



Pine Court Housing  
Association

# Annual Report 2007



Pine Court Housing  
Association

# Committee Members

Members of the Management Committee give their time and expertise in a voluntary capacity. They are responsible for the work of the Association and formulate plans to achieve its goals.



Tim Leung  
(Chairman)



Alan Taylor  
(Vice Chairman)



Lily Castilho  
(Treasurer)



Helen  
Owen



Colin  
Chee



Phillip  
Leong

# Pine Court Staff



(clockwise):

Richard Lau  
Houston Fung  
Wilson Lau  
Bonnie Mok  
David Brown  
Nigel Reed  
Shirley Leng



# Chairman's Introduction

We all know the market in the UK is changing – affected by the US slump in their housing market. The so called credit crunch as a result of US sub prime mortgage lending indicates all the more that Social Housing is essential.

Pine Court was established more than a quarter of a century ago with its main purpose to provide decent housing to those in need and in particular to the Chinese and South East Asian and local communities. The founders wanted to see an independent and unique RSL which not only serves the communities by providing good, affordable housing to those in need but also to provide alternative employment routes to young Chinese, whose alternative jobs would be to work long hours in hot steamy kitchens. Half way down, we got Nigel Reed, our current Director to help achieve that goal.

Today, I can categorically say that together we have achieved that goal. Not a small thing when one realises that there is only one independent Chinese Housing Association in the whole of the British Isles. If one refers to the Director's report, one will marvel at what an achievement it is. Even comparing like with like, Pine Court is in a much better position than many other registered RSLs, big or small, financially or otherwise. As emphasised by the Director, it is teamwork. Our Director, staff, current and past, service agencies, community leaders, local councils, the Housing Corporation, board members, current and past, and many others who lend a hand to Pine Court in whatever ways that bring us to the current position of the Association.

The continued achievement of the Association can be seen in the rest of this Report; but it would not be complete without mentioning some of the events in the year. We have completed improvement of properties transferred from Arena Housing Association. For this the Association is truly thankful, but at the same time looking to other big players to continue this good work, building a more harmonious and diverse society, sharing central and local resources equitably and serving local communities well.

During this reporting year, three of our valued board members resigned for personal reasons. On behalf of the Board, I thank them for their tireless contributions at Board and other meetings. I would not complete this Report without mentioning that indeed this is the last reporting year that Nigel acts as the Director of Pine Court. Nigel has decided the time has come to retire from the front line of social housing management. Measures have been set in motion to seek a successor.

I have to say, during these years, a kind of unique rapport has been built up between Nigel and the Board. At times his way of running the organisation's business and in particular, his humour may not be fully appreciated by all, but his dedication, and loyalty are unquestioned. I wish to deeply thank him for his years of service to Pine Court. It is also apt to say here, that the whole of the staff team are very much appreciated for their efforts which underpins the Association's achievements. I would also wish to thank fellow Board members for their unselfish efforts in contributing to the success of the Association, voluntarily, without pay, time and time again.

To end this Report, may I wish Pine Court another big leap forward for the next quarter of a century!

*Tim S Leung*  
Chair



# Director's Report

In my report for this year I will allow some self indulgence. It is my last. Retirement looms.

I can wallow unmercifully in achievements of the past decade at (probably) the best RSL in the North.

There must be very few who have not heard this story before: When I started here the Association owned 72 properties. Its office was my back room at home. Progress has been a team effort. We now have 418 properties with a further 26 completing in the spring. Turnover for the year exceeds £1.75 million, all property at least meets the decent homes standard and performance reported here compares favourably with the best.

Tenants have recognised and value our achievements. Over 90% are satisfied with the service we provide, 95% think rents are good value for money and over 90% think the condition of their home to be good. These measures exceed averages by a good 10%. We are doing something right.

During the year preliminary steps were taken to improve the thermal efficiency of all property. We recognise responsibilities to reduce the carbon footprint and tenants costs associated with their homes. My successor will report next year that what can be done has been achieved. We have also completed the emergency stuff with all communal TV aerials upgraded to digital. I remember my first day at Pine Court. The Chairman told me "Don't you dare let our property deteriorate like that in the mainstream". It was a clear threat! I responded. My successor will advise whether the response was adequate.

Last year we reported that one property failed the decent homes standard. During the year the tenant agreed to have improvements and moved to a vacant property in the area. The work cost in excess £70 thousand and at year end was due for completion shortly. As this is written the tenant has moved back into a substantially new home within the existing shell.

During my time at Pine Court there have also been failures. Chief among these is my almost total failure to develop productive arrangements with mainstream associations. In all other regions minority RSL's have benefited substantially from property transfers, management arrangements, development and general support. I do not know what could have been done differently. This is probably the explanation for the lack of progress. I do know that this is the key to Pine Court becoming financially robust. This I leave to my successor with my hopes for considerably more than I have been able to achieve.

So, to performance during the year. It continues to be exemplary. Top quartile on most published indicators. We relet property within two weeks the local average is 47 days. Other indicators illustrated in later tables are just as good. A small thing like the Director's retirement is insufficient to undermine staff attachment to goals and morale stemming from doing a job well.

Tenant turnover, from a low base has reduced still further. At below 6% it is evidenced that tenants value our approach, maintenance standards and attention to property improvements.

There are far too many people who have helped or who have touched me sufficient to warrant my thanks.

I limit this public recognition to those currently closest. Firstly, my thanks to the staff of Pine Court. Their attachment to the goals and philosophy of the Association is instrumental to its performance. I like to think that my leadership illustrates direction and required standards though sometimes I do wonder just who is leading and managing! To them my sincere and heartfelt thanks. You will be missed. Achieve as much for my successor or I will come back to haunt you.

Secondly my thanks to those providing the Association with services: The Plus Group and North West Housing Services. This is far more than an outsourcing relationship. Staff at both organisations have provided understanding in times of difficulty, clarity at times of uncertainty and the kind of consultancy support skills that can only stem from years of friendship and personal understanding.

Lastly, and most importantly I would like to offer thanks to the Association's Board. I hope that I have served you well. You have certainly provided the guidance, support and vision necessary. Current performance is a testament to the quality of your past decisions. My thanks to you all.

*Nigel Reed*

Director



# Housing Services Progress

2007 proved to be another successful year for the Association.

We continued to work with our partners to provide quality homes in Neighbourhoods where people want to live embracing the LIFE model in Liverpool as Influencers particularly in the Wavertree and L1 areas of the city.

Turnover of our void properties continues to be very low (just over 5%). Unfortunately, this means that applicants accepted for rehousing have to wait longer for accommodation. Our void performance remains excellent.

Once again, we exceeded our target of 50% lettings to Black and Racial Minority households and hope to maintain this trend in the future for both new-build and improved properties, thus creating and sustaining diverse communities. Growth continues to be a priority for the Association.

Throughout the year, the Association was on site at Upper Warwick Street, Liverpool 8, building 26 homes for rent. We worked closely with the Local Authority over nominations and the Rialto Neighbourhood Council to ensure that our new residents settle in and take advantage of their new homes and facilities.

In addition to the Upper Warwick Street scheme, Pine Court saw a high level of demand for our properties throughout 2007, consistent with previous years and highlighting the increasing levels of need amongst Black and Racial Minority groups in Merseyside. We are in a position to recognise these needs and provide quality homes and services to diverse communities.

We conducted a Tenant Satisfaction Survey earlier in the year as we wanted to measure contentment with the housing services and identify areas for improvement. The Association's bilingual Housing Officers ensured that we received a 51% response rate by personally contacting all of the Association's BRM tenants. 67% of the Association's BRM tenants responded. Overall satisfaction levels are excellent. 92% of our tenants stated that they are very or fairly satisfied with the overall service provided by the Association. 73% are very or fairly satisfied with the opportunities for participation in management and decision making. Of those responding, 92% stated that they were very or fairly satisfied with the way the Association deals with repairs and maintenance issues.

We continued to work closely with our partners on wider neighbourhood issues that affect the quality of life of our tenants and the local community.

We supported the Merseyside Community Voice consortium (MCV), in assisting with recruitment to the panel and attending the steering group meetings to offer advice and direction for the future.

In Liverpool, the Association is a member of the Strategic Housing Partnership and is actively involved in the Community Cohesion sub-group focussing on the Black and Racial Minorities Housing Action Plan.

We are members of the Registered Social Landlords Forum for the L1 area dealing with neighbourhood issues such as crime, anti-social behaviour and social inclusion. We also support the Abercromby City Safe group and ACTIVE project in north Liverpool – both projects focus on community safety and quality of life issues

In Wirral, the Association has worked in partnership with Tranmere Alliance on neighbourhood issues and social activities. We continue to hold regular advice surgeries at the Wirral Multicultural Centre enabling our tenants and members of the local community to access services at a local level.

We also supported the Annual Multi-Cultural Festival sponsoring multi-cultural workshops and performances.

Pine Court is a member of the Wirral Strategic Housing Partnership and we are involved in a consortia approach to dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour in line with the Governments RESPECT agenda, ensuring that our residents have access to support and services when dealing with anti-social behaviour and neighbourhood problems.

The Association continues to be a member of the National Housing Federations Small Housing Associations Forum in the North West and we are partners in an innovative training and development initiative - NWSTAND - for staff and Board Members, sourcing local training and consultancy services at competitive costs.

We also maintained our positive working relationship with the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Services Bilingual Community Team to direct resources to our Chinese-speaking tenants and residents to enable home fire risk assessments to be carried out in addition to greater access to other services. This enables chinese speakers to benefit from the same service levels experienced by all english speakers.

Throughout the year we undertook an energy efficiency programme preparing to install cavity wall and loft insulation to our properties in Liverpool and Wirral in 2008.

Housing Officers gave advice to tenants about energy efficiency measures. We will be undertaking further thermal upgrading projects throughout 2008.

Pine Court's housing and community services demonstrate our commitment to creating diverse communities and supporting local residents. We are confident that our housing and community services will be in high demand throughout the coming year and beyond.

*David Brown*

Housing Services Manager

Houston Fung (Housing Officer) welcoming residents to new homes at Upper Warwick Street



# Performance Information 2007

## Lettings

Members have adopted a target of 50% of lettings to those from minority backgrounds. This is a tough target to meet compared with peer group performance of 12% in Liverpool and under 4% in Wirral. Our lettings of approaching 60% to minority groups is exceptional.

By Ethnicity	Liverpool	Wirral	Total	Percentage
Chinese/South East Asian	9	4	13	59%
Black/Black British	0	0	0	0%
White British	6	3	9	41%
Other Racial Minority	0	0	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>100%</b>

Lettings to those nominated by Local Authorities continues to be low. Even if additional properties are included where we offered the property but the authority was unable to identify a tenant within reasonable time the total offered rises to only 27% of lettings.

By Source	Liverpool	Wirral	Total	Percentage
L.A. Nomination	1	0	1	4%
RSL Nomination	0	0	0	0%
Direct Applicant	12	6	18	82%
Internal Transfer	2	1	3	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>100%</b>

We must balance this against lettings to minorities which have never come via the nominations route.

We do however expect to achieve significantly better figures for 2008. Our new build scheme in Upper Warwick Street completes in Spring and we are certain that all properties offered for nomination will be taken.

The number of economically inactive new tenants continues to be very high at 45%. The percentage working full or part time is virtually the same as last year at 32%.

By Economic Status	No.	Percentage
Working	7	33
Job Seeker	5	19
Retired	6	33
Not Seeking Work	4	11
Long term sick or disabled	0	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>100</b>

It is difficult to draw substantive conclusions from such small numbers of lettings.

# Rent Comparisons

## Property Details

Last year we reported a decision to utilise tolerance at both interim and final stages in the process. Rents for one and two bedroom properties are now at this level. We have a little more to do with three and four bedroom homes but expect achievement well before the extended deadline in 2017.

Average rents charged by other RSL's appear to be significantly below

ours. We do not yet understand the reasons for this as all target rents are calculated from the same formula.

Location	Number Bedrooms	Average £ Per Week	Target Plus tolerance £ per week	Average all RSL's £ per week
Liverpool	1	62.22	62.83	51.58
	2	67.32	68.73	58.85
	3	74.71	74.61	61.40
	4	85.94	85.06	69.11
Wirral	1	57.40	57.27	50.41
	2	64.37	64.76	57.78
	3	73.71	73.18	61.66
	4	81.69	80.46	70.47

## Rent Arrears

At year end there were 309 (74%) tenants in arrears. The total amount outstanding was £79 thousand. Last year the equivalent figure was £63 thousand.

We estimate that £54 thousand was owed by Housing Benefit at year end.

Even including this sum arrears was marginally over 5% of rent roll. Relatively good performance at two thirds of levels reported by our peers.

Band £	No Tenants	Total £
1 - 100	63	3,593
101 - 500	220	49,758
501 - 1000	16	11,268
>1000	10	14,389
<b>Total</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>79,008</b>

## Void Periods between Lettings

During the year just 22 properties became vacant. A turnover rate of 5% compared with our peers at double this level.

The average period of rent loss is under 2 weeks and the distribution is shown in the above table.

Void Period (weeks)	No	Percentage
1	10	45%
2 - 3	10	45%
4 - 5	2	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>100%</b>

Peer group performance is around 6 weeks so our turn around time remains excellent with rent losses well below 1% of the rent roll.

## Maintenance Performance

During the year we processed 1820 responsive repair requests an increase of 19% over the previous year.

The percentage classified as either emergency or urgent reduced to 33% from 39% last year.

Priority	Target Days	Total Jobs	On Time	Percentage
Emergency	1	77	72	94%
Urgent	3	537	527	98%
Essential	14	273	269	98%
Routine	28	933	914	98%
		<b>1820</b>	<b>1782</b>	<b>98%</b>

Our reported performance continues to be good. We believe success is underreported in both emergency and urgent categories. Attention to issues concerned with computer recording systems in the current year promises to correct underreporting for our next report.



New houses at Upper Warwick Street Scheme

# Financial Results

## Income and Expenditure Account

	Year to 31-Dec-07 (£)	Year to 31-Dec-06 (£)	Year to 31-Dec-05 (£)	Year to 31-Dec-04 (£)	Year to 31-Dec-03 (£)
Net Rental Income	1,695,976	1,579,238	1,502,874	1,379,140	1,334,061
Bank & Other Interest	61,063	44,544	50,149	40,672	27,348
	1,757,039	1,623,782	1,553,023	1,419,812	1,361,409

Management Costs	376,971	358,537	339,088	312,777	286,826
Repair & Maintenance	354,763	296,358	235,381	161,183	220,036
Service Costs	170,658	173,209	155,235	105,227	114,688
Major Repair	95,258	121,308	108,334	54,087	40,729
Other Operating Costs	10,867	8,395	12,464	18,450	20,900
Financing Costs	404,884	377,212	423,448	406,737	390,198
Reserves	274,997	220,470	221,158	309,251	235,581
Depreciation	68,641	68,293	57,915	52,100	52,451
	1,757,039	1,623,782	1,553,023	1,419,812	1,361,409

## Balance Sheet

	Year to 31-Dec-07 (£)	Year to 31-Dec-06 (£)	Year to 31-Dec-05 (£)	Year to 31-Dec-04 (£)	Year to 31-Dec-03 (£)
Housing Properties	7,802,374	7,800,023	6,595,376	5,965,701	6,054,879
Net Current Assets	906,409	726,409	782,916	1,345,973	1,093,014
	<b>8,708,783</b>	<b>8,526,432</b>	<b>7,378,292</b>	<b>7,311,674</b>	<b>7,147,893</b>

## Financed By

	Year to 31-Dec-07 (£)	Year to 31-Dec-06 (£)	Year to 31-Dec-05 (£)	Year to 31-Dec-04 (£)	Year to 31-Dec-03 (£)
Long Term Loans	5,531,938	5,638,701	4,735,420	4,892,539	5,042,693
Provisions	311,318	297,201	272,812	270,235	265,552
Designated Reserves	1,019,435	890,213	801,251	718,993	607,390
Accumulated Surplus	1,846,092	1,700,317	1,568,809	1,429,907	1,232,258
	<b>8,708,783</b>	<b>8,526,432</b>	<b>7,378,292</b>	<b>7,311,674</b>	<b>7,147,893</b>

**Copy of full Financial Statements available on request from:**

Pine Court Housing Association, 1 Nelson Street, Liverpool, L1 5DW



Richard Lau (Housing Officer) with new tenants at Yates Street , L8

# Contact Details

## Development Agent

Plus Harvest Development, Plus  
Housing Group  
Baltimore Buildings  
13-15 Rodney Street  
Liverpool, L1 9EF

## Solicitors

Bremners  
6th Floor  
Silkhouse Court  
Tithebarn Street  
Liverpool, L2 2LZ

Weightmans  
India Buildings  
Water Street  
Liverpool, L2 0GA

## Bankers

The Co-operative Bank plc  
Lyceum Building  
1 Bold Street  
Liverpool, L1 4NW

National Westminster Bank plc  
Corporate Business Centre  
22 Castle Street  
Liverpool  
L69 2BE

## Auditor

Mitchell Charlesworth  
5 Temple Square  
Temple Street  
Liverpool, L2 5RH

## Translation

Wilson Lau  
Xueci Leng

