

# Thanet District Council

**Tenant and Leaseholder Services**

## **Annual Report 2022/23**



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# Foreword

## Sally O’Sullivan (Head of Tenant and Leaseholder Services)



“Our Annual Report provides an overview of our performance over the last financial year.

Looking at the achievements of the team over the last year, I can see the dedication of the officers reflected in the performance. I see daily, the hard work and desire to deliver an exceptional housing service; but also humility to know that we don't always get it right and when we don't we can admit this, seek to put it right and learn from our mistakes. I feel very proud to lead this service that would not be as successful as it is without the passion of every officer in the team.”

## Helen Whitehead (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing)

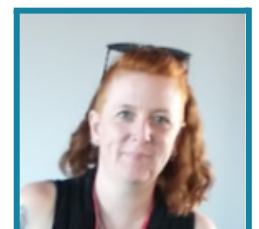


“We have come an incredibly long way since services first came back in-house, and one of the ongoing commitments we made at that point was to ensure that the voices of tenants and leaseholders would be central to the growth of our new service. I believe we are making constant and significant progress on that front, and it is evident in a more reflective and considered approach to housing provision.

“I am exceptionally proud of everyone involved in making these changes happen; the efforts of the Thanet Tenant and Leaseholder Group, officers, and all involved in delivering housing services. Together they have produced both measured and marked improvements across our service, and it is pleasing to note and see the evidence that these improvements are being felt by our tenants and leaseholders across Thanet.

“We have faced financially challenging times over the past year, but are still delivering on our aims and supporting residents. There is always further to go, but tenants, leaseholders, officers, and everyone involved in developing and feeding into our housing service can be rightly proud of the changes they have made, the improvements they have put in place, and the first class service they continue to work towards.”

## Claire Smyth (Chair of the Thanet Tenant and Leaseholder Group (TTLG))



“It is great to see the continued improvement to the services, and I look forward to seeing them improve further. This past year has seen the involvement of tenants and leaseholders gain momentum.

“It is good to see the continued safety and maintenance work to advance the quality of housing, giving tenants a further sense of trust and faith in the services provided. I have seen first hand, communication between officers, contractors and tenants become stronger and more consistent. We at the TTLG have been proud to have been part of this process and will continue our collaboration in enhancing services moving forward.”

# Our People

Our team is made up of dedicated people who care about what they are doing and the lives they affect. They constantly strive to improve the service that the Tenant and Leaseholder Services team provides.

Our people must have the knowledge and tools they require to deliver an excellent service, compliant with legislation and regulation. To do this, we ensure they have the right training. This is outlined in our visions and values and is a requirement of the Regulator of Social Housing.



## Vision and Values

Our team is dedicated to delivering the council's core business objectives: to deliver high-quality housing, safer communities and enhance the health and wellbeing of our residents.

Our Tenant and Leaseholder Services team cares about delivering the best landlord experience for our residents:

- our team is proactive, collaborative and committed to providing great landlord services
- our dedicated officers are respectful, professional and take pride in their work
- our values are at the core of our vision and guide the behaviour of our team

## **We are people-focused**

We listen to individual needs, take notice of them and treat our customers and our colleagues as we expect to be treated ourselves.

## **We are trustworthy**

We do what we say we are going to do, by taking responsibility for our actions. We act with integrity, are honest and transparent. We recognise when things go wrong and put them right.

## **We are professional**

We are professionally trained and knowledgeable in our area of expertise, with access to relevant qualifications. We are unbiased in our approach, professional and inclusive in our communication.

## **Our officers have taken part in the following training over the last year:**

Handling complaints and improving tenant experience
Landlord compliance and the Building Safety Act
How to effectively tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB)
Lone working - home visits
Equality Impact Assessments
Procedural and technical issues of Section 20
What the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill means for local authorities
Working effectively with hoarders
Case preparation for court
Condensation, damp and mould
Domestic abuse awareness
GDPR and CCTV
Safeguarding for housing teams

# No Excuse for Abuse

This year has been hard for many, including members of our team. Our residents often take out their frustrations on our officers. This has included verbal and threatening abuse directed at our Housing Officers, Maintenance Inspectors and Customer Transactions Officers.

There are no circumstances that make it acceptable to abuse someone working in a public service role. Thanet District Council is making a stand against this behaviour and launched a campaign in summer 2021 to remind the public to respect its staff as they go about their work.

When a resident abuses a council officer, Tenant and Leaseholder Services may take the following actions:

- Issuing warning letters to the resident
- Placing warning flags on our records system to make sure that all officers are aware of previous incidents
- Issuing a Community Protection Warning (CPW)
- Injunction proceedings
- Informing the Police

If a tenant continues to direct abusive behaviour or serious threats of harm to a member of staff, the action we take can ultimately lead to eviction.

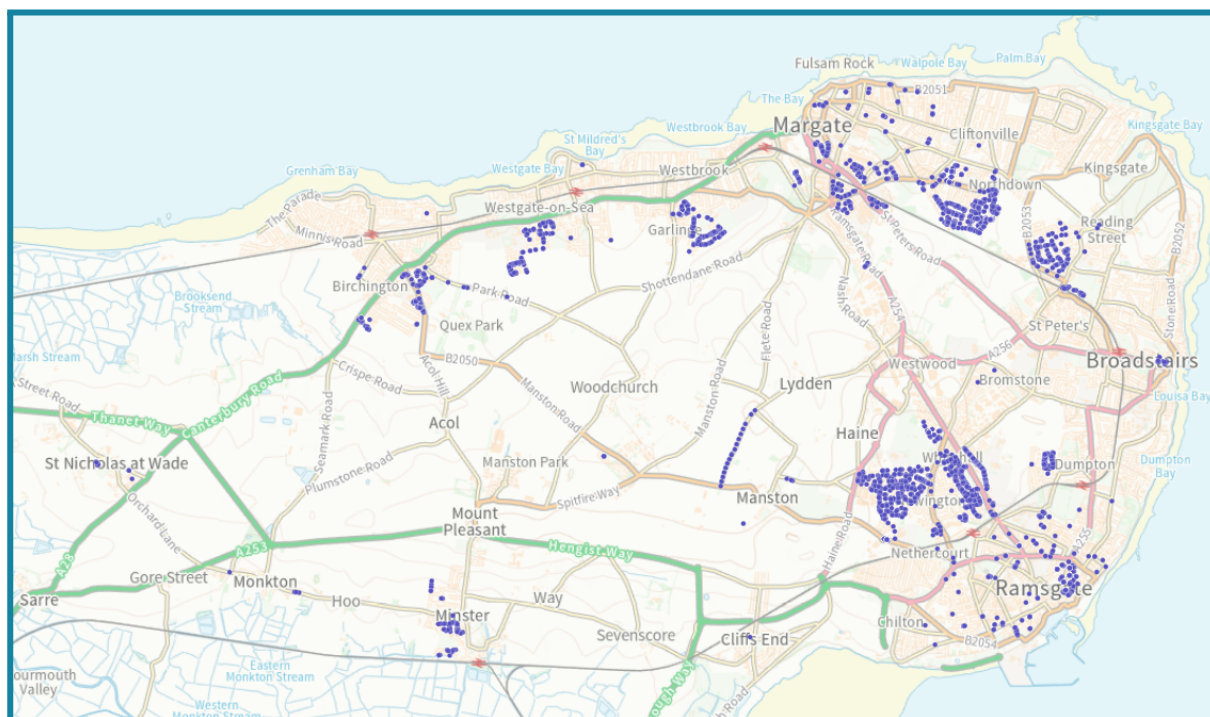


# Our Homes

## The number of homes we own and manage

Tenure type	Number of homes 2022/23
General needs	3,045
Leasehold	385
Shared ownership	11
<b>Total number of homes</b>	<b>3,441</b>

This map of Thanet shows the distribution of these properties, which are concentrated around Margate, Broadstairs and Ramsgate. We also have properties in Minster, Manston, Birchington and Westgate-on-Sea.



# Resident Involvement

Residents are at the heart of influencing service delivery and we provide a wide variety of options for them to have their say. This includes completing a survey, joining a focus group or local event or making a complaint. We listen to our residents and are delivering on many of the improvements they have recommended.



## Engagement in 2022/23

### Activity

Individual resident engagements with projects	295
Projects involved	30
Online and face to face meetings	33
Community partnership events	8
Published newsletters	19
Waste and recycling information campaigns	3



Our work together with the Thanet Tenant and Leaseholder Group (TTLG) includes:

- Developing an Estate Strategy, Policy and Service Standards for cleaning, grounds maintenance and car parking areas
- Setting a Letting Service Standard for homes
- Improving the information we provide to new tenants
- Setting a Repair Standard
- Procuring new cleaning and gas contracts.

## Tenant and Resident Engagement Conference



Tracey (TTLG member) attended the Tenant and Resident Engagement Conference in London with the Resident Involvement team in October 2022.

Here is what she had to say about the experience:

“Thank you so much for the opportunity to attend such an important event. It certainly helped cement my personal feelings that Thanet District Council no longer takes the old fashioned ‘them and us’ approach that so many of your current residents remember.

“It also reinforced my belief that Thanet District Council takes resident involvement to the very heart of their housing policy and does not engage residents as a tick box exercise.”

## Getting to know our tenants

We need to get to know our tenants better, so we contacted them all, asking them to complete a Tenant Information Form.

Number of tenant information forms sent out	2,800
Number of responses received	1,200
Number of tenant records updated	1,200
Number of contact details updated	800
Number of tenants who won £100 in our prize draw	3

This information will help us:

- shape our communications
- tailor services to meet needs
- communicate with our seldom heard groups

## Community Partnership Events 2022

Number of events held	8
Average number of of partnering contractors and agencies who attended each event	5
Average number of TLS officers who attended each event	12
Total number of residents who joined the events	114



The events included communal inspections, community litter picks as well as information and consultation sessions at our central Housing Hubs.

The feedback from conversations with residents followed these themes:

- communal repairs
- parking
- communication
- waste and recycling, rubbish, bulky waste, bin chutes and fly-tipping
- gardens and ground maintenance - unkempt grassy areas and weeds
- anti-social behaviour - neighbours, drugs, waste disposal and abandoned cars.

Residents told us: “We are seeing improvements from previous years”  
and “The HROs are making a real difference”.

Inspections of communal areas resulted in the following:

- 212 repairs to communal areas
- discovery of 56 instances of items left or stored in communal areas
- 10 issues with fly-tipping, litter and communal bins
- 28 issues with gardens and grounds.

We are seeking to improve these areas as part of our work on Estate, Strategy, Policy and Standards.

## Community litter picks

A community litter pick was carried out at each engagement event. Many residents got involved, along with their children. The photograph below features Maia (left) and her brother and sister at the Millmead event. Between them, with the help of others, they filled at least eight rubbish sacks!

Maia said: 'I'm very proud of myself for taking part and clearing lots of litter.'



## Recycling trials in Ramsgate



We trialed a paper and card recycling facility for residents living at Trove Court and Kennedy House in Ramsgate.

The trial was a huge success and the recycling service is here to stay!

Following further consultations, we are introducing recycling for residents in Royal Crescent. We are now carrying out a feasibility study to see whether a recycling service can also be introduced at Brunswick Court.

# Customer Services

Our Customer Transactions team carries out a range of tasks to ensure the smooth running of the service. This includes:

- raising purchase orders
- managing and licensing our garage stock
- managing bookings for Millmead Hall
- coordinating pest control treatments
- managing Council Tax and utility bills for our housing stock
- maintaining tenancy records.

The team is also the first point of contact for our residents:

Number of phone calls received during 2022/23	8,154
Call answer rate	93.3%

Our Customer Transactions team receives some lovely compliments from callers. Thank you to everyone who takes the time to submit a compliment, it means a lot to us!

We know we don't always get it right, and when we don't we do our best to put it right. We can improve our service in partnership with our residents, as the section below demonstrates.

## Improving our communication with residents

Residents told us we needed to improve our communication with them. These are some of the things we have done together:

Reviewed our standard letters
Created a new tenant handbook - available in 2023/24
Replaced and improved information on our communal notice boards
Improved service information on our website
Increased the opportunities for residents to access more services and information online

## Reviewing our standard letters

A big thank you to residents Terry and David who recommended that we review our standard letters. They told us our letters made them feel anxious or frustrated. Residents joined us to carry out the reviews, looking at the language and tone of the letters.

## Complaints

Complaints are a valuable tool in improving our service. The insight we gain reviewing our complaints helps us to identify possible policy and service improvements.

### Complaint statistics 2022/23

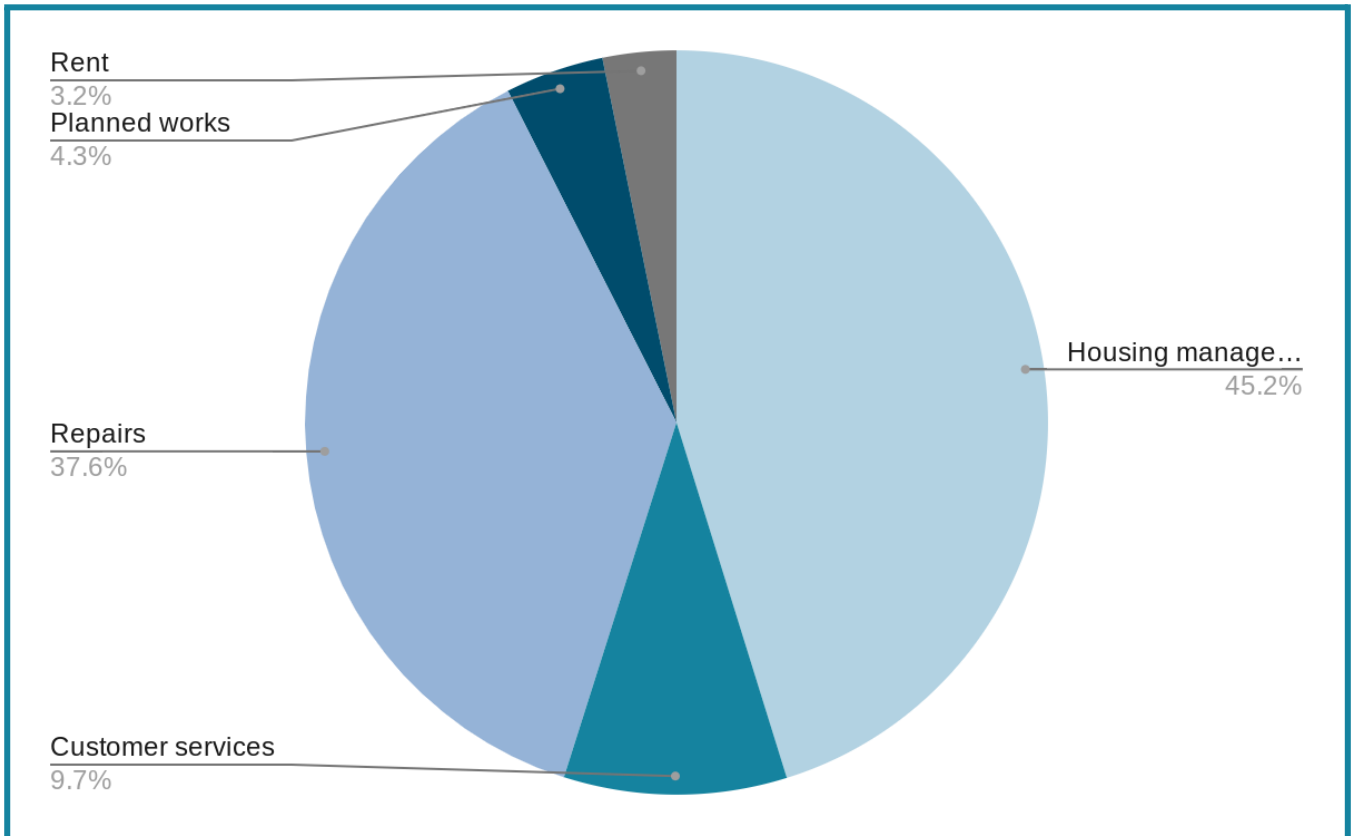
Number of stage 1 complaints received	94
Number of complaints per 1,000 properties	32
National average of complaints received per 1,000 properties* <i>HQN complaints benchmarking exercise May 2023</i>	48
Number of complaints escalated to stage 2	31
% complaints escalated to stage 2	32%
Number of complaints escalated to the Housing Ombudsman	3
Number of maladministration outcomes following Housing Ombudsman review	0

*\*This figure is provided by Housing Quality Network (HQN) and is an average across all housing associations, local authorities and Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs), regardless of size. For organisations with 10,000 homes or less, the average number of complaints per 1,000 properties is 37.3.*

It is possible that we receive fewer complaints than the average because our tenants do not know how to make a complaint or do not feel confident to do so. We will address this over the next year.

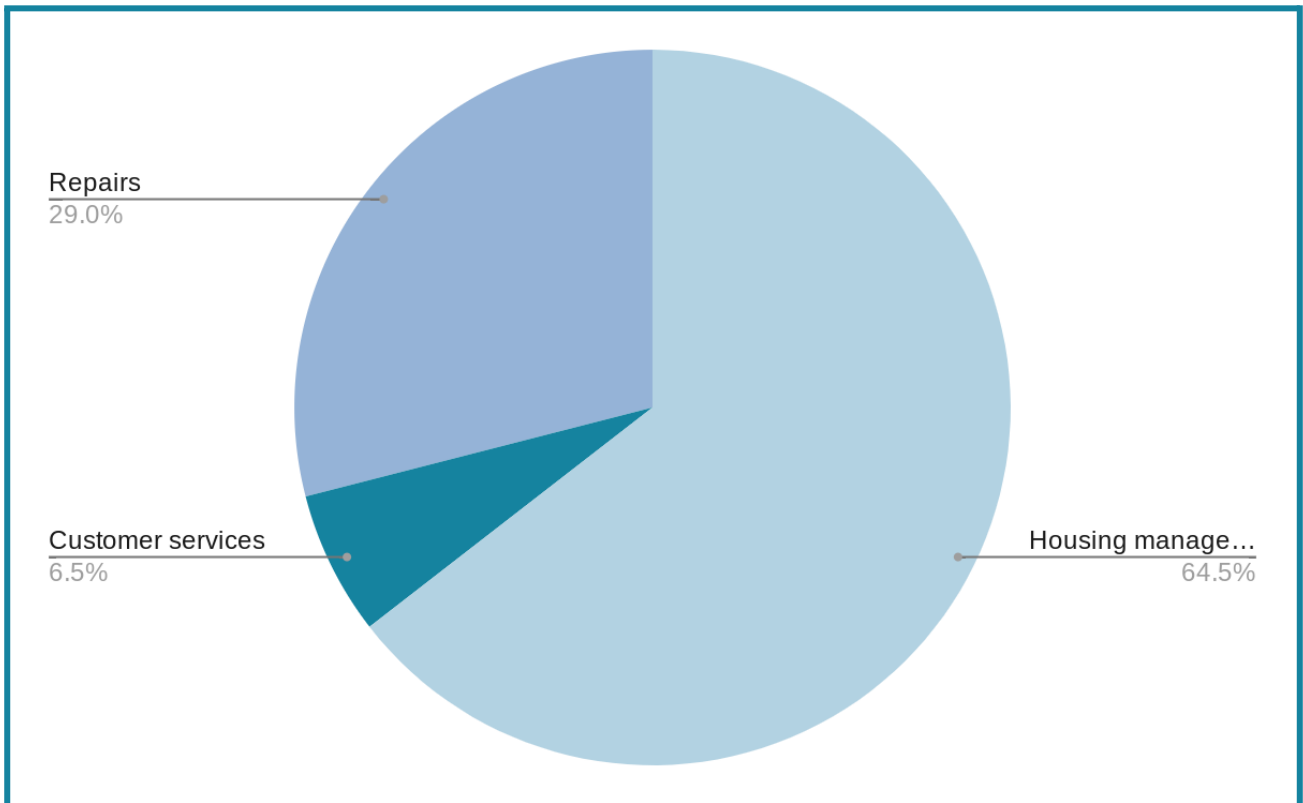
Total stage 1 complaints received	Average number of days to respond	% complaints responded to within target
94	7.2	89% (10 overdue)

### Stage 1 complaints per team



Total stage 2 complaints received	Average number of days to respond	% complaints responded to within target
31	16.7	87% (4 overdue)

### Stage 2 complaints per team



### Complaints - compliance with Ombudsman Code

Residents scrutinised our compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code. The group was able to give assurance that we were compliant and recommended further improvements.