

HOUSING TIMES

ANNUAL SUMMARY
2024



stalbans.gov.uk/housing





Major milestone achieved in social housing energy-efficiency project

The Council has made significant strides in its ambitious project to improve the energy efficiency of Council homes, with nearly 200 social housing properties successfully upgraded since the 2nd wave of the initiative began in October 2023.

The project has been funded in part by a grant from the social housing decarbonisation fund allocated by the Department for Energy, Security and Net Zero. The latest phase has focused on Nicholas Close in St Albans, where the Council's contractor, Correct Contract Services (CCS), has carried out the work. Many of the homes in this area are post-war prefabricated concrete structures, known as 'Airey' houses, which have long been known for their poor thermal performance and are difficult to heat.

The upgrade works include the installation of external wall insulation, solar panels, loft insulation, and enhancements to ventilation and lighting systems. The external wall system incorporates a premium grade insulation board topped with a final painted render coat. This not only improves the thermal efficiency of the homes but also gives them a fresh, rejuvenated appearance.

The insulation measures are expected to significantly reduce drafts and cold spots, improving comfort levels for residents during the winter months.

Additionally, the upgrades will help to keep the homes cool in the warmer weather, further enhancing the overall living conditions.

As part of the Council's social value initiatives, residents of these upgraded homes are also being offered a free swift nest box to be installed by CCS under the eaves. Swifts have seen a decline in numbers in recent years, partly due to the loss of nesting sites in modern buildings. By offering swift boxes, the Council is helping to create new nesting opportunities, contributing to local biodiversity, and supporting the conservation of these iconic birds.

Residents of Nicholas Close have already begun to experience the benefits of these upgrades, with many praising the improvements.

As the project continues, the Council remains committed to enhancing the energy efficiency of more homes across the district, ensuring that all residents can enjoy warm, comfortable, and sustainable living environments while helping to lower their energy bills.



Community estate days

With help from our partners, including Morgan Sindall, Watret, Communities 1st, Herts Police, and others, the Council organises 'Estate Days' across the District each year.

At these events, between 10th May and 31st October 2023, we collected 3.86 tonnes of rubbish to help residents keep their neighbourhoods tidy and free of fly-tipping. We knocked on residents' doors and got their feedback on a range of services including repairs and how well they feel we are doing in helping keep the area immediately surrounding their homes in good condition.

We always have representatives from Morgan Sindall on hand to inspect repairs, remedy what they can there and then, and book in follow up works where necessary.

We feel these events are a valuable opportunity to help improve the lives of our tenants and engage with you on matters that are important to you. We plan to expand these events and invite other organisations along to them as well over the coming months.

During the most recent events we have been asking residents if they would like to be involved in future scrutiny of our services and helping to design our services. We have had a great response so far.

We will be working on a new Resident Engagement Strategy over the coming months and hope you will join us at one of these Community Estate Days, or other events we hope to deliver for our tenants and leaseholders.



Electric bikes and e-scooters

If you have an e-bike or e-scooter, please make sure you know how to keep it safe.

Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service warns that there have been reports of the lithium batteries contained in these items catching fire.

It's important to follow the manufacturer's instructions when charging and storing your e-bike/scooter.

- Ensure your charger and battery meet UK safety standards.
- Never cover your charger, and unplug it when not in use.
- Never leave your bike or scooter charging unattended or while you are asleep.
- Never block an escape route with your bike or scooter.

More safety information can be found at: www.fireengland.uk

The riding of e-scooters is only allowed on private land in Hertfordshire.



Planned works

As with responsive repairs, 2023-24 was the fifth year of the Council's partnership with Morgan Sindall Property Services (MSPS), and it saw almost £5m of capital investment channelled into the Council's housing stock, during the financial year.

This planned maintenance investment was used to replace components and make improvement to over 500 Council homes as detailed in the table below.

| Workstream | Number of Properties/ Blocks | Comments |
|---|------------------------------|---|
| Roof Replacement - Individual Dwellings | 13 | Ad hoc dwellings – many being referred due to unviable responsive repairs |
| Roofs - Housing Blocks | 7 | Ranging from medium (Hall Place Close) to large (Abbots Avenue West) blocks |
| Window Renewals | 112 | Renewals to 112 dwellings, primarily non-block dwellings |
| Front and Rear Door Renewals | 113 | 48 front doors and 65 rear doors |
| Kitchen Renewals | 35 | Kitchen renewals, contributing to maintaining Decent Homes Standard |
| Bathroom Renewals | 24 | Bathroom renewals, contributing to maintaining Decent Homes Standard |
| Cavity Wall and Loft Insulation | 70 | 32 cavity wall insulation installs, and 38 loft insulation installs |
| Structural Works | 6 | Pemberton Almshouses and retaining wall adjacent to Malthouse Court |
| Gas Safety Checks | 19 | Works benefitting 19 dwellings Boundary fence – Northfield Road, blocks |
| Fire Safety Checks | 136 | Blocks, (flats and com. areas) - fire detection/compartimentation |
| Redecorations | 6 | Internal decoration to communal areas on blocks, and external redecoration |
| Garage Refurbishments | 1 | One block of 16 garages (including extensive rear retaining wall) |



Flat roof renewals – Abbots Avenue West, St Albans

Disabled adaptations

Since 1st April 2023, the Council has focussed solely on providing Disabled Adaptations to council tenants living in Council homes.

All Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funded adaptations, which primarily relate to 'Private Sector' Adaptations have been managed by the Herts Home Improvement Agency since that date.

In 2023/24 the Council's Adaptations Team, working with a small number of local contractors, delivered 92 'major adaptations'.

These adaptations primarily consist of bathroom alterations to provide level access shower facilities, stairlifts, hoists, hard standings and dropped kerbs etc., all of which follow referrals from occupational therapists.

The Council does, on occasions, extend properties which cannot be adapted in their current format.

The Adaptations Team also administer the instruction and installation of minor adaptations such as grab rails, stair-rails, and external pathway handrails, each one, again, based upon referrals from an Occupational Therapist. In 2023/24, the team delivered 112 minor adaptations through its network of contractors.



Rebuilt wall to rear of Pemberton Almshouses, St Albans (Grade II Listed Building)



New flat roofs Thirlestane, St Albans



Upgraded loft insulation



Ladies Grove Garages, St Albans – Retaining wall installed to rear of garage blocks



Completed Roof Renewals – Hall Place Close, St Albans (Aerial view)



Fire compartmentation



New Roof at Hall Place Close, St Albans. Associated asbestos removal and fire safety works.



Completed Roof Renewals – Hall Place Close, St Albans



Fire compartmentation

Responsive repairs

2023/24 saw the 5-year anniversary of the asset management partnership that delivers the Council's repairs and maintenance service with Morgan Sindall.



12,472
responsive
repairs
completed



10,471
of responsive
repairs completed
on first visit



84.8%
yearly satisfaction
score from
residents



282
vacant property
refurbishments
completed

The asset management contract was awarded over a 15-year period, separated into three 5-year sections. The Council took up the opportunity to extend the partnership by a second 5-year term from 1st April 2024. There have been some important legislation changes, and challenging national issues such as the pandemic, which the Council and Morgan Sindall have worked together to address.

In 2023/24 Morgan Sindall completed 12,472 responsive repairs, with 10,471 of these completed on the first visit. The overall satisfaction score from residents for the year was 4.24 out of 5.

282 vacant property refurbishments were completed so that properties could be relet to people on our housing register. The contact centre handled 25,321 phone calls relating to responsive repairs with an average answer time of 2 minutes.

Price increases and the lack of availability of some materials has been challenging to overcome, as well as the reduced labour supply in the country following Brexit.

The partnership has worked together to navigate these issues and tried to maintain the service that has been expected over the first 5 years.

We have also worked together to formulate a new damp and mould policy. New information leaflets have been produced to support residents, and additional training has been given to staff on the treatment, cause and remedy of damp and mould by leading industry experts. Our stock condition survey programme highlighted a number of properties that required additional measures to treat damp and mould and we have been working to improve the them further.

As well as the 'Estate Days' that are detailed elsewhere in the Annual Report, our partnership with Morgan Sindall works to achieve various social value outcomes for our District including apprenticeships and work experience for school leavers. We also provide help to tenants with writing CVs, a digital inclusion session, and 'energy cafés' with Citizens Advice St Albans, where people can learn about saving money on their energy bills. Staff also provided 170 hours of free volunteering work.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

Tenent Satisfaction Measures assess how well social landlords are doing at providing good quality homes and services.

In April 2023 it became law for all social landlords to report those measures to the Regulator of Social Housing. The Regulator of Social Housing is a body that oversees the management and performance of all social landlords. There are 22 measures in total and they are divided into 2 parts.

- 12 customer perception measures that are collected through questions asked in a tenants' survey.
- 10 performance measures that are collected through our own performance information.

For 2023/24 the Council procured an independent company (MEL Research) to carry out the tenants' survey on our behalf. A total of 922 tenant surveys were completed and returned, a response rate of 19%.

The Regulator of Social Housing produced guidance on how to calculate the measures and the questions to be asked in the survey. The outcomes from the tenants' survey are set out here...

Tenant Perceptions 2023/24

| Measure | Result 2023/24 |
|--|----------------|
| Overall satisfaction with landlord | 62% |
| Satisfaction with repairs | 59% |
| Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair | 53% |
| Satisfaction that the home is well maintained | 57% |
| Satisfaction that the home is safe | 65% |
| Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them | 43% |
| Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them | 51% |
| Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect | 64% |
| Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints | 25% |
| Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained | 41% |
| Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods | 49% |
| Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to tackling anti-social behaviour | 43% |

Tenant Satisfaction 2023/24 – Management Information (performance information the Council collects)

| Measure | Reporting Method/ Expression | Result 2023/24 |
|---|------------------------------|----------------|
| Complaints relative to size of landlord Stage 1 | Per 1,000 dwellings | 13.88 |
| Complaints relative to size of landlord Stage 2 | Per 1,000 dwellings | 4.69 |
| Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales Stage 1 | Per 1,000 dwellings | 77.94 |
| Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales Stage 2 | Per 1,000 dwellings | 60.87 |
| Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of landlord | Per 1,000 dwellings | 1.63 |
| Homes that do not meet Decent Homes Standard | Percentage | 2.39% |
| Repairs completed within target timescales: | | |
| a) Non emergency repairs (28 days) | Percentage | 84.73% |
| b) Emergency repairs (24 hours) | Percentage | 98.17% |
| Gas safety checks | Percentage | 99.55% |
| Fire safety checks | Percentage | 100% |
| Water safety checks | Percentage | 98.95% |
| Lift safety checks | Percentage | 100% |

This information is being used as a baseline on which to improve and develop our services.

We are working with our repairs contractor, Morgan Sindall, to develop plans to improve communications and repair processes particularly around complex repairs.

We have recently appointed a Housing Resident Engagement Officer who will work with our tenants to develop a range of opportunities for tenants to engage, scrutinise, influence and develop our housing services.

We have also recently joined 'Tpas', a national organisation that supports landlords across the country on resident engagement and best practice.

They can also provide training for both tenants and staff on models of engagement and how to scrutinise services.

The tenant satisfaction measures are collected and calculated each year. A further tenant survey will be carried out this autumn. We would like to thank all the tenants who completed the survey last year and encourage everyone to complete the survey this year.

If you would like to know more about the work we are doing on resident engagement and how to get involved please contact residentengagement@stalbens.gov.uk



We now carry out our Housing Needs Assessments at an earlier stage. These conversations allow us to make sure any offers of future housing are robust and suitable. We can support clients in obtaining any information that may be required to support their housing requirements, and get relevant agencies involved.

We have been working with the tenancy sustainment team which provides support to tenants to ensure a smooth and successful transition from temporary to permanent housing. If required we can look at provision of white goods (fridges, etc.) and other support required during this process.

Customer satisfaction surveys are completed with our clients – we are keen to understand the views of our customers to help shape the service to their needs.



Sheltered accommodation

Various fire safety works were undertaken at Cyril Dumpleton House. These works are now mainly completed, and Morgan Sindell hosted a fish and chip feast for the residents in celebration.

It was a lovely day, and a chance for all those involved in the project to chat with residents and our lead councillor for housing matters.

Gertrude Peake Place is currently undergoing improvement works to the external grounds. Our project team is working closely with residents to ensure that alterations to these works suit their needs.

Supported housing services

The Council's housing support team manage and support residents in temporary accommodation and those in our 2 remaining Council-run retirement housing schemes – Cyril Dumpleton House and Gertrude Peake Place.

Temporary accommodation for homeless families

We deal primarily with households who have been placed in temporary accommodation in the District. Most have applied to be housed locally and are waiting for a decision on their homelessness application. We offer guidance and support in their current accommodation, and work towards a successful outcome when the time comes to move on.

Numbers in temporary accommodation have risen. This has meant that further properties have been sourced to provide accommodation. This has included the need for more adapted properties to meet clients' needs.

It is hoped that some of the new housing developments being completed will alleviate numbers in temporary accommodation and allow residents to put down permanent roots.



Affordable housing

56 new 'affordable housing' properties were delivered in 2023/24. 44 were for rent and 12 were for shared ownership.

Highlights of new affordable housing delivery include:

- The completion of a new housing development at the former Westfield Allotments sites in Harpenden by Peabody Housing Association.



- An increased number of social rental properties delivered at Perham Way, London Colney by Hightown Housing Association, supported by Council funding.



- Completion of 4 three-bedroom, Council built, houses at a former garage site in Harpenden, now called Viking Close (pictured above).

The Council continues to identify opportunities to deliver housing available to applicants on the Housing Register and homeless households.

There are limited ways to achieve this as available land is in short supply in the District.

Our Garage Management Strategy helps us to identify land suitable for development and/or consider whether sites can be transferred to a Housing Association to develop for social housing.

The site at Telford Court offers the Council a chance to work in partnership with a Housing Association to develop a substantial amount of social housing in a City centre location. District Councillors agreed in 2022 that the building should be emptied and the site redeveloped. This was because the building does not meet modern standards. Since that time the Council has been rehousing Telford Court tenants in alternative housing within the District. It is expected that the building will be fully vacant in 2025, after which it will be redeveloped.

The Council continues to identify opportunities to deliver new homes available to applicants on the Housing Register and homeless households. These are limited because available land is in short supply in the District. However, work has progressed on sites at Woollam Crescent and a site at the former King Offa, Abbots Avenue West, that will deliver 26 brand new Council properties for social rent to households in 2025.

Housing income

The Council now offers more online rent services for our tenants. Online, you can check your rent balance, see a breakdown of your charges, see your payment history, pay your rent, and make an appointment to see your Housing Income Officer. It is easy to register for an online account.

For more information, please see:
www.stalbans.gov.uk/mystalbans

Direct Debit is the easiest and most convenient way to pay your rent. We now offer payment by Direct Debit weekly, fortnightly, 4 weekly or monthly. You can choose any date in a month or any day in a week to make your payment. Please contact the Housing Income Team via our online portal www.stalbans.gov.uk/mystalbans if you would like to pay your rent this way.

The number of tenants receiving Universal Credit in St Albans has increased over the year and this has left some tenants struggling to make their rent payments. If this affects you please contact your Housing Income Officer as soon as possible so that we can support and advise you. It is worth having an early conversation with your Housing Income Officer, who can talk through the options and refer you to helpful support services locally. The Housing Income Team can be contacted via our online portal www.stalbans.gov.uk/mystalbans or by e-mailing housingincome@stalbans.gov.uk

Most of our tenants pay their rent on time. However, a small percentage find themselves in court for non-payment of rent. Our Housing Income Officers will try to work with tenants to avoid the need for court action wherever possible. This includes budgeting and benefit advice, and, where helpful, referral to support services.

In 2023-2024 the following formal action was taken



327

Notices Seeking
Possession
served on
tenants**



19

**Tenants were
referred to court
in connection
with rent arrears**



12

**Possession
orders obtained**



4

**Tenants
evicted**

**327 Notices of Seeking Possession are the first step in taking legal action which could lead to eviction.

Tenants' incentive scheme

The Council's Tenants' Incentive Scheme is a voluntary scheme for people who are transfer applicants and wish to move home.

It helps to support tenants to move to smaller properties that are more suitable for their needs. Tenants wish to downsize for a variety of reasons including bills being expensive, their current property being too big, difficulty with stairs, and gardens that are too large to manage.

Financial incentives are available to all tenants who are in homes that are too large for them and their families and who want to move to smaller properties. Applicants are given priority 'banding' to enable them to move too. There are 3 options available:

1. The Council will pay a full grant of £1,700 if the tenant makes all their own arrangements, plus pay an additional £250 if the property is left in a good state of repair, or
2. The Council will arrange and pay for the cost of removals and will pay the sum of £500 per bedroom given up, plus an additional £250 if the property is left in a good state of repair, or
3. The Council will arrange and pay for the cost of removals and the cost of re-carpeting the new home (from our selection), plus an additional £250 if the current property is left in a good state of repair.

Please note, tenants are only eligible for one payment and these incentives are available for transfer applicants only.

In 2023/24



If you interested in applying, you can do so at:
www.stalbanshomechoice.co.uk

We are currently reviewing our Tenants' Incentive Scheme. If you have any feedback or improvement suggestions about providing more support to those who would like to move to smaller accommodation, please email tenantsincentive@stalbans.gov.uk or call **01727 814613** (Tuesday/Wednesday/Friday).



Chart 1: Size of properties allocated in 2023-2024

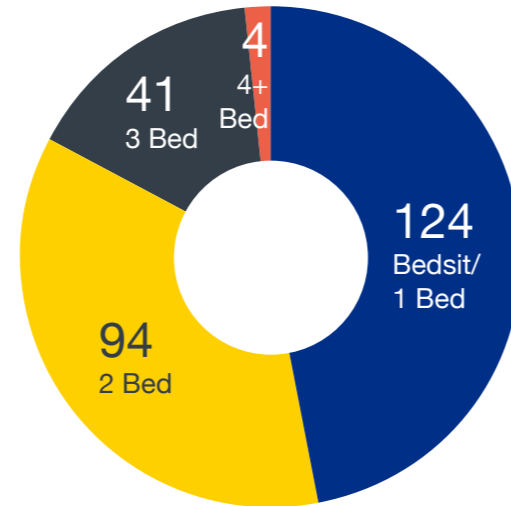


Chart 2: Types of applicants rehoused in 263 properties

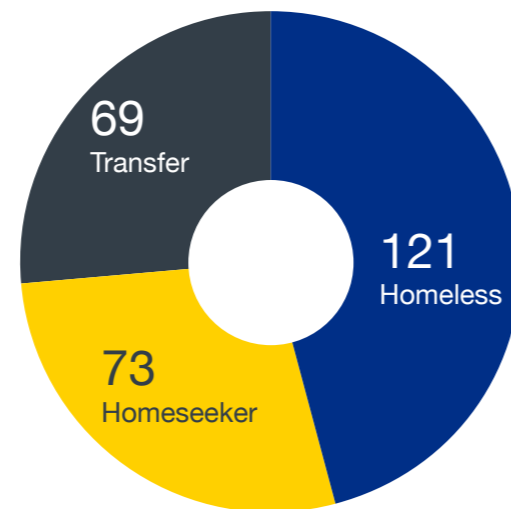
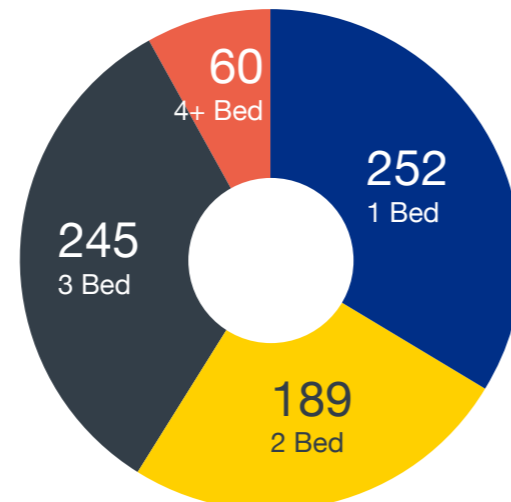


Chart 3: Breakdown of housing register by bedroom size



Housing allocations

The Council continues to work with housing associations to allocate properties to applicants from the housing register.

This includes applicants who are registered as homeseekers; applicants who are homeless and in temporary accommodation; and applicants who need to transfer to a new property, for example those who need a larger property, downsizers, or applicants with medical needs.

Social housing remains in limited supply in the District however there were **263 social housing properties let in 2023-24**.

At the end of 2023-24 there were 746 applicants on the Council's Housing Register.

Annual homelessness rough sleeping count

Since autumn 2010, St Albans Council has been required to submit an annual figure to the government to indicate the number of people sleeping rough locally on a 'typical' night between 1st October and 30th November.

All 10 districts in Hertfordshire coordinate to agree a date to complete a physical count or an estimate of the amount of people sleeping rough on the agreed date.

The Council generally carries out both a physical count and a robust estimate, to ensure a range of reliable information is agreed upon by all involved, and to provide an accurate base figure of those sleeping rough.

The definition of those rough sleeping is *'People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments)'*. And *'People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or "bashes")'*.

The homeless count is conducted by St Albans Council staff and independent partners.

It is important that local partners are involved so that the Council has the most accurate up-to-date information on the numbers of people sleeping rough locally.

Local partners include outreach teams providing support to rough sleepers, hostels, day centres, night shelters, Police, community safety teams, health and mental health services and faith groups.

The annual rough sleeping count allows the Council to track progress with entrenched rough sleepers, to reappraise the current measures in tackling rough sleeping, and consider new approaches to engage with individuals to get them off the street for good and hopefully into more settled accommodation.

Last year the count identified 8 people sleeping rough in the District during the annual count.

Homeless approaches in St Albans District

In the financial year April 2023 to March 2024, 1,181 households approached St Albans Council as homeless or threatened with homelessness.

General advice and assistance was provided to the majority of people presenting as homeless and those households were happy to receive this level of assistance without the need to complete a full assessment of their situation.

The 10 main reasons households provided when presenting as homeless are listed in the table below.

| 10 Main reasons for homelessness | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Asked to leave by their family | 225 |
| 2. Fleeing domestic abuse | 158 |
| 3. Received a S21 eviction notice from their landlord | 122 |
| 4. Seeking asylum | 88 |
| 5. Relationship breakdown | 65 |
| 6. Residing with friends and being asked to leave | 53 |
| 7. Rough sleeping | 50 |
| 8. Evicted but not provided with a S21 notice | 49 |
| 9. Sofa surfing between friends and family | 48 |
| 10. Leaving prison | 38 |

1,181
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St Albans Council as
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The 2023/24 Financial Position

In 2023/24 the overall income to the housing service was **£33,000,000**.

The main source of the income is the rent and service charges received from tenants and leaseholders.

All income collected by Housing is kept in the Housing Revenue Account and this is ring fenced so that money can only be spent on services to tenants such as staffing, repairs and maintenance. We also pay c.£15 million to the Government each year for loan repayments and to service the historic debt from building houses and flats in the last 80 years.

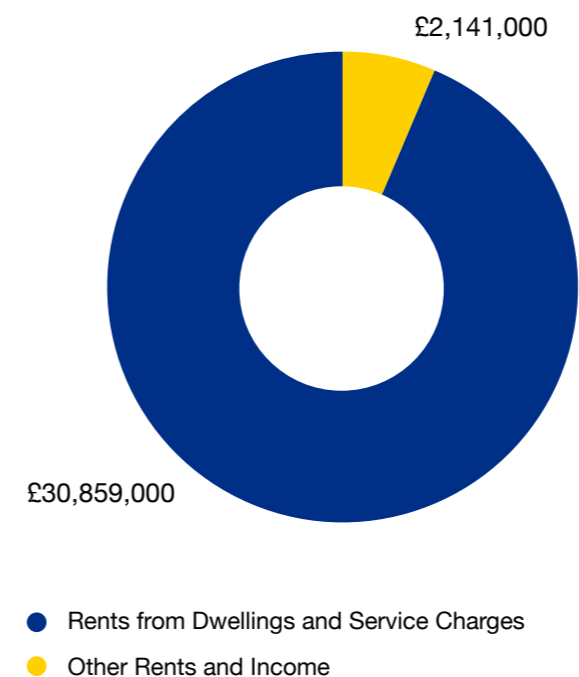
New housing and improvement to homes (capital expenditure)

During 2023/24 the Council spent £9.2m on improvements to our housing stock. This includes boiler upgrades, window replacements, roofing, electrical rewires, kitchens and bathrooms and disabled adaptations.

In addition to this, £4.2m was spent on affordable housing projects in the District, with one of these projects completing in 24/25, adding an additional 12 units to our housing stock.

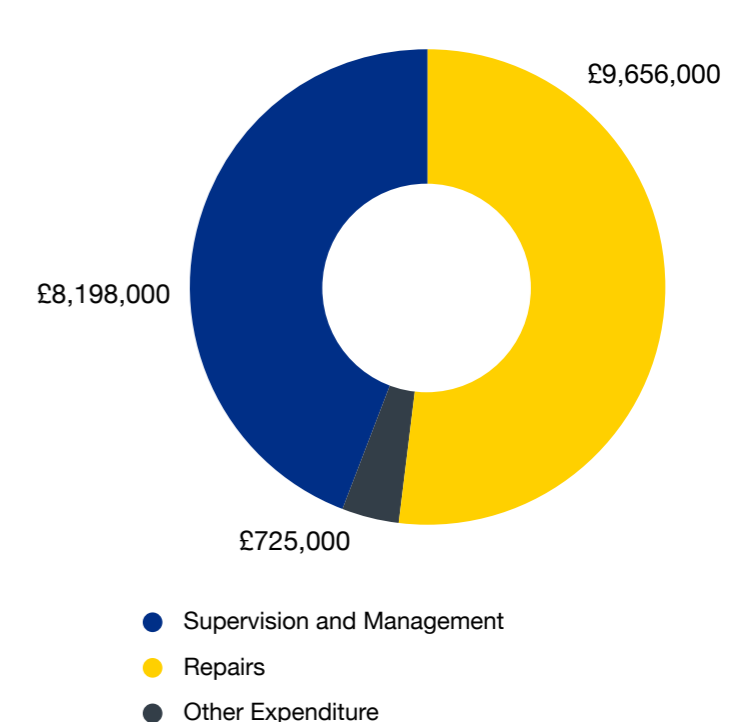
Housing Income

| Housing Income | How much £ | Percentage of Total |
|--|-------------------|---------------------|
| Rents from Dwellings and Service Charges | 30,859,000 | 94% |
| Other Rents and Income | 2,141,000 | 6% |
| Total | 33,000,000 | 100% |



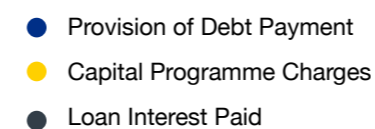
Housing Expenditure

| Housing Expenditure | How much £ | Percentage of Total |
|----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Supervision and Management | 8,198,000 | 44% |
| Repairs | 9,656,000 | 52% |
| Other Expenditure | 725,000 | 4% |
| Total | 18,579,000 | 100% |



Other Charges to the Housing Revenue Account

| Other charges to HRA | How much £ |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Capital Programme Charges | 10,173,000 |
| Loan Interest Paid | 4,068,000 |
| Provision for Debt Payment | 4,200,000 |
| Total | 18,441,000 |



Housing complaints

Towards the end of 2023, a new customer led complaints portal was introduced, changing the way we manage this service across the Council.

The new system was created not only to streamline the Council's complaints process but also to ensure compliance with the revised Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code which became statutory in April 2024. This reflects the enhanced powers conferred upon the Housing Ombudsman to look into complaints referred by tenants. They hope to be able to identify systemic and repeated issues and carry out their own spotlight reports on current problem areas. The Housing Ombudsman encourages residents to approach them for advice and support. They also work collaboratively with the Regulator for Social Housing.

Customers are now able to self-serve, so they can select whether they wish to log a complaint or a service request, with guidance provided on the portal. The Complaints and Compliments page on the Council website has step by step instructions on how to make a complaint or service request. You can also provide feedback or make a compliment. The other advantage is that we now have a good, data-driven, reporting system.

For this year's Annual Report, because of the timing, data has been obtained from two different systems. Next year we will be able to use the current system and provide a more in-depth report.

In accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's Revised Complaint Handling Code we have clarified and provided definitions for Complaints and Service Requests as follows:

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Service Request | A request from a resident requiring action to be taken to put something right |
| Stage 1 Complaint | An expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Council, staff or those acting on its behalf e.g., contractors |
| Stage 2 Complaint | An escalation of the complaint if the resident remains dissatisfied with the outcome at stage 1 |
| Compliments | Positive feedback about Council services, officers or contractors |
| Feedback | To enable comments made by residents to be shared with the relevant services |

Stage 1 Complaints

Are generally investigated by the manager responsible for the service area concerned.

Stage 2 Complaints

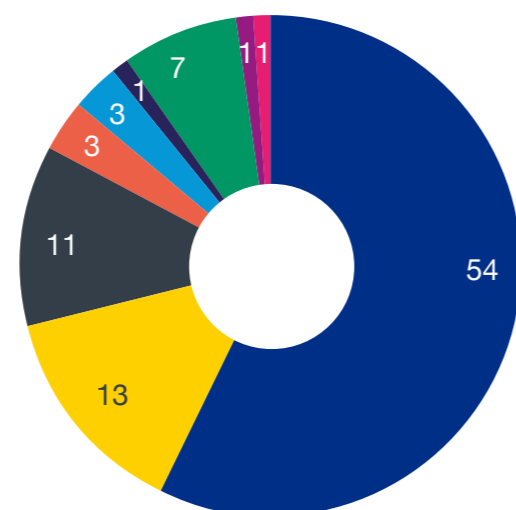
Are investigated by the senior manager for that service area.

If residents still feel their complaint has not been adequately investigated or resolved they can then refer it to the Housing Ombudsman if they are a tenant or leaseholder, or to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman if they are an applicant, although they can ask for the Ombudsman's advice or support at any point during the complaint process.

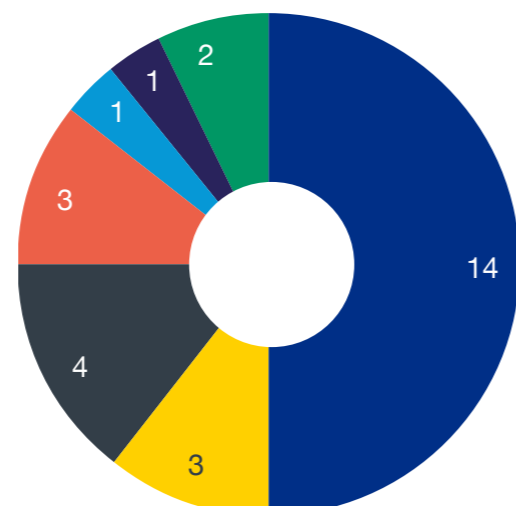
So how did we do last year?

Below are some complaint statistics showing the most common housing concerns that our tenants and leaseholders have.

Stage 1 Complaints



Stage 2 Complaints



| | S1 Complaints | S2 Complaints |
|---|---------------|---------------|
| Repairs and Maintenance | 54 | 14 |
| Housing Management | 13 | 3 |
| Housing Options | 11 | 4 |
| Major Works | 3 | 3 |
| Leasehold | 3 | 1 |
| Adaptations | 1 | 1 |
| Gas/Electricity/Central Heating/Compliance* | 7 | 2 |
| Estate Services* | 1 | 0 |
| Private Sector Housing | 1 | 0 |

*These service types are part of the new system therefore figures are only available from 12/12/2023 to 31/03/24, being the end of the period reported on.

It should be noted that, with the complaints system categories now defined by residents, the statistics are likely to see an increase in the number of Stage 1 complaints received, as matters that might otherwise have been defined as service requests can be categorised differently. This will impact similarly on Stage 2 complaints data.

Learning from the data

We are using the rich data we get from our complaints process to help us to improve our services and to prevent complaints from recurring. Some examples of changes we are making are below:

- The conduct and behaviour of employees of our contractor, Morgan Sindall Property Services (MSPS), are investigated by the Council and, if necessary, as part of their own complaints process.
- Regular training takes place with MSPS schedulers to assist with effective appointment management.
- We have noted the importance of summarising the content of telephone conversations to clarify and agree the complaint.
- Our vacant property process now includes a stringent checklist to ensure all items on the schedule have been addressed.

- MSPS is able to note vulnerabilities of tenants on their system.
- The Mutual Exchange process has been reviewed and improved.
- Where there have been serious/ongoing repairs' problems, inspections are now undertaken to ensure satisfactory resolution of issues and to reassure residents.
- Toolbox talks are arranged with all engineers at MSPS to reinforce/check their understanding of the works/completion process.
- To avoid rent errors, a new process has been added and housing income officers must confirm the rent charge on the IT system prior to confirming with the resident.
- A variety of training has been, or is in the process of being, carried out both as part of Housing Ombudsman's determination orders, and independently, for example on domestic abuse and autism.

Ombudsman cases

There were no cases determined by the Housing Ombudsman in the 2023/24 financial year.

Three cases have been determined by the Housing Ombudsman during the current financial year to date, one of which was upheld. The usual orders in Housing Ombudsman determinations are a compensation payment, apology and we may also be asked to carry out some training for relevant staff.



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