

Runnymede Borough Council

2022-23 Housing Annual Report for Tenants





Introduction

The Regulator of Social Housing sets the minimum standards that social landlords, including councils, must meet. This annual report gives information on our performance between April 2022 and March 2023. It is set out using the themes of the Regulator's standards.

Dear tenant,

We are pleased to send this annual report to all Runnymede's tenants and are proud of the successes which the Council's Housing Service has achieved. Our aim is always to improve the service we provide to tenants.

In October 2019 the Regulator of Social Housing served us a notice saying we were not compliant with one of its regulatory standards, the Home Standard.

Our most significant achievement this year is that by delivering a comprehensive range of improvements, the Regulator lifted this notice. This demonstrates the confidence the Regulator has in the Council's ability to keep your homes safe and secure

Other improvements delivered this year include:

- Letting nine brand new Council apartments in Addlestone.
- Creating an action plan in response to our first digital satisfaction survey of tenants.
- We gained independent accreditation that our Independent Retirement Living schemes are affordable and with quality services for these residents.
- Our Paw Prints award from the RSPCA shows our commitment to animal welfare, with our new Pets Policy promoting responsible pet ownership by tenants.



Cllr Mark Nuti



Andy Vincent

- We gained official recognition for our Technical Services, with compliance against international standards of quality management checked by independent auditors. We hope to get this 'ISO' certification for the rest of Housing services next year.
- All tenants had the opportunity to give their views through our satisfaction survey and during the year we also engaged directly with 535 tenants through consultation opportunities. Please contact us if you want to share your experience of the services we provide.

Cllr Mark Nuti, Chair, Housing Committee

Andy Vincent, Corporate Head of Housing

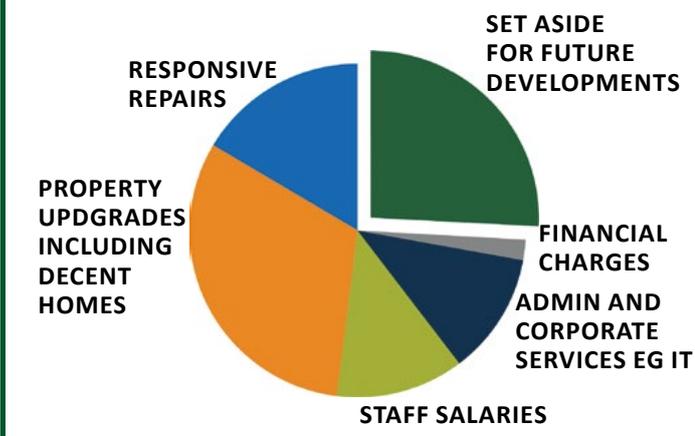
More information on regulation is available online at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/regulator-of-social-housing/about

Rent standard

Social housing providers must set rents and service charges in accordance with Government guidance, and they must provide all the required data and information to the Regulator.

How your rent payments were used

The Council received £18.8million in rent payments from tenants during 2022-23, this is how it was spent:



The biggest proportion of income was spent on upgrades like kitchens and bathrooms. We have replaced 212 kitchens and 215 bathrooms, giving individuals and families facilities which will last them for many years to come.



Rent increase and payments

In February we wrote to all tenants to explain that although rents had to go up, because the costs the Council has to pay are going up, the increase was capped at seven per cent. The average rent of a two bedroom home went up from £117.54 to £125.77.

A total of 33 households pay a higher 'affordable' rent for a newer Council property.

Just 1.93 per cent of total rent due had not been paid by tenants. The national average for similar sized councils was 2.14 per cent. Only 4.25 per cent of tenants were in more than seven weeks arrears.

Compared with the previous year, there was a 45 per cent reduction in the time taken for an empty property to be taken over by a new tenant. We are working with MCP, our new repairs contractor, to bring empty properties up to standard quickly. This ensures we avoid losing money from rent payments and we can rehouse tenants sooner.

Supporting tenants with finances

We reinstated our tenancy support service in summer 2022. Between then and April 2023 our specialist worker has taken over 40 referrals to work with tenants to help them to claim and maintain welfare benefits.

Paul has provided budgeting advice and carried out income and expenditure exercises to help tenants with the cost of living.

He has secured grant funding to help



with energy costs, discretionary housing payments and helped tenants successfully get backdated benefit payments with the Department for Work and Pensions.

Home standard

Tenants' homes must meet the government's Decent Homes Standard. Landlords like the Council should have a balance of planned and responsive repairs and deliver value for money and there must be an adaptations service that meets tenants' needs.

Providing Decent Homes for tenants

We aim to invest in council-owned homes so they meet or exceed the Decent Homes standard. We spent just over £4m doing so during 2022-23:



6,030
day-to-day
repairs

Keeping homes in good order

We carried out 6,030 non-emergency repairs during the 2022-23 year, and of those, 95 per cent were completed on time.

On top of that, we dealt with 815 emergency repairs, with 98 per cent completed within four hours.

815
emergency
repairs

Adaptations and improvements

We standardised our response to requests for adaptations, with one policy for all residents so everyone receives a fair outcome, with targeted options to support people to live independently and safely in their homes.

More than £186,000 was spent on on adaptations to make Council homes easier to live in during 2022/23. This is the highest amount we have spent on this since 2018/19. We installed:

- 2 new ramps to make our properties more wheelchair accessible.
- 23 adaptations to showers.
- 10 properties where we installed handrails.

Tenant feedback: "Thank you very much for the new kitchen and bathroom. We really appreciate the work being done. KinCraig (the contractors) have been amazing, very professional and friendly and kept us updated."

Regulator satisfied with service

In January the Regulator of Social Housing formally lifted the Notice served on the Council at the end of 2019 and declared their satisfaction that all the issues identified had been addressed and we are fully compliant with the Home Standard. This meant that all our homes had valid gas and electrical safety certificates in date and that a programme was in place to get all homes up to Decent Homes standard.

By March 2023 just 22 per cent of homes did not meet the government's Decent Homes standard – many of these were because the tenants had declined to have recommended work completed.

In their own words: "I wanted to record my sincere thanks to the Council... for the positive and constructive engagement we have had throughout the period of our engagement and for their transparency and openness" - Regulator of Social Housing.

Neighbourhood and Communities Standard

Landlords must keep the neighbourhood and communal areas clean and safe, promote wellbeing and tackle anti-social behaviour.

Acting on tenants' concerns

► In July we held a Community Day at Heathervale Way, New Haw, to clear fly-tipping and remove litter. We talked to tenants about our plans to improve the area. We have installed outside storage units for tenants to store children's play and garden equipment and put up curtains and drying lines.

► After listening to feedback from residents in School Lane, Egham we provided skips for bulky waste – which we helped to remove. We litter picked the area, hired contractors to clear overgrown bushes, installed washing lines, lowered kerbs for disabled people, and re-marked parking bays.

► Following complaints, we put in new CCTV near the bin store in Garfield Road, Addlestone. This has meant that fly tipping has reduced significantly.

Other estate improvements include:

► Bollards installed to prevent parking and churning up of grassed areas at St Ann's Close in Chertsey and Braeside in New Haw.

► We improved the green spaces in and around Field View in Egham.

Early planning for modern homes

In August Housing Committee approved the principle of regenerating the Parkside estate in New Haw. We began work on feasibility, concept design and potential costs, met with residents likely to be affected and have been sending regular news updates. The regeneration aims to deliver modern, energy efficient homes of various sizes and tenure including first-time home ownership opportunities.



Our Engagement and Inclusion Officer Kate regularly meets with IRL tenants

Accreditation for IRL schemes

Our Independent Retirement Living (IRL) team successfully achieved accreditation with EROSH, a national consortium for older people's housing and support, with its own dedicated quality standards framework.

During a week-long assessment, each of our schemes were visited and assessed before we were successfully accredited.

Achieving accreditation shows that our IRL services successfully meet high standards in relation to:

- Good quality older people's housing and support.
- Ensuring residents are involved in service improvements.
- That services are affordable, accessible and inclusive.
- Staff are regularly trained.
- We ensure residents aren't isolated or lonely.

We will be assessed by EROSH annually to ensure we continue to meet these high standards.



Eviction last year for Anti-Social Behaviour.



Partial premises closure for sex worker activity.



Action for breach of injunction due to violence.



Community Protection Notices for anti-social behaviour.



Community Protection Warnings (gardens/cannabis).



Households re-housed due to safeguarding concerns.

Tenancy Standard

The Tenancy Standard says social housing homes must be let in a fair way and make efficient use of the housing stock.

► We approved a 'Support With Moving Policy' in March 2023 under which we can pay incentives for tenants giving up larger, family sized properties who are willing to downsize to a smaller home.

► We continued to work with a specialist anti-fraud team. In one case, a tenancy was surrendered after we investigated concerns that the tenant was living elsewhere, despite making a fraudulent right to buy application.

Flexible tenancies

Of the new tenancies offered, 79 per cent were flexible tenancies of two, five or ten years.

This type of tenancy is gradually replacing the old 'tenancy for life'. It means that if a tenant's circumstances change – for example they can afford to buy a place or are ready to downsize - properties will become available more quickly for those waiting for social housing.

Separately we completed 15 flexible tenancy reviews and all were offered new Council tenancies.

Tenant engagement

► We continue to publish newsletters for all tenants and dedicated IRL newsletters for all five schemes.

► Tenants took part in focus groups for our new anti-social behaviour procedure and new repairs handbook.

► Responding to feedback from IRL tenants, we have hosted meetings on multiple topics.

► We ran a satisfaction survey which found 62 per cent of tenants were satisfied with our housing service.



Corn Merchant House at Magna Square

Working with housing associations

In total, 125 households were nominated to housing associations in the borough during 2022-23 – the highest total in six years.

We worked with Accent Housing to complete the letting of social housing in Magna Square, Egham. This Council regeneration project has been nominated for a number of awards and has created a vibrant new focal point for the town centre.

Complaints

We received 48 complaints in 2022/23 and upheld or partly upheld 20 of them, resulting in compensation being paid to five tenants.

The three most common subjects of complaint were about repairs, staff and the housing register.

One complaint to the Housing Ombudsman resulted in a new policy on disabled adaptations.

11

Council homes sold during 2022-23 year.

23

Households found new homes via mutual exchange.

53

Tenants moved to a different Council home.

19

Tenants moved and downsized to a smaller property.

187

Households awaiting transfer to a new home.

193

Homes let to new tenants during the year.

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