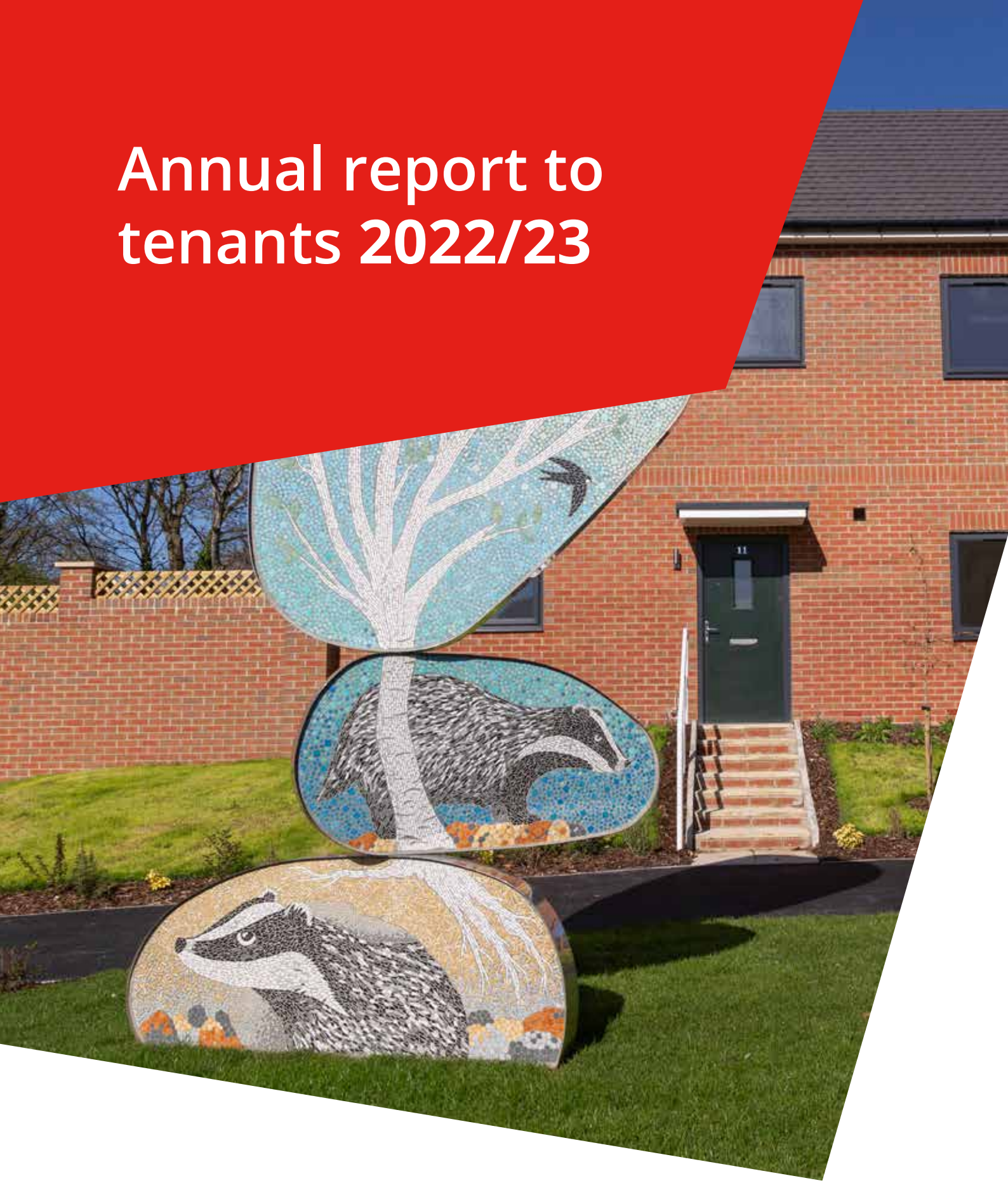
Annual report to tenants 2022/23



CHESTERFIELD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Introduction from Councillor Jean Innes, cabinet member for housing

I am delighted to have been appointed as the council's new cabinet member for housing, and I am fully committed to delivering these essential services to the residents of Chesterfield.

Looking back at some of our key achievements during 2022/2023 there is much to celebrate. We:

- delivered 33 new council homes for people on the housing register
- delivered over £24.8 million of investment into properties and estates
- implemented a reshape of our housing management teams to increase investment in frontline staff resources
- launched a programme of home tenancy visits that are beginning to deliver positive outcomes for tenants

> **"We understand that a house is much more than just bricks and mortar. That's why we are focused on providing good quality and well managed homes that meet the needs of our residents and help improve quality of life."**

Councillor Jean Innes, cabinet member for housing.

We understand that a house is much more than just bricks and mortar. That's why we are focused on providing good quality and well managed homes that meet the needs of our residents and help improve quality of life.

Throughout 2022/23 we made great strides in reshaping the housing management service - increasing tenancy sustainment, creating an approach to tenancy management that meets individual needs, tackling anti-social behaviour with partnership working and taking steps to improve our tenant and community engagement. We always put tenants at the heart of everything we do and I'm looking forward to working with you and listening to your thoughts to make sure we can provide you with excellent services.

We are also committed to helping achieve our goal of becoming a carbon neutral borough by 2050 and are already making progress. This includes working hard to make sure that our homes are as energy efficient as possible, and we are delivering a number of improvement programmes to help achieve this.

The report also looks ahead, detailing our ambitions for changes to the services in 2023/24. I hope you enjoy reading the report and are excited about how our service is going to develop over the coming years.

The housing service annual report to tenants 2022/23

The annual report shows how the services we provide to our tenants performed in 2022/23, and highlights some of our main priorities for the year ahead. It is organised into five sections which reflect the standards set by the Social Housing Regulator:

Tenant involvement and empowerment standard

Tenancy standard

Home standard

Neighbourhood and community standard

Value for money standard

1 Tenant involvement and empowerment standard

This standard looks at how we communicate, engage and work with tenants, and ensure you have the opportunity to shape what we do. It also covers how we deal with complaints.

Tenant engagement

During 2022/23 we recruited new staff to focus on tenant engagement, and the team has worked hard to develop a new engagement framework and increase their presence around our estates - making links with community and voluntary groups.

The Tenant Scrutiny Group continued to work hard throughout 2022/23, with achievements including a review of environmental improvements, and the launch of a new piece of scrutiny work focused on fire safety.

The tenant engagement team organised a series of housing service relaunch events in January 2023 at the Winding Wheel Theatre and The Healthy Living Centre to promote the new look service, and give tenants the chance to meet the staff working in their local area teams, as well as representatives from other housing services such as rents, repairs, Careline, allocations, and housing and health teams.

The tenant engagement team were also able to support two community groups to renew leases on buildings in Holme Hall and Grangewood so they could continue to provide a variety of services to their local communities.

If you want to know more about the different tenant engagement groups and opportunities available please get in touch by calling **01246 345147**, emailing **tenantengagement@chesterfield.gov.uk** or visiting our website: **www.chesterfield.gov.uk/Chat**

Tenant engagement - looking ahead to 2023/24

The tenant engagement menu will be relaunched during 2023/24, which will include:

- **a new performance group to challenge the housing service on how well we are delivering services**
- **setting up a programme of estate management inspections and offering training to tenants who wish to work with our housing officers to check the condition of our estates and make sure standards are met**
- **working groups to review our allocations processes and work with us on improving the housing services section of the council's website**

In 2023/24 we will carry out tenant satisfaction surveys that capture the new standard Tenant Satisfaction Measures, as required by the Social Housing Regulator. The surveys will be sent throughout the year to a random sample of tenants.

Complaints

Scrutiny over how social landlords manage complaints has increased since the publication of the Social Housing White Paper in November 2020. The Housing Ombudsman's complaint handling code sets out the expectation placed on social landlords for how they deal with complaints.

During 2022/23 the council launched a new complaints policy and complaints system, which ensures the housing service is compliant with these standards. More detail can be found on our website: www.chesterfield.gov.uk/housing/about-our-housing-service/housing-ombudsman-and-complaints

The main changes are speeding up response times for complaints from 15 to 10 days, and reducing the number of complaint stages before complainants can be sent on to the Housing Ombudsman. The new system also makes it easier for tenants and residents to make complaints, and for us to record and manage performance.

The housing service is committed to providing a high-quality service to everyone and where customers have cause to complain, we make efforts to resolve issues raised and to learn from the feedback. The table below shows a summary of complaints performance for 2022/23. Due to the council's complaints policy changing during the year, performance is split into complaints received under the old and the new complaints policy.

The reduced timescale for responding to complaints along with increased numbers of complaints have led to a fall in overall performance in responding to complaints within timescales and we are working hard to improve on this.

Indicator	1 April to 7 Nov 2022	8 Nov 2022 to 31 March 2023
Complaints received (stage 1 and 2)	**248**	**247**
Complaints received per month	**36**	**50**
Complaints responded to within timescale	**89%**	**66.4%**
Percentage of complaints relating to repairs	**85%**	**83%**
Percentage of complaints relating to housing management	**15%**	**17%**
Average number of days it took us to respond	**8.5 days**	**9.8 days**

During 2022/23 the top five areas for complaint for **housing management** were:

- **council employee or contractor**
- **time on the waiting list**
- **anti-social behaviour**
- **hedges and trees**
- **cleaning of communal areas**

During 2022/23 the top five areas for complaint for **repairs and maintenance** were:

- **chasing up a repair**
- **waiting for an inspector**
- **timescales**
- **missed repair appointments**
- **poor communication**

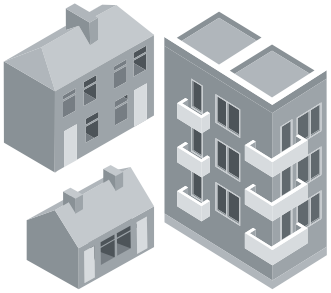
Complaints - looking ahead to 2023/24

During 2023/24 we will implement regular performance reporting on complaints, increase the number of staff dealing with repairs complaints in order to improve response timescales, and take a more robust approach to learning from complaints and using customer feedback to drive service improvements.

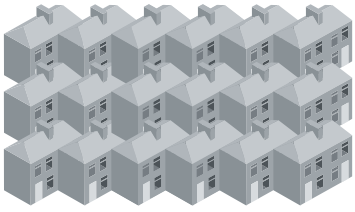
2 Tenancy standard

This standard covers how properties are allocated and how we manage and provide support to tenants in their homes.

Key information for 2022/23



8,797
Total number of properties we own and manage (at the end of March 2023)

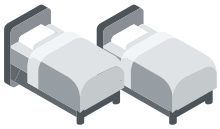


2,926
Number of households on the housing register

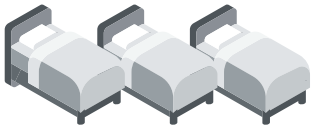
33
New homes added to the council's stock

90
Properties sold under the right to buy scheme

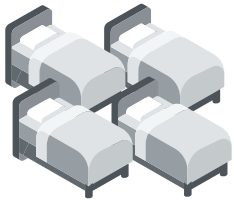
3,189
Properties with one bedroom (including bedsits)



2,759
Properties with two bedrooms



2,604
Properties with three bedrooms



245
Properties with four bedrooms

605
Number of new lettings

33
Mutual exchanges

364
Households receiving tenancy support

336
Empty properties (at end of march 2023)

45
Successful nominations to housing associations

129

Time taken to re-let a property - 129 days

84,069

Careline calls received

3,947

Careline call outs

324

Number of older people who have received support

Lettings and the housing register

The number of households on our housing register increased by 14.3 per cent in 2022/2023 to 2,926 (from 2,558 in 2021/2022). Cost of living pressures and rising homelessness applications are two of the reasons why we have seen increased numbers of people on the housing register.

The total number of lettings within 2022/23 was 605. A further 45 households from the housing register secured a new home through a nomination to a housing association property. This equates to around 22 per cent of households on the register being successful in applying for a home.

The high level of empty properties has proven to be a significant challenge – but we are committed to improvements in this area over the coming year.

The number of empty properties was 336 (at the end of March 2023), up from 285 a year earlier. Of the 336 properties, 44 were empty due to long-term refurbishment work, or properties which needed major structural repairs, leaving 292 as 'standard re-lets'. Due to the issues with high levels of empty properties the average number of days to re-let a property was also high at 129 days - an increase from 94.7 days in 2021/2022.

Looking ahead to 2023/24

Tackling the backlog and high number of empty properties will be the main priority for 2023/24. One reason for the high levels of unoccupied homes has been the large amount of work required in many of the properties. The service will look to bring in additional resources through appointing external contractors to carry out the necessary work on empty homes to make them available for letting. The recent introduction of home tenancy visits by housing officers will make an impact in the longer term, making sure that tenants are looking after their properties and reporting any repairs in a timely manner.

As more properties become available for letting this will help ensure that as many households on our housing register as possible are able to make successful bids and be offered a new home.

Support for new tenants

In 2022/23 we introduced Personal Housing Plans (PHPs) for new applicants on the housing register. The PHPs aim to explore more about the households' circumstances to help enable us to better understand their needs. It can also be an opportunity for us to signpost applicants to support services and alternative accommodation options and choices if appropriate. The introduction of the plans is already making an impact. Here are some examples from our tenants:

Case study 1:

The team were able to help a vulnerable tenant who was living in a privately rented property which was unsuitable as they could not get upstairs and were effectively living in one room on the ground floor. Our officer carried out a PHP which allowed the resident to successfully bid on a one bedroom council bungalow. The move into the bungalow has improved the resident's quality of life and wellbeing.

Case study 2:

After our officers helped a single parent to complete a PHP they were able to make a successful bid on a home that better meets their needs and has had a positive impact on their family life. Our officers are continuing to provide assistance and support to this family in their new home.

We also introduced new tenancy visits so we can identify any support needs early on in a tenancy. This helps to prevent tenants from struggling in the early days as utilities are set up and we can make sure that benefits to cover rent are put in place. Of the tenants we have worked with, 89 per cent remained in their tenancies a year after support started, showing the success and importance of this service.

Ongoing support for tenants

Our tenancy support officers work with our most vulnerable tenants such as:

- people with physical and mental health needs
- people with learning difficulties and disabilities
- people at risk of violence

The tenancy support officers provide help to:

- apply for funding to prevent homelessness
- ensure tenants are claiming the correct benefits
- pay priority bills, budget, and deal with debts
- access the correct support services for their needs
- ensure their accommodation is suitable for their needs, and they have any aids and adaptations they require
- access grants for things like furniture and carpets

We will provide support throughout the duration of the tenancy and change as the needs change, and officers work in partnership with other support agencies, health and social care, community safety and the police to address a range of issues as appropriate to the individual tenant or household.

A programme of home tenancy visits began in January 2023. The visits are an opportunity for a member of our team to come and have an informal chat with tenants at their home. The main aim of the visit is to give people the opportunity to have an open and honest conversation, share their views on our services and let us know of any concerns that they may have. This will give us the chance to work to make things right as soon as we can, as well as making sure tenants have all the additional support they need. The visits are already delivering positive outcomes and some examples are shown in the case studies below.

Case study 1:

On a visit to one tenant who had just left hospital and had no family, it was identified that he was frail and unwell, and needed extra support. To help the tenant continue living independently, our team arranged for him to have a Careline alarm installed so that help was always available at the touch of a button. The officers also arranged for a cleaner to visit once a month and hot meals to be delivered to his home.

Our officers also managed to trace a closed Post Office account on behalf of the tenant. The account still had money in it, so our officer arranged for this to be transferred into the tenant's current account, so it was not lost.

Case study 2:

During another home tenancy visit, our officer came across an elderly tenant with health issues. Access issues meant he struggled to leave his flat, as he was on the second floor of a property that he had lived in for over thirty years. Our officer was able to help the tenant complete a housing application form and, working with colleagues in our housing service, we were able to identify a bungalow which better suited the tenant's needs. He has moved in and absolutely loves his new property and his ability to get out and about as often as he wants.

We also support people to make sure they are claiming the benefits that they are entitled to. Referrals made to our benefits team resulted in nearly £76,000 of additional benefits for customers between April 2022 and February 2023.

Careline and independent living services

The first phase of the reshape of the housing service included the Careline and independent living service and has brought these services into the overall housing management service, to deliver a sustainable and integrated approach. This supports tenants to maintain their independence for as long as possible, and to keep tenancies for longer.

Careline has continued to provide an essential falls service and support to our customers. This provides much needed assistance to the emergency services, enabling them to concentrate their services on the most critically ill.

During the past year, 646 referral and positive outcomes have been achieved by the independent living team in relation to improving independence, health, quality of life, home safety and preventing falls and social isolation.

Support - looking ahead to 2023/24

We will build on and use information gathered in personal housing plans and home tenancy visits to better understand tenants' needs and proactively signpost for appropriate support.

We will recruit two housing officers to work with tenants in our six independent living schemes. The officers will provide dedicated housing management and support services, making a positive contribution to the safety, social and physical environment of the area.

We will continue to review our allocations procedures and processes jointly with tenants to make sure that the information given at the start of a new tenancy is targeted, simplified and appropriate to their needs. The work will also look to develop easy read formats to improve communication and make the process of starting a new tenancy easier for people.

3 Home standard

This standard looks at how we repair and make improvements to your homes.

Key performance information - repairs and maintenance

37,393
Responsive repairs carried out

12.3
Average number of days for a repair to be carried out

91%
Repairs satisfaction (repairs with appointments)

After several years of being affected by restrictions in place during the pandemic, the number of repairs carried out increased by 4,000 to 37,393 during 2022/23 - an average of 4.2 repairs per property. The average length of time to complete all types of repairs was 12.3 days. We undertake satisfaction surveys on standard repairs we carry out (ones where appointments are booked in)). The overall satisfaction with the works done was 91.9 per cent. However, we know we need to reduce the time taken for people to be given repairs appointments and improve our processes for responding to queries and complaints.

Key performance information - safety compliance (year-end)

100%
Gas servicing completed

98%
Electrical safety checks (EICR) completed*

100%
Fire safety checks (blocks of flats) completed

100%
Asbestos checks completed

100%
Lifts checks at sheltered schemes completed

100%
Legionella checks at sheltered schemes completed

*We are taking proactive steps to gain access to the remaining 2 per cent of properties to carry out electrical safety checks

Key performance information – investment

99.7%
Decent Homes Standard

C
The average energy performance rating for council properties in the range from A to G.

Decent Homes spend

£18.9m
Maintenance and improvements

£2.7m
Older person scheme refurbishments

£3.2m
New build and acquisitions

£24.8m
Total

Number of replacements:

103
Roofs

162
Heating

162
Bathrooms

163
Kitchens

During 2022/23 we invested over £21.5 million in homes and estates across the borough and a further £3.2 million on new homes. This investment included upgrading independent living schemes as well as delivering programmes of kitchens, bathrooms, adaptations and roofs across the borough.

To ensure that we spend our investment resources appropriately, during 2022 we undertook a stock condition survey. The results of this help us plan future investment into homes and accurately prepare our investment programmes for new kitchens, bathrooms and other capital investment projects for 2023 onwards.

Climate change

In line with our climate change strategy, we are already making steps to help increase the energy efficiency of our existing properties by improving insulation and replacing windows. The flats at Aston Court in Lowgates are some of the latest properties to benefit from energy efficiency improvements, as part of a wider project to help modernise homes in the area.

We have removed all gas supplies from the properties, replacing them with fully electric heating and hot water units. We have used insulated plasterboard and increased loft insulation to help reduce the amount of energy that is needed to heat the homes. The properties will have solar panels installed to provide renewable energy to each property, which will reduce the energy bills for our residents. Other improvements include the installation of low wattage LED lighting in corridors that work with motion detection, meaning they are only used when needed.

Adaptations to homes

Our capital programme also includes investment in adapting properties to make sure they are suitable for tenants' needs. During 2022/23 the housing property services team worked hard to deliver 151 major adaptions, including level-access showers and ramps and a further 245 minor adaptations, including stair rails and grabrails.

Also, work to modernise the 41 independent living flats at Mallard Court and Leander Court in Staveley was finished during 2022/23. Each flat has a new kitchen, level-access shower room and integrated Careline equipment.

Building new council homes

We completed our £4.1 million scheme to build 21 new homes at Badger Croft in Loundsley Green. The 21 properties comprised of ten two-bedroom houses, six three-bedroom houses, four four-bedroom houses and a three-bedroom adapted bungalow. We have also acquired 12 new two-bedroom homes at Harehill Mews in Grangewood.

Home Standard - looking ahead to 2023/24:

We will deliver improvements to IT systems and processes, and increase staff resources, to reduce the waiting time for repairs.

We will invest up to £22.4 million in our council homes, including new heating systems, windows and doors.

We will buy seven new-build properties in Brampton to add to the number of homes we have available for local people, and help meet housing demand.

We will start to build 36 new council homes in Middlecroft and Mastin Moor.

We will continue to deliver against the council's climate change strategy:

- All our new housing projects from 2023/24 onwards are being designed and built to achieve an EPC A rating, with a range of sustainability measures including energy efficient boilers, increased levels of insulation in the floors, walls and ceilings, cycle stores, electric car charging points and rainwater recycling through collection points in the garden.
- A feasibility study is planned for 2023 to identify the options available to decarbonise all council homes by 2050.
- We will also be updating our fleet of electric vehicles from five to 34, as we work towards decarbonising our transport by 2030.

4 Neighbourhood and community standard

This standard sets out how we manage communal areas and estates, and work with other partners and agencies to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB).

Anti-social behaviour - key performance information

418 Anti-social behaviour cases

6 Number of evictions of people causing ASB

In February 2022, consultation began on a draft anti-social behaviour strategy. The consultation ran until August 2022 and included surveys for tenants and members of the public to give their views on ASB issues and how they are approached. The consultation also included presentations and discussions with the Chesterfield Community Safety Partnership, and workshops with external partners including Derbyshire Constabulary, Derbyshire Fire Service and Chesterfield Spire Trust.

We now have a new single ASB strategy for the whole authority, adopted during 2022/23, which provides a clear approach from the strategic to operational levels. The strategy outlines how we will work with other key stakeholders to manage and reduce ASB whilst aligning with key legal requirements of engagement with local communities, taking a preventative early intervention approach, being victim-focused, and using proportionate enforcement.

Creating attractive estates and environments for people to live

The housing service is committed to enhancing the borough's housing offer to ensure we meet the needs of our residents now, and in the future. We are continuing to deliver a number of modernisation and improvement projects which will help create attractive places for people to live. Our residential block refurbishment programme upgraded Leander Court and Mallard Court in Staveley, and Brearley Court and Dixon Court in Old Whittington.

Improvement work at Willow Garth Road in Dunston has also been completed. This included re-roofing, drainage works and new doors and windows.

We have continued to invest in our estates and started environmental works at Newland Dale. The £6 million estate and property improvement project has seen the installation of new roofing, balconies, windows and doors. In addition, communal areas in flats have been painted and new flooring has been fitted. The improvements also include new rendering, new lighting and work for improved parking, paths and green spaces which are expected to be completed in 2023/24.

The increase in housing officers has also allowed us to deal with tenancy management issues more effectively such as hoarding, abandoned homes, and homes where rubbish is not disposed of properly and gardens are not being maintained. This will allow us to make progress in keeping our homes and gardens to higher standards.

Looking ahead to 2023/24

We will carry out a review of the cleaning of the communal areas in blocks of flats to ensure they are maintained to a good standard of cleanliness and the service is delivering value for money for our tenants and leaseholders.

Our environment officers are jointly working with environmental protection officers to tackle fly tipping issues around our blocks of flats and on other housing land. This will help reduce costs to us and improve the appearance of estates.

6 Value for money standard

This standard looks at how we spend the money we receive as rent.

Average rents

The social rents we charge are set through a national formula based on incomes and house prices. The average rents by property size are set out below for 2022/23.

The national social rent policy increase of 4.1 per cent was applied to all properties in April 2022 and applied until March 31 2023. The increase was based on the inflation figure from September 2021.

Average social rent (general needs)	Per week 2022/23	Per month 2022/23
All properties	**£79.52**	**£344.59**
Bedsit	**£62.70**	**£271.70**
1 bedroom	**£74.01**	**£320.71**
2 bedrooms	**£80.10**	**£347.10**
3 bedrooms	**£89.36**	**£387.23**
4 bedrooms+	**£98.12**	**£425.19**

Average social rent (older persons schemes)	Per week 2022/23	Per month 2021/23
All properties	**£78.91**	**£341.94**
1 bedroom	**£73.69**	**£319.32**
2 bedrooms	**£90.48**	**£392.08**

The income into the housing service comes from several sources. The main source of income is the collection of rent from the properties we manage (94.06 per cent), followed by garage rents. Other income comes from service charges and recharges.

Income	Per week 2022/23 (£ million)
Rents	**36.777**
Non dwelling rents (garages)	**0.924**
Service charges	**1.398**
Total	**39.099**

Our expenditure is illustrated below showing how we spend every £1 we receive in income. Over three quarters of our expenditure is spent on repairs and maintenance with 6.5p of each £1 received covering housing management costs.

Expenditure	Per £1.00
Repairs and maintenance (total)	**79.2**
Of which:	
Capital inc. new build	**56.1**
Cyclical maintenance	**5.3**
Repairs	**12.5**
Void works	**5.4**
Housing management (total)	**6.5**
Of which:	
Rent collection	**2.1**
Tackling ASB	**1.2**
Tenancy management	**2.1**
Tenant participation	**0.3**
Support housing services	**1.9**
Estate management	**2.3**
Other costs (HR, Offices, ICT)	**10.1**
Total cost	**£1.00**

Useful contacts for tenants

Chesterfield Borough Council

Visit the council's website for useful information about services in Chesterfield. You can also report issues and contact the council online via the website.

www.chesterfield.gov.uk/contact-us

www.chesterfield.gov.uk/housing

My Chesterfield

From telling us about something that needs cleaning up in your neighbourhood, to managing your Council Tax bills and payments, you can manage and track a range of services by signing up to My Chesterfield:

www.chesterfield.gov.uk/my-chesterfield

Report a repair

You can report a repair online via the council's website:

www.chesterfield.gov.uk/repairs

01246 345345/0800 5875659

Out of hours repairs

If you are a council tenant and need an emergency repair, where there is a risk to health and wellbeing or major damage to the property or personal belongings call:

01246 345041

Housing management team

housingmanagement@chesterfield.gov.uk

Environment officers: 01246 345142

Housing officers: 01246 345071

Enforcement officers: 01246 345071

Tenancy support officers

tenancy.support.referrals@chesterfield.gov.uk

01246 345354

Tenant engagement

tenantengagement@chesterfield.gov.uk

01246 345147

07815 092939 (text)

Home Options

To complete a housing application and bid for properties, visit:

www.home-options.org

Allocations team

contact.allocations@chesterfield.gov.uk

01246 345436

Housing and health team

home.options@chesterfield.gov.uk

01246 345700

Rents team

revenues.rents@chesterfield.gov.uk

01246 345501

Benefits team

benefits@chesterfield.gov.uk

01246 345484 / 01246 345507

Careline

queries.careline@chesterfield.gov.uk

0300 303 3378

Homelessness support

homelessness.prevention@chesterfield.gov.uk

01246 345825

Out of hours support: 0808 169 2333

Comments, compliments and complaints

We want you to tell us what we are doing right, what we could do better and what we are doing wrong. If you have a comment, compliment or complaint, the best way to let us know is online through My Chesterfield.

You can also contact us by phone on **01246 345345** or in writing to **Customer Feedback, Town Hall, Rose Hill, Chesterfield, S40 1LP.**

CHESTERFIELD
BOROUGH COUNCIL