

2020

Housing Annual Report



Foreword

By

Councillor Beverley Egan, Cabinet Portfolio holder for Place - Housing



The last year has seen a huge effort as we have invested in our stock and really focussed to work hard as an organisation to improve housing and deliver a professional service for our tenants and customers.

As a councillor with responsibility for housing, I have made it clear my wish for an improved housing stock and a service that puts customers first, and I was pleased to see that 98% of all Council homes met the decent homes standard. The last year has also seen big challenges with the implementation of the Homeless Reduction Act, and we have continued to work to help secure homes for homeless people.

Over the next year the Housing Service will continue to develop new homes, and 2020 will see the completion of a nine bedroomed hostel for homeless people as well as 4 new two bedroomed homes in Church Close and a further two in Windsor Gardens.

I am proud of all the teams who deliver services to our residents and of how focused they are on creating opportunities for involvement and engagement. This report doesn't just tell you how we performed in the last year, it also tells you how we are working with residents to make our services, properties and estates even better based on your feedback, compliments and complaints. We recognise the importance of working in partnership with residents and will continue to work closely with our Tenant and Leaseholder Group and Sheltered Housing Forum to focus on areas where we can improve satisfaction with our services.

Please do keep working with us to make a difference and make you feel AT HOME.

Our Performance

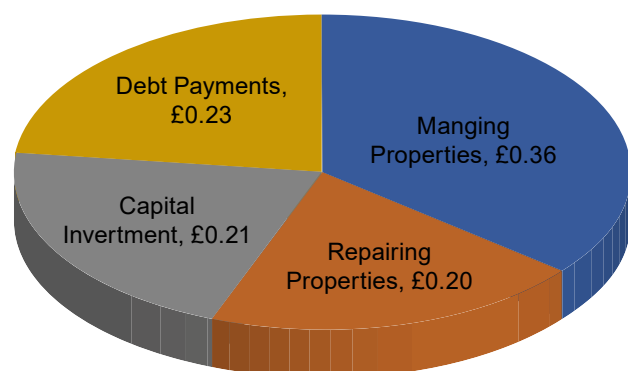
From 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020 we recorded the following performance:

Indicator	Our Performance	*Average for other Organisations	Comments
Percentage of repairs completed on time.	95.7%	Not Known	The vast majority of repairs were completed on time.
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the with last repair job undertaken.	99.5%	*92%	We are above average compared to other organisations.
Dwellings with a valid gas certificate in the last 12 months.	100%	100%	We are in line with other organisations for this critical health and safety indicator.
Average void turnaround time	21 Days	28.8 Days	We are above average compared to other organisations.
Rent Arrears of current tenants as a percentage of rent due.	4.95%	2.84%	We are below average compared to other organisations and are changing our working practices to improve performance in this measure.
Percentage of Housing Rents collected.	99.7%	100%	We are in line with other organisations.

**Based on the period up to 30th September 2019.*

How we spent the money from your rents

How we spent the money per £1 of rent paid over the last year



Over the last year from April 2019 to March 2020 we spent a total of **£8.28m** managing the Council's housing stock.

This includes £2.95m Managing Properties, £1.69m repairing properties, £1.77m investing in our properties, and building new homes, £1.87m in debt repayments to the government.

Satisfaction with our Services

We are due to undertake a comparative survey with other housing providers again in 2021. For your information this is how we performed together with actions we put in place when the survey was last undertaken in 2018. This includes how we compared to others.

Indicator	Our Performance	Average for other Organisations	Comments
Satisfaction with Housing Services	74%	85.6%	We analysed the information and found that many of the issues raised related to repairs and maintenance service. As a result we have undertaken a number of actions to improve, and these are set out below.
The percentage of tenants who thought the Council listened to their views and acted on them	61.2%	70%	Whilst we have a tenants and leaseholders forum, we have looked at other ways to get tenant's views on important issues and will use the tenants newsletter to consult on important issues that affect you.
Satisfaction with the quality of your home.	78%	84.7%	We have undertaken a lot of work to improve the quality of homes and in 2020 the percentage of homes that were assessed to be of decent quality was 98%. Nevertheless we recognise there is still much more work to be done and have undertaken works this year to help improve the fabric of our estates such as replacing soffits and fascias and painting.
Satisfaction with the neighbourhood as a place to live	83.9%	84%	We have undertaken further work to improve this year including more intense cleaning for some housing estate areas and to monitor more closely for issues such as flytipping removal.
Percentage of tenants who thought that Council housing offered value for money.	89%	85%	We will continue to manage our stock to help improve the quality of homes and our estates whilst charging rents that offer value for money.
Percentage of tenants satisfied with repairs and maintenance works if had a repair over the last year.	65%	77%	We recognise that we have needed to change the way we work to improve the perception of our repairs and maintenance service, and this is summarised below.

Improving our Repairs and Maintenance Service

We have undertaken the following actions to improve our repairs service:

- Customer Care training for all staff
- New working arrangements with a manager appointed from South Essex Homes to manage our property services
- Appointed new surveying staff
- Improved our survey of works undertaken to ensure works are of the right quality

In addition we continue to develop our procedures to ensure the service improves.

Works to Improve your home

We surveyed all our homes back in 2018 and have used this information to look at what needs to improve. Here are just some examples:

Capital Works

From the 1st April 2019 to the 31st March 2020, these are some of the works completed:

- Installed 314 Fire safety doors
- Undertook 16 Electrical Rewires
- Replaced 108 Boilers
- Replaced 22 kitchens & 18 bathrooms
- Electrical safety checks of 1,277 homes

Lawns Court

As part of our programme to build more new Council houses, last year saw the successful completion of two new sheltered housing bungalows at Lawns Court. The bungalows are fully disabled adapted, including kitchen units that have variable height as well as wet rooms and full level access.



Improving our Estates

We recognise that some of our estates needed intense work. An example were blocks of flats at St Guiberts, and Middleburg.

Issues included poor quality footpaths and parking, poor condition of the fabric of the estate with poor paintwork and poor quality doors.

As a result we: Undertook repairs to the roofs and replaced the roof guttering, replaced fascia's and soffits with new maintenance free items, improved drainage, undertook masonry and joinery painting, replaced communal doors and porches and upgraded paths for improved disability access as well as improved the surface of car parking and access roads.



Fire Safety

Following the tragedy of the Grenfell Fire, we have focussed our work to improve Fire Safety. This means that by March 2020, we had replaced all our Fire safety doors with new ones. In addition we have completed the installation of most carbon monoxide detectors and mains powered smoke alarms in our properties.

Looking Ahead to next Year

This year we will continue to work to improve our properties, and despite the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic, and the difficulties for the building industry, we will look to continue to maintain a high percentage of homes reaching the decent homes standard. Works we are either doing or plan to do include special focussed work in some flat block areas, and will include some repairs to the fabric of the buildings, as well as painting and more intense cleaning.

Other planned capital works include:

- 59 Bathroom and Wet room replacements
- 16 Re-wires/upgrade to properties.
- 28 roof replacements
- 39 kitchen replacements
- 32 Window replacements

More new Homes Being Built!

In addition, in 2020 we expect to finish building more new homes including:

- A Nine bedroomed Hostel for Homeless People in Hatley Gardens
- Two new two bedroomed homes in Windsor Gardens
- Four new two bedroomed homes in Church Close

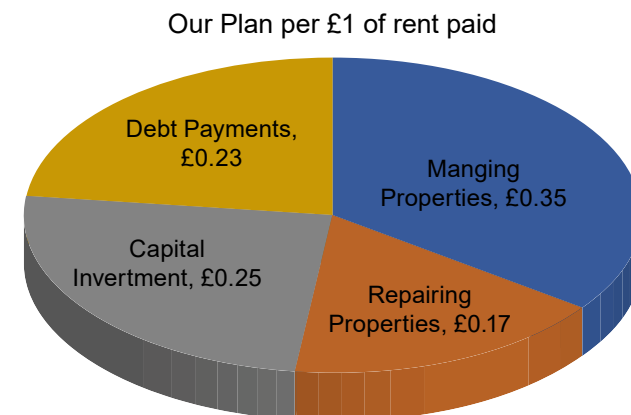


Improving our Services

We are also looking to modernise and improve our services, including:

- Implementing a new Housing Management System
- Procure a new contractor for our repairs and maintenance service
- Customer Care training for staff
- Review of tenant engagement and role of the Tenant & Leaseholder forum and the Sheltered Housing Forum
- Review and Improve our procedures
- Review our Allocation Policy

During the year we plan to spend:



Our plans for April 2020 to March 2021 include £2.79m Managing Properties, £1.41m repairing properties, £1.98m investing in our properties, and £1.87m in debt repayments to the government.