

**Tamworth Borough Council
Housing Services**

Annual Report to Tenants

April 2023 – March 2024

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Welcome From Your Tenant Consultative Group

Your Tenant Consultative Group welcomes you to Tamworth Borough Council's Annual Report. This report highlights the performance of Housing Services throughout the year, April 2023 to March 2024, and showcases the amazing work of tenant involvement groups supported by Tamworth Borough Council's Tenant Regulatory & Involvement Team who

are passionate about helping tenants, and the wider community. In a time when many of us, including the Council, have been under great financial pressure there have been many challenges, but also lots to be proud of. Throughout the year your Tenant Consultative Group (TCG) has kept a watchful eye on Housing services and will continue to do so in the future. Last year, TCG was involved in many areas of review, update and development but to mention just a few included TCG representation on the Housing & Homelessness Advisory Board with voting rights to support assurance on housing improvements, active tenant involvement with the planning and delivery of a successful tenants conference with learning from tenant feedback shaping future engagement activity and a workshop to discuss the Social Housing Regulatory Act 2023 and its impact on tenants and the Councils Regulatory self-assessment action plan. Involvement groups were also involved in the development and review of key publications such as the High-Rise Health & Safety booklet, the quarterly tenant's newsletter Open House and the 2022-2023 Annual Report to Tenants. Groups, have in addition been instrumental with the introduction, and setting the terms of reference, for both a High-Rise Consultative Panel and Anti-Social Behaviour Scrutiny Group and have reviewed processes, practices and key performance within the specific related service area.

Communication is key to maintaining and improving the services provided to us and we would encourage all tenants to raise the issues they face, even including making complaints if these are not resolved. The information provided by tenants reporting issues is used by the Council to improve services and dedicate resources to the areas that need them. It is also one of the ways that as a group, we can champion, to ensure problems do get resolved. Over the next 12 months we will also continue with good communication providing updates on the recruitment of an independent Tenant Advocate to sit alongside the Tenant Consultative Group, and other working groups alike, to scrutinise and shape housing services for all tenants.

This year also saw the Council face the introduction of new Tenancy Satisfaction Measures by the Regulator for Social Housing. As a Consultative Group we have engaged with staff in looking at the results and will now be involved in the development of the action plan. The work is never done and services, tenant-council relationships, and our community can always be improved.

So, I encourage you to read this report, be proud of the positive things we've achieved and ask you to give feedback to the Council on how you feel they are performing and what can be improved to make 2024-2025 an even better year.

Iris Clements, Chair, Tenant Consultative Group

Foreword

Councillor Ben Clarke, portfolio holder for housing, homelessness and planning

I would like to welcome you to this year's Tenants Annual Report 2023-2024, which outlines the progress made over the past year, and I would specifically like to extend my gratitude to our tenants, for your valuable feedback. I am eager to engage with you and learn how we

can continue enhancing our housing services as our commitment is to provide you with a high standard of service and quality homes. Your input is crucial as we strive for continuous improvement, and I look forward to listening to you in the year ahead.

We take our role as a landlord for council housing tenants very seriously and have welcomed the customer standards introduced by the Regulator for Social Housing. We've reviewed our performance and ways of working and found that in some areas we do not meet the standard we expect of ourselves nor the standards of the regulator. In these areas we have and are continuing to take swift and robust action to make sure our housing services improve, and we apologise to tenants that some of our services are not as they should be.

We've taken the decision to self-refer ourselves to the Regulator for Social Housing so that we can work with the regulator as we improve our services and approach."

We value your feedback, invite you to get involved, and look forward to working with you to improve services in the future.

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Who We Are



Area	Total Properties
Amington	404
Belgrave	294
Bolehall	342
Borough Road	40
Coton Green	63
Dosthill	79
Fazeley	111
Gillwey	218
Grascote	304
Hockley	145
Kettlebrook	262
Leyfields	446
Stonydelph	604
The Leys	58
Town Centre	393
Two Gates	21
Wilnecote	226
Grand Total	4300

3 Bed	4+ Bed	Total
20	1280	1300
705	2420	3125
3	365	368
728	154	4300

The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard

This standard outlines the outcomes landlords must deliver about being open with tenants and treating them with fairness and respect so that tenants can access services, raise complaints, influence decision making and hold their landlord to account.

This standard also requires all registered providers of social housing to collect and report annually on their performance using a core set of defined measures. These measures are called the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM's). The TSMs provide tenants with greater transparency about their landlord's performance.

Why not get involved!

There are several ways for you to get involved and help improve your housing services and we would love to hear from you. These options are designed to suit varied needs and lifestyles- whether you can spare only 5 minutes completing a short survey, popping along to one of housing consultation events or even attending one of the tenant involvement bi-monthly or quarterly meetings – there is something here for everyone.

If you would like to get involved or would simply like some further information then please call the Tenant Regulatory & Involvement Team on 01827 709709, email tenantparticipation@tamworth.gov.uk or visit the website at <https://www.tamworth.gov.uk/council-tenants-hub/getting-involved/tenant-involvement>



<p>There are many ways for customers to get involved</p>	<p>Tenants Voice Group Members reviewed articles and edited Open House the quarterly newsletter, Sheltered Housings Tenants Handbook & the High Rise Health & Safety booklet</p>	<p>New Anti-Social Behaviour Scrutiny Group The first meeting was held to scrutinise the service offer and discuss best practice and service improvements</p>	<p>2 Plant a Pots Events held at Cheatele Court & Sunset Close Sheltered Schemes tackled social isolation, got residents & staff outside and active and improved the communal garden areas</p>
<p>Annual programme of Estate Inspections The annual programme was successfully carried out across Tamworth estate in 2023/24</p>	<p>Reviewed feedback from satisfaction surveys 141 surveys completed from customers across housing services</p>	<p>Database of Involvement The total number of tenants registered to get involved one of the many involvement options was 392</p>	<p>Tenant & Leaseholder feedback Continued to monitor all feedback and performance to improve overall satisfaction with housing services</p>
<p>Tenant Involvement and Consultation Strategy Action Plan 2025-2030</p>	<p>Seniors United 2 meetings were held in 2023/24 with guest speakers from the Council's Enforcement</p>	<p>Tenant Consultative Group Members invited to attend 2 workshops to look at the</p>	<p>High Rise Consultative Group and ASB Scrutiny Group</p>

Started to review and prepare for a tenants' conference and borough wide consultation event	Team, Waste Management and Equans, repairs contractor	Council's Self-Assessment Improvement Plan to ensure compliance with the Social Housing Regulatory Standards and to input into the Consumer Standards Consultation	Preparations started with the introduction of two new working groups to look at best practice and scrutinise procedures, process and practices
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Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

The Regulator of Social Housing has introduced a set of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) to assess how well social housing landlords in England are doing at providing good quality homes and services to their tenants. Of the 22 measures introduced, 12 provide tenants with the opportunity to have their say, understand how their landlord is performing and provide an insight into where service improvements are required. The other 10 measures are about compliance that as a landlord we measure, including safety and repairs. As a social housing landlord, we are required to complete the survey every year. With 2024 being the first year and as part of our commitment to service improvement, Tamworth Borough Council asked M·E·L Research to carry out an independent tenants' perception survey to find out what tenants think about the housing services they receive from the Council. The Regulator of Social Housing sets the format and questions for this survey, responses must be submitted to the Regulator by 30th June each year and the Regulator will then produce a report that shows how well all registered providers are doing (including Local Authorities like Tamworth Borough Council), and where they may need to improve.

More information on the Regulatory Standards and the Tenant Satisfaction Measures can be found at: [Regulatory standards - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/regulatory-standards) and [Transparency, Influence and Accountability \(including Tenant Satisfaction Measures\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/transparency-influence-and-accountability-including-tenant-satisfaction-measures)

Summary of the Tenants Satisfaction Measures Perception Survey Findings

This is the first survey the survey was carried out, January & February 2024, using the questions below, and the findings will help us to improve the quality of services we deliver to our tenants.

Out of the 4242 Council properties let at the time of the survey (as at 10.01.2024) 745 tenants completed a survey either by phone or post.

- 58% satisfied with the overall service provided by the Council
- 62% satisfied with the overall repairs service
- 62% satisfied with the time taken to complete most recent repair
- 63% satisfied that the Council provides a home that is well maintained
- 69% satisfied that the Council provides a home that is safe
- 51% satisfied that the Council listens to their views and acts upon them
- 56% satisfied that the Council keeps them informed about things that matter to them
- 69% agree that the Council treats them fairly and with respect
- 23% satisfied with the Council's approach to complaints handling
- 68% satisfied that the Council keeps communal areas clean and well maintained

- 52% satisfied that the Council makes a positive contribution to their neighbourhoods
- 54% satisfied with the Council's approach to handling anti-social behaviour

A short video and easy read leaflet is available on the Council website, providing a summary of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures Perception Survey results 2024. Please visit www.tamworth.gov.uk/tenant-satisfaction-measures-and-performance-information

The Council would like to take this opportunity to thank those tenants that shared their thoughts about Tamworth Borough Council's housing services. The Council is currently working hard, together with their tenants' groups, to improve housing services based on tenant feedback and the improvements to services will be published in the forthcoming Tenant Annual Report.

Customer feedback and effective handling of complaints

As a Council, we want to offer a service that is right first time – every time. However, occasionally we accept that things do not go as planned. We value all feedback and encourage tenants to tell us about their experience, good or bad, and/or suggest ways to improve our service delivery.

How can I make a compliment, complaint or leave a comment:

- Complete an e-form via the My Tamworth customer portal: mytamworth.tamworth.gov.uk
- Telephone 01827 709709.
- Email complaints@tamworth.gov.uk
- Write to us at Marmion House, Lichfield Street, Tamworth, Staffordshire, B79 7BZ.
- Ask any member of staff to assist.

A total of 476 complaints, compliments and service requests was received within Housing Services during 2023 -2024..

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Complaints	242	88	176
Compliments	33	21	29
Service requests	48	170	241
Total	323	279	476

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Number of stage 1 complaints	213	81	156
Number of stage 2 complaints	29	7	20
Number of compliments	33	21	29

Self-Assessment - Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code 2024

The council published its first Self-Assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code in 2023. In line with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman, a self-assessment has been undertaken to identify if the organisation's current approach to complaints handling meets all the requirements of the 2024 Complaint Handling Code. The council has identified many aspects of good practice and identified some areas of non-compliance. We have used the self-assessment findings, to put in place an action plan to support improvements in our complaint handling process and aim to achieve full compliance by 31st December 2024

Key improvements in 2023-2024:

<p>Revised Complaints Policy Updated the Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy to reflect the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman statutory code</p>	<p>Centralised complaints processing team By centralising the complaints processing team, operations have been streamlined.</p>	<p>Improved customer communication All communication received through the central team is now acknowledged within 5 working days. In 2023/2024, this was achieved with 95.5% of complaints received.</p>
<p>Efficient process for contractor complaints Established a process to reduce the time repair contractors receive complaint information</p>	<p>Improved letter templates Letter templates have been reviewed and improved</p>	<p>Improved record management Enhanced record management to support performance report requirements</p>
<p>Voids damp and mould assessment Incorporated a damp and mould assessment into the void inspection process due to an increase in damp and mould enquiries</p>	<p>Development of a Service Improvement Plan In consultation with tenants, through the Complaint Review Panel, identified and analysed themes so targeted outcomes for service improvement could be made.</p>	<p>Complaint performance now included in quarterly performance reports Introduced from quarter 1, 2023-24 performance reports</p>

What's in store for 2024!

- Consultation with tenants on the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan with updated priorities for 2024-2025
- Recruitment of an independent Tenant Advocate to sit alongside the Tenant Consultative Group (TCG) to scrutinise and shape housing services
- Tenant inclusivity and engagement roadshow, November 2024, with consultation on the draft Tenant Involvement & Engagement Strategy 2025-2023
- Customer profiling with a 'Getting to know you survey', supported by MEL Research, to better understand and tailor services in accordance with tenants needs
- Refreshed self-assessment on the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code
- Improved customer access through the re-opening of Marmion House reception
- TCG representation on the Housing & Homelessness Advisory Board, with voting rights on to support assurance on housing improvements
- Annual Tenant Satisfaction measures (TSM'S) survey
- Implementation of a full suite of housing service standards following customer consultation

The Safety and Quality Standard

The **Safety and Quality Standard** focuses on ensuring landlords understand the condition of all their homes and make use of that data to provide safe, quality homes.

Tamworth Borough Council is committed to providing decent and safe council properties. Over the next 12 months, the Council will deliver a series of projects to continue to improve the safety of homes and the overall quality of service. Systems will be updated to easily stay up to date with ongoing work that has already begun to meet the new regulatory standards.

Keeping homes in good repair

Did you know	Customer satisfaction with responsive repairs 89.6%	Emergency responsive repairs completed within the landlord's target timescale 98.8%	Number of responsive repairs carried out 14231
Percentage of repairs completed on first visit 89.6%	Average number of calendar days to complete a repair 26 days	Percentage of appointments made and kept 96.2%	Total cost to carry out responsive repairs in 2023/2024 was £1,721,572
Total number of void properties 242	Average spend on an empty property was £4,582	60 new kitchens installed	78 new bathrooms installed
Number of planned Roofing renewals 113	Number of window and door replacements 94	319 new heating systems installed	Number of responsive roofing repairs 1426

In 2023/2024, approximately **£7,790,636.10** was spent on planned home improvements

Maintaining the safety of your home

100% of homes with a working gas supply have had a gas safety check in the last year A total of 4336 gas services have been carried out	EICR (Electrical Installation Condition Report) 494 electrical installations inspections completed	Legionella Risk Assessments carried out 28 in sheltered and communal areas
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New Homes

Tamworth Borough Council purchased 22 new build, one-bedroomed flats and two, three-bedroomed new houses.

The new homes are available as council housing and are part of the refurbished former Wilnecote day centre, Hockley Road. The £4,955,000 development, led by Capstone, includes the cost of land, refurbishment and new buildings.

All properties meet the latest energy efficiency standards and includes specific bike storage for residents. With the five new homes also built at Caledonian, Glascote Heath, there are an additional 29 properties, bringing the total number of council housing properties to over 4,300.



Decarbonising Hockley

Working to make Tamworth Greener and more energy efficient for residents



Equans, working with Tamworth Borough Council, successfully secured a £900,000 grant from the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund to improve the thermal efficiency of 50 council-owned homes in Hockley. Improvements included adding new highly efficient external wall insulation - covered by a modern white render – to transform the homes' energy performance and appearance. Roofs were replaced and insulated, and new double-glazed windows and doors was also fitted to properties. As a result of the upgrades, Energy Performance Certificate ratings increased from E to at

"Before the work, my home could be really cold – especially in winter and I had to use draught excluders and turn the heating right up. The changes have made a huge difference, both in temperature and in the house's appearance, and I'd encourage anyone in a position to have the same work done to go ahead – it is well worth it." Hockley resident

least C.

What's in store for 2024!

- New stock condition survey to inform a tenant focused asset management plan
- Focus on compliance with the introduction of a newly created repairs improvement group with tenants and leaseholders
- Leaseholder management review and with a refreshed action plan
- Resetting of Equans, the repairs contractor to improve performance from April 2025
- Full Impact Assessment on the new disabled Adaptation Policy with tenant outcomes identified

The Tenancy Standard

Outcomes social landlords must deliver is about the fair allocation and letting of homes and how tenancies are managed and ended by landlords

Finding a Home

Tamworth Borough Council operates a choice-based letting system to give applicants as much say as possible about where they want to live and when they want to move. Due to the shortage of council homes in Tamworth, the council will also help applicants explore other affordable housing options. For further information please visit the website at:

<https://www.tamworth.gov.uk/housing/applying-council-housing/about-council-housing>

Number of active housing applicants on the housing waiting list, by band, as at 31st March 2024 was **434**

Band 1	68
Band 2	208
Band 3	113
Band 4	45
Total	434

<p>Optional welfare benefit checks</p> <p>Tenants are offered optional welfare benefit checks, at the start of tenancy, and referrals to support agencies are carried out if needed</p>	<p>Average time between general needs property lettings is 73 days</p> <p>Work continues with Equans, the repairs contractor, to improve re-let times</p>	<p>Total number of properties for re-letting</p> <p>241 became available for letting; approximately 20 voids per month, and 44 refused</p>
<p>The Council received 27 mutual exchange applications of which 14 was accepted and 13 was refused or withdrawn.</p>	<p>Housing Choice Interviews are offered to all applicants to ensure customers are aware of all housing choices available to them</p>	<p>Early intervention to prevent homelessness</p> <p>Prevented or relieved 199 households becoming homeless</p>
<p>Length of Bed & Breakfast stay</p> <p>The average length of stay in Bed & Breakfast was 26.75 nights, within the 42 night limit, set out by government legislation</p>	<p>Temporary accommodation</p> <p>26 households in temporary accommodation on 31 March 2023, 6 in bed & breakfast and 20 in council owned self-contained temporary accommodation</p>	<p>6 households benefitted from the Incentive to move programme, designed to release larger family accommodation</p>

HOME Hub

Tamworth Borough Council, in partnership with Citizens' Advice Mid Mercia, launched a new service to better support some of the most vulnerable in Tamworth.

The council already delivers tailored, in-home services to prevent homelessness, however HOME Hub aims to reach more people working with Citizens' Advice Mid Mercia and other local community and voluntary partners. This service aims to offer support across all aspects of life such as debt advice, increasing skills, support with addiction, family support, advocacy and support with mental health to name a few. This involves working collaboratively with Tamworth's active community and voluntary sector and with statutory partners such as the probation service, Department for Work and Pensions, drug and alcohol services and other health support services.

HOME Hub provides:

Holistic help to stabilise housing problems.

Outreach work in communities.

Multi-agency working with one service for all issues

Empowering and enabling people to create their own better future



The overall aim of the HOME Hub is to prevent homelessness through early intervention, advice, signposting, information, and support to those rough sleeping or at risk of homelessness.

Other benefits to HOME Hub may include

- Reduced anxiety levels
- Managed health conditions and improved overall wellbeing
- Improved financial situation
- Peer support in the community
- Connecting to social activities, improving confidence and learning new skills

The service is for anyone who may be in danger of losing their home even if they may not yet realise it; for example, rent arrears, mental health worries, warning of breach of tenancy agreement, alcohol and substance misuse, failure to meet mortgage payments; whatever it might be, help is at hand.

The service is open to everyone, whether they currently own their own home, rent privately or rent from a social landlord.

To access the service,

- Call: freephone 0808 175 4041 seven days a week, Monday and Wednesday 9am – 9pm, Tuesday, Thursday Friday 9am – 5pm.
- Visit us:
 - Wednesdays 9.30am – 11.30am
Three Peaks Primary School, Fossdale Road.
 - Friday 10.30am -12.30pm
Glascote Childrens Centre, Hawksworth.
 - Friday 1.30pm – 3.30pm
Leyfields Childrens Centre, Masefield Drive
- Drop into the Community Together CIC offices at Offa House
- For emergency out of hours homeless support, call 01827 709709.
- Alternatively visit the council's current reception at Tamworth Assembly Rooms, this service replicates the service formally available at Marmion House, and the team can signpost you to specialist support.

Supported Housing

The Supported Housing service provides high quality, short-term accommodation with a dedicated team ensuring a visit support service is in place for people who are faced with homelessness. Support is provided to help people through the crisis they face and to prepare them to successfully move on to their own independent tenancy. Help, guidance and advice offered consist of:

- Claiming welfare benefits
- Help in sorting out debt management and budgeting problems
- Support and encouragement in career choices and gaining qualifications e.g. keeping residents up to date with available courses, help with completing forms and CVs and accompanying residents to appointments
- Keeping residents motivated and involved in decision making
- Contacting other services/ agencies on resident's behalf



<p>Supported Residents attended a range of events in 2023/24 supported residents attended seasonal Christmas and Easter activities</p>	<p>The Supported Team was successfully awarded funding to provide weekly cooking sessions for residents. In conjunction with Community Together CIC Tamworth, 6 sessions was arranged for residents to learn new skills to support their families in the future</p>	<p>Heating system upgrade. The installation of new storage heaters within supported properties provided tenants with more energy efficient heating.</p>
<p>With the support of the Temporary Accommodation Co-ordinator the team now has new processes and procedures for dealing with operational functions. Case management recording is now fully digital with a new set of key performance indicators introduced to reflect the operational work undertaken by the team.</p>	<p>Neighbourhood Investment Programme application made for new play equipment at Ellerbeck supported scheme</p>	<p>A new customer satisfaction e-survey is launched. This is sent to tenants six weeks after they have left their supported scheme to enable staff to gather valuable feedback to continue to improve service delivery.</p>

Voids and Allocations

<p>New portal system for ordering decoration vouchers, for residents, is implemented. The B&Q portal has reduced both the administrative burden as well as the eradication of postal cost services with vouchers</p>	<p>Development and improvement of the mutual exchange process is well underway with works continuing into 2024-2025</p>	<p>All signups now completed face to face following feedback form tenants that in person interaction is the preferred option.</p>
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emailed directly to new tenants.		
Successful advertisement and allocation process of 2 new build sites, liaising with the developer and supporting residents to ensure the process is carefully and clearly managed with residents kept informed.	Number of hard to let properties reduced 2, reduced from 12 in 2022-2023. Suitable matches found for to make the best use out of housing stock and help bring more residents off the housing waiting list	

Housing Solutions Advisors have:

- Responded to more than 400 external customer emails per month. In addition to managing enquires via phone, web chat, email and councillors
- Continued to work in partnership with the Tamworth Advice Centre (TAC), referring customers for financial advice and assistance
- Continued to streamline the customer journey when applying for council housing. Working closely with Customer Services to ensure applications are answered quickly and efficiently
- Developed a new set of key performance indicators to ensure standards are maintained. Figures for applicants on the housing register is now broken down by banding and bedroom need

Self-Contained Temporary Accommodation

Temporary accommodation units are used as an alternative to Bed & Breakfast for both vulnerable and at-risk households such as those with young children. These properties are managed by the councils Temporary Accommodation Co-ordinator, who also supports those who are homeless to being re-housed into alternative, secure accommodation. Due to the pro-active hands-on approach and extra support provided for those in self-contained temporary accommodation, void costs of temporary accommodation units have successfully decreased.

- There is currently 26 temporary accommodation units ranging from 1 to 3 bed properties
- The Temporary Accommodation Co-ordinator continues to work closely with residents to ensure housing applications are completed quickly and housing benefit claims processed
- A Temporary Accommodation Handbook has been produced listing the key information for new residents

Sheltered Housing

Sheltered housing provides people aged 55 and over with another housing choice in Tamworth. It enables tenants to continue to live independently and combats social isolation by creating a sense of community within each sheltered scheme. Communal spaces within all schemes give residents the opportunity to come together at one of the many organised events and activities as well as being kept updated with housing services information and news at the schemes organised bi-month tenants meetings.

100% of Legionella monitoring sheets completed	100% of Needs Assessments carried out at all sheltered schemes for potential applicants – 61 completed in total	Annual Health and safety inspection programme completed across all sheltered schemes
Lifeline pull cords answered 24/7	100% of new tenants visited with 24hrs of	Capital works projects completed

<p>97.79% of alarm calls answered within 60 seconds</p> <p>Outside of office hours, the lifeline service answered 10466 alarm calls.</p>	<p>moving in</p> <p>100% of new tenants had Tenancy management plans completed , with their scheme manager, within 4 weeks of moving in</p>	<p>As part of the Capital Works Investment Programme, the communal kitchen at Magnolia Sheltered Scheme was refitted and decorated. creating a bright and fresher space for residents to use for scheme events and meetings</p>
<p>98% of scheme resident meetings held bi-monthly</p>	<p>A full suite of new health & safety literature produced and published across sheltered council stock, in compliance with new fire regulation requirements</p>	<p>Developed and successfully implemented the 'Sheltered Housing Winter Plan 2023', aimed to reduce the spread of winter viruses across all sheltered housing schemes for elderly persons</p>

King’s Coronation – Celebrations across all sheltered housing schemes



Sheltered scheme residents celebrated the coronation of his Majesty King Charles III with tea party events throughout the May Bank holiday weekend, 2023



Pictures from Sunset Close and Bright Crescent Sheltered Schemes

Income Management

Excellent end of year arrears

Housing rent arrears collection remains in the upper quartile when compared with other social housing providers across the West Midlands. The Income Team not only reduced overall rent arrears in 2022-2023 but continued to successfully support residents in sustaining their tenancies and preventing homelessness.

The Council continues to deliver on its Housing Quality Network (HQN) rent accreditation improvement plan, which provides reassurance that good quality rent collection services continued to be delivered.

<p>Evictions</p> <p>The number of evictions carried out was 8</p> <p>Eviction is always a last resort</p>	<p>Notices of seeking Possession</p> <p>The number of NSP's Issued for rent arrears was 692</p>	<p>Reviewed the Rent Collection, Arrears Prevention & Recovery Policy</p> <p>Reviewed in March/April 2024 and fully implemented across the team</p>
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<p>Arrears as a % of debit was 2.22% for 2023/2024 compared to 2.60% for 2022/2023</p>	<p>HQN (Housing Quality Network) Review of TBC's rent against government rent policy The income Team continues to work through the Accreditation Action Plan with preparations underway for a full re-accreditation in February 2025</p>	<p>Early Intervention Emphasis continues to be placed on early intervention whilst arrears are at a low level to prevent the escalation of further arrears</p>
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Hardship Fund as at 31st March 2024

The Hardship Fund has continued to be utilised over recent years to support those customers struggling with the rising cost of living and associated expenses. The purpose of the scheme is:

- To assist tenants suffering financial hardship
- To help alleviate poverty and stress
- To reduce the temptation for tenants to use illegal money lenders
- To sustain tenancies

Total number of HF Applications as at 31.03.2024	Applications approved	Applications refused	Applications cancelled	Awaiting evidence	Approved awaiting costs
65	33	22	5	1	4
Annual Hardship Fund Budget: £20,000					
Monies spent following a review of the Hardship Fund Policy in 2020: £14,422.15					
Hardship Fund Budget available as at 31.03.2024: £5,577.85					

Problems paying rent

There are many ways that the Income Team can support tenants to begin resolving their financial difficulties:

- Agreeing an affordable repayment plan
- Help and advice on maximising and managing income at the start, and during a tenancy
- Advice on entitlement to welfare benefits including help towards housing costs and council tax
- Help with Discretionary Housing Payment Applications (This is not a benefit, but a discretionary payment and is paid to the rent account. Applicants must be in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit Housing Costs to apply)
- Referral for Food Bank Vouchers for those struggling to afford essential groceries
- Referral to independent specialist advice support services to help put a budgeting plan together that offers debt management advice and solutions
- Referral for advice on reducing fuel bills and energy saving tips

Successful Client Case Study

During 2023-2024, Client A was referred to Citizens Advice Mid Mercia for a potential discretionary housing payment application, benefit check and further financial advice and assistance. During the appointment it was quickly identified that in addition to rent arrears, Client A also had other multiple debts and was unsure how they would deal with these due to a change in personal and financial circumstances. Client A was unable to work and could not see themselves being able to return to work for the foreseeable future.

Citizens Advice Mid Mercia supported Client A with completing the discretionary housing payment application for rent arrears, carried out a benefit check to confirm correct benefit entitlement, offered additional financial and debt management advice and was entered into a breathing space whilst debt solutions were considered and appropriate measures put in place.

Client A expressed complete relief that their debt situation was being resolved which in turn improved the overall wellbeing of Client A and their family member. Client A also received hygiene parcels during their appointments, due to the rising costs of living, and other advice was provided on overall support for the family circumstance.

Neighbourhood Support during rising living costs

Staff have:

- continued to assess hardship applications for vulnerable customers suffering financial hardship
- continued to support vulnerable customers through the cost-of-living crisis with a whole range of referral and support schemes available
- supported customers with Household Support Fund referrals. The Department for Work and Pensions announced a further extension to the Household Support Fund from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 with funding limited to benefit those households most in need.
- continued to keep Tamworth Borough Councils website updated to include the Money Help link with access to a free budget planner/calculator, the Government web link 'Help for Households' and Tamworth's Paying your Rent Guide.
- Provided information within the 2022 and 2023 winter editions of Open House, tenant's quarterly newsletter, on the Warm Home Discount Scheme, winter fuel payment and cold weather payment. The Paying Your Rent Winter Leaflet was also included to provide lots of useful information on ways to pay rent, contact details for help and advice when struggling to pay rent, managing debt, universal credit information, contact details for Citizens Advice Mid Mercia and other useful information and contacts.

Early Intervention, the foundation for effective income management, begins from the first point of contact with every new tenant.

Early effective intervention methods that continue to be used

- Information about the importance of paying rent is profiled at viewings and tenancy sign ups.
- All tenants, new and existing, are informed of whom to contact about rent payments and where to get help if they fall into debt.
- Post-tenancy visits arranged for new tenants - The Tenancy Sustainment team work proactively with tenants to assist them with adhering to their tenancy terms and

conditions and signposting for support and advice to ensure rent continues to be paid

- Provides help to resolve any Housing Benefit or Universal Credit claims queries.
- Complies with the provisions of the Pre-Action Protocol for Rent Arrears
- Make realistic repayment arrangements to accommodate tenants' changes in circumstance
- Offers a wide choice of payment methods and widely advertises these
- Provides help and support customers in claiming benefits and make referrals to Citizens Advice Mid Mercia and the Job Centre
- The Tamworth Borough Council website is updated with available benefit checks and budgeting links.
- Direct referrals can be made to Citizens Advice Mid Mercia for multiple debt problems and money management.
- Information and support details are included, as standard, on all quarterly rent statements and on Tamworth Borough Councils website.
- The Rent Leaflet includes a wealth of information on debt and money management in addition to other support and assistance inclusive of home energy, counselling and the Samaritans

Average rent (excluding service charges)

Property Type	Weekly	Monthly
1 Bedroom Flat/Maisonette	£86.22	£344.88
2 Bedroom Flat/ Maisonette	£97.90	£391.60
1 Bedroom Bungalow	£95.94	£383.76
2 Bedroom Bungalow	£108.90	£435.60
2 Bedroom House	£107.53	£430.12
3 Bedroom House	£109.61	£438.44
4 bedroom House	£123.28	£493.12

Our finances - income and 'what we spent'

Housing Revenue Annual Costs	2022/23	2023/24
Landlord Services – Operational costs for running the service. This also includes staffing costs to deliver landlord services	£7.7m	£7.3m
Staffing costs to deliver landlord services – this is included in the figures above	£3.9m	£3.6m
Repairs and maintenance	£6.2m	£5.5m
Depreciation and Impairment on non-current assets	£15m	£12.9m
Increase in bad debt provisions	£0.2m	£0.2m
Interest on borrowing	£2.8m	£2.9m
Income collected from rent, service charges, interest, and gain from right to buy sales	£23.9m	£24.9m
Capital programme – this money is spent on large projects to ensure our properties are up to standard	£13.9m	£11.3m

What's in store for 2024!

- Updated Tenancy Management policy with options detailed on future tenancy types - do we return to lifetime tenancies and decisions?

- Housing Quality Network (HQN) re-accreditation in 2025 which continues to provide reassurance that good quality rent collection services continue to be delivered.
- Allocations Policy and Housing Needs Survey is currently underway with updated outcomes to be reported in 2024
- Launch of new mutual exchange service, MRI software Ltd, to commence 2 December 2024 and finish 6 December 2026.
- tenant backed support for accreditation of our rent income services to ensure tenants income is maximised and tenancy sustained
- Monitoring of the new Tunstall lifeline contract with improved services for all sheltered residents
- Impact Assessment on the HOME Hub service with continued efforts to reduce homelessness with partners

The Neighbourhood and Community Standard

Outcomes landlords must deliver about engaging with other relevant parties so that tenants can live in safe and well-maintained neighbourhoods and feel safe in their homes.

Refurbishing the play area at Rainscar

Work to replace and create a new playground at Rainscar play area, Stonydelph, started on Monday 19 February 2024.

The new playground will cover a larger area and include focus on accessible areas including a low-level hammock, double width steel slide, low level accessible podium steps and hand holds, plus a wider variety of new play equipment.

The design from Kompan has ensured that all the new products have an element of accessibility and inclusivity. Features include moulded hand holds to provide an extra layer of stability for users as they navigate the unit, several low-level items such as the springer bowl and desks on the multi units, as well as the communication panels.

Outdoor play improves health and well-being while a safe environment encourages independence and development of children's socio-emotional skills through group and imaginative play with actions such as turn taking and cooperation, whilst also building a child's physical strength, balance, coordination and agility through actions such as climbing, swinging, jumping, crawling and balancing.

Estate Inspection Programme

Estate inspections are carried out to assess the standards of service being delivered, identify areas for improvement and generally identify any action needed to be taken to address tenancy breaches. Housing Services are committed to inspecting all housing areas on a regular basis and inspections are jointly carried out with tenant inspectors.

The estate inspection team will aim to identify issues such as;

- Vandalism
- Abandoned vehicles / illegally parked vehicles
- Graffiti
- Litter and fly-tipping
- Dog fouling
- Problems with highway maintenance and street lighting
- Health and safety issues
- Neglected homes and gardens, tenancy issues
- Hot spots for anti-social behaviour
- The condition of hard landscape (e.g. fences, walls and paving)
- The condition of soft landscape (e.g. trees, grass, shrubs in communal areas)

Estate Inspections will;

- Provide a high-profile presence on our estates
- Ensure cleaner, more attractive and safer neighbourhoods
- Improve the physical condition of estates through quick responses to residents' concerns and by identifying potential improvements
- Clear communal areas of fly-tipping/graffiti and rubbish

- Identify overgrown gardens/shrubbery
- Identify defective street lighting and estate furniture
- Ensure agencies take responsibility for issues identified within their remit
- Identify potholes and surface perishing to hard surfaces and uneven and broken paving.

CCTV monitoring shared service agreement

CCTV services in Tamworth are provided in partnership with West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to help develop a safe and secure community.

The overt (open) surveillance camera systems are owned by Tamworth Borough Council and operated in accordance with the relevant General Data Protection Regulations, as well as good practice guidelines issued by the Information Commissioner’s Office, Surveillance Camera Commission. This is to ensure the need for public protection can be balanced with respect for individual privacy.

As part of the shared service agreement with the WMCA, Tamworth benefits from:

- CCTV monitored 24 hours a day from the WMCA’s state-of-the-art control centre in Birmingham
- Expertise and intelligence including ISO 27001 National Quality Assurance Accreditation
- Working across boundaries with other councils and police forces
- An upgraded fully digital HD system and the WMCA’s superior video analytics
- Shared access to police analysts and radio links to the police
- Partnership working with people who use Tamworth’s Storenet and Nightnet radio surveillance systems to proactively reduce and manage crime in the town

During the last 12 months the Council has also been involved in the New Martyn’s law event notification CCTV process, supporting events across Tamworth borough mitigating terrorist threats. And, camera upgrades have been undertaken at Ankerside, St Editha’s, the Job Centre and the Castle Gate

CCTV Shared Service Agreement with WMCA 2020-2027	
<p>West Midlands Combined Authority: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research into best practice and shared services • Economies of scale and efficiencies with maintenance contracts • Maximise staffing resource, deployed based on evidence • Cross border collaboration with train station and bus service in context of wider infrastructure network • County lines insight and intelligence 	<p>Tamworth Borough Council: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved service offer with digital police analysis • Accelerated capital upgrade • Reduced revenue costs • Cross border collaboration with neighbouring towns • Shared expertise with latest codes of practice for surveillance • Installed and modernised arrangements at the assembly rooms

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic access to wider WMCA benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Commenced 30th March 2020 during the covid pandemic lockdown ❖ Entering year 5 of the 7-year term ❖ Shared service agreement expires 30th March 2027 	

Riverside Highrise flats

<p>Completed an annual programme of High-Rise Health & Safety communal block inspections.</p> <p>Also completed monthly lift alarm testing</p>	<p>Attended Tenant Consultative Group meetings for tenants to review and update existing and new high-rise literature</p>	<p>Weekly health and safety inspections at the High-Rise Social Club, including fire alarm testing</p>
<p>Tailored support offered to high rise residents with the heating upgrade to include communication, consultation and 1-2-1 support to residents struggling to programme their heating controls. A new user-friendly guide is currently being developed with step-by-step instruction.</p>	<p>Working preparations for the introduction of a High-Rise working panel to review areas of health & safety, communications, tenancy issues and breaches and any high-rise refurbishment projects</p>	<p>Sprinkler activation New sign-up tick sheet developed to ensure sprinklers are pointed out to all new high-rise residents, the Health and Safety guide updated to include further detail on the operation of sprinklers, Fire service completed visits to high rise properties to discuss fire safety and a tailored sprinkler activation letter was hand delivered to all high-rise residents</p>

Anti-Social Behaviour

The Neighbourhood Impact Team was formed in 2023 to deal with corporate anti-social behaviour within the borough of Tamworth. The newly formed team receives reports of anti-social behaviour irrespective of tenure (council tenant, private tenant, owner). Reports received into the team are assessed by the team and accepted where there is anti-social behaviour.

Anti-Social Behaviour	2023-2024
Number of complaints received	388 (tenant complaints only)
Number of hate crimes reported	6
Top complaints by type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noise • Pets/Animal nuisance • Verbal abuse/harassment/threats
Top complaints by location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stonydelph • Glascote • Tamworth Centre • Amington

Percentage of reports acknowledged within 24 hours	76% (categories have now been re-aligned within teams)
Early Interventions taken to resolve cases (this includes warnings, visits, etc.)	365
Enforcement actions taken to resolve cases	7 x Notice of Seeking Possession 2 x Injunctions
Referrals made (for example victim support, mediation, hate crime, domestic abuse)	56 referrals made for support
Percentage of customers satisfied with the outcome of their ASB complaint	75%
Successfully closed ASB cases (resolved)	Out of the 378 cases closed, 94% of cases was closed (resolved)
Average number of days taken to resolve cases	87 days

Anti-Social Behaviour Awareness Week



The Community safety partnership team joined forces with external partners, including the police, to share best practice and get out and about with a visible presence across the borough.

There was lots of activities on offer, including a coffee morning at Marks & Spencer where PCSO Amber Allsop, Alec Jewkes from Harmony and Claire Turner Neighbourhood Impact Officer, talked to people about any ASB issues. Nice 'good neighbour agreements' were issued throughout the week and with the support of the local police, teams carried out extra visits to engage with residents and offer support and advice on ASB issues.

Anti-Social Behaviour awareness week concluded extremely successful with engaging with the local community, meeting new residents and educating people around ASB and different ways to resolve it.

Community Matters!

Community Easter Event 2023



The Tamworth Wates site team, along with their local supply chain, collected and donated 308 Easter Eggs to Wilnecote Junior Academy. Additional support was also provided by sub-contractors: Kingsley Roofing, V-Electric, Blyth, Jeavons Roofing, MIC, Legionella

Community Christmas event 2023

Christmas bingo at Oakendale was a huge success and welcomed by many residents. Wates rolled up their sleeves to get stuck in and host the event as well as supplying pie & peas, a small glass of something fizzy, mince pies, and bingo prizes.



Along with the bingo, Wates kindly donated a pool table to Oakendale residents which has proved a big hit with residents providing a new activity, a good sense of competitiveness and a new social gathering occasion for all.

What's in store for 2024

- Trial and review of the Neighbourhood impact surgeries pilot, in community-based locations for tackling ASB and maximising the councils CCTV service
- Review policies, procedures and the website to ensure information remains up to date, all in consultation with the ASB Scrutiny Group
- Review the impact of the new triage service, over the last 12 months, including best practice with a view to attaining national accreditation through HouseMark
- Prepare to move to a new ASB case management system to allow officers to manage cases in real time while out and about on estates
- Neighbourhood Impact Officers will undertake nationally recognised training in Anti-Social Behaviour Case Management
- A comprehensive training plan is in place to include training on injunctions, safeguarding and other tools and powers used in tackling anti-social behaviour
- Neighbourhood Investment programme with tenant consultation on local priorities to improve outcomes
- Review of the annual estate inspection programme with published 'You said, We did' outcomes
- New environmental service standards to be introduced for the Council's HMOs/Caretakers
- Engage in County Lines week with the Police and substance misuse service
- The ASB Scrutiny Group will scrutinise revised, and new processes and report on its findings with improvements for 2024
- Attendance at store watch and pub watch meetings

**The Pub Watch and Store Watch scheme is independently run by Partnership Against Business Crime in Staffordshire (PABCIS) to link members (licensed premises within Tamworth/stores within Tamworth), council departments and the partner agencies to review intelligence and share best practices*

Value For Money

Tamworth Borough Council recognises the importance of demonstrating value for money, which doesn't only mean keeping costs to a minimum. Value for money is also achieved through the following:

- Comparing costs and performance with other similar housing providers. We assess value for money by using an independent organisation called HouseMark. This organisation compares our services to other councils and registered social landlords. HouseMark also produces an annual report which identifies areas for improvement.
- Monitoring 'tenant satisfaction that rent is providing value for money. This is checked by carrying out regular tenant satisfaction surveys and 2024 saw the introduction of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey which will benchmark performance across all registered housing providers.
- Continue to remove old inefficient gas appliances and install new 'A' rated appliances, reducing heating and hot water energy costs for tenants across the borough.
- Regularly review budgets and the highest areas of spending.
- Regularly review processes to provide more streamlined cost-effective services for customers.
- Provide hands on support to residents at high risk of homelessness to support with transition into secure tenancies – this has improved success in sustaining tenancies and reduced void costs.
- A comprehensive management performance framework exists to identify the performance levels services aim to achieve.
- Investing in council properties to maintain them at a high standard for both current and future tenants.

Did you know?

The following indicators have been agreed with tenants but are being reviewed again in 2024

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Estimated top quartile*
Overall satisfaction with Landlord services	78%	78%	TSMs 2024*	86.5%
Average time between lettings	38 days	52 days	73 days	25.92 days
Estate Inspections	10	10	7**	-

Tenant satisfaction with communal cleaning	76%	76%	68%	-
Number of tenants on the database of involvement	417	407	392	-
% of repairs appointments made and kept	97%	95.1%	96.2%	-
Gas servicing CP12	98%	99.93%	100%	100%
% of repairs completed at first visit	95%	87%	89.6%	91.12%***
Customer satisfaction with responsive repairs	97%	85.6%	89.6%	93%
Arrears as a % of rent due	2.77%	2.60%	2.22%	2.04%
Number of Evictions	2	9	8	-

**See performance information on the Tenant Satisfaction Measures TSM's. The Regulator of Social Housing introduced a set of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) to assess how well social housing landlords in England are doing at providing good quality homes and services to their tenants*

*** An estate inspection is an inspection of the facilities and grounds, and the exterior and communal parts of an estate comprising a mixture of flats and houses, or a block of flats built on land managed by Tamworth Borough Council, Housing Services. The inspections are carried by way of an annual programme across 10 wards*

**** Responsive repairs completed within target timescale (%) as per HouseMark benchmarking performance report March 2024*

‘YOU SAID’	‘WE DID’
Below, is a selection of some of the main ‘You said, We did’, headlines that the Tenant Consultative Group have identified from a range of sources	
“High Rise residents are never invited to anything and are certainly never listened to; we are always forgotten”	The High-Rise Co-ordinator has successfully set up a High-Rise Tenant Consultative Group with their own terms of reference. This group meets at least 3 times a year with 2 meetings already attended during 2024. The agenda for all meetings covers areas of health & safety, communication and newsletters, communal areas and immediate environmental issues, any tenancy breaches and guest speakers are invited as per the group’s request
“Is there anything the Council can do about accidental sprinkler activations”	<p>A new sign-up tick sheet has been developed to ensure sprinklers are pointed out to all new high-rise residents. In addition, the High Rise Health and Safety guide has been updated to include further detail on the operation of sprinklers and distributed to all residents, the Fire service have completed visits to high rise properties to discuss fire safety and a tailored sprinkler activation letter was hand delivered to all residents.</p> <p>In the case of an accidental activation a tenant would need to claim on their own content’s insurance for loss or damage to any personal belongings. To help with the cost, the Council has negotiated a scheme with the Royal and Sun Alliance for tenants to consider, with no excess for any claim, making the scheme extremely cost effective for customers</p>
“Can we encourage more tenants to get involved and join one of our involved working groups”	An ‘All Call for Tenants’ leaflet was produced with Tenants Voice (The Tenant Editorial Panel) and posted out with the quarterly rent statement to all tenants. Getting involved is a standard item now included within Open House, the tenant’s quarterly, newsletter, an introductory letter is sent to all tenants and annual recruitment campaign is undertaken and the successes of all tenant involvement activity is more widely advertised
“I am really struggling with my heating controls since the heating at the high rise was improved”	Tailored support has been offered to high rise residents with the heating upgrade to include additional communication, 1-2-1 support for those residents struggling to programme their heating controls and a new friendly user guide is currently being developed, with tenants, with clear step-by-step instruction