



Housing Annual Report

Introduction

Welcome to Gravesham Borough Council's 2023/24 annual report, where we reflect on the years achievements, challenges, and continued commitment to providing safe, affordable, and quality housing for our community.

As Gravesham Borough Council's cabinet member for housing services, I am proud to introduce the 2023/24 Housing Annual Report, which highlights our commitment to maintaining high standards and ensuring safe and healthy homes for all our tenants.

Safe, quality housing is the foundation of a thriving community, and we recognise that our responsibility extends beyond providing homes; it includes providing a secure, respectful, and supportive environment where our tenants can truly feel at home.

This report highlights the strides we've made in adhering to safety, strengthening our commitment to tenants, and responding proactively to the needs of our community.

As we reflect on the past year's achievements, we remain dedicated to setting and meeting the highest standards in housing, assuring residents of our continued commitment to their well-being and security.

I hope you enjoy finding out more about what has been achieved during the last financial year and, if you aren't doing so already, perhaps it might inspire you to play a part in the great work we report on for next year.

Karina O'Malley
Portfolio Holder for Housing

Your community

As one of the few councils to retain its social housing stock in-house, we are committed to providing quality and sustainable housing that are homes to be proud of for our tenants and leaseholders.

Homes in numbers

- 5669 total number of council homes
- 2797 houses
- 1748 flats
- 313 maisonettes
- 201 bungalows
- 610 independent living
- 76 new homes have been built this year for our residents
- 21.5 days on average for a council home to be re-let
- 468 of our properties are leaseholder homes

Independent Living

The service continues to work hard to meet our commitment to support independent living, we continue to empower our tenants to live safely and confidently in their own homes, providing access to essential services, resources and promote a safe and strong community.

- 610 homes dedicated for independent living
- 43,730 Welfare calls carried out through home visits and intercom calls
- 1,197 events took place within independent living scheme through the Independent Living Forum

How are we supporting you?

- Combatting loneliness
- Welcoming pet companionship
- Keeping you safe

Your rent matters

It is positive to see that the rent collected, this year, has increased from last year and rent arrears has also decreased. Rental income and service charges pay for the services that all our tenants receive. This includes responsive repairs, planned refurbishment of new kitchens and bathrooms, redecoration of external areas and building new council homes. If rent is not paid, we cannot deliver these functions. Therefore, it is important that our tenants pay their rent, on time; and by doing so ensuring that the planned and required work can go ahead.

- 99.51% rent collected within the year
- £489,828 arrears within the year
- 683 tenants in arrears over £500
- 6773 telephone calls handled by our income team
- 350 homes visits took place to support residents with their rent.

Community engagement

Community engagement remains our mission, as we work hard to share a vibrant, inclusive, and resilient community. There were numerous successful events that took place throughout this year, encouraging active participation that reflect the diverse voices of our community. We strive to build stronger engagement, ensuring the tenants voice is at the heart of the services we provide, promoting honesty and ensuring our policies and projects reflect the values and needs of the people we serve.

- Partnered with Moat Housing and securing the use of their hub in Kings Farm in the heart of where our tenants are.
- D-Day celebrations for our 20 independent living schemes that targeted 156 tenants.
- Consultation with tenants to ask them how the council can regenerate shopping areas to encourage a greater community.
- Partnered with Kent Fire and Rescue to provide advice on home safety and instal carbon monoxide and smoke alarms.

Your home

As your landlord we are committed to ensuring all our tenants live in a home that is warm, safe and in good condition. During 2023/2024 we continued to undertake planned improvements to your homes.

Improving your home

- 14% of our homes currently need improvements to meet decent home standards
- £516,724 spent on installing new kitchens to 156 homes
- £99,693 spent on installing new bathrooms to 89 homes
- £98,401 spent on installing new boilers to 37 homes

- £536,812 spent on aids and adaptations to give people freedom within their homes
- £705,437 spent on replacing windows and doors on 87 homes

Fixing your repairs

We recognise the importance of the repairs and maintenance service to residents and are proud to have our own in-house workforce to carry out our contractual repair obligations as a responsible social landlord.

- 35,962 calls received reporting repairs
- 21,591 number of jobs completed by our team.
- 323 properties refurbished to re-let
- 100 emergency (within 24 hours) jobs completed on time
- 89% of non-emergency (within 28 days) jobs completed on time

Keeping you safe

We carry out regular checks to our homes to ensure they are safe. We do this according to the standards set by the government. We make every possible effort to carry out these important checks and it's vital for the safety of your family and neighbours to make sure someone is home to let us in for your scheduled appointment.

- 5448 gas services completed to ensure 100% of homes have a valid certificate
- 974 electrical tests and upgrades carried out
- 96.1% have valid 5-year electrical safety certificated (EICR)
- 100% of properties fitted with carbon monoxide alarms

We have launched a new Damp and Mould policy along with a task force.

Keeping your communal areas safe

We continue to make sure we identify and minimise fire and building safety risks across all our housing estates and blocks, to ensure you feel safe in your home and we remain compliant with emerging legislation and best practice.

- 122 asbestos re-inspections of communal areas reaching 100% compliancy
- 118 blocks completed water hygiene risk assessments making us 100% compliant
- 26 passenger lifts receiving monthly servicing reaching 100% compliancy
- 132 blocks getting monthly electrical light testing making us 100% compliant.
- 118 blocks completed water hygiene risk assessments making us 100% compliant.
- 2,278 communal fire doors inspected reaching 100%
- 89 communal fire risk assessments completed making us 100% compliant.
- £60,000 spent on upgrading 5 blocks with LED lighting
- £444,385 spent on upgrading flooring and decoration in communal areas

Caretaking services

We know a clean and tidy estate means a lot to you and because of this it is important to have clear standards as to what you can expect. We are committed to making sure residents have estates that are clean and cared for, safe and secure and in a good state of repair.

- Inspect and sweep all play areas
- Check and clear blocked rubbish chutes Sweep all estate paths and parking areas
- Check grassed and shrubbed areas, removing litter and leaves
- Clean the inside windows on all shared doors, landings, and staircases

- Sweep and mop shared halls, porches, landings, and stairs, and remove any graffiti or other marks Remove large items of rubbish from our estates where possible, or report them to the Waste Team
- Clean, sweep and mop all lift floors, walls, and doors inside and outside where possible, and remove any graffiti
- Check estate lighting, change bulbs and clean low level light shades as necessary, and report faults to the Repairs Team

Powering better living

The sustainability agenda continues to be a priority area of focus for us, particularly giving the challenging energy costs all have experienced. The council are also committed to reducing carbon emissions and improving the energy performance of its homes to help reduce fuel bills, improve thermal comfort, and help combat damp and mould.

- £708,823 spent on installation of ground source heat pumps (GSHP's) to 29 flats and the communal area.
- 140 properties have had insulation measures installed under the SHDF scheme.
- 2,395 tonnes of carbon reduced with the improvements we've made.
- 17 Net Zero homes completed, featuring air source heat pumps (ASHPs), solar panels, and loft and cavity wall insulation.
- £182,187 spent on installation of solar panels and battery storage at Springvale Court to power the communal electricity supply.
- 81.7% of our homes have energy efficiency EPC C+ rating

These improvements are reducing your fuel bills on average by £650 per year

Did you know? You need to get permission from your landlord to install an electrical vehicle charging point

Feedback

Resolving your concerns

Whilst we strive to provide the best possible service, we acknowledge that we don't always get it right, and we welcome your feedback to help us address concerns and handle complaints promptly and effectively.

Complaint process

1. Report and review
2. Stage 1 complaint
3. Stage 2 complaint
4. Housing ombudsman

Did you know? Sometimes we will treat a complaint as a Service Request if it is the first time the issue has been reported.

- 87 Stage 1 complaints processed and investigated
- 9 complaints were escalated to stage 2

What we have learnt

As a result of complaints received by the Council regarding the Council's landlord function, many service improvements have been implemented in the last financial year or are planned for the current year.

- Improved communication between teams
- Review of the telephone system
- Repairs and maintenance policy
- Greater focus on tenant engagement

Performance

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

Tenant satisfaction measures are measures that indicate how well we are providing services to you. These measures cover various topics including keeping properties in good repair, maintaining building safety, effective complaints handling, respectful and helpful tenant engagement, and responsible neighbourhood management. These measures are intended to help us as landlords review our performance, share these with you and ensure you have a voice to hold us to account.

1266 total successful surveys through all contact methods

- 512 surveys via telephone contact
- 508 surveys carried out face-to-face
- 183 surveys completed by online survey
- 63 submissions via the post

The findings:

- 75.4% overall satisfaction
- 79.6% satisfaction that you feel safe at home
- 29.6% satisfaction with complaint handling
- 71.6% satisfaction with repairs
- 63.6% satisfaction that your landlord listens and acts
- 71.1% satisfaction that communal areas are kept clean and well maintained
- 64.4% satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair
- 75.2% satisfaction that your landlord keeps you well informed
- 66.2% satisfaction that your landlord makes a positive contribution
- 74.9% satisfaction that home is well maintained
- 79.9% agree that your landlord is fair and respectful
- 54% satisfaction with landlord's handling of anti-social behaviour

The Future

Looking ahead, our council is committed to building a safe and bright future for our residents through enhanced community support and sustainable development. Our future plans are to focus on ensuring all residents have access to safe and welcoming homes. We are excited to strengthen our partnerships and invest in services to ensure we create an exceptional service for you, our tenants and create vibrant communities that will service generations to come.

- Consider increasing the number of Neighbourhood Officers, giving them a smaller number of customers to support, making them more readily available for you.
- Review the way we manage anti-social behaviour to ensure the victims are at the heart of the decision making ensuring the focus is prevention
- Look into opportunities to create a Tenant Engagement Manager to ensure they can push meaningful engagements with tenant and leaseholders.
- Ensure tenants and leaseholders are kept informed with housing updates by [accessing GoVocal our new engagement platform](#).

Thank you for being a valued part of our community.

As we look ahead, we remain dedicated in improving our housing services, building stronger

neighbourhoods, listening to our tenants' voice and ensuring Gravesham continues to be a place we are all proud to call home.

[Read previous housing performance report for 2022-2023.](#)

Helpful support contact details

Shout mental health support

Free, confidential and 24/7 text messaging service for anyone in the UK who needs support.

Phone: 0800 107 0160

Text the word Kent to 85258

Mind

Providing mental health support, information, and advice.

Phone: 0300 102 1234

www.mind.org.uk

Victim support

Support and information for anyone affected by crime.

Helpline free, open 24/7.

Phone: 0808 168 9111

www.victimsUP-P-Ort.org.uk

Change Grow Live

Drug and alcohol advice, treatment, and support.

Phone: 0300 128 1113

www.changegrowlive.org

Choices

Formerly North Kent Womens' Aid – Providing help to people experiencing domestic abuse.

Phone: 0800 917 9948

Oasis Domestic Abuse Service

For people affected by domestic abuse.

Helpline free, open 24/7.

Phone: 0808 2000 0247

www.oasisdbservice.org

Citizens Advice

Help & advice with a range of issues, including housing, legal, and debt advice.

Phone: 0808 278 7810

www.citizensadvicenwk.org.uk

National Debt Helpline

Offering free, impartial debt advice built for you.

Phone: 0808 808 400

www.nationaldebtline.org

Foodbank

Providing emergency food and support to local people in crisis.

Phone: 01474 559555

www.gravesham.foodbank.org.uk

Fuel bill support

Providing financial support and practical advice on paying for energy.

Phone: 0300 1237 597

www.fuelbankfoundation.org

RSPCA

If you need to report animal cruelty or need advice about general pet care, animal welfare law, animal rehoming or vet care.

www.rspca.org.uk