

DOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL

2022/23

# ANNUAL REPORT TO TENANTS



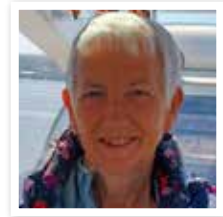
DOVER  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL

**HOUSING**  
SERVICES

# Welcome

## Introduction to the new Housing Portfolio Holder

As the new Portfolio Holder for Housing and former housing manager, I am delighted to see information in this edition of Tenant News that highlights the dedication, commitment, and resilience of both our staff and you, our tenants and leaseholders.



**Cllr Pam Brivio**  
Housing Portfolio Holder

The housing team continues to work exceptionally hard to maintain services and I am looking to the future with optimism as we plan how to improve our performance and services.

As a Dover resident I am familiar with many of our estates and often attend walkabouts with members of the housing team. I hope to continue to find time to do this and meet many of you in person. I want tenants and

leaseholders to be at the heart of the services we provide and look forward to hearing your feedback so that we can work together on the issues that matter most to you.

It's been another busy year and again world events have had a huge impact on our lives. The cost of living has affected most of us and throughout this year we have been working hard to help support our tenants, who we recognise have been struggling under the pressure of increasing household bills.

Our money and benefit advisors have worked tirelessly to ensure households in the district are receiving the financial help they need and are entitled to and have helped households increase their incomes by an amazing million pounds across the district.

Although the backlog of work caused by Covid is slowly clearing, last year still saw us tackling outstanding repairs and maintenance work.

Part of this has been improving our communication around damp, condensation and mould issues. With hundreds

of inspections, work orders and repairs having taken place, we have driven forward our desire to continue to ensure the health and safety of our residents.

We have been busy concentrating on letting more contracts for capital work to support our programme of planned work and continuing to make improvements to our work on building safety. To help us make these improvements, it is important that you let us have access to your properties so that we can undertake the wide range of work we need to complete to keep you safe.

This annual report shows you how the Council is investing in your homes and building on the service we provide for residents and once again we wanted to thank you for your wonderful cooperation and feedback. The positive relationship that we have with you our customers will continue to remain at the heart of our housing service.



**Nadeem Aziz**  
Chief Executive

## How we've done - 2022/23 income in numbers

**£21,027,972**

in collectable rent  
(21/22 £20,087,343)

**1.42%**

of rent is in arrears  
(21/22 2.13%)

Benefit and Money Advisors helped

**1214**

households (21/22 595)

# About Us



The Council currently has a housing stock of 4,847 units, which comprises of:

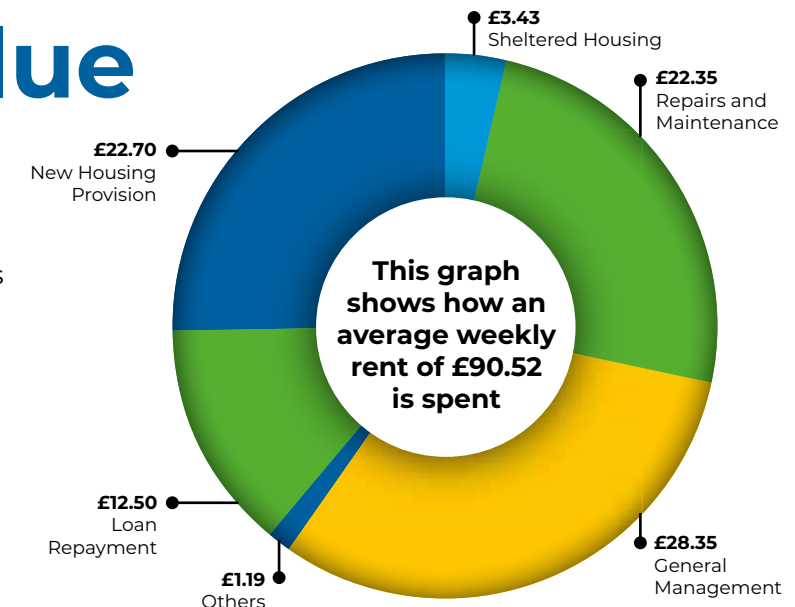
- **4,033** Social rented properties
- **61** Affordable rented properties
- **34** Shared ownership properties
- **288** Sheltered accommodation
- **431** Leasehold

These property sizes exclude leasehold and shared ownership but do include temporary accommodation

Size property	Flat	House	Bungalow	Maisonette
Studio	31			
One bed	621	43	310	1
Two bed	905	651	265	62
Three bed	21	1296	1	50
Four bed	6	74		3
Five bed		4		

## Rents and value for money

We set our rents using a government formula. This creates a 'formula rent' for each property, which is calculated based on the relative value of the property, the size of the property and relative local income levels. Affordable rent is no more than 80 per cent of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable). For 2023 the Government capped the increase in rent to 7% as a consequence of the higher than expected inflation levels and the cost of living affecting most households.



## Cost of Living Support

In the face of the ongoing impact of the cost of living, we have continued our commitment

Throughout the year, the Council's dedicated Money and Benefit Team, have played a pivotal role in alleviating financial pressures on some of our most vulnerable residents.

The Money and Benefit Team's initiatives, expertise and knowledge in assessing eligibility for benefits and personalized financial counseling, have been instrumental in ensuring that

tenants receive the necessary support to maintain stable housing, avoid the risk of eviction, and are helped with support for their financial well-being. Through proactive measures and a people-centered approach, Dover District Council remains committed to supporting tenants to afford and prioritize rent amidst the evolving economic landscape.



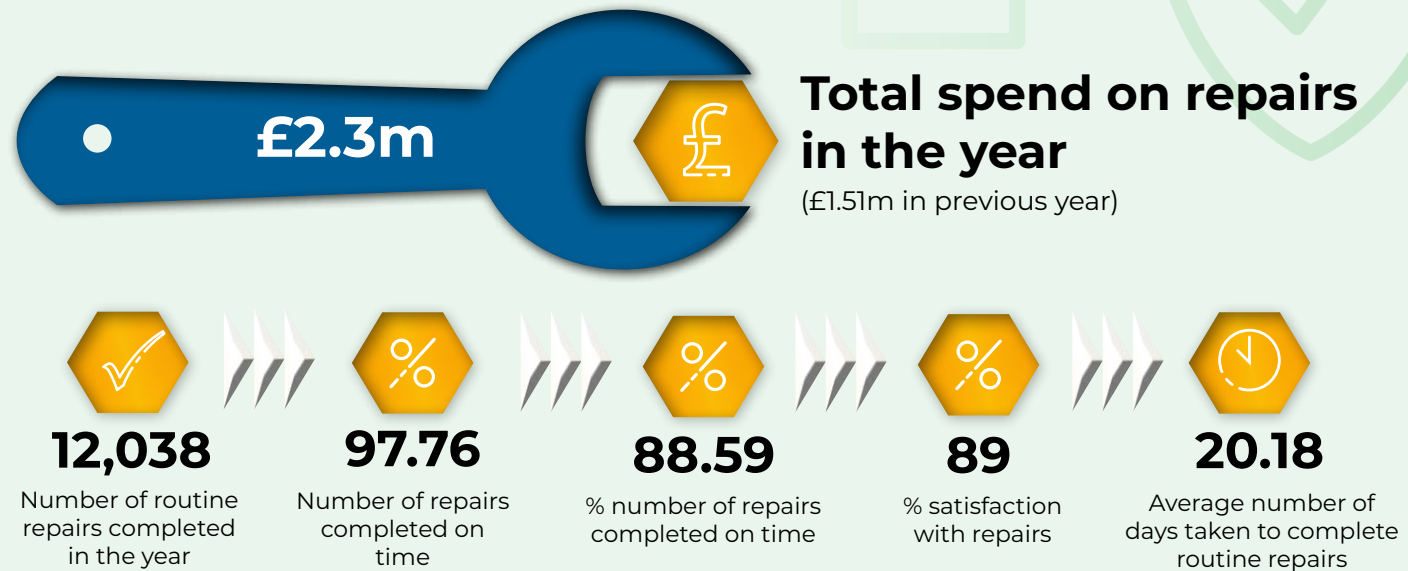


# The Homes Standard

This standard covers the way in which we maintain and improve Council homes and to meet it we must show that we have a cost effective repairs and maintenance service where most repair issues are resolved at the first attempt.

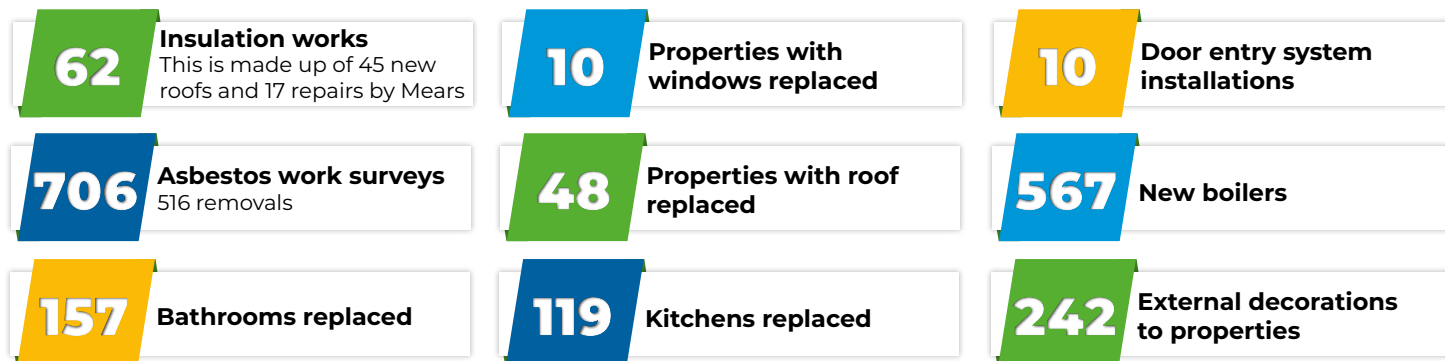
We must also comply with all appropriate health and safety standards to keep homes safe for you to live in and invest in improvements to them including, where needed offering tenants disabled adaptations.

## Repairs and maintenance



## Improving your homes

Dover District Council is taking a comprehensive approach to ensure the longevity, comfort, and sustainability of our housing stock. Our commitment to providing safe and quality homes is reflected in our meticulously planned maintenance initiatives and drive to help tackle issues around damp and mould. By investing in regular upkeep and replacement schemes, we aim to keep you, safe and your home in a good state of repair whilst aiming to reduce inevitable disruption that building work causes.



## Safe Homes

During 2022/23 we continued to carry out all the essential checks to ensure your homes were

safe. The dedicated Compliance Team have established new risk assessment schedules and action

plans to ensure that we continue to meet all property safety requirements.

## Damp & Mould

We realise the need to continue to tackle important issues around damp and mould

To help we:

- Have updated each of our inspection forms so that all officers who visit tenants at home can ask questions about issues with damp and mould
- Have started to use humidity and temperature readers so that we can look at temperatures and humidity in properties over a period of time
- Have ensured surveyors and managers in our repairs team have had specialist training to help them better understand damp & mould
- Are investigating the use of specialist window boards to help improve thermal efficiency in our properties
- Arrange for all reported cases of mould and damp to be inspected by one of our property team and will work with you to find a solution to any problems we come across. This includes a follow up inspection to make sure that any work we undertake is successful
- Wrote to all tenants encouraging them to tell us about any issues of damp and mould they are experiencing
- Have updated the information on our website about mould and damp
- Have created special leaflets and mould and damp packs to hand out to tenants.

By 31 March 2023, **356** damp and mould cases had been reported each receiving a minimum of 3 inspections each (1st initial diagnosis, 2nd post inspection of work complete, 3rd follow up to ensure remedial work was effective.

This involved a total of **1068** inspections.

**308** cases have had their 1st diagnosis inspection and work ordered.

**232** works orders have been completed.

**The total cost of work ordered up until 31 March 2023 is £122k**

Of the cases reported the cause of damp was **95% condensation and 5% due to building issues.**

**Less than 10%** of the properties suffering from condensation required other work such as insulation or the installation of extractor fans. .

We have created hand outs and there is information on our website to help residents reduce moisture in their homes and to understand the causes and

resolution to damp in the home.

If you have any issues with excess moisture, please search 'damp' on our website for helpful tips.

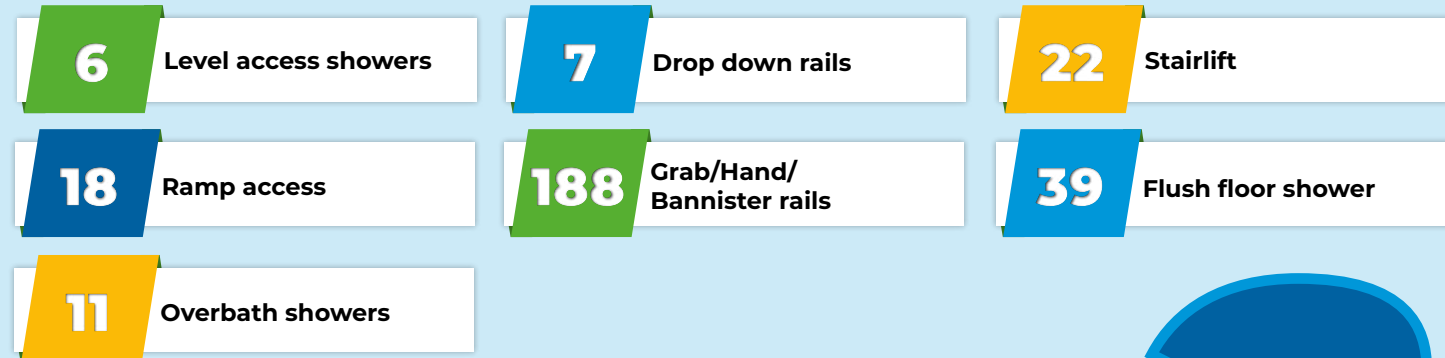
Work continues to deal with and monitor carefully all reported cases of damp and mould.



## Disabled adaptations

Dover District Council offers a disabled adaptations service for our tenants and wherever possible we will try to make adjustments to the home that mean that our tenant can remain living there and enjoy a better quality of life.

During 2022-23, we carried out:



## How did we do?

Last year our local offers were:

- The high number of tenants not at home for repairs appointments is a concern to us because the work is delayed. We want to work with tenants to find ways as to how we can resolve this issue.- in response to this we have publicized in our newsletters that missed appointments waste money and make it more difficult for other tenants to have work completed. We reminded all tenants that it is a term of their tenancy conditions that they give access to workmen to complete work. We have tried to reassure tenants that we will always make appointments and that our contractors and staff will carry identification which they are encouraged to ask to see.
- Our response to the climate emergency will continue to be a priority for us and we will be drafting a strategy on how best to make our housing stock more energy efficient. We will look for government funding opportunities to contribute towards the cost of making our housing stock green. We will embark on a small pilot project to retrofit external insulation and other energy efficient initiatives.- Ground source heat pumps and solar panels have been fitted to all of our newly developed properties and a consultant has been commissioned to undertake a full asset appraisal and make recommendations.
- Create an energy advice area on our website to help reduce effect on energy price rises for customers – we have created an energy advice area on our website and our newsletters have included articles and signposting to help our tenants secure additional support to help them manage with the cost of living.

## What we want to do in the coming year

- Set out our approach to achieving EPC 'C' by 2030 by reducing carbon emissions and ensuring homes are more efficient and less costly to heat
- We will work closely with tenants to create a dedicated Repairs Focus Group to work with Officers on the procurement process
- Manage disrepair claims to reduce the cost to the HRA
- Write a damp and mould policy for housing stock
- Work with suppliers of full fibre digital broadband to ensure that social housing blocks of flats benefit from the roll out of this and can access broadband on affordable tariffs
- Involve tenants on the repairs contract
- Encourage our contractors to become involved with local events, meetings and open days, etc.

# The Tenancy Standard

This standard covers the work that we do to make sure that empty homes are allocated in a fair, transparent and efficient way, that tenants have access to an online mutual exchange system that helps them find other households with which to exchange, that we relet empty homes as quickly and efficiently as possible and that we have policies in place and tenancy types that help us make the best use of our housing stock.

## Allocations and lettings

Our Housing Allocations Policy sets out the criteria you need to meet to qualify to join the council's housing register, the reasons why people may not be able to join and who we will prioritise for re-housing. We regularly review our allocations policy to make sure it helps those in greatest need and that all applicants are fairly dealt with. Empty homes are

advertised through a choice-based lettings scheme called HomeChoice. It allows you to bid for the properties you want so that you can make choices about where you want to live. In the summer of 2023 we will be moving to a new choice based letting system called HUMME. If you are registered on the list to move you will receive details about how to log in and bid for

properties in the new system. The Council receives many enquiries from people looking to rent a home in the district each year. At 31 March 2023 there were 1831 people on the list, with 1267 being homeseekers and 564 being transfers. Applications on our housing register and the average time they waited for properties is set out below.

Type / Size	No. of Lets	Shortest wait	Longest wait	Average wait
Sheltered accomm.	31	7 days	23 months	7 months
Studio general needs	2	21 months	4 years	33 months
1-bed general needs	85	18 days	9 years	15 months
2-bed flat or maisonette	85	13 days	6 years	14 months
2-bed house	53	4 weeks	10 years	22 months
3-bed flat or maisonette	3	14 months	5 years	32 months
3-bed house	41	3 months	5 years	22 months
4-bed	5	5 months	21 months	12 months
5-bed	0			

The total number on the housing register as at 31/3/23 is 1831, with 1267 being homeseekers and 564 being transfers.

Numbers are rounded to the nearest whole figure.

Source: Locata, Data taken between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023



## Mutual exchange

A Mutual Exchange is a way that tenants can move home by 'swapping' their property with someone else.

Approved exchanges can take place between tenants with council houses or housing association properties anywhere across the UK. Dover District Council is a member of HomeSwapper and this provides

a popular way for our customers to find a suitable exchange. The site allows customers to add photos and a description of their property and to see what other properties are available. More information about

HomeSwapper can be found at: [www.homeswapper.co.uk](http://www.homeswapper.co.uk). To sign up, just select Dover District Council as your landlord and complete the easy to follow steps.

**Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023 we helped 63 households exchange homes**

## Reletting empty homes

For the period of 2022/23 the council let 211 properties.

The average number of days to re-let a property was 57.82 days - this is an improvement from the previous year, which was 70.68 days, we are working on making further improvements.

DDC has recently started collecting information from new tenants about how satisfied they were with their new homes and although we only have a few completed questionnaires

it is reassuring to see that the majority of new households were satisfied with the standard of their new home.

## Tenancy types and increasing housing supply

Our tenancy conditions set out clearly both your responsibilities and ours as landlord. We also have a dedicated area of the Council's website specifically for tenants and leaseholders and use this to provide useful information about your tenancy.

DDC have always worked with others to provide more affordable housing for residents in our district and this year for the first time in many years we have a building programme of our own. This Napchester development included 26 new, affordable homes which were available to bid on and subsequently offered via Kent Homechoice.

Also completed within the last year have been 6 properties at Jute Fields, Deal interim accommodation with 8 properties at Elizabeth Carter Court, Deal and 16 properties at Water Hammond Close in Dover.



## Leasehold Services

Dover District Council's dedicated Homeownership Officer supports our leaseholders and shared owners by acting as a first point of contact for queries in regards to service charges, leasehold/ landlord responsibilities and payment issues.

The Homeownership Officer also works closely with Property Services to ensure that, in the event of new contracts or major planned works, leaseholders are

consulted under the Section 20 process.

In 2022/23 the council billed estimate charges of £272,033.13 and recovered just over

£222,000.00. Actual service charges for 2022/23 are not billed until September 2023 so it is not possible to provide this information at the current time.



## What we want to do in the coming year

- Work continues to drive down average relet times and this will be reported to members and tenants through our improved performance pages on the website
- Review our processes for new tenants to make sure we know about any support needs before they move in and that all new tenants have

a full understanding of their rights and responsibilities.- Our money and benefit advisors continue to work with all new tenants and existing tenants across the district. During the year 22/23 these officers supported households to claim and additional 1 million pounds worth of benefits and support which has helped them maintain their tenancies

- We will make every effort to visit at least 85% of new tenants within 6 weeks of their tenancy starting and help them organise any support they might need to manage their tenancy – we achieved this target.

### We also want to:

- Upgrade our Choice Based Lettings IT system to improve the way in which applicants can apply for re-housing online, submit supporting information and bid for homes
- Start to develop a vulnerable tenant strategy to help support our customers
- Offer more ways for tenants to update their personal information
- Review how long we keep records about tenants for to ensure that we keep only that which is strictly necessary for the minimum amount of time.

## Housing Ombudsman

Changes to the Housing Ombudsman Scheme took effect from 1 October 2022, including the removal of the 'democratic filter'.

It means residents will no longer have to contact a designated person or wait eight weeks before referring their complaint to the Ombudsman if they remain

dissatisfied at the end of their landlord's complaint process. This change in law is a positive step in making it easier for residents to access the Ombudsman's service

and hold landlords to account. For more information about the Housing Ombudsman, please visit [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk).



# Neighbourhood and Communities Standard

This standard covers the arrangements we have in place to make sure your neighbourhoods and the communal areas of estates are kept safe and clean, the arrangements we will make to work in partnership with other agencies and the work that we will do to deal with nuisance and anti social behaviour.

## Estate management

This standard covers the arrangements we have in place to make sure your neighbourhoods and the communal areas of

estates are kept safe and clean, the arrangements we will make to work in partnership with other agencies and the work that we

will do to deal with nuisance and anti social behaviour.

### Independent Living

This year the Independent Living Service was the subject of an audit, and achieved a “substantial assurance” result.

Scheme coffee mornings were

re-introduced post pandemic to encourage tenants to socialise again. This is to reduce loneliness amongst our elderly residents, in schemes where they have

the opportunity to connect with others. We also invited Age UK and ‘Scam Talks’ to help.



## Housing management

Housing Officers have continued to support our tenants during the year, setting up new tenancies, helping tenants move, dealing with general issues and supporting people. The team are continuing a regular schedule of Estate Walkabouts to identify

issues, defects and improvements required which were then raised for the Housing Property team to address. They have carried out a full programme of block inspections, to ensure compliance for fire and other risks. We have also continued our

annual tenancy checks to visit some households and assess the condition of the tenancy and property, to ensure properties are being managed well and in line with the tenancy agreement



DDC takes reports of ASB seriously and tries to resolve issues of ASB as soon as possible. Once a report of ASB has been received the ASB Housing Officer will contact the complainant to gather as much information as possible and liaise with the police where they have also been involved.

## Tackling anti-social behaviour

Those affected by ASB can report this using our online ASB form or contact us through any of our other contact arrangements. Following all reports our ASB Officer will make contact with the alleged perpetrator to discuss the allegations made along

with any information provided by the police or other agencies. In some cases the perpetrator may need support to be put in place to address their behaviour and to be able to maintain their tenancy. However, if the nuisance behaviour continues despite

support being provided by the correct agency, then there are a range of options that DDC can take, providing there is sufficient evidence of the noise or nuisance behaviour.

Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023:

ASB cases by type included:



We use our powers to intervene when needed, which include these types:

- Right To Review – 1
- Notice of Seeking Possession – 4
- Injunction – 1
- Extension of Introductory Tenancy Period – 1
- Community Protection Warning – 5
- Community Protection Notice – 3
- Acceptable Behaviour Agreement – 1

## How did we do?

In 2022-23 we achieved the following:

- Use Community protection warnings and notices to help us deal robustly with estate based issues that are causing dissatisfaction in our communities
- Introduce a mechanism for grading the communal areas of our estates to help us determine where we need to make improvements
- Publish more information about our estate service standards and whether or not we are meeting them – our Neighbourhood Management policy was approved by Cabinet in the summer of 2022 and sets out clearly how we will manage the communal spaces on our estates. More information about this is regularly included in our newsletters and on our website.

## What we want to do in the coming year

- GIS – make better use of our mapping facilities to show residents where there are particular issues in the district
- Break down cleaning performance information into areas so that you can identify how well your community is looking after itself
- Conduct more community safety perception surveys in areas where we receive complaints of ASB.



# Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard

To meet this standard, landlords need to demonstrate how they encourage tenants to be involved with monitoring performance and improvement of the housing service, the types of activity that they offer to encourage tenants to be involved, the information they provide to tenants, and the way in which they respond to the needs of their tenants. They must demonstrate how tenants can get in touch with the landlord and what they do when things go wrong and complaints are made.

## Customer service

It is important for us to recognise the positive feedback that we receive from you, as well as the

not so positive. It is a good way of us being able to measure what we are doing well and feed this

back to our team. Some examples of the feedback we received are:

*Huge thank you to ILM Fiona, for her empathy and kindness in being welcomed into the scheme*

*In the Years that we have lived here the place has never looked this good. Also thanks to Frank and the Team for getting the rest of the pavement repaired properly.*

*...the people had all been fantastic and since moving to the property he and his wife have been sleeping better. He said it feels like 'being reborn' and they feel much safer and want to thank everyone involved for the opportunity.*

## Your feedback complaints:

In July 2020, the Housing Ombudsman launched their Complaint Handling Code and updated it further in April 2022. The Code sets a standard of good practice that will allow landlords to respond to complaints effectively and fairly. Key areas of the Complaint Handling Code

include a universal definition of a complaint, providing easy access to a landlord's complaints procedure and ensuring fairness in complaint handling. The Code also helps us to take steps to put things right and offer appropriate remedies, as well as creating a positive

complaint handling culture through continuous learning and improving. In November 2020, the Government launched its Social Housing White Paper, with a section dedicated to improving complaints performance.

## From April 2022 to March 2023:

- We received an average of 3 stage 1 complaints per month for Housing Management and 7 Housing Assets
- Housing Management responded to 100% of all stage 1 complaints within the 10 working day standard
- DDC handled 7 Housing Assets complaints at stage 2 of our

- complaints process for Housing Management, of which 43% were upheld
- DDC responded to 77% of all Properties Stage 1 complaints (Responsive Repairs, Capital Works, Voids, Assets and Compliance) within the prescribed 10 working days
- DDC upheld 53% of complaints made at stage 1 (where we

- accepted fault, apologised and fixed the issue)
- DDC handled 20 escalated complaints at stage 2 of our complaints process for Asset Management of which 6 are still open but of the 14 closed, 64% were upheld
- A total of 2 Housing Ombudsman cases were investigated.

## Communications



We handled 15,651 calls, with 129,323 website hits for 'Housing For Tenants' pages.

- Created an online form for tenants to contact their Housing Officer with enquiries and requests for service
- Launched an online form to use to report issues of mould and damp with our property team
- Improved the information we have about the housing service online

## Measuring performance

We try to find a range of ways in which we can let you know how we are doing. This report is one of those ways but others include:

- Keeping our web site up to date with information about our performance
- Answering your specific enquiries when you contact us.

## Ways to get involved



## Tenant Satisfaction Measures

As part of the Government's Social Housing White Paper – The Charter for Social Housing Residents, a new set of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) will be introduced in April 2023.

During December 2021 and March 2022, the Government consulted with tenants and landlords, including Local Authorities, Housing Associations and other Registered Providers of Social Housing on the introduction of TSM.

These satisfaction measures will provide the Regulator of Social Housing with information about

our performance and the quality of our services, so that when their report is published, tenants can see clearly how we are performing and hold the Council to account.

The Government has asked us to collect and publish the data on 22 tenant satisfaction measures, covering five main themes. 10 of these will be measured by



landlords directly, and 12 by landlords carrying out tenant perception surveys.

We will be required to collect and publish this information every year, some of which we already collect and is contained in this report. As this is due to start in 2023, we will publish our first report on TSM in 2024.



## The five main themes we have been asked to report on include:

- How we keep properties in good repair
- How we maintain building safety
- Respectful and helpful engagement
- Responsible neighbourhood management
- Effective handling of complaints



To calculate the tenant perception areas we will survey tenants every year to seek your level of satisfaction on certain areas, starting between 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2024. Once each year's surveys have been completed, we will gather and analyse the results, then publish

the details on our website and in our Housing Annual Report. The Tenant Satisfaction Measure will give us, our tenants and the Regulator of Social Housing information around how tenants feel we are performing and where we might be able to improve the services we provide to you. They

will also allow our performance to be compared against other social landlords. We encourage you to complete the survey if you are asked to do so. If you need any support from us to complete your survey, please contact us as soon as possible to discuss.

## Housing Performance Scrutiny Group

The Housing Performance Scrutiny Group is a group of trained, volunteer Council tenants in addition to the elected Councillor lead for Social Housing, in both the cabinet

and shadow cabinet. They play an important role in bringing about positive changes to our housing services. The panel is responsible for examining and scrutinising different areas of

Dover's housing services. Panel members independently check, and challenge, service delivery and performance. They also make recommendations on how services should be improved.

## Have your views influenced our policies?

Part of the way we are improving how we listen to and work with tenants and leaseholders is by making our policies and strategies more readable and accessible. WE want to make it is easier for customers to share their views on them.

### Mobility Scooter Policy

**You said:** It was important for mobility scooters to be insured and safety tested and for the Council to provide more information for tenants thinking about buying one.



**We did:** We introduced a new mobility scooter policy setting out clearly what you should think about before you buy a mobility scooter and what you will need to do to get our permission for this.

## Tenancy Fraud

As part of the Kent-wide Tenancy Fraud Forum, DDC is continuing to back the county-wide campaign to tackle tenancy fraud

The penalties for tenancy fraud can be severe, with a jail term of up to two years and fines of up to £50,000 possible.

It's also against the law for a tenant to make a profit from subletting a spare room in the house, or to move out completely

while charging another family or families rent on the home that is registered to them.

## Finding out what tenants need

We try to find out what our tenants want and need in a variety of ways, this includes:

- Sending a full tenant satisfaction survey and considering the results of this. The June 2023 Tenant magazine included a tenant satisfaction survey and we will be giving information out the outcome of this in our November newsletter
- We support the Dover District Tenant Group – a group of tenants who meet regularly

with officers from the housing service to look at our performance, help prioritize environmental improvement work, give us feedback on any of our draft policies and generally make sure that the voices of our tenants are heard. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, recent tenant meetings have been successfully delivered online using Microsoft Teams.

If you are interested in joining sessions, we can offer training and support to help you engage online

- Day to day contact we have with our tenants and leaseholders
- By looking at the complaints that we get and trying to learn from any mistakes we make.



## Customer information and contacting us

There are a range of ways in which you can get in touch with us:



By letter - write to us at Housing Landlord Services, White Cliffs Business Park, Whitfield, Dover, CT16 3PJ



By email - for tenancy matters email housing@dover.gov.uk If you've already reported your repair and want to speak to someone in DDC's repair team email housing.repairs@dover.gov.uk



In person - appointments at the DDC Offices are booked in advance only. If you turn up unexpected at the Council Offices, staff will be unable to see you as most are out and about and on visits.



By telephone - call us on 01304 821199. Lines are open 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday (except Bank Holidays). This line can also be used for out of hours emergencies

Information about our services is published on the Dover District Council website and through our tenant newsletters sent to all tenants every 6 months. We encourage our tenants and leaseholders to sign up to the housing specific 'Keep Me Posted' message service so that they can receive our housing updates. You can subscribe to this service through our website.

In some cases you may wish to speak to or contact your local elected Councillor and their full details are published on our website.



# How did we do?

Last year we set ourselves some targets to help us improve our services. Here is an update on how we did with those.

- We always try to answer queries at the first point of contact, but when this is not possible, we will let you know who will be dealing with the query and make sure that we provide updates until the query is resolved
- We will prepare for the anticipated changes announced in the Government White Paper 'The Charter for Social Housing Tenants' by:
  - Improving our customer engagement and scrutiny arrangements
  - Doing more testing of your satisfaction with our services at the point at which you use them
- We will be starting to compare our performance against other housing landlords and if they are suitable using some of the good ideas they come up with to improve our own services
- Improve our communication with you by developing a joint editorial team with tenants so that they can help us write our newsletter, check that our forms and letters are easy to follow and that our information on the website is useful and interactive
- Check that the information we hold on you and your needs is up to date so that we can improve how we communicate with you and provide services to meet your needs
- Build a self service section of our housing IT system so that you can create an account and log in to look things up and report things to us
- Prepare the sheltered housing service and our telecare provision for the transition from analogue telephones to digital.

## What we want to do in the coming year

### Customer care – working with Dover District Tenant's Consultative Group

- We will increase the amount of feedback that we offer customers when they contact us to reassure them that we are dealing with their request and keeping them up to date
- Making sure that when a customer needs to complain we keep them fully informed of the progress being made with the investigation of their complaint
- Ensuring that the responses we provide are thoroughly investigated and accurately responded to, so that fewer customers need to escalate a complaint to stage 2 or the Ombudsman
- Helping to create a positive complaints handling culture in the housing service through training and mentoring of our staff
- Carrying out a self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code every six months. We will publish this on our website and include it in future tenant correspondence
- Signposting our residents to the ongoing guidance and support provided by the Housing Ombudsman, at all stages of the complaints process. <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/>
- Consult more widely with tenants and leaseholders when we remodel the HRA business plan to find out which areas of the business are important to them
- Actively engage with tenants to help review our service standards.

