address issues across the estate; this has resulted in a number of arrests been made.

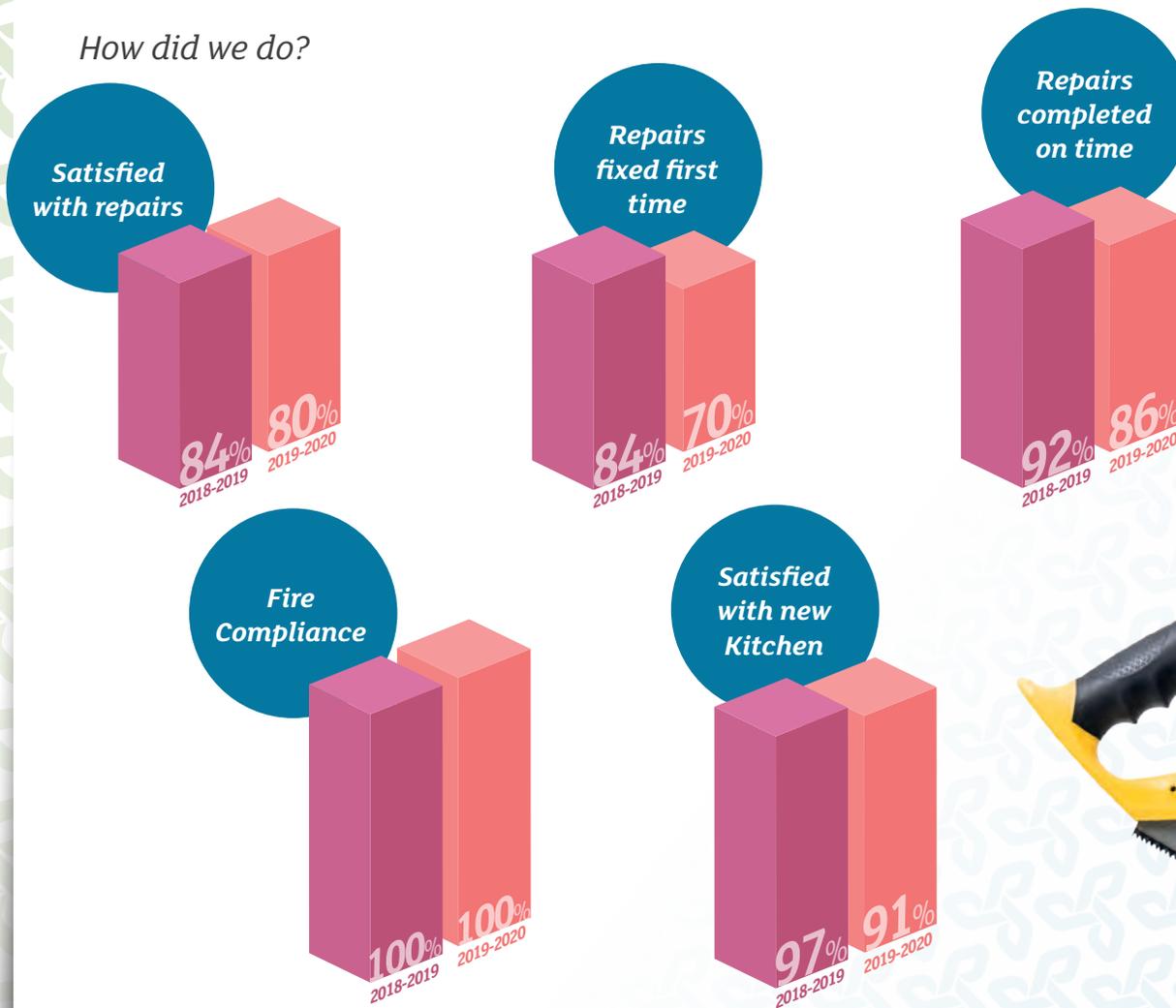
Car theft has been the hot topic on Castle Vale this year and we are working closely with West Midlands Police to tackle this issue. From the stats we gather, we identify trends and focus our CCTV cameras in the hot spot areas to increase the chance of identifying the individuals involved. Car theft is slowly decreasing on the estate but it is still one of the main ones to continue to monitor.

To increase the performance of our cameras, and offer better results for our residents, we are currently in the process of upgrading to High Definition for a better picture quality to assist with various types of identification. This is already showing us great results as we've had a real increase in identifying fly-tipping offenders.

# Repairs, Maintenance & Voids

## Performance Information

How did we do?



## Response Repairs

2019/20 saw the final year of our arrangement with L Daniels to deliver the repairs and maintenance for our Castle Vale tenants. A lot of work with the contractor designed to improve the services that you receive. However, it was clear that we could do better and part of being better was listening to what you had to say about the service.

Throughout the year, the asset management team engaged with you (our residents) through surveys, engagement events and via your very own scrutiny panel. From this we have listened to what you felt was most important in the delivery of a repairs and maintenance service. Amongst other themes, what came through loud and clear was your desire to have a service that communicates with you efficiently and delivers a quality product.



With this in mind the asset management team spend time developing, negotiating and procuring a new supplier to deliver the repairs and maintenance. Therefore on the 1st April 2020, our contract with L Daniels will cease and we welcome a new partnership with Wrekin Housing Group to deliver the new service.

Wrekin were selected as they offer a service standard that is almost unique in the industry. We have agreed that the service will have two key drivers.

*These are:*

over **80%**  
of routine repairs  
requests will be  
dealt with on the  
same day

over **95%**  
of you will rate the  
service as good.

We are confident that you will see a noticeable change in the speed and efficiency in this important service going forward and can be assured that we have listened to you in order to shape the service.



## Team News

When asking our residents about the service, it was coming across loud and clear that the quality of service delivery was really important to you, therefore, over the last 12 months we have changed the structure of the asset management team to increase resources in delivery management. This is intended to put more resources into the services that

matter most to you and improve the overall experience you have when you have cause to contact us. We are confident that this is a positive movement implemented as a direct result of your feedback.

# New Contractors

## Gas

We have appointed a new gas contractor Status Heating. They were the preferred bidder following an extensive selection process throughout the summer of 2019. Some of their winning characteristics were the way the company has embraced IT to delivery efficient services and their focus on customer service and delivery.



## Repairs

We have appointed Wrekin Housing to delivery our responsive repairs and voids works, they are industry leaders in the delivery of this sort of work and we look forward to working with them over the coming months and years.

## Lifts

2019 saw the beginning of a procurement exercise for a new Lift maintenance contractor, this will see all lifting equipment across the association being maintained by a single supplier making management of this arrangements easier and more efficient. This work includes a significant updates to lift equipment in the two towers which we will see in the spring of 2021.

## Electrical Testing

2019 saw the employment of a dedicated electrician to deliver electrical safety tests across residents' homes. Some of you will have already met Dave West, if not you will be getting at letter from him soon arranging an appointment to make sure that the electrical installation to your home is safe.

## Going Green

2019/20 saw the installation of solar panels to the High Street offices and the Football Stadium greatly reducing our organisations carbon footprint.



## Aids and Adaptations

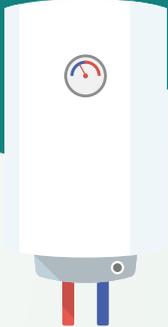
This year witnessed our busiest yet, with improvements to resident's homes to make everyday activities easier. We have worked closely with Birmingham City Council and as a result was able to deliver over £116,000 worth of adaptations in 41 homes.

# Major Works & Planned Maintenance

The delivery of the 2019/20 program has been hugely successful despite the challenges faced by the team through structural changes and the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis.

In summary, the team delivered:

**8 boiler replacements**



**11 property window replacements**



**180 kitchens**



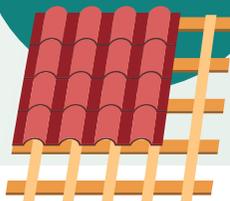
Our kitchen replacement will continue throughout 2020, though we may experience some delays if restrictions come into play with COVID-19.



**pump replacement at Topcliffe house**

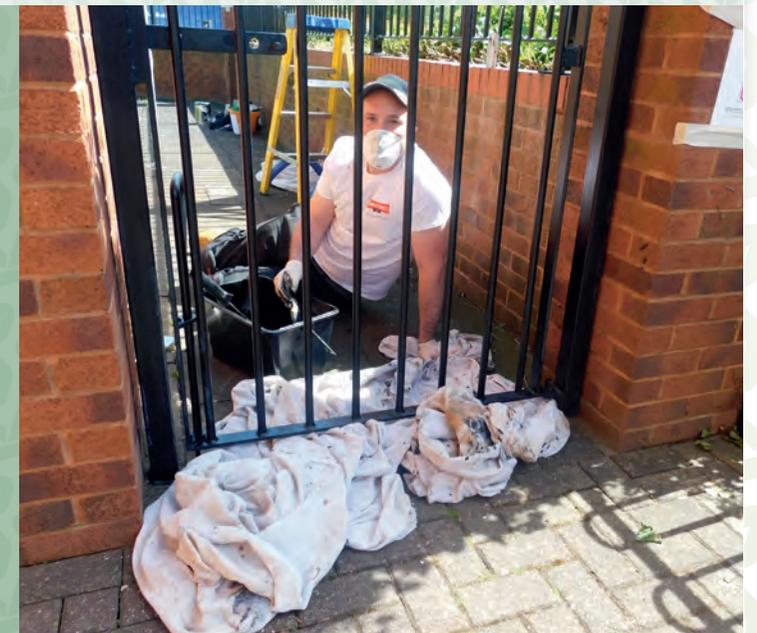


**and a number of external door and roofing replacements.**



Our painting program was slightly curtailed due to COVID-19 with the 2019/20 program delivering 238 completed properties, however we are confident these will be successfully completed in the 2020/21 program.

The start of 2020 also saw the introduction of a small direct painting team within the Estates Team and they have been carrying out internal communal area decorations and painting of external railings throughout the estate.



# Fire Safety

## Fire Risk Assessment

The annual fire risk assessment programme is undertaken on a yearly basis in accordance with the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. All offices, community assets and the communal areas of flats will have a fire risk assessment undertaken by a competent person from Fire Comply.

These fire risk assessments will identify and evaluate sources of ignition, sources of fuel, active and passive fire protection measures, the working or social environment and emergency procedures.

Records are kept of how recommendations made in the fire risk assessment have been responded to, including the resolution of any management issues.

Any remedial works identified in the risk assessment are undertaken within the target timescale. If any remedial works are delayed, postponed or cancelled, a record will be made detailing the reasons.

## Fire Equipment

We are in the process of carrying out a full stock condition of the fire equipment at our complex buildings and communal areas. This work is being carried out by CCSS who specialise in fire equipment. Once this list has been compiled, this will be checked to make sure all of the equipment is being serviced and maintained.

Estates and Facilities Teams also carry out monthly and weekly checks on the fire alarms and emergency lighting.

## HSSG/Fire Working Group

A fire working group has been put together following the HSSG meetings. This group is led by Keith West who is our Consultant Health & Safety Advisor. Keith West carried out inspections of all our complex buildings to ensure long-term fire safety for all our residents.

The KPIs and actions are discussed at the HSSG, which is held every 2 months. Balcony inspections are being carried out on a monthly basis and being reported at this Forum.



# Results of the Survey

It is important for us to understand your experience of the services we provide through the feedback you give us. Resident feedback helps us gain insight on what works well and helps us shape our services to ensure that we are delivering our commitment to the community and understand those we serve.

**81%** *Satisfied with the overall quality of their home*

**69%** *Satisfied with the way CVCH handles repairs and maintenance*

*\* Throughout the course of the year, CVCH worked hard with our contractors to try to address the concerns of tenants and we were pleased to see a slight increase in satisfaction (up from 64% to 69%). However, CVCH Board felt that the underlying performance required a more radical solution to the problems, and so from 1 April 2020 we have new arrangements to deliver a repairs and maintenance service in partnership with Wrekin Housing Trust.*

**75%** *Satisfied with the overall appearance of their neighbourhood*

**74%** *Satisfied that they feel safe in their neighbourhood*

**85%** *Satisfied with Castle Vale as a place to live*

**81%** *Satisfied that their rent provides value for money*

**57%** *Satisfied with the opportunities to get in involved with CVCH or other parts of the Pioneer Group*

*\* Throughout the course of the year we tried to extend the ways in which people could become involved with our structures and continue to ensure that residents are at the heart of what we do. Our Scrutiny Group was strengthened and we developed new approaches such as Community Chat. We will continue to maintain this into the current year.*

**60%** *Satisfied that CVCH listens to their views and acts on them*

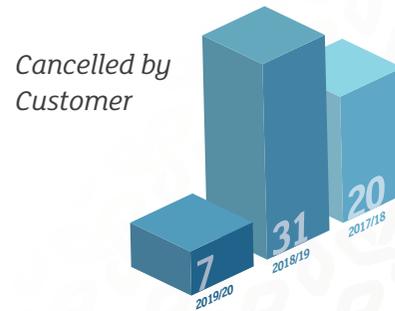
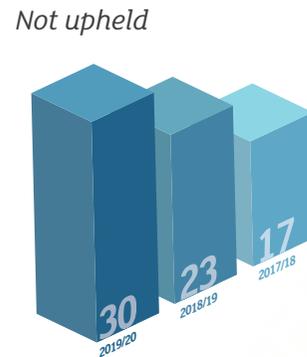
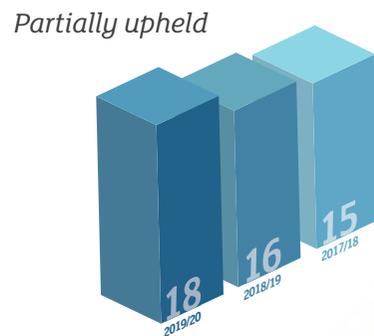
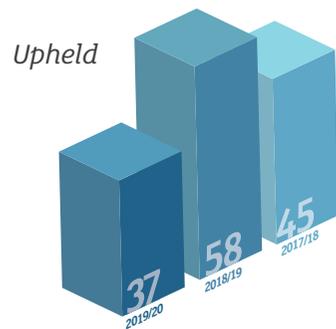
*\* We were very concerned by this feedback and as a result we are launching a major listening campaign which will commence over autumn/winter of 2020/21. This will be at the heart of our activity across the Castle Vale estate and we will provide the foundation for how we listen and respond to the concerns of tenants and residents moving forward.*

**68%** *Satisfied that CVCH provides opportunities to make their views known*

**89%** *Satisfied that CVCH has friendly and approachable staff*

**80%** *Satisfied with the service provided by CVCH*

## Complaints Data



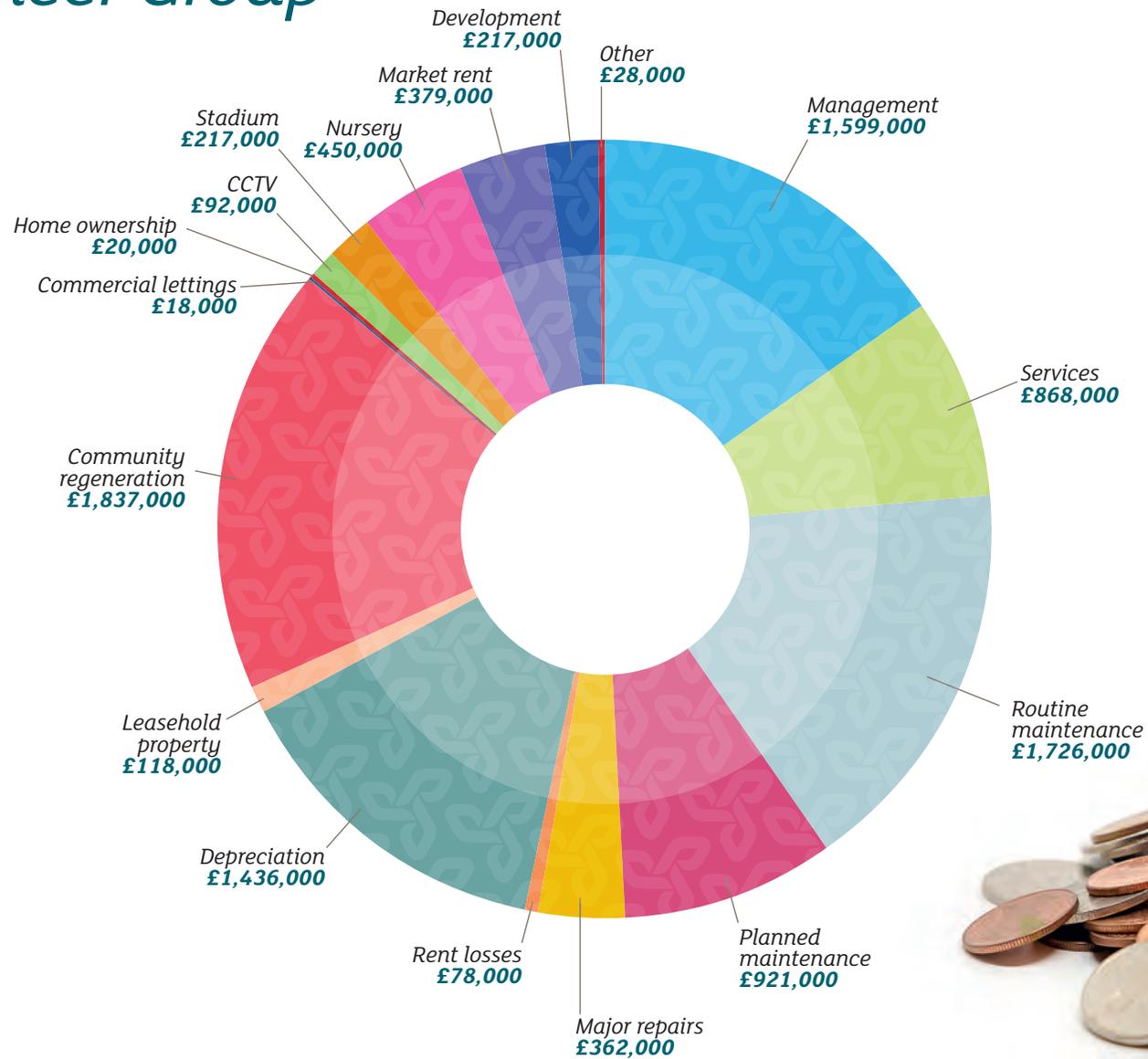
The internal management of the Complaints process has been subject to considerable review through the course of the year. Training was provided for staff who are responsible for responding to complaints and work is ongoing to support the development and improvement of the procedure. This is an important service to get right for our residents therefore a project has therefore been included in the Operational Plan for 2020/21 to develop and deliver a Gold Class Complaints service.

## Compliments

During the year, a total of **57** Compliments were received from tenants and residents about our staff or services were received.

We always welcome feedback from our residents, so if you would like to get in touch with yours, please visit us at [www.cvch.org.uk](http://www.cvch.org.uk)

# Spending for The Pioneer Group



## Legal status of structure

**The Pioneer Group** – is a Registered Provider with the Regulator of Social Housing. It is an exempt charity. It owns all of the housing assets of the Group and holds all loans and other liabilities.

**CVCH** – Is a trading name of The Pioneer Group to manage the social housing assets owned in Castle Vale. The work is overseen by an operational committee of the Group called Castle Vale Community Housing Board. It has a resident majority on the board and delegated authority to ensure services are delivered to Castle Vale residents.

**Compass Support** – is a Company limited by guarantee and is a subsidiary of the Pioneer Group.

**Pioneer Places** – is a trading name of The Pioneer Group for market rented homes, shared ownership and sales of the Group assets.

**SGOHT** – is a Company limited by guarantee and is a subsidiary of the Pioneer Group.

**Merlin Venture** – is a Company limited by guarantee and is a subsidiary of the Pioneer Group.



11 High Street | Castle Vale | Birmingham B35 7PR

Tel: **0121 748 8100** Email: [contactus@cvch.org.uk](mailto:contactus@cvch.org.uk)

[www.cvch.org.uk](http://www.cvch.org.uk)