



Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames

Housing Services

End of year performance report
1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023



Welcome and introduction

Councillor Emily Davey, Portfolio Holder for Housing



Welcome to our third annual review and report to Housing Residents, for the year from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

2022/23 has been a landmark year when we started to build the first new council homes in Kingston for a generation. In September 2022, we broke ground on the redevelopment of the Cambridge Road Estate where we will be delivering 767 new high quality sustainable council rented homes, a new community centre and green spaces, as part of the overall development of over 2,000 homes. This will represent 114 additional council homes for our residents. Alongside this major development, our smaller site programme to create over 100 new homes, is now delivering the first new homes in 2023.

We have also been improving many properties by delivering over 500 energy-saving measures to reduce bills, as part of our home improvements programme.

However, the Cost of Living Crisis has made it a remarkably tough year for all of our residents, with energy bills at an all time high and inflation hitting food and all household costs.

Housing's Financial Inclusion Team has been working one-to-one supporting residents to ensure they have access to all the benefits and help available to them. The FIT team has also delivered the government's Household Support Fund to individuals, families and other households in need. The cost of the living crisis is far from over and we can help many more people as we head into the coming winter.

We know there is always more to do and we are working in partnership with residents on many projects such as making them part of the process to procure services such as the new repairs contract.

Best regards
Councillor Emily Davey



Our Vision and Priorities

Wale Adetoro - Assistant Director Homes



In Kingston we have over 6,000 council owned homes and manage a further 400 private rented homes for temporary accommodation. We also provide services to 1,600 leasehold homes, and 750 homes for older people.

The scale and scope of work to manage our properties is significant with over 15,000 general repairs, 5,500 specialist repairs and 6,000 service visits for gas installations a year, as well as thousands of visits to check compliance in 11 categories including fire, gas and electricity safety. These services are delivered while providing 24/7, 365 cover.

I am pleased to say that our team has delivered 100% in nearly all of our compliance categories and 82% customer satisfaction on delivery of responsive repairs.

While we continue to strive to improve on these metrics, we have also focused on delivering on our strategic vision and our priorities as a council through the housing services team. Broadly speaking our aim is to deliver and support safe, comfortable, efficient and well-maintained homes, where people want to live and establish a long-term future for themselves and their families here in Kingston.

I am particularly proud that during this year, and through challenging financial times for everyone, the team has not only provided 182 home placements for new social tenants, but also launched our resident engagement and homeless and rough sleeper strategies, prevented homelessness in 686 cases, provided temporary accommodation for 941 individuals and families to prevent homelessness and provided 313 emergency accommodation places for households in crisis.

Best regards
Wale Adetoro



Rent Collection

Rent Collected



Arrears



We set a target for the year to 31 March 2023 to achieve 97.9% rent collected against total rent charged, with arrears at 2.1%. At the end of year the results were 97% rent collected and 3% arrears.

Against the backdrop of the Cost of Living Crisis and record high energy bills, we would like to thank our residents for working with us to achieve low arrears for the year.

Financial Inclusion

The Council's Financial Inclusion Team provides holistic and tailored financial inclusion support for council tenants to help sustain their tenancies.

They provide support to council tenants in rent arrears, tenants signing up to a new tenancy and to those who have made a new application to Universal Credit. The support helps tenants achieve income maximisation, prioritise debts and household expenses, set up affordable repayment plans and to budget their monthly income effectively. The team also helps tenants to access additional grants or discounts, including the government's Household Support Fund.



Total income generated by FIT



Income maximisation - benefits

£265,683

Housing Benefit and Universal Credit

£126,030

Household Support Fund delivered

£48,883

You can contact FIT on **020 8547 5591** or email: **financialinclusion@kingston.gov.uk**

Fairer

The advent of the Cost of Living Crisis has proved a challenge for everyone, not least our social housing tenants.

Kingston is committed to reducing inequalities and increasing opportunities for everyone in the borough. To help in meeting this challenge, Housing's Financial Inclusion Team has extended its reach even further into our communities with support at the monthly CResT/RBKares Cambridge Road Estate Wellbeing Days and a calendar of 'drop-in' support days across the borough at Libraries and other community locations.

Community Fibre

Partner companies Community Fibre and Hyperoptic are delivering low cost fibre broadband for social housing residents, with fibre cabling already installed at Sheep House Way, South Lane Estate, School Lane and Alpha Road Estates. Further services are being rolled out at Cambridge Gardens, Cumberland House and Kingsmill Business Park, as well as free WiFi in community spaces and buildings.



Community Resilience

In July 2022 we brought together the voluntary, community and charity sectors in our borough with our teams and critical services such as the NHS, Foodbanks, Care and Emergency services to work together on a coordinated approach to tackle Cost of Living challenges. As a result the Council launched a £720,000 Community Resilience Fund to enable our community, charity and voluntary sectors to continue to support residents.

Financial Inclusion Case Study



- Mr and Mrs P were referred to the Financial inclusion Team (FIT) in August 2022 after struggling to pay their rent.
- They were unaware of the benefits they were entitled to and following the ill health of Mrs P, were using their savings to pay their rent. Savings depleted, the only income the couple were living off was Mr P's state pension. FIT were able to support the couple to apply for Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payment, Carer's element, and Council Tax Reduction.
- They also secured immediate financial support from the Household Support Fund, fuel vouchers, a reduction in their water bill and the removal of the bedroom tax on medical grounds.
- FIT were able to generate over £11,000 in benefit entitlement, greatly improving their monthly income helping them to pay for rent and essential household expenses.

Lettings and Housing Register

Lettings

The number of all social housing lettings in 2022/23 was 238 up from 207 in the previous year. (176 were in general purpose accommodation and 62 sheltered housing)



Housing Register

On 31 March 2023 there were 4,003 live applications on the housing register.

Losing your home (Eviction)

While it is always our aim to keep people in their homes and eviction is a last resort, we have carried out 8 evictions for rent arrears.



Re-Letting

The average time taken to re-let general needs homes in the year to 31 March 2023 was 54.7 days and 166 days for older people.

General Needs



Homes for Older People



There are a number of reasons that delay re-letting, including settling debt on smart meters and receiving new energy cards for incoming tenants. But we recognise that time to re-let vacant properties is far too high. Housing officers now have blank energy cards available to tenants and we have now implemented a new 2023/24 Performance Improvement Plan to speed up re-letting times which will not only return quality homes to the market quicker, but will also ensure the council can minimise loss of rental income.

Empty Homes

At year end 31 March 2023 there were 286 empty homes in the borough.

A high number of empty properties not being let is a concern to us, but these figures included: Properties vacated as part of the re-development of the Cambridge Road Estate in Norbiton and therefore not available for letting.

Also homes for older people with shared facilities (primarily bathrooms) which are not acceptable for many older residents. These properties are under assessment for improvement to make them suitable.

Empty Homes	Available for letting	Not available for letting	Total
0-6 weeks	18	0	18
6 weeks - 6 months	36	6	42
Over 6 months	115	111	226
Total	169	117	286

Right to Buy

This year there were 52 right to buy applications and 25 completions.



Customer satisfaction with repairs



Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, we carried out over 14,000 repairs across all properties, also gas orders over 5,617 and gas servicing 3,950. During this time we received 104 formal complaints (less than 1%).

In 2022/23 we also implemented a more rigorous procedure for complaints which means that ALL enquiries are logged as a Stage 1 complaint as a default. Despite this change, we have achieved 82% satisfaction in feedback from residents and will continue to work to improve performance in dealing with repairs and complaints.

Complaints Procedure

The complaints procedure encourages resolution at the first point of contact. If we are unable to resolve a customer's dissatisfaction, there is a two stage complaints process to follow.

A Stage One complaint includes an investigation and outcome and Stage Two will be a review of the investigation.

Stage 1 Complaints

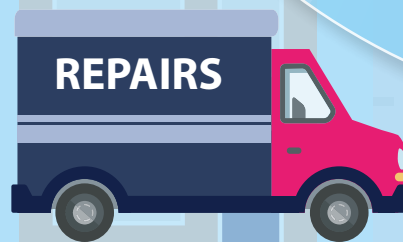
Contact Centre	1
Highways (Pot Holes/Street Furniture)	2
Landlord - Repairs and Maintenance	198
Options/Register/Homelessness	1
Staff attitude, conduct or behaviour	1

Stage 2 Complaints

Landlord Repairs & Maintenance	40
Staff attitude, conduct or behaviour	2

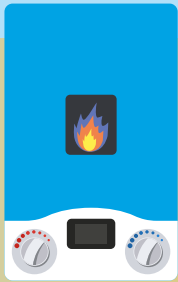
Ombudsman Complaints

There were no Ombudsman complaints during the period 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023.



Home Improvements

Nearly 600 improvements have been delivered by our team this year from energy-saving and damp measures to new kitchens and bathrooms and adaptations to meet tenants needs.



357 homes received new energy efficient boilers



11 homes have received new bathrooms



107 homes received new windows



Adaptations

64 homes have been adapted to meet the tenant's needs



35 homes received new, better insulated roofs



18 homes have received new kitchens



4 buildings have had improvements and renovations to communal parts



Greener

Kingston is committed to working with our communities to deliver improvements through greener solutions and working towards a carbon neutral future that protects and enhances our environment with a target to make council operations net zero by 2038.

Housing is committed to maximising opportunities to play its part - we have delivered in the region of 500 council home improvements that bring energy saving benefits to our residents including new windows and doors, insulated roofs and energy efficient boilers.

Government Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund

Kingston has won funding from the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. This funding will see 66 of the council's least energy efficient homes receive energy saving measures including, loft insulation, cavity and external wall insulation, solar panels and battery storage that will save them up to £600 a year in energy costs.

First Air Source Heating Installation

Kingston Council has commissioned its first Air Source Heating installation to replace gas boilers at Four Oaks hostel in Chessington. Once completed it is estimated the installation will save 80% on energy bills and reduce carbon emissions by 15 tonnes of a year.



Green initiative

- During the year to 31 March 2023 we launched our Greening Initiative, which aims to help communities across Kingston social housing estates to improve their local green spaces, with partner Glendale on hand to provide them with the gardening tools and where required gardening advice. Residents can explore setting up a gardening club and we are on hand to support them.
- **Vine Close new community wildlife friendly Garden project**
- Over the past year, the local community has worked hard to tidy and improve the unused and overgrown space at the rear of Vine close and as a result, they have secured funding from Kingston Council's Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy fund, to reinstate the small pond and create a new wildlife rich community garden in 2023.



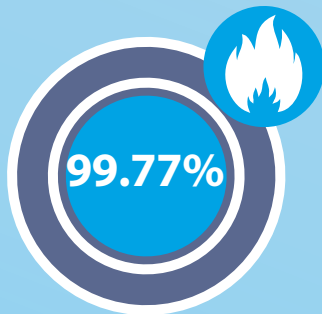
Business assurance and compliance

Business assurance covers all of the safety checks the council carries out on our properties and they are designed to ensure we comply with all relevant legislation and requirements as a landlord.

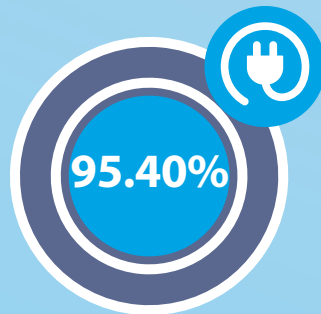
Health & Safety inspections



Gas Safety



Electricity Safety



Fire Safety Inspection



Cases where we have not been able to achieve 100% compliance are primarily because we have not been able to gain access to the property. We strongly encourage all residents to allow access to ensure the safety of their home.

Other areas of compliance:

- ✓ Fire safety equipment
- ✓ Emergency lighting
- ✓ Lightning conductor testing
- ✓ PAT testing
- ✓ Lift servicing
- ✓ Asbestos surveys
- ✓ Water monitoring



Safer

Kingston is one of the safest boroughs and we are committed to making it even safer for everyone. Councils have a duty to ensure that buildings under their control comply with appropriate legislation and corporate standards.

Fire Risk Assessment

Kingston Council is required to carry out fire risk assessments on all of its properties to look at the safety and integrity of all exit routes and if there is anything inside the property that could start, accelerate or spread a fire. We carry out 764 communal fire door inspections every year.

These inspections are carried out by an external independent fire safety consultant - we are working with Quinn Contactors.

100% of the recommendations made following inspections are programmed for completion by our specialist fire remedial contractor.



Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

Kingston works with our communities, the police and other stakeholders to tackle anti-social behaviour and make Kingston a safer place to live. During this year we have further strengthened our processes and procedures regarding ASB and have obtained one property closure order for the misuse of drugs and served injunctions on two residents related to illegal drugs and assault.



Resident Engagement

Working in partnership with our residents, engagement and participation is designed to deliver value for money responsive and improved services. Consultations give all participants a formal process to give their views on major initiatives and changes to services, while our 'Involved In' tenant groups provide a core ongoing feedback loop to ensure continual improvement.

What is the social housing white paper ?

The UK government's white paper on Social Housing Consumer Regulatory Standards was launched in November 2020 and the revised consumer standard and code of practice will apply to all registered social landlords from April 2024. Stakeholder consultations are currently taking place.

What does this mean for Kingston council?

The new Social Housing Regulation Bill will help to ensure we put residents at the centre of our services, allow them to hold us to account and embed performance reporting and transparency in our processes through new legally required Tenant Satisfaction Measures.

We have already moved ahead of many aspects of the white paper with our commitment to build trust by producing an engagement framework for resident involvement and where decisions are made.

Repairs Group



As part of our drive to provide the best possible repairs service, we established a resident repair group that would have a direct involvement in the development of the service. The group had its first meeting in October 2022 and is currently supporting the repairs procurement programme to award a new repairs and maintenance contract in 2024.

Frances Moseley annual award



Our scrutiny group KRiSP were awarded the annual Frances Moseley award in October 2022. The award recognises the tremendous hard work done by our scrutiny group, who have been monitoring our housing service over the past 10 years.



Housing for Older People

This group was established late 2022 and aims to ensure that older residents can participate in the service delivery of housing for older people. Working together with our residents and community groups we are able to achieve much more. The group is a chance for residents to get together with council staff, to be updated on housing news and share their views and suggestions to support and improve delivery of services.

Together



Great British Spring Clean

Our estate clean-ups have become increasingly popular and once again our contractor Axis has supported the big clean-up at the Alpha Road Estate in March 2023. The event was a huge success and many residents were very happy to see that their estate was having a spring clean makeover.

'Thank you for doing this for the community' 'Thank you much appreciated' 'So helpful as I don't drive'

'Everyone so kind thank you' 'The gentlemen who helped clear my items were so helpful'

'So thoughtful thank you, can I organise another one sometime'

Following the success at Alpha Road, we have held a Skip Day at South Lane Estate and Communal Gardens Clean and Tidy at Penrhyn Gardens.

Queen Mary Community Hall Refurbishment

Queen Mary Community Hall at Cambridge Gardens in Norbiton has been refurbished and was reopened on 31 January 2023.

The hall is now host to a variety of different clubs, groups and events.

- The Tuesday Group has now transferred from Piper Hall to provide a foodbank and a hot lunch for the community.
- The monthly CReSt/RBKares Wellbeing Day transferred to QMCH from February 2023, providing NHS vaccinations, health checks and foot care, Kick-It stop smoking, Kingston Samaritans and Mind, Tony's Fruit Stall, Kingston Adult Education, Kingston Council support services, energy vouchers, free data sims and bike maintenance.
- One Norbiton & CReSt, Achieving for Children, Norbiton Safer Neighbourhood Policing Team, and Kingston Social Enterprise Club are now using the hall facilities.

Queen Mary Community Hall is also now available for hire for community Groups, not for profit organisations, charities and residents. You can email queenmaryhall@kingston.gov.uk to discuss hiring and arrange a viewing.

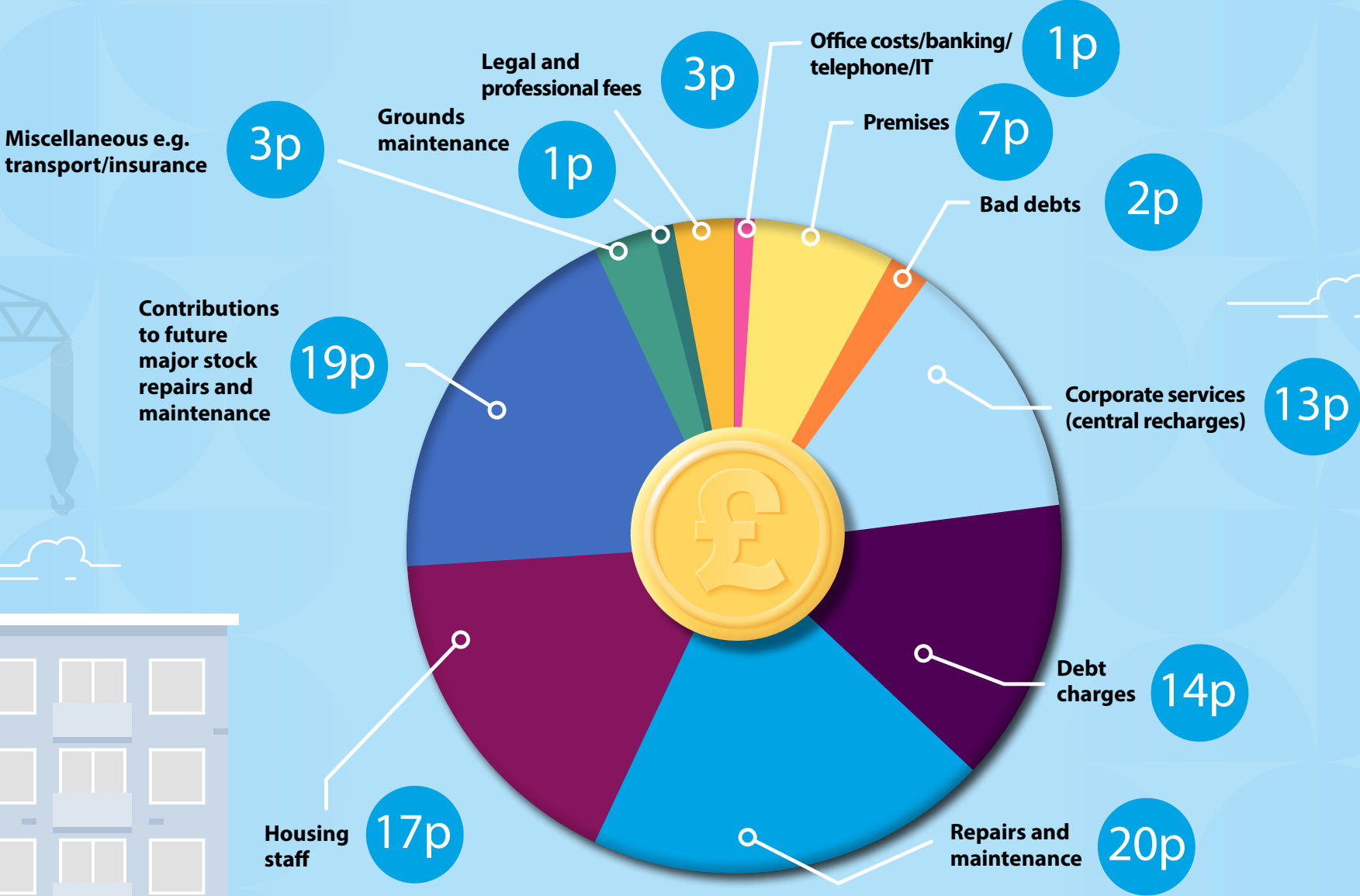


Tenant Satisfaction Survey by text

For faster and improved feedback on repairs, we are using an SMS text survey, so when a repair has been completed, residents receive an SMS text message from us to complete a short satisfaction survey.

This survey is one of the Key Performance Indicators we will use to monitor our contractor's performance against set targets.

How every penny in the £ is spent





Thanks for reading!

For further details on housing visit our website:
www.kingston.gov.uk/housing-regeneration

