



Housing HIGHLIGHTS

Housing Services newsletter

www.slough.gov.uk
Slough
Borough Council

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Issued by Slough Borough Council
for our tenants and leaseholders

ISSUE 54
November 2023

Cllr Puja Bedi, Lead Member for Housing

Here we are in November, with some positive developments happening within the Housing Department, which for me has been encouraging to witness and support.

You will be pleased to find our annual report in this edition of the newsletter. We apologise for the delay in getting this out to you, next year we will ensure you get the information in a timely manner.

In this report we look back over the period of 2022-2023. You can find the report on pages 6-11 and I would encourage all residents to read over the recaps from the last year. There are status recaps on various elements of the Service that directly impact on residents, like our performance when it comes to the resident engagement, repairs, the budget and so much more. It is worth a read and marks the start of official annual feedback on our activities within the Housing Service.

Something I am really pleased to announce is the appointment of Mediation Buckinghamshire and the signing of a service level agreement, that will see better support and help with complaints and most importantly, resolutions. They will provide mediation support for our tenants and leaseholders, as well as James Elliman Homes and DISH properties. This is a great step towards creating better communities and encourage accountability, as well as a live understanding of the types of issues that are having huge impacts on

resident's lives. Further information can be found on the Company website www.mediationbucks.org.uk/contact-us/

The most tangible change that has happened, as a direct result of the resident feedback that we have received, is the introduction of regular monthly Housing Surgeries. Starting on the 23rd of November, the housing drop-in surgeries will be running on the fourth Thursday of each month, from 10am-4pm. An officer will be based at the Langley, Britwell and Chalvey Hubs, for tenants to be able to go along to talk about their property, tenancy, or neighbourhood. Residents will be able to discuss any issues with their tenancy and be able to ask questions. If something can't be answered on the spot, the team will take away the query and respond once they have got the necessary information. We hope people make use of the surgeries and enjoy talking to the team, who in turn look forward to meeting our residents and reconnecting with our communities. Further information can be found at www.slough.gov.uk/council-housing-tenants/tenancy/6

I hope that some of the things mentioned in my foreword, gives you some reassurance that we are listening and that we are serious about improving the offer that we make to you, as your landlord. We still have much to do, but this is a great start on a realistic journey to the improvements that will benefit you most.



Update from Chris Stratford, Housing Director

New consumer standards

The Social Housing Regulator has reviewed the consumer standards and are proposing changes to them. Consultation on the new standards were closed in October 2023. The standards will come into effect from April 2024.

The key message for the standards is that landlords maintain tenants' homes, so they are safe and of a decent standard and that they provide good quality homes. The Social Housing Act received royal assent in July 2023 and strengthens powers of the regulator to assess landlords to ensure they are meeting standards.

Resident safety

Government's Decent Homes standard sets out minimum standards for the condition of homes for both social and private rented accommodation. This has come about since the Grenfell fire tragedy and sad and tragic death of Awaab Ishak. 'Awaab's law' requires landlords to fix reported health hazards within specified timeframes.

Both Osborne and housing management staff are working together to ensure residents are safe in their homes. Gas, electrical, asbestos and water safety checks and fire risk assessments are routinely carried out. Resident safety is high on our agenda.

Replacing roofs

Our home improvements work is well underway as we work across the borough replacing roofs, most recently roofs at Wellesley Path and Darvilles Lane. Getting these

replaced ahead of the winter months has been critical, as we know this has been a concern for several residents particularly given the increase in rain we have had most recently.

Given the high number of roofs that need replacing, we have plans to accelerate and bring forward the roofing programme.



Energy efficient homes

We know the cost-of-living crisis has had an impact on all households. Over the last year we have been working across the borough to look at ways to improve energy efficiency. The pilot programme for installing solar panels continues. As does the roof and cavity wall insulation programme, all of which should help prevent heat loss.



To enable us to continue the work, we are in the early stages of working on a bid for the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. The funds, if secured, will give us a considerable cash injection required to make our homes more energy efficient and most importantly reduce energy costs for our residents. Look out for our updates in future editions.

Working in partnership to deal with anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) continues to be an issue across the borough and both housing and enforcement officers are working closely with Thames Valley Police to ensure it is dealt with in a timely manner.

You will be pleased to hear we have recently secured a contract with Mediation Buckinghamshire. They are experts in the field who will provide training to staff and, where necessary, step in to help us to intervene in anti-social behaviour from the onset to prevent things escalating.

continued overleaf

We have also become members of Resolve, a specialist organisation who provide advice and expertise on managing anti-social behaviour. They are currently reviewing our policies and procedures before embarking on a training programme for staff.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

MEL Research has been appointed by us to carry out quarterly surveys to get your feedback on our services. Results are showing satisfaction continues to be low. Senior management are meeting on a regular basis to look at what measures and resources we need to increase satisfaction.

We can see lack of communication seems to be an issue that needs addressing. In the next survey, we have asked MEL to ask a few more details around how you currently contact us and what changes we can make to make it easier for you to get in touch with us.

The next round of surveys has just begun. If you are contacted, please do give your honest views as it's important we hear and understand the issues that affect our residents,

Leaseholder update

We have recently issued actual service charge letters which has seen an increase in calls. The leasehold section is going through a period of change as we try to improve the service being provided to residents. Please bear with us as we recruit a couple of officers to assist in responding to enquiries received.

Resident Engagement Strategy update

Since our last update in September, we have drafted the new Resident Engagement Strategy based on feedback from residents, staff and the lead councillor for housing. The strategy sets out how we will ensure we provide more meaningful opportunities for residents to influence services, policies and strategy that impacts them. It also highlights the importance of a culture that embeds resident involvement, with implementation as everyone's responsibility.

We want to work more closely with residents to put issues right quickly and put residents at the heart of key housing services' decision making. The strategy sets out the following five themes to help achieve this.

1. Creating a resident involvement culture.
2. Strengthen the Resident Board and residents' influence.
3. Range of options for resident involvement.
4. Appropriate resources and support to enable effective involvement.
5. Inclusive and accessible engagement.

The strategy also aligns with the council's approach in the new corporate plan to be resident

focused and build trust. The draft strategy was successfully presented to the Resident Board at their meeting on 31 October and is currently going through the council's approval stages, which will end in December when we expect the Cabinet's decision. If there are no major changes required, we will publish the strategy in early 2024. The Resident Board will monitor our performance and progress on bringing the strategy to life.

The strategy will provide more opportunities for residents to get involved in the ways that best suit them, including virtual involvement, estate inspection and short-term scrutiny projects. Involvement of residents is important to bring the strategy to life and to ensure we are always accountable to residents.

If you would like us to add you onto our mailing list about these resident involvement opportunities, please email getinvolved@slough.gov.uk. Please include your full name, address and telephone number, with the subject RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT.

Thank you to all that have contributed to the development of the strategy by completing the online survey or contributing at face-to-face sessions. We look forward to sharing the final strategy with you in 2024.



HOUSING DROP-IN SESSIONS at the Local Hubs

Residents have been telling us that they want it to be easier for them to see their Senior Neighbourhood Officer.

From November, a Senior Neighbourhood Officer will be based at Langley, Britwell and Chalvey Hubs on a monthly basis running a drop-in session to deal with any enquiries about your property, tenancy or neighbourhood.



These will take place in Britwell and Chalvey on the fourth Thursday of every month, starting on Thursday 23 November, and on the fourth Wednesday of the month in Langley. The SNO will be based in the hub between 10am-4pm and will be looking forward to meeting our tenants.

The dates of the drop-in sessions will be:

Britwell and Chalvey

- 23 November
- 21 December
(third Thursday)

2024

- 25 January
- 22 February
- 28 March
- 25 April
- 23 May
- 27 June
- 25 July
- 22 August
- 26 September
- 24 October
- 28 November

Langley

- 20 December
2024

- 24 January
- 23 February
- 27 March
- 24 April
- 22 May
- 26 June
- 24 July
- 21 August
- 25 September
- 23 October
- 27 November.



Slough Healthy Smiles

Oral Health Drop In

Come and chat to us about any dental/oral health concerns or questions you have within your family

LOCATION:

CHALVEY GROVE CHILDREN'S CENTRE

Chalvey Grove, Slough, SL1 2TE, 01753 574 387

DATE:

**SECOND MONDAY, EACH MONTH
UNTIL APRIL 2024**

MONDAY 13TH NOVEMBER 2023

MONDAY 11TH DECEMBER 2023

MONDAY 8TH JANUARY 2024

MONDAY 12TH FEBRUARY 2024

MONDAY 11TH MARCH 2024



11:00AM - 12:30PM

Oral.Health@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk

Paying your rent

There are several ways to pay your rent.

- Direct Debit: if you pay your rent monthly, the simplest way is via direct debit. Your monthly rent is taken out on one of four dates (1st, 8th, 15th or 22nd) and is automatically calculated following rent increase or benefit changes and can be adjusted to reduce any arrears by instalments. [Set it up online.](#)
- Online using debit/credit card: use the link above and scroll to the 'pay online' option. You will need your 11-digit reference number (begins 10 or 20 for garages) found on your rent card or letters about rent.
- By 24-hour Freefone using debit/credit card: telephone 0300 456 0480 - you will need your 11-digit reference number.
- At the Post Office: using your rent card.
- To have your rent paid directly from your Universal Credit contact the rent recovery team on the email below.

Please note the council can no longer accept cheques. If you have any problems paying your rent, the best way to contact the team is to email rentrecovery@slough.gov.uk

Annual Report 2022/2023



Introduction by Pat Hayes Executive Director of Housing & Property

I am pleased to be introducing this annual report a year on from when I joined Slough. The last few years have been very challenging for the council. The pandemic coupled with the longer term impacts of Brexit and the war in Ukraine on costs of energy and other products adding to Slough's underlying financial problems.

Chris Stratford Housing Director joined Slough at the beginning of January 2023 and both Chris and I are working together to change the way services are provided and to ensure we are listening and responding to the needs of our tenants and leaseholders. This particularly means focusing on standards of customer service and about getting repairs done on time and complaints responded to.

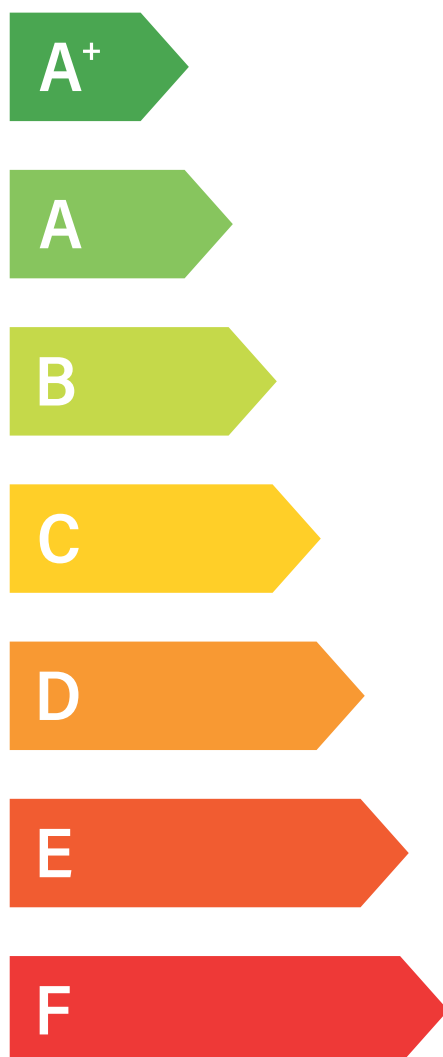
To help us do this we are carrying out comprehensive resident satisfactions surveys and are going to do regular ongoing surveys to monitor hopefully improving performance.

Improving homes

Prior to the pandemic, we had carried out stock condition surveys across the borough. As a result, we had a good understanding of where we needed to make major improvements to bring homes up to a decent standard, replacing kitchens, bathrooms and windows. It also means we can prioritise major work to estates to improve buildings and the wider environment.

Energy efficient homes

During the year, we started working on improving the energy efficiency of our homes through the fitting of solar panels, renewing roofs and replacing windows.



Our repairs contractor

We are still not happy with the performance of our repairs contractor despite some improvement and are working hard to make sure that they finally catch up on the repairs backlog and drastically improve their standards of customer care particularly around keeping appointments and finishing jobs.

With the current repairs and maintenance contract coming to an end in November 2024, we are working hard on developing new contracts to replace it. These must guarantee a higher standard of service and we will be getting the input of the residents board into this process

Damp and mould

None of our residents should be expected to live in properties with damp and mould and we are committed identifying all sub standard properties and making sure the problems are addressed.

To help us proactively identify properties affected by damp and mould, we wrote to all residents where we had no record, asking that they contact us, should they have an issue. This generated a range of complaints which we have acted on.

Resident engagement



Resident engagement plays a key part in Housing Services. Throughout 2022-23 we continued to involve residents in policies and processes.

The Resident Board have played an important role and have been responsible for scrutinising the council's housing service and at times ask us difficult questions about the standard of our services. Over the last year, the Board has been reviewing performance data for both housing management and repairs, as well as keeping an overview of our damp and mould response.

Plans for 2023-24

- Improve and strengthen resident engagement.
- Develop a Resident Engagement Strategy; the Board will play a key role in the creation and implementation of the strategy along with its objectives.
- The Resident Board to establish a closer link with the Lead Member for Housing.
- Recruit a new Chairperson.

Communication

Since October 2022, we increased the frequency of Housing Highlights from quarterly to monthly, to start providing information more frequently than previously. We have a database of residents with email addresses who are sent Housing Highlights, we also put it on our website www.slough.gov.uk/housing-highlights

We also put hard copies in each of the council's libraries. We will continue to actively collect residents' email addresses, so we can ensure as many residents as possible get a copy.

Our customer services team continue to take your calls, though we are aware that long waiting times continue to be an issue. There are number of ways to get in touch with us via email or [our website](#).

In 2022-23 the call centre handled:



30,265
calls relating
to housing



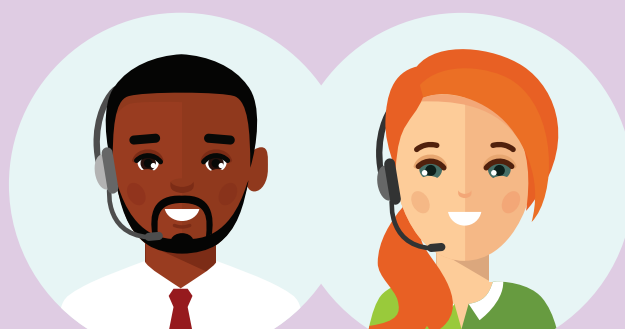
6,883
housing
environmental
calls



11,168
Housing
Services
calls



12,214
calls
relating to
Homeless



Plans for 2023-24

- Improve communication with residents.
- Hold surgeries on the estates and dates and times will be published in the newsletter.
- Collect resident email addresses.

Managing your estates

We are aware that having well maintained estates and homes has a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of residents. Since the lockdown rules eased at the beginning of 2022, our housing officers have been out and about on the estates, carrying out inspections and home visits.

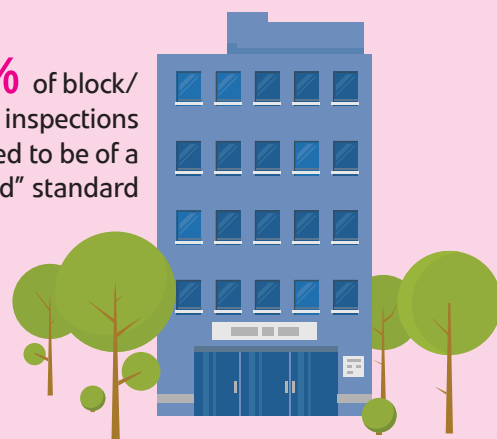
Plans for 2023-24

- Inspections will involve both housing and Osborne staff, helping to address and deal with communal repairs in a timely manner.
- Involve residents in the walkabouts to give them an opportunity to highlight their areas of concern.

74% of block/
estate inspections
judged to be of a
"good" standard



433
block/estate
inspections



Resident safety

A number one priority for us is to keep you safe in your homes.

Two particular areas of safety concern are damp and mould, as mentioned earlier, but the other is fire safety, reflecting the consequences of the Grenfell fire in 2017.

During the year, there are regular independent fire risk assessments carried out; and regular inspections by housing officers carrying out checks, especially of communal areas in blocks of flats. In addition, housing officers have written to all residents advising whether their block is a "Stay Put" block (which is the vast majority) or an "evacuation" block. Housing officers have also started to talk to residents about personal emergency evacuations plans (PEEPs) should there be a fire. These PEEPs act as guidance to the fire brigade should they have to attend a block of flats so they are aware of those residents who will have difficulty getting out of their flat and the building.

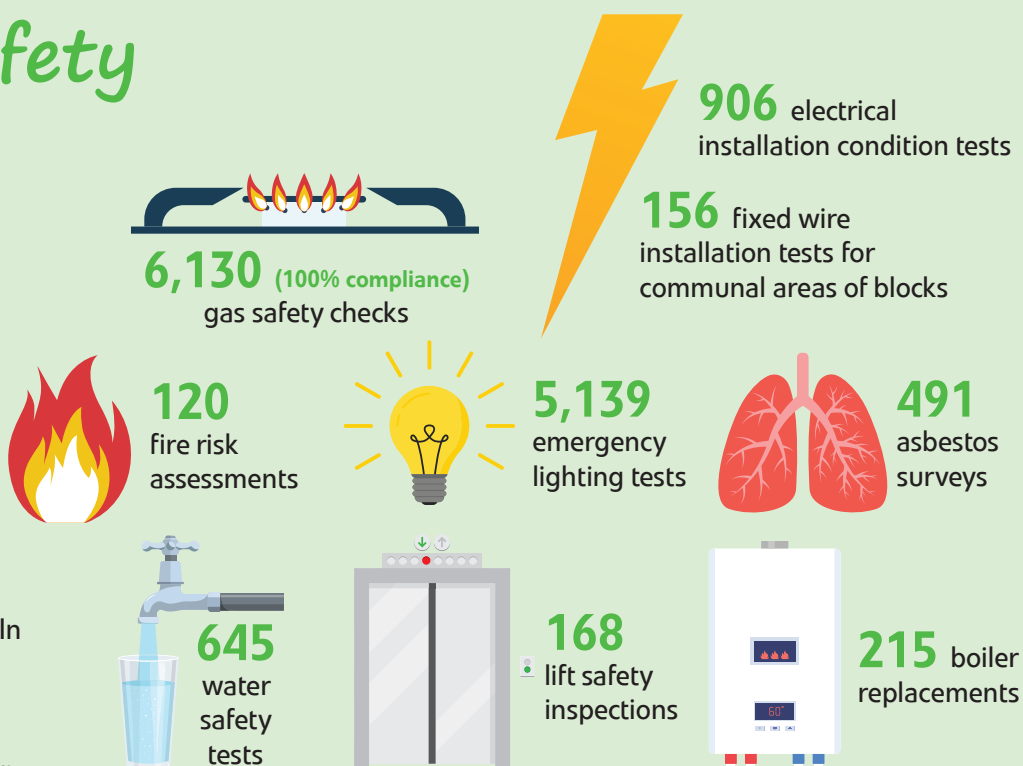
The Building Safety Act 2022 received Royal Assent on 28 April 2022. Grenfell was a primary reason for this act. Cladding material and

installation; fire protection between flat floors; general fire protection; repairs; resident engagement all contributed to the failures at Grenfell. The act focused on blocks over 18 metres in height. Most of the issues highlighted in the act were well known before. We have two blocks which are affected by the act, both of which had extensive building work carried out between 2018 and 2021 to ensure all requirements within the 2022 Building Act can be shown to have been complied with.

Gas safety checks continue to be a legal requirement. In 2022/23 we carried out 6,130 safety checks - you will be pleased to hear we have 100% gas compliance. These can only be carried out with your cooperation, so thank you for helping us to keep you safe.

Plans for 2023-24

- Looking to put in place effective ways to communicate to residents the most up to date fire safety assessment and actions plans relating to their blocks.



Right to Buy

Tenants who wish to can buy their properties at a discounted price under the Government Right to Buy Scheme.

Plans for 2023-24

- Recruit and retain experienced staff to assist in responding to enquiries in a timely manner.



Allocations and lettings inc HomeSwapper

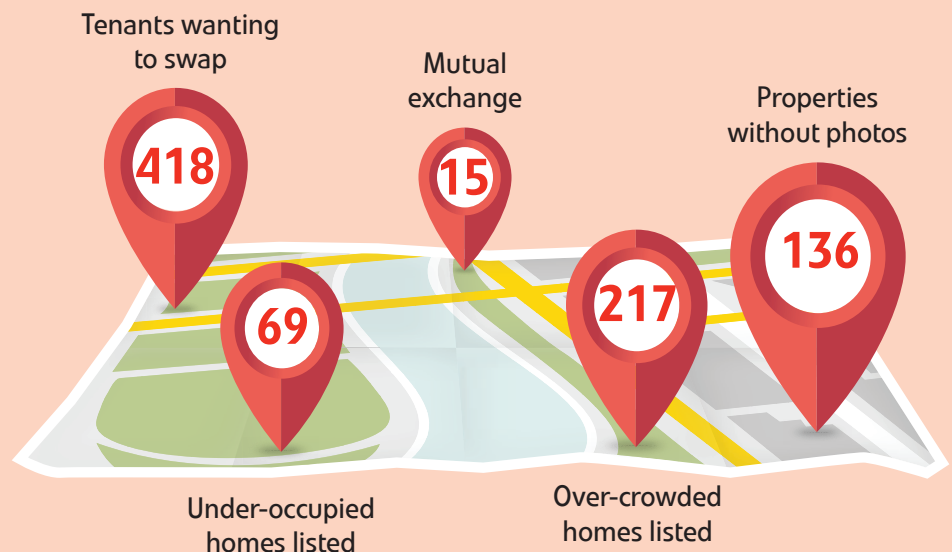
All councils and housing associations have seen a growing demand and need for social housing, with demands exceeding stock levels across large parts of England.

In October 2022, the council updated its Housing Management System as our provider CAPITA ceased to provide the system we were using. This meant we had to suspend lettings while the new NEC system was implemented. This has caused a backlog of applications but we are now letting properties again and hope to rapidly clear the backlog.



1,180
applicants on
the register
at the end of
March 2023

HomeSwapper is the easiest way for tenants to swap council homes and housing associations. The best way to get an opportunity to swap homes is by ensuring you have included as much information as possible i.e, contact details, photographs etc. Slough currently has:



Plans for 2023-24

- Create an online platform for residents to submit their housing applications.
- Enable residents to view the status of their application online.

Preventing fraud

Ensuring we have measures in place to deal with housing fraud is important. The fraud team work closely with housing staff and are constantly looking for information that will help us to recover properties from perpetrators. To report fraud, complete our [online form](#) or call 01753 787876 (24 hours). This can be done anonymously.

During their investigations in 2022-23, three properties were brought back into stock, all for non-occupation as main or principal homes. One of these, the family was living abroad and had given the keys to friends. Two properties were not occupied, and the tenants were living with family. There were no prosecutions, but all the properties were recovered and relet.



Complaints

In April 2022, the Housing Ombudsman issued the complaints handling code and all councils were required to complete the Complaints Self-Assessment by October 2022. We responded to this. Our self-assessment can be found on our [website](#).

We are aware these figures are not looking good; the assessment has also shown we need to make changes to ensure we are meeting the requirements.

Plans for 2023-24

- Review the complaints self-assessment.
- Improve response time and standard of responses.
- Implement processes for learning from complaints to improve satisfaction.

More than half of the complaints received were in relation to lack of response and communication



36%

of housing related complaints were responded to on time



41%

of complaints received by the council relate to housing repairs (this remains the highest complained about area)

Homelessness

Increasing unemployment and rapid cost of living increases have seen an increase in numbers presenting themselves as homeless. Most homeless cases resulting from eviction from private rented properties.



183

homelessness case final decisions made

2,086 approaches under the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA)



147 (80%)

applications accepted



122

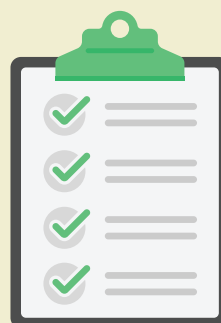
homelessness preventions achieved

Plans for 2023-24

- Seek government funding for resources to deal with the high demand of homelessness and rough sleeping.
- Create a stronger link/partnership working with organisations supporting those who find themselves homeless or sleeping rough.

Dealing with anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour is a particular problem in Slough which we accept we have not done enough to combat. It is unacceptable behaviour that comes in many forms - such as noise, abusive behaviour, littering or illegal drug taking and we always want it to stop. In 2022-23 the council's resilience and enforcement team issued:



23

Community Protection Notices (CPN) warning letter served

8

full CPN letters

2

Criminal Behaviour Orders obtained

3

Closure Orders obtained

Plans for 2023-24

- Secure a contract with a mediation organisation to train, give advice and intervene in anti-social behaviour cases to prevent things escalating.
- Have a membership with Resolve, a specialist organisation who provide advice and expertise on managing anti-social behaviour.

Supporting the vulnerable

Our tenant sustainment officers' (TSOs) role is to support tenants to live independently and maintain their tenancies. They offer advice and support on various items which include budgeting, access to grants, as well as signposting to other agencies and partners.

They work closely with the housing teams and partners to ensure tenants can remain in their homes, particularly if they have been in hospital and require adaptations.

Plans for 2023-24

- Employ Occupational Therapists to work closely with our TSOs. Their main focus will be to visit homes where aids and adaptations are required to enable residents to remain in their homes.
- Dedicated member of staff who is responsible for managing the over 50s de-designated properties.
- Review the de-designated stock with aim to change back to designated stock.

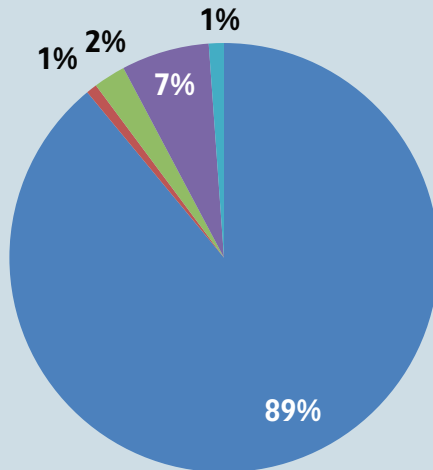


123 referrals made by tenant sustainment officers



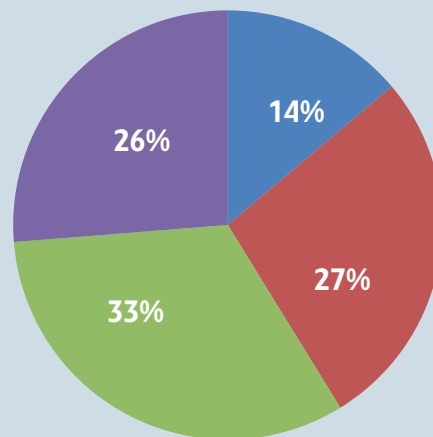
Repairs and Maintenance and Housing Revenue Account Budget

Income



- Dwelling Rents
- Garage Rents
- Other Rents
- Service Charges
- Shop Rents

Expenditure



- Debt Charges
- Major Repairs - investment
- Management
- Repairs



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Property Services

Key Facts Apr 2022 - Mar 2023

Slough
Borough Council

all complaints
received

334

all complaints
closed

319



59,000

calls
answered



77%

satisfied customers based
on most recent repair



24.5

average
days for
Osborne to
complete
voids



Follow on
appointments
required:

14%



100%
gas compliance



20,773

repairs
raised

29%
appointments
missed by
Osborne



**£6.5
million**

Planned
maintenance
programmes
completed



Average time to
complete non urgent
repairs:

21 days



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Property Services

Key Facts Apr 2022 - Mar 2023

Slough
Borough Council

Top 3 Repairs Issued:

Plumbing

5571

Plumbing repairs attended to

29%

of total repairs in period



Carpentry



4117

Carpentry repairs attended to

21%

of total repairs in period

Electrical

3402

Electrical repairs attended to

18%

of total repairs in period



Plumbing:

Pipework



1421 Calls

26%

W/C Toilet



1416 Calls

25%

Taps



941 Calls

17%

Total calls

3778

68%

Carpentry:

Carpentry &
Joinery - Misc.
Fixtures and
fittings



1283 Calls

31%

Carpentry &
Joinery - Locks



641 Calls

16%

Carpentry
& Joinery -
Windows



628 Calls

15%

Total calls

2552

62%

Electrical:

Electrical
Light Fittings



1146 Calls

34%

Electrical
Fault Location /
Minor repairs



444 Calls

13%

Electrical
Domestic
Extractor Fan



373 Calls

11%

Total calls

1963

58%

Damp & Mould

Apr 2022	7	2%	May 2022	8	2%
Jun 2022	9	2%	Jul 2022	8	2%
Aug 2022	12	1%	Sep 2022	6	1%
Oct 2022	12	3%	Nov 2022	62	14%
Dec 2022	90	21%	Jan 2023	77	18%
Feb 2023	68	16%	Mar 2023	73	17%
Total				432	99%



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Property Services

Key Facts Apr 2022 - Mar 2023

Slough
Borough Council

Repairs

Damp & Mould has had a huge impact in performance, affecting not only jobs completed on time but our appointments kept. Since January 2023 there has been an increase of over 900% of cases received compared with the previous year. This has put a significant demand into the Repairs service.

Subsequently, since early September, we have set up a new team of specialists to carry out initial treatment to damp and mould in properties. We will collate longer term solutions to present to SBC to form part of the investment strategy to resolve these issues.

The direct impact of the increase from Damp and Mould is coupled with a further 10% increase in Repairs reported on the previous year. Improved recruitment and retention of staff is key as is working alongside specialist contractors to improve the performance of the service. This means that we have improved our pay structure for some roles and continue to offer upskilling and development opportunities for all of our employees.

Customer Satisfaction

Satisfaction with the Repairs service has remained static in 2023 and the feedback highlights improved communication. We have set up a Planner Academy as well as enhanced call monitoring to develop our staff and improve areas of communication. Importantly, with the setup of the separate Damp and Mould team we are able to get our Repairs Operatives back to work full time on standard repairs.

Planned Works

Planned works has seen an increase in terms of projects and spend. Much of this is attributable to essential works such as fire doors and alarm systems. There has also been a significant increase in roof replacements, changing many of the roofs that have caused leaks and repairs in properties for many years. Upgrade works at De-Designated blocks has been a large project that is to run throughout the year. The quality and scale of the work is a real positive for Osborne and SBC.

Compliance Works

Compliance continues to perform at the highest level, month on month, ensuring the housing and communal areas are safe and to standard. We have consistently met our obligations with 100% compliance for Gas servicing and carry out a large number of other compliance elements within the Contract. These services have maintained the compliance levels required each month of the year.

Void/Empty Homes

Our voids team continue to offer a good home for people to move in to and it is pleasing to note improved turnaround times on the previous year. We have experienced an unusual downturn in overall numbers of void properties compared to previous years and this has been problematic in retention of our contractors. We have onboarded additional resource to accommodate fluctuations in the levels who will work across additional workstreams.

Improvement work at Beaumaris Court

During an estate inspection back in June, a resident suggested that the bin store next to the car park be relocated into the disused drying area so that more space could be freed up for parking.

The housing team were successful in their request that this improvement work be carried out, and this has now been completed, providing two much needed extra parking bays. We were even able to get the lines repainted by our repairs contractor during the recent volunteer day at Beaumaris Court so the whole area is looking much improved.



Clearing things up in the North

Garage sites

When out on inspections, the Senior Neighbourhood Officers often come across fly tips in our garage sites. Clearing fly tips costs the council a lot of money, so we are trying to deal robustly with these cases, working with our colleagues in the resilience and enforcement team to investigate the perpetrators and prosecute wherever possible.



Sometimes it is more difficult to establish whether items left in garage sites have been 'fly tipped' or if they belong to the garage tenants. We had a long-standing issue at one of our sites where there was a huge pile of stuff left outside a garage. We didn't want to treat it as a fly tip, as it had been covered with a tarpaulin so seemed to belong to someone.

We had to do a thorough investigation, making many attempts to contact the tenants of the adjacent garages to try and find out if the items belonged to them. When this wasn't successful, we placed a legal notice on the pile of belongings and eventually the items were removed by their owner without any cost to the council. We really appreciate the patience of the local residents who had to put up with this unsightly pile for several months while we worked through our processes, but it paid off in the end!

Please do bear in mind that where there is flytipping, we will look to see if there is anything that can assist us in tracking down the

person who did it, and we will not hesitate to re-charge you for the cost of removing the items and prosecute where appropriate.

If we have to clear rubbish from a block or communal area, this will incur additional management charges which will eventually be reflected in service charges.

Communal areas in blocks

During August, our teams visited 25 blocks across the North which had been highlighted in recent Fire Risk Assessments because they had items being stored in communal areas both inside and outside blocks.

Lots of items have been removed by officers using Section 41 of the Local Government Act 1982, which gives the council the power to dispose of goods found in buildings or premises owned or managed by the council. (Any items removed have been stored for 28 days).

We understand this may be difficult for residents, but items like this can pose a serious fire risk to residents and have to be removed. We will be bringing the truck to more blocks in the coming months, so if you live in a flat, please make sure you keep all your belongings inside your property.



Cost of living support for residents

A resource pack, which outlines where residents can find help and support in relation to the cost of living, has been published.

The council's cost of living resource pack was first published in 2022, offering signposting to groups for support with food, energy, skills and more.

It is part of the council's work to support residents to make the most of the help available.

Representatives from the council are also part of the Slough Poverty Forum, which was formed as a OneSlough response to the cost of living crisis in July 2022.

It brings together organisations and groups from the statutory, voluntary, business, community, health and charitable sectors in a bid to find ways to ensure residents have the support they need.

This includes developing new initiatives such as Warm Spaces Slough, organising the Great Get Togethers and the cost of living resource pack which all help to support and signpost residents and families.

There are now more than 70 organisations who receive updates on programmes and projects to then share with their networks.

The Forum meets once a month to share ideas and how best they can work as a partnership to help release people from financial burdens which affect their health and wellbeing and everyday life.

Councillor Iftakhar Ahmed, lead member for leisure, community cohesion, regulation, enforcement and planning said: "Times are tough right now for many people who are trying to make their money stretch further. Being part of the Slough Poverty Forum enables us to hear from different people about issues of concern from residents so we can work towards finding the right support.

"Our resource pack is fantastic and it's brilliant to see another edition. Residents can download it, save it and refer back to it. It points out lots of useful groups for support, energy-saving tips, places to get food support each day of the week and more.

"Residents can easily translate the PDF document into another language, using Google Translate, and share it among their friends and family who may find it useful."

The council also has a debt and welfare team who can offer financial assistance through the Household Support Fund, can help identify which benefits residents may be entitled to and they can help residents deal with their debts, by supporting them to talk to their creditors.

For support from the debt and welfare team, email _incomeboost@slough.gov.uk

Find the latest resource pack, along with previous editions, visit www.slough.gov.uk/costofliving

New library books coming soon

Libraries in Slough are set for some fantastic new resources, with £36,000 being spent on new books for children and young people, and on e-books, and e-audio titles for adults.

The council has already received some of the new titles.

With nearly 5,000 books to choose from, these include books for babies, picture books for under 5s and storybooks for under 12s. Some of the new books include the latest titles from popular authors such as

David Walliams, Michael Rosen, Russell Punter and many more.

Throughout the year the council will be buying more than 400 new e-titles. The new e-titles include books from Lynda La Plante, Lisa Jewell, Jo Nesbo and Karen Swan.

Councillor Chandra Muvvala, lead member for public protection, I.T, customer service and young futures, said: "It's great news to hear there is investment being made in new library resources, as promised.

"Our libraries are a fantastic asset in the community, membership is free and there are so many physical and e-books to choose from. If you haven't paid a visit lately, pop into your nearest library and see what's going on."

Visit the [council website](http://www.slough.gov.uk) to find out more about our libraries.

Osborne community update



Halloween happenings

Osborne's planner Martyna helped judge entries at a spooky Halloween competition, at Britwell Youth and Community Project.

During the half-term week, the Britwell Youth and Community Project organised children and youth club sessions featuring a variety of Halloween activities.

Osborne had purchased and hand-delivered pumpkins to support the spooky competition. Activities during the week included pumpkin carving, decorating milk bottles, and firework painting, engaging the youth in a festive and artistic manner.

Martyna took on the role of judge, carefully evaluating the Halloween-themed arts and crafts items created by the children throughout the week.

The activities culminated in a prize ceremony, where winners in each category were announced. Martyna distributed small prizes and gifts to all participating children, provided by Osborne, to commend their creativity and effort.

Paula Murphy, Britwell Youth and Community Centre Manager, said: "Without this support we would not be in a position to provide as many pumpkins, let alone prizes, for all and really do appreciate all that Osborne do for Britwell."



Community kitchen help

Electrical qualifying supervisor, Paul Mynott, from Osborne, delivered and connected a brand-new cooker for St. John's Church Manor Park's community kitchen.



The community kitchen had faced a critical setback when their previous catering cooker stopped working and was deemed beyond repair, leaving them unable to prepare free hot meals for the local community.

Osborne's contribution ensures the community kitchen can continue its vital service. The donated cooker will facilitate the preparation of meals on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and the upcoming community Christmas lunch.

Rev. Suzanne Johnson, Vicar of Parish of Manor Park St John the Baptist and Whitby Road St Michael, said: "You cannot imagine what a blessing this will be, not least for our two community cafes serving a free hot meal to the community each week, for our weekly coffee morning and for the free Christmas meal we provide for Home Start families. As a church, it is so important for us to serve and support all members of our community here in Manor Park and it's good to know there are organisations such as yourselves who are community minded and willing to help. Thanks again for your generous gift."

Appeal for donations

The Baby Bank will be supporting families within the local community this Christmas with their Christmas Pyjama Appeal.

If you would like to help ensure that no child goes without this Christmas, you can donate a brand new pair of pyjamas, a selection box and a new book in a labelled gift bag. Ages can range from 6 months up to 16 years.

Donations can be dropped at the following children's centres - Chalvey Grove, Penn Road, Romsey Close, Monksfield Way and Yew Tree Road.



Calling All Christmas ELVES!

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED ABOUT VOLUNTEERING?

Become a Parent Champion Volunteer

- Do you like meeting people and want to make a difference?
- Can you spare up to 5 hours per week?
- Do you have children or grandchildren and live in Slough?
- Do you know about local services such as children's centres?



Email
FIS@slough.gov.uk
for further information



For any questions on dental and oral health, breastfeeding, weaning, sleep routines and more!

Parent and Child Groups

Do you have a baby or young child at home?
Do you want to get out of the house and meet other parents?

Why not come along to our parent and child groups with your little one to play, learn and meet others.

We provide a friendly and safe environment where everyone is welcome!

Running at:

- Chalvey Grove Children's Centre, Chalvey Grove, SL1 2TE
Mondays at 1.30-3pm
Starting on 6 November
T: 01753 574387.
- Romsey Close Children's Centre, Romsey Close, SL3 8PE
Thursdays at 9.30-11am
Starting on 9 November
T: 01753 540797.

Please call the centres to book your place.

CC-703626-10-23



Repair priorities

When you report a repair, the work will be prioritised as below.

Priority 1: Emergency repairs: risk of immediate danger to people and/or significant damage to property (e.g. this could be a substantial leak or flood that can't be contained by the tenant).

Priority 2: Urgent repairs: risk of danger to people and/or damage to property if not attended to within three days.

Priority 3: Routine repairs: low risk of danger to people and/or further damage to property.

You can expect us to respond within the following timescales:

Priority 1: We will attend within 2 hours to make safe with the objective of completing the repair within 24 hours or the next working day (if attended by the out of hours service).

Priority 2: To be completed within 3 working days.

Priority 3: To be completed within 20 working days.

When you call to report a repair, the call taker will tell you how the repair has been prioritised and book an appointment with you within timescales above.

This guide shows which repairs are the council's or the tenant's responsibility. You should check this guide before contacting the council to request a repair. Any SBC repair that has been caused by damage or neglect will be rechargeable. We may agree to undertake some tenant responsibility repairs in exceptional circumstances and recharge.

Information for leaseholders

Repair responsibilities for leaseholders differ depending on your lease agreement. Please check your lease for confirmation of responsibility for repairs.

Repair description	Council tenancies SBC	Council tenancies Tenant	Lease hold
The structure			
Roof and chimney stacks/breasts (brickwork, flashing, cowls and protective fittings)	✓		
Chimney cleaning		✓	✓
Walls, foundations and flooring (floorboards, MDF panel or concrete screed and lino in kitchen/bathroom/ wet rooms)	✓		✓
Heating, power and sanitary installations			
Central heating boilers and radiators	✓		✓
Council-supplied gas and electric fires	✓		✓
Electricity wiring and gas and water* pipework from meter or point of entry into the property *the council may be responsible for water supply pipework outside the property and some pipework passing through leasehold properties	✓		✓
Blocked and damaged drains and sewers	✓		
Slow-draining/blocked sink, hand basin and bath waste traps/u-bends		✓	✓
W.C. pans, sinks and cisterns	✓		✓
Fixtures and fittings			
Laminate flooring, carpets and other non-council floor coverings		✓	✓
Kitchen sinks, units and worktops	✓		✓
Toilet seats		✓	✓
Curtain battens, rails, shelves and coat hooks		✓	✓
Standard light and fluorescent light bulbs and starter fittings		✓	✓
Electrical sockets, light switches and pull cords	✓		✓
Sink plugs and toilet chains		✓	✓
Smoke alarm batteries		✓	✓
Hard-wired smoke alarms	✓		✓
Shower rails and curtains		✓	✓
Doors and windows			
External doors, hinges and locks	✓		✓
Internal doors and hinges and privacy door locks		✓	✓
Window frames and glazing panes, latches, locks, putty and sills	✓		✓
Failed seal in double glazing units (not caused by pane break)	✓		✓
Gaining access/lost keys		✓	✓
Gardens			
Individual washing lines and rotary driers		✓	✓
Washing lines/driers in communal areas	✓		
Dividing fencing and gates for tenants/ leaseholder gardens * The council will maintain any estate boundary fencing		✓	✓
Garden sheds, greenhouses and patios		✓	✓
Decoration			
Internal decorations including minor plastering		✓	✓
External decorations	✓		
Other repairs			
White goods and non-council appliances		✓	✓
Improvements and alterations by you or previous tenants		✓	✓
Communal and external areas			
Footpaths to your front door	✓		
Estate paths across grounds	✓		
Gates and fencing to alleyways and drying areas	✓		
Play equipment	✓		
Door entry systems *Damage to door entry system handsets may be rechargeable	✓		
Refuse and recycling			
Cleaning individual refuse/recycling bins		✓	✓
Replacing lost or stolen bins (via MyCouncil)		✓	✓