



Housing Annual Report to Tenants and Leaseholders 2023-2024





Welcome to the Tenant and Leaseholder Annual Report 2023/24

Each year the tenants and leaseholders of Harlow Housing Standards Panels work together with Harlow Council to provide feedback on the annual report. It highlights aspects of services that we believe are important and useful for tenants and leaseholders to know and identifies plans for improvement. These panels also examine performance to assess how your housing services are being delivered against regulatory requirements, as well as meeting the expectations of customers.

Why we produce an annual report

The production of an annual report is a requirement of the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH), which regulates social housing in England. It sets out standards that social housing providers should meet and they can act if these standards are breached. Harlow Council, as a landlord, is responsible for ensuring the regulatory requirements are met in a transparent and accountable way. This report shows how tenants and leaseholders are involved in examining performance as well as helping to shape and improve services.

The view of the council

Last year was extremely challenging, with rising inflation resulting in a cost-of-living crisis. We recognise that this has placed significant pressures on our customers, and we are prioritising tenancy sustainment and support to help those who find they are struggling. Our staff are working hard to provide welfare and debt advice and support to help people keep their tenancies.

Rising inflation and increased service demand have placed significant financial pressures on the council - with rising material, energy, fuel, sub-contractor and pay costs providing additional pressures on service delivery.

Despite all the challenges, we were able to clear the housing repairs backlog, introduce a new housing allocations policy focusing on Harlow homes for Harlow people and carrying out tenancy audits to ensure we provide tenants with the right services.

The introduction of new legislation and regulation from the Building Safety, Fire Safety and Social Housing Acts keeps our focus on making sure we provide safe and secure homes. We're dedicated to effectively engaging and listening to our customers, tailoring services to meet individual needs, and providing an environment where people feel safe in their neighbourhoods.

We want to continue to provide new homes in the town. There is a huge demand for affordable housing and we see rising homeless cases coming through to our teams. We will continue to invest in our housing stock and seek additional funding to improve energy ratings in current housing stock, with the aim of providing decent homes, tackling fuel poverty, and reducing carbon emissions.

Finally, we want to empower our customers by placing them at the heart of everything we do. We offer a wide range of opportunities for you to give your views, making sure your voice is heard and encouraging you to help us continue to tailor and improve the services we offer and influence our decision making through robust governance. You can provide feedback on reports like this one and work on projects to help improve homes and neighbourhoods.

Councillor David Carter
Portfolio Holder for Housing

For information on this report contact: Community Engagement Lead Zulfi Kiani-Mackintosh. Call 01279 446655, or email: zulfi.kiani-mackintosh@harlow.gov.uk



Tenant Involvement and Empowerment

This standard focuses on providing opportunities for tenant involvement and empowerment; supporting customers to scrutinise and improve services; having a clear focus on good customer service, choice and complaints and having a clear understanding and response to the diverse needs of our customers.

Involving tenants and leaseholders

This standard is one of four that registered providers of social housing, like Harlow Council, must comply with. We want as many customers as possible to tell us what they think through a variety of ways. You can share your views at tenant and leaseholder events held throughout the year, housing consultations and estate inspections. Visit our website for more details.

Complaints

If you are not happy with the service you have received, the council will attempt to resolve the issue straight away. If this is not possible, you can log a complaint (stage 1). You can then request a further investigation (stage 2) and if you are still not satisfied, you can take your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman, an independent body that deals with disputes between landlords and tenants.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

The Regulator of Social Housing has created a new system for assessing how well social housing landlords in England provide good quality homes and services. In addition to revised consumer standards, there are a set of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) that social housing landlords must report on.

You can use these measures to understand how well we are doing. Harlow Council has 22 TSMs, reflecting themes and issues set out in the Social Housing White Paper. 12 are collected through tenant perception surveys and 10 from registered providers' management information. Below are results for 2023/24:

TP01	Overall satisfaction.	67.8%
TP02	Satisfaction with repairs.	76.6%
TP03	Satisfaction with time taken to complete the most recent repair.	69.1%
TP04	Satisfaction that the home is well maintained.	64.0%
TP05	Satisfaction that the home is safe.	68.9%
TP06	Satisfaction that Harlow Council housing service listens to tenant views and acts upon them.	49.7%
TP07	Satisfaction that Harlow Council housing service keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them.	69.6%
TP08	Agreement that Harlow Council housing service treats tenants fairly and with respect.	65.8%
TP09	Satisfaction with Harlow Council's housing service approach to handling complaints.	30.9%
TP10	Satisfaction that Harlow Council housing service keeps communal areas clean and well maintained.	50.9%
TP11	Satisfaction that Harlow Council housing service makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods.	53.2%
TP12	Satisfaction with Harlow Council's housing service approach to handling anti-social behaviour.	41.1%
BS01	Proportion of homes for which all required gas safety checks have been carried out.	100%
BS02	Proportion of homes for which all required fire risk assessments have been carried out.	16.4%
BS03	Proportion of homes for which all required asbestos management surveys or re-inspections have been carried out.	100%
BS04	Proportion of homes for which all required legionella risk assessments have been carried out.	100%
BS05	Proportion of homes for which all required communal passenger lift safety checks have been carried out.	100%
NM01 (pt1)	Number of anti-social behaviour cases opened per 1,000 homes.	43%
NM01 (pt2)	Number of anti-social behaviour cases that involve hate incidents opened per 1,000 homes.	0.1%
RP01	Proportion of homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard.	0.2%
RP02	Proportion of non-emergency responsive repairs completed within the landlord's target timescale.	96.8%
RP02 (pt2)	Proportion of emergency responsive repairs completed within the landlord's target timescale.	99.2%

Housing service complaints 2023/24

Stage 1	253
Stage 2	48
Total	301

HTS complaints 2023/24

Stage 1	376
Stage 2	62
Total	438



Home Standard

This standard focuses on the provision of quality homes that meet the Decent Homes Standard, a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service, the health and safety of customers, and the provision of an adaptations service that meets customer needs.

Repairs

You can report a repair by:

- telephoning the repairs centre on **01279 446666** (best if your repair is urgent).
- using your **MyHome** account.
- **visiting the Civic Centre**, where a free phone service is available direct to the repairs centre.
- **email** repairs@htsgroupltd.co.uk
- If your repair is about damp or mould, you need to report this to us **online**.

It's really important to let the council know if you cannot attend your repairs appointment.



The percentage of annual service charges collected for 2023/24 was 98.21%.

Leaseholders

Harlow Council, as landlord, is responsible for 2,601 leasehold properties. The leaseholder(s) are responsible for repairs and maintenance to the interior of their home. Day-to-day repairs and maintenance to the structure, and communal areas are carried out by HTS on behalf of the council and costs are recovered from leaseholders through the annual service charges. Major or planned works will be consulted on with leaseholders.

The Leasehold Standard Panel review items from their annual work plan which includes service charge monitoring, scrutiny of the management fee, review of service charge invoices and statements and documentation provided, compile the leaseholder survey and agree this with officers from the council and review the results.

88 leaseholders took advantage of the council's prompt payment discount (compared to 66 in 2022/23).

72.43% of leaseholders paid by direct debit (compared to 72.8% in 2022/23).

6 Complaints were received. **3** of these complaints were not upheld, **2** partially upheld and **1** upheld.

26 Compliments were received.

840 formal notices for major works were served.

292 leaseholders applied for a loan from Harlow Council since the introduction of improved payment options (274 in 2022/23).

Adaptations

Alterations to rear ramp	1	Over bath shower (OBS)	8
Conversion	0	OBS and bathroom	1
Door alterations	0	Rear path	2
Door widening	1	Rear ramp	7
Dropped kerb	1	Replacement switches	1
Front entrance door	2	Specialist bath	1
Front ramp	11	Specialist toilet	1
Front step	1	Stair lift	20
Ground floor WC	1	Stair rail	2
Hardstanding	1	Standard bath	1
Internal alterations	1	Wall padding	1
Kitchen	8	WC conversion	1
Kitchen alterations	1	Wet room	69
Kitchen lights	0		

Investing in a Greener Future

2023 to 2024:



Cavity wall insulation: **17**



Loft insulation: **268**



Homes receiving solar panels: **0**



Homes receiving triple glazing: **0**

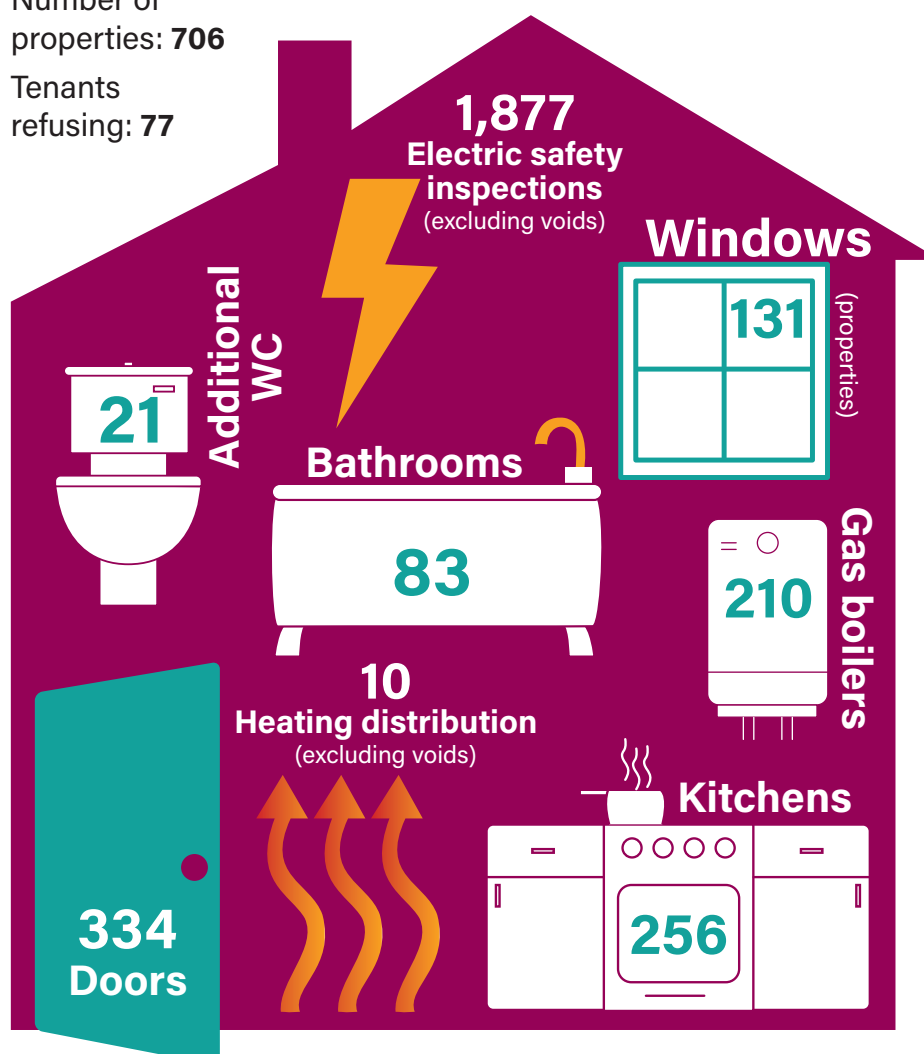
Council home improvements

Number of properties: **706**

Tenants refusing: **77**

Total Number of voids for 2023/24: **598**

Void turnaround days taken 2023/24: **21 days**



Repairs

Number of jobs:

Bricklaying, paving and labour	417
Disrepair	226
Garage roof repairs	264
Aids and adaptations	133
Damp repairs under £400	374
Carpentry	4,002
Door entry	117
Double glazed units	614
Drainage	617
Drain surveys	1
Electrical	4,546
Fencing	1,068
Garages	1,056
Glazing	97
Gas breakdowns	7,098
Loss of insurance	5
Painting	48
Plumbing	6,657
Plastering	895
Roofing	1,173
Guttering	1,027
UPVC	1,151



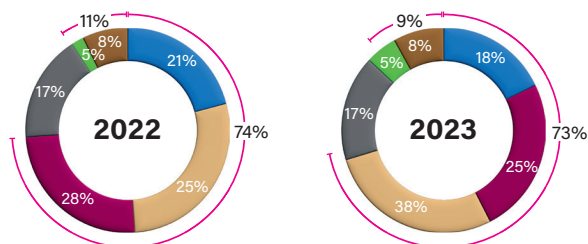
Tenancy Standard

This standard focuses on the way homes are allocated and how tenants are supported to maintain their tenancy.

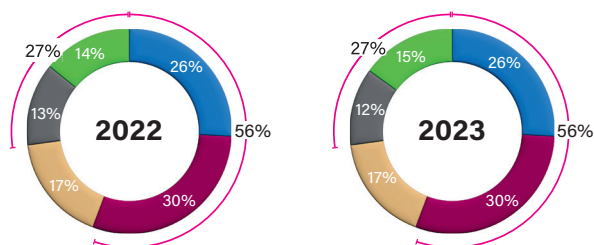
The voids and Housing Options & Advice teams carry out the day-to-day process of managing properties from 'keys in to keys out,' so that empty homes are let at the right quality standard.

The percentage of rent collected for 2023/24 was 98.50%.

Ease of bidding process:



Were you satisfied or dissatisfied with the condition of your property when you moved in?



■ Very satisfied ■ Fairly satisfied
■ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied ■ Very dissatisfied
■ Fairly dissatisfied

Between April 2023 and March 2024, the council housed a total of **548** households:

Band 1: **103**
 Band 2: **351**
 Band 3: **94**
 Band 4: **0**

298 applicants were home seekers, **193** were transfers and **57** were homeless. **393** of these were placed in general needs properties, **60** in supported housing and **95** in housing association properties.

Tenancy Support

The tenancy support team support vulnerable customers by using a 'condition matters' approach where necessary. The team helps those experiencing issues with hoarding, excessive cluttering, malicious damage, problems with managing rent and bills and poor property condition.

During the year, they contact vulnerable customers and provide support, through a journey that results in them feeling more independent in maintaining their tenancies.



123 tenants have been supported by a tenancy support officer in the past year



66 financial incentive payments have been authorised for those tenants that have downsized to a smaller property



42 MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) meetings have been attended



13 sanctuary referrals have been made

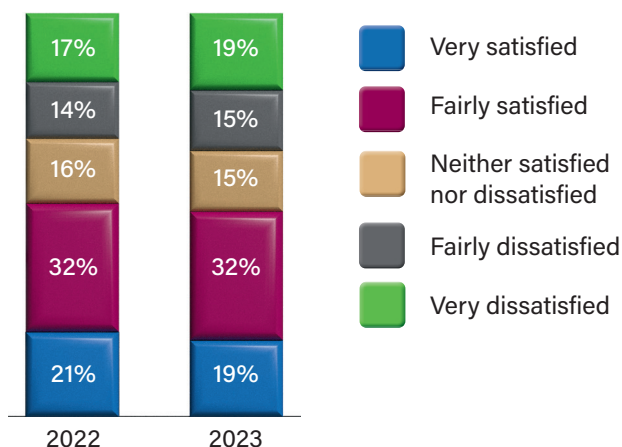
As part of recent Government White Paper requirements, the council is introducing Tenancy Audits. Housing officers will visit tenants and make sure all tenancy and property details are up to date.



Neighbourhood and Community Standard

This standard focuses on the cleanliness and safety of neighbourhoods and communal areas; the promotion of social, environmental, economic wellbeing and the prevention and tackling of anti-social behaviour (ASB).

Harlow Council's housing service keeps communal areas clean and well maintained:



Tenancy Enforcement

During the year the council has continued to work with and provide support to those tenants suffering financial difficulties affecting payment of rent, while taking appropriate action to deal with those tenants who persistently failed to maintain payments:

- The council obtained **80** possession orders for non-payment of rent.
- **8** tenants were evicted for non-payment of rent.

In addition:



1 tenant was evicted for anti-social behaviour.



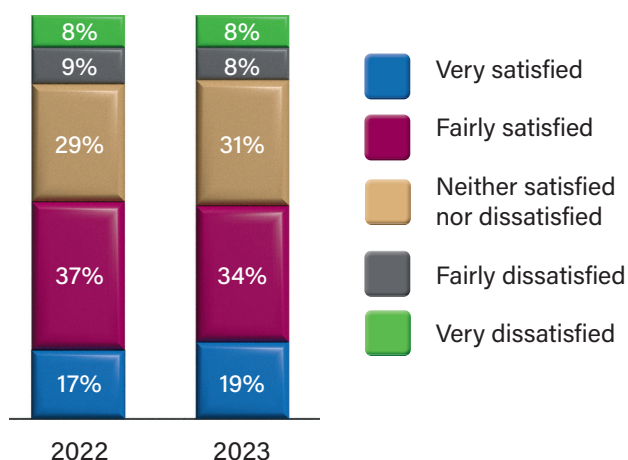
Anti-social behaviour injunction orders were obtained against **2** tenants.



5 tenants were evicted for other reasons.

As part of the requirements relating to a new Government White Paper, the council will introduce tenancy audits, where housing officers will visit all tenants to make sure our tenancy and property details are up to date.

Harlow Council's housing service makes a positive contribution to your neighbourhood:



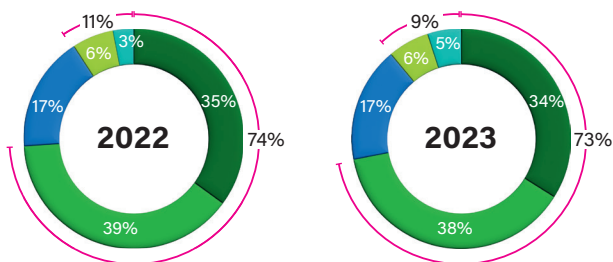


Making Money Matter

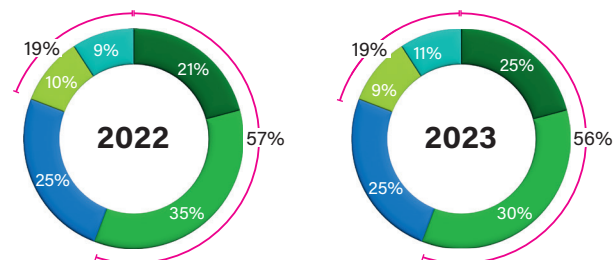
Harlow Council continues to improve services and ensure value for money by learning from other housing providers and developing ways of comparing performance.

This information is shared in quarterly performance progress reviews, in the annual report to tenants and leaseholders and in Harlow Times magazine.

Satisfaction with value for money: housing rents

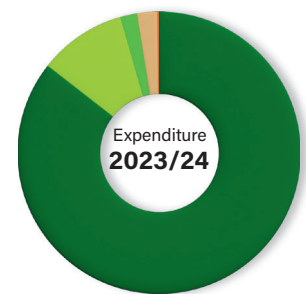
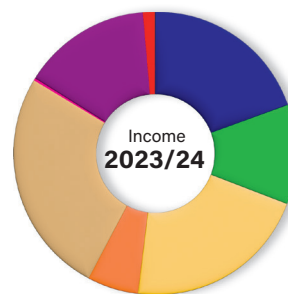


Satisfaction with value for money: service charges



- Very satisfied
- Fairly satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Fairly dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

We review the quarterly performance and financial housing reports at the Housing Standards Board with tenant and leaseholder representatives. The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan is also reviewed to ensure it is sustainable and fit for purpose.



Expenditure

	2022/23	2023/24
	£	£
Debt management expenses	6,883	7,747
General management	11,014,546	11,871,463
Interest charges	7,282,296	6,798,428
Major repairs reserve	11,110,168	12,844,576
Transfer to/from reserves	1,352,961	3,505,237
Provision for bad and doubtful debts	226,928	-206,167
Repairs	11,215,801	15,566,971
Rents, rates, taxes and other charges	154,386	153,937
Special management	8,111,304	9,046,633
Supporting people transitional arrangements	1,245	686
Total	50,476,518	59,589,511

Income

	2022/23	2023/24
	£	£
Dwellings rents	45,110,013	48,404,914
Charges for services and facilities	5,584,709	5,690,087
Garage rents	976,198	1,080,740
Interest receivable	548,396	1,321,040
Other rents	79,439	63,938
Total	52,298,755	56,560,719

Balance in hand at 1 April	11,986,926	13,809,163
Surplus / (deficit) for year	1,822,237	-3,028,792
Balance in hand at 31 March	13,809,163	10,780,371