



# Saffron E-News

The digital update for Saffron tenants

## Saffron tenants and community leaders create exciting new approach to service quality and involvement

After speaking with our tenants and members of the communities where we operate, we realised there were many people with a real commitment to Saffron but the ways for them to engage with us were not fully joined up or fully effective. Our new approach, which has been designed by our tenants and community leaders aims to take the best parts of the different ways of engaging with Saffron over the years, including Customer Voice, STAG and shareholding, and has involved leaders from each of these groups working together to create something really exciting for the future.



"It's taken us a long time to get here, but if we can deliver what we've promised it will be brilliant, it's very exciting"  
- John

Tenant and community leaders told us what was really needed was meaningful involvement and the ability to hold us to account for the quality of service and communication. Our new approach has been incorporated into Saffron's governing documents in a new rule called

'Resident and community involvement' and set out in full within a newly created Charter, which is attached to this email.

We thought what better way to tell you about this really important piece of work than from the tenant and community leaders themselves. Saffron tenants, community leaders and Founding Community Members, Lauren Bromage, Cathy Combs, Linda Sinclair, John Overton, Ken Warman, Colin Gould and Board member Alison Inman update us on what they have created and share their thoughts on what the future holds.

### What were your initial thoughts when it was decided to talk with you about the structures in place for Saffron to be accountable to tenants and their communities?

Cathy explained "I felt that it was about time for Saffron to put in place structures to be accountable to tenants and communities". Lauren added "I feel that Saffron had lost the trust of tenants, so I knew that I wanted to be part of regaining that trust and improving accountability." This feeling was also reflected by John, Colin and Ken who felt strongly that the time was right to do something so positive. Colin also shared his views on what success would look like for the work "I asked myself a number of questions – are tenants going to be listened to, are the structures going to be fit for purpose and who decides if they are? Now we have achieved that, it's up to us to stick to it and make it work."



"...it was important that we thought about the community, the tenants and management as we all need to work together"  
- Ken



"..it's a positive working relationship between those involved to work together to improve things"  
- Lauren

## Who has been involved in the project and why was it important they were?

Alison explained "Saffron has benefitted over the years from some incredibly deeply committed tenants and residents who've given massive amounts of their time to help Saffron be as good as it can be and it's really important those people are still involved, but that we are also a welcoming place for people who've not been involved before. I think it's important to build on what the different groups of tenants have done in the past, the new structure hard wires it into the DNA of the organisation, so our tenants and wider community will be part of it. It's moving to the whole community working together in the interests of the whole community."

As Chair of Customer Voice, Lauren also felt that the people who needed to make it happen in practice had to be involved "Everyone from colleagues, Board members and former shareholders were involved as we all need to be part of the change". Cathy, along with Linda Sinclair have also been reflecting on tenants' views from their social media platform, which they have run independently for 5 years, as she explains "We hear daily what tenants are going through in areas like repairs, so it's important that we have a link with Saffron to support other tenants and work more closely together." Linda added "The Facebook page has been a way for tenants to raise any queries, but it's also interactive and can often join tenants together. We're really pleased that we are going to be working together with Saffron moving forward as the page is incorporated into their other social media channels and will be a great way of recruiting Community Members."

## What has it been like working together over the past year on this project?

Ken describes how it has been "We had lots of Zoom calls and people were really getting on well and everyone was trying to get it right, we all came up with ideas and highlighted challenges. Finally, it was important that we thought about the community, the tenants and management as we all need to work together. We have our first Community Triangle being set up, which will be interesting - where tenants, Saffron teams and the community come together for the good of everyone and the whole area." Lauren added "It's been nice to see Saffron so open to change". Cathy agreed that "It's been a great opportunity to speak freely to Saffron." Colin explained "Saffron really appear to be listening and taking on the views of the tenants." This is something that Alison thinks is key to the success of the new structure, adding "I'm grateful that people have put the time and effort into making these improvements. People have been really open and honest, and I hope that is how we will continue to work in the future."

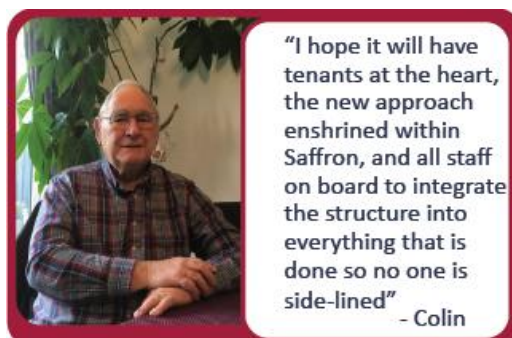


"We're really pleased that we are going to be working together with Saffron moving forward"  
- Linda

## What do you hope to achieve in the first year?

Cathy shared what she would like to see "Involvement of more tenants and for Saffron to listen and be receptive to making changes."

Lauren added "Significant change with regards to building trust



"I hope it will have tenants at the heart, the new approach enshrined within Saffron, and all staff on board to integrate the structure into everything that is done so no one is side-lined"  
- Colin

between Saffron and its tenants but also Saffron being more open to listening to its tenants. I don't want Saffron to see it as "they are bashing us", but that it's a positive working relationship between those involved to work together to improve things."

The community leaders are also itching to get going with things, with John adding "It's taken us a long time to get here, but if we can deliver what we've promised it will be brilliant, it's very exciting". Colin wants to see the community membership increasing, explaining "We need to get the committees full and up and running" and Ken shared his vision for the first year focusing on teamwork "We all need to work as a team and communicate much more, moving from being dictated to, to working together". Alison, who is known across the housing sector for not letting the grass grow under her feet, outlined exactly what the new structure had to get its teeth into "We have some really meaty pieces of work to get stuck into and the Social Housing White Paper has given us a 'to do' list. We need to balance the quality of our existing homes, building new homes to support the acute housing need in the area, focus on net zero and the green agenda and do all of this with tenant scrutiny at the heart. We need to be open and transparent about what we do. We need to listen to our tenants when they give us feedback and act upon it."

"It's been a great opportunity to speak freely to Saffron"  
- Cathy

### **What are your thoughts on the future of Saffron's tenant engagement?**

John shared "I have been so impressed with this whole project and as long as we stick with it and make it happen it will be of great benefit to everyone". This was echoed by Colin who explained "I hope it will have tenants at the heart, the new approach is enshrined within Saffron, and all staff are on board to integrate the structure into everything that is done so no one is side-lined."

Lauren set out an ambitious target "If it goes well and Saffron and tenants are both on board with the changes being made, I think it can be really positive and people will say "go and live in a Saffron house". Saffron will also be more understanding of those who are living in them." With Cathy adding "For it to succeed, Saffron needs to listen to what tenants are saying. We are the customers, and, like any business, the customers know what they want, and Saffron needs to understand that and work with us towards to that goal post."

Ken explains "If your landlord cares about you, it works. This is Saffron's opportunity to start again and I'm really optimistic about what we can do. I'm all for it, I always have been."

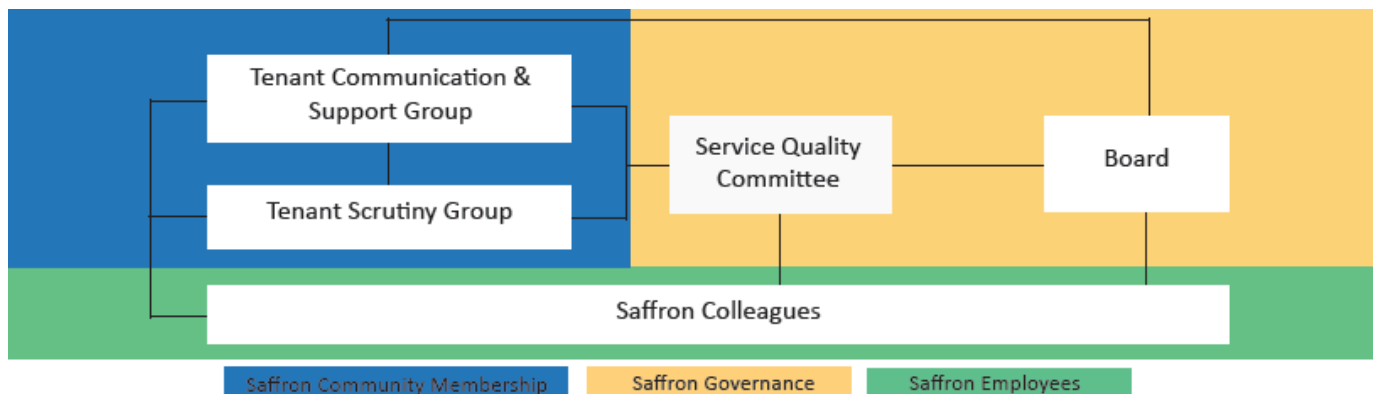
And a final message from Alison "We have so many opportunities for tenants and community leaders to get involved with Saffron in this new structure and approach. It's not just about the work of the Service Quality Committee though, it's important to offer a menu of opportunities for tenants and residents to be involved in. So, for some people that might be answering surveys, for some that might be helping with our communications, and for some it might be feedback on our repairs service for example, all ultimately making a difference to Saffron and its communities."

"We have so many opportunities for tenants and community leaders to get involved with Saffron in this new structure and approach"  
- Alison



There are different ways in which the new Saffron Community Members can be part of, and help shape,

our tenant/community engagement, which includes the Tenant Communication & Support Group, Tenant Scrutiny Group, Community Triangles and six monthly meetings with members of Saffron's Board and Executive Team. Below you can find the new structure and further information on the different ways you could get involved:



- **Tenant Scrutiny Group** - tenants, who with the support of Saffron, will scrutinise and influence performance, processes, and policies. There will be a direct link to Board so they can hear the tenant voice.
- **Tenant Communication and Support Group** - with the support of Saffron, will oversee, monitor, and influence communication between Saffron, its tenants and residents, and facilitate tenant to tenant support and communication.
- **Service Quality Committee** - the Committee's purpose is to receive feedback from Saffron Community Members (including the Tenant Scrutiny Group and the Tenant Communication and Support Group); and to monitor and oversee continuous improvements to the quality of our services and our tenants' and residents' experience, overseeing compliance with the Regulator's Consumer Standards.
- **Community Triangles** - will connect Saffron Community Members (our residents and community leaders) with Saffron colleagues around a specific community. Community walk arounds will be held quarterly by the Community Triangles and will periodically host informal visits of Board Members. Their purpose is to act as a key engagement forum going forward. They will positively promote Saffron's role and reputation in the communities we live and work in. They will also provide an opportunity to receive feedback and note any actions required during walk arounds.

**We would love to hear from you if you would like to be part of the new Community Membership. If you are interested in finding out more, please email us your name, email address and telephone number to [communitymembership@saffronhousing.co.uk](mailto:communitymembership@saffronhousing.co.uk) and let us know which of the below you would like to be involved in:**

- **Tenant Communication and Support**
- **Tenant scrutiny**
- **Attend six monthly meetings with members of Saffron's Board and Executive Team**
- **Attend the Community Triangles**

## Tenancy and Independent Living Skills Workshops

Your Own Place, a Norwich-based social enterprise, have delivered Tenancy and Independent Living Skills workshops for our tenants (TILS+) which have received some really positive feedback. The workshops aim to make a difference to the lives of our tenants and cover topics such as:



The workshops are now being offered to the tenants of Freebridge, Orwell and Broadland housing associations. This exciting partnership working with Your Own Place and members of Independent East (an informal alliance of 5 community-focused housing associations in the East of England) aims to help more people into employment, reduce rent arrears and reduce potential future evictions.

Starting in January, the workshops will be a mix of digital and face to face sessions at locations across Norfolk and Suffolk, providing opportunities for people of all ages to develop and build on existing skills.

CEO of Your Own Place, Rebecca White, said: “We’re absolutely delighted to be working not just with the residents of four regional housing associations, but with four housing associations that want to collaborate, support residents from across East Anglia and recognise that our Tenancy & Independent Living Skills Plus (TILS+) are beneficial for any person in any situation. Their compassion and understanding that having an impact on lives goes way beyond just being their landlord is why we want to work with them and be a part of building on the skills that tenants already have. We know that the residents we work with are experts in their own lives, we respect their experiences and contributions and love the two-way learning. Fun, participative and engaging workshops will be delivered with 400 tenants during 2022 across eight different locations – with the aim of building the skills to be happy in their homes and ultimately prevent homelessness.


Paula Tuck, Assistant Director of Customer Services at Saffron and member of the Independent East Residents Group, said: “We have been really pleased with how well the workshops have been received by Saffron’s tenants and it’s fantastic that it’s now going to be delivered by Independent East to help even more tenants across the region. Not only is it a great opportunity for them to learn new skills, but it provides scope for tenants to meet those from other housing associations, share their experiences, support one another and help create cohesive communities.”

Chantay, one of our tenants, has spoken about her experience on the digital workshops. You can watch her video by clicking on the image below:



To find out more about Your Own Place, please visit their website [here](#).

## You said, we did

You said...	...We did.
 <p>You said it can sometimes take too long to get through to the contact centre by phone.</p>	<p>We have now seen a reduction in call wait times. This has been helped by filling vacant positions and improving our queue buster call back facility.</p>
 <p>You said that the reported repair doesn't always match with what the craftworker turns up to do.</p>	<p>Our contact centre staff have undertaken further training to better diagnose the repair being reported.</p>
 <p>You said response times for emails were too long.</p>	<p>We have changed our auto replies on our email acknowledgement to make it clearer if there is a need to report a more urgent issue.</p>
 <p>You said we don't get an update when further work is required, after the original repair was looked into.</p>	<p>We are working on being able to get a automated update to you, when the wait for materials to complete the repair remains outstanding.</p>
 <p>You said I am unhappy with how my Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) report is being dealt with.</p>	<p>We have made a number of changes to the ASB process and introduced a specialist team to respond to your intial reports within an agreed time frame.</p>
 <p>You said I am unhappy that drug usage continues to be an issue within the area I live in.</p>	<p>We said that we continue to give advice and support of other specialist agencies that we work with in the community. This includes the police, Early Help Hub and substance &amp; alcohol services within each local authority area.</p>
 <p>You said I don't always get an update from the same person when I have made a complaint.</p>	<p>We have changed the complaints process and now have a dedicated officer in place to be your point of contact throughout your complaint journey.</p>

Our Customer Satisfaction surveys are a great way of gaining feedback from our tenants so we can see where we are doing things well or perhaps where we can improve. The surveys ask questions about our key frontline services, such as our Customer Contact Centre, Anti-Social Behaviour and Housing Management.

To the left is some of your feedback from those surveys and the actions we have taken as a result.

We always like to hear from our tenants, so if you would like to send us feedback, including a compliment, please fill out the feedback form on the 'Get in touch' website page [here](#).

## Grants given to community groups by Saffron's Community Foundation



In October 2020 we let you know that we had community project grants available and now we are pleased to announce that our Community Foundation has allocated almost all the funding to 13 local groups and not for profit organisations.

The funding will be used to help improve the lives of people across Norfolk and Suffolk by encouraging community engagement or providing training and educational activities.

Applicants ranged from local town and parish councils, to village halls, a bowls club and a charity which aims to help single people find housing. The maximum amount allocated to each group is £5,000. A panel made up of Saffron staff and two members of Customer Voice (Saffron's tenant representative group) reviewed applications and allocated funding to those that best meet the goal of enhancing the wellbeing of local communities.

Emillie Hildreth, Community Foundation Manager at Saffron, said: "The groups which have been allocated funding all share Saffron's vision to create positive futures not only for our tenants, but the wider community too. We're thrilled to be able to award the funding which should make a real difference."

One of the groups receiving £5,000 is Wacton Parish Council in South Norfolk. The money will go towards new play equipment in the Parish. Alan Arber, Parish Clerk, said: "This funding will make a huge difference to improving the facilities for local children. Sadly, the old equipment had become rotten and unusable so we are thrilled we will be able to install some new play equipment for many more families to enjoy."

Another group to benefit is Solo Housing, a charity which aims to prevent single people from becoming homeless. The £5,000 grant will be used to provide bespoke training to its residents to help them become self-employed makers of hand crafted jewellery. Zoe Webb from Solo Housing said: "Thanks to Saffron's Community Grant we have been able to launch this exciting new venture that recognises the potential in people and helps to provide opportunities in their community and away from homelessness."

The groups allocated funding are:

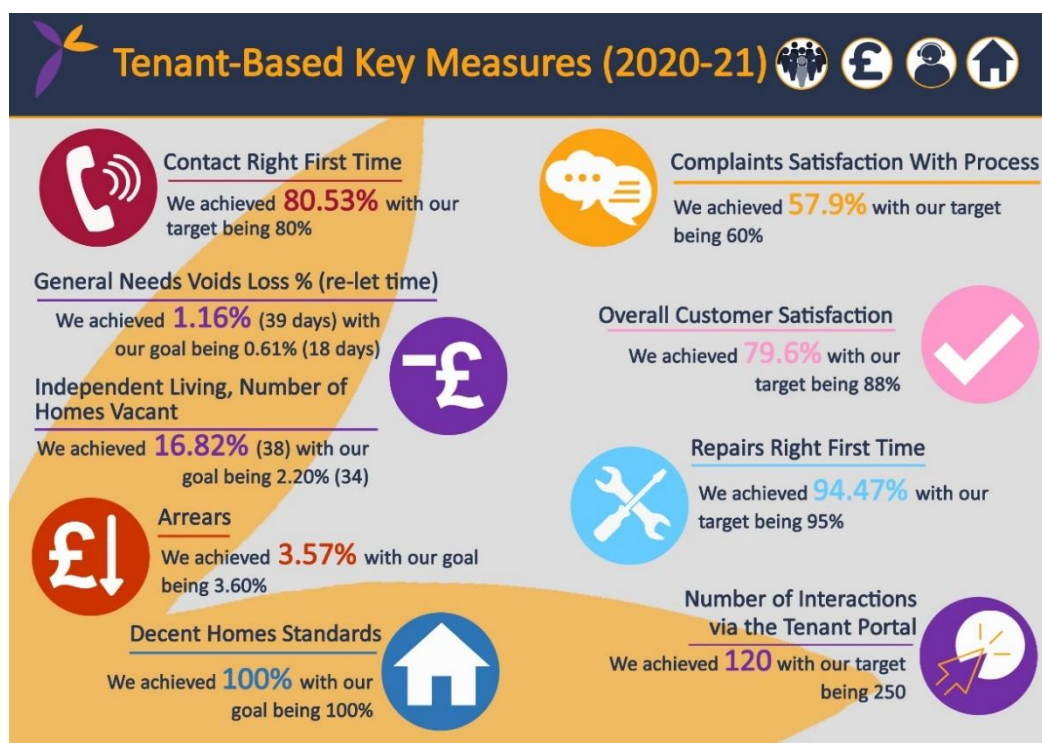
- Wacton Parish Council
- South Norfolk Tree Wardens
- Patteson Parish Room in Cringleford
- Hingham Luncheon Club
- Hethersett Bowls Club
- Friends of Tudd Valley
- Manor Field Parent Teacher Association
- Norfolk Schools Sailing Association
- Mind The Gap
- Harleston Guides and Rangers
- Shelfhanger Village Hall
- Ted Ellis Trust
- Solo Housing

## Tenant Vital Signs

Our tenants selected a number of Key Performance Indicators, with one-year targets for the year 2020 -2021.

Our Key Performance Indicators are used to measure success within Saffron. You can find more information, including the previous statistics on our website [here](#).

Below are the latest figures for December 2021:



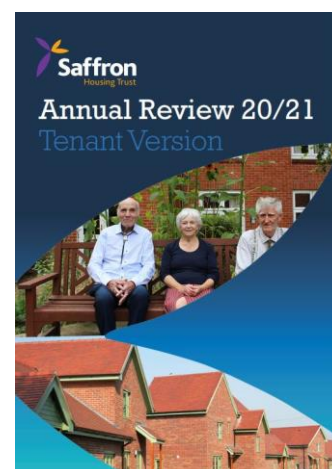
## Read our latest Annual Review

Find out more about what we have been up to over the past year in our Tenant Annual Review. It is a bitesize version of our full Annual Review giving you an overview of our performance and key highlights over the 2020/21 financial year.

It focuses on a number of areas, including:

- 1. About Us** – which looks at our History, Purpose & Vision.
- 2. Homes** - looks through our Location of Our Homes, Investment in Existing Homes, Letting our Homes and Health & Safety.
- 3. Customer Service** – details Customer Satisfaction, our Tenant Portal, Complaints & Compliments, Community Foundation and Customer Voice.

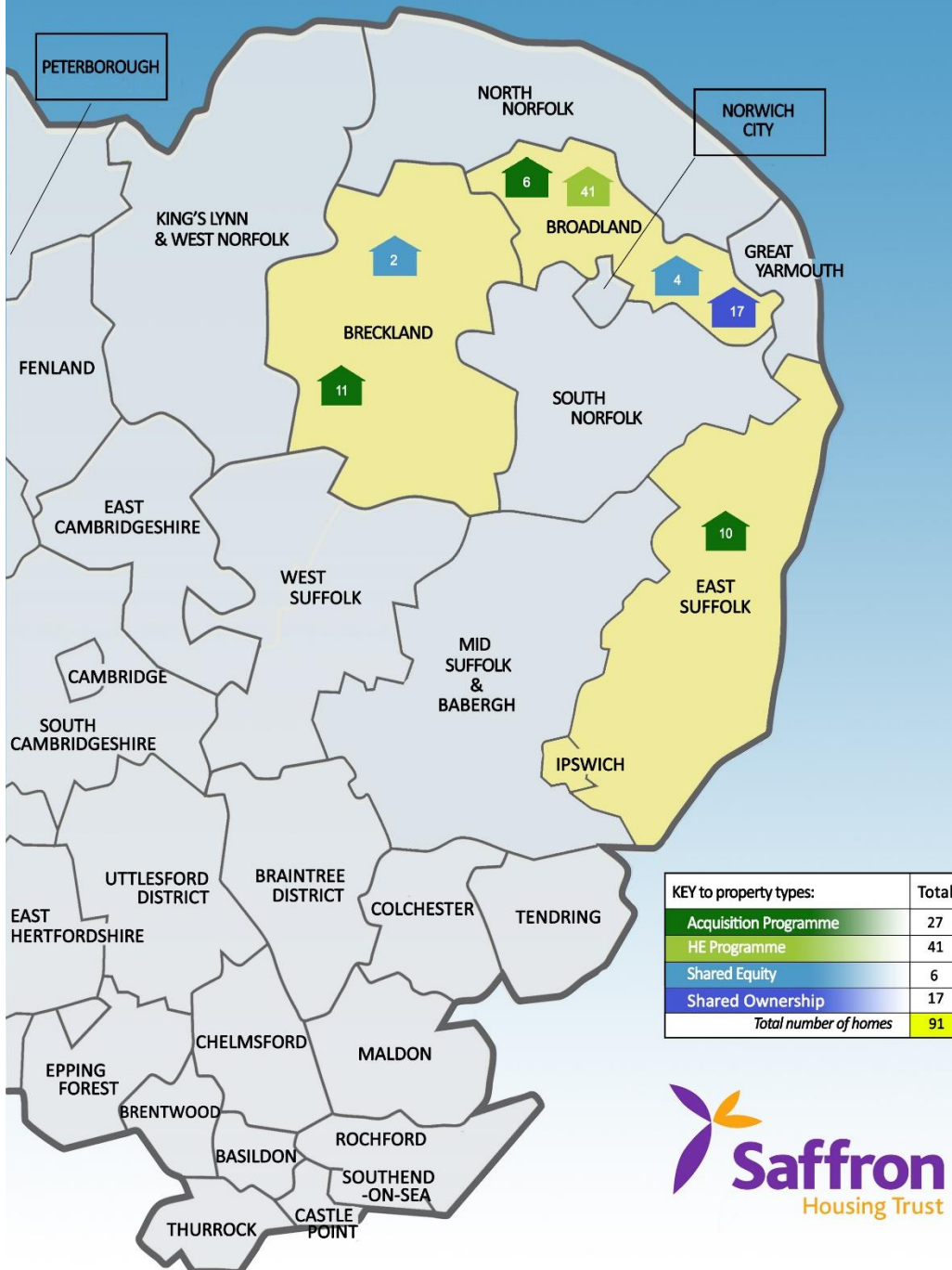
You can read the Tenant Version and the full Annual Review on our website [here](#).





## Developments – where we are building

### Where we are building - September 2021

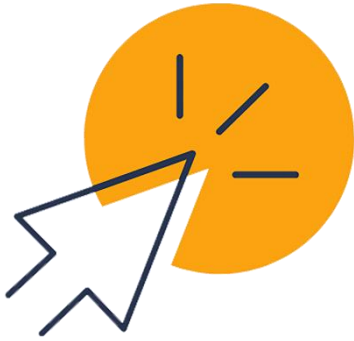


We are committed to providing more quality homes across Norfolk and Suffolk. In order to register for a home you will need to make sure you are signed up with the Home Options Scheme via your local council, more information can be found on our 'Register for a home' page [here](#). Keep an eye out each week, as we will update our 'Properties currently available to rent on Home Options' page [here](#).

You can view where we are currently building in the table and on the map. Please note we have some big projects in South Norfolk which are at an earlier stage and are likely to feature on future versions of this map.



## Have you signed up to our tenant portal 'My Saffron'?



The portal allows you to pay your rent, amend your personal details when you need to, raise an enquiry and receive updates over a secure link which has advantages over sending an email. You also have access to information and resources such as our Tenant Support & Wellbeing Service.

We will no longer be posting your rent statements, but you can view your balance and transaction history in the portal whenever you want. If you would like to receive a hard copy of your rent statement, we can provide them upon request.

For more information including how to sign up to My Saffron visit our website [here](#).