

July 2025

TENANT NEWS

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report**

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**Folkestone
& Hythe**



District Council

Welcome to the July edition of Tenant News

I hope you are all having a lovely summer and enjoying everything our district has to offer.

Tenants are at the heart of what we do so it's vital that we get your input regarding the way the housing management service is run. It is also important to us that you are aware of the work we do, so you can find our annual report in this edition of the newsletter. This gives an insight into our performance this year and details our plans for the future.

I'd like to thank everyone who has taken the time to complete our tenant and leaseholder satisfaction survey. It is incredibly important to us to find out what you think about the housing management service, so we can ensure your voices are heard and that our action plan is shaped by your suggestions.

I would also encourage you to attend your neighbourhood inspection if you haven't already. These inspections offer an opportunity to make your voice heard and to help bring about changes. Last year 181 of the 182 issues raised in the inspections were actioned or referred to other teams and agencies to deal with.



You can also read about the £1 million heat metering project at Win Pine House which is just one of the examples of the work we're doing to future proof tenants homes and make them more comfortable to live in.

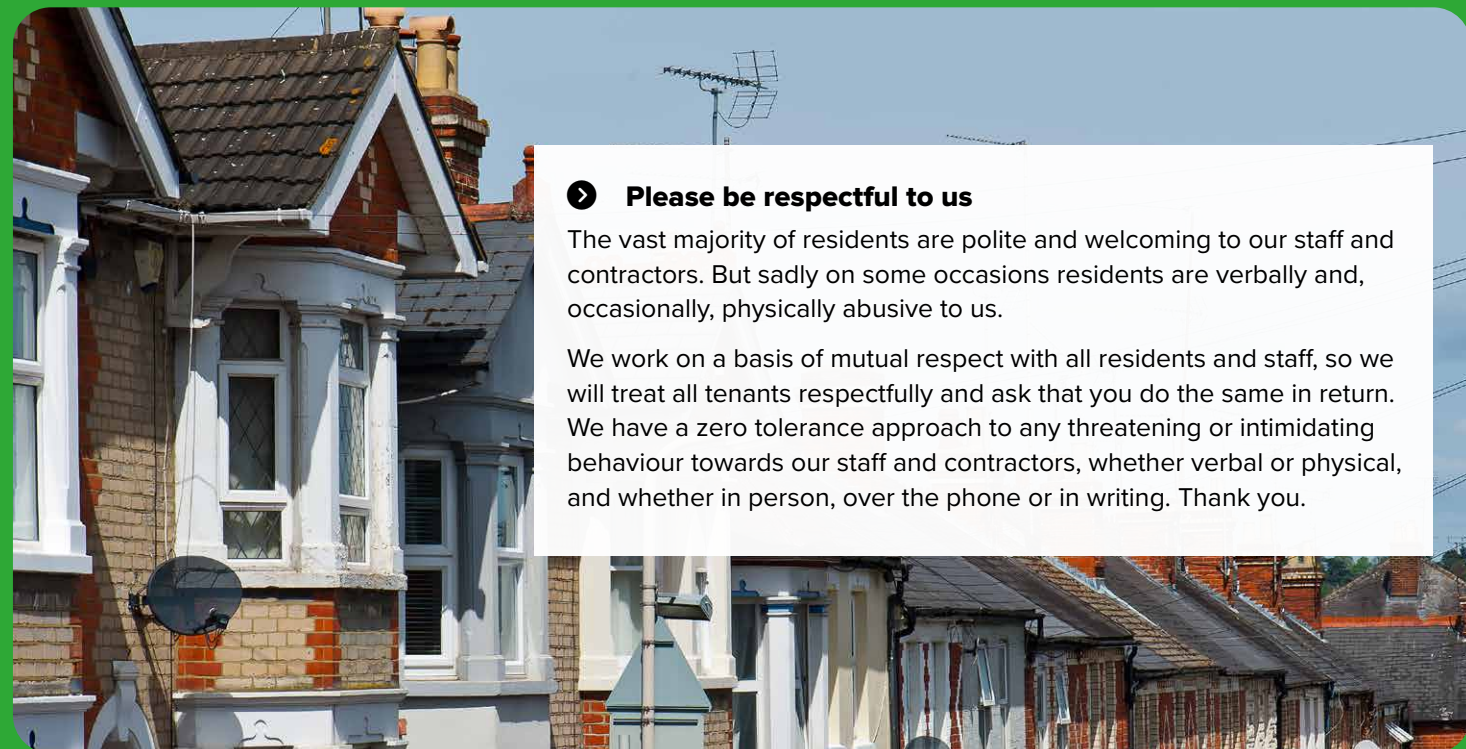
Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter, I hope you enjoy it.

Councillor Rebecca Shoob
Cabinet Member for Housing
and Homelessness

➤ Please be respectful to us

The vast majority of residents are polite and welcoming to our staff and contractors. But sadly on some occasions residents are verbally and, occasionally, physically abusive to us.

We work on a basis of mutual respect with all residents and staff, so we will treat all tenants respectfully and ask that you do the same in return. We have a zero tolerance approach to any threatening or intimidating behaviour towards our staff and contractors, whether verbal or physical, and whether in person, over the phone or in writing. Thank you.

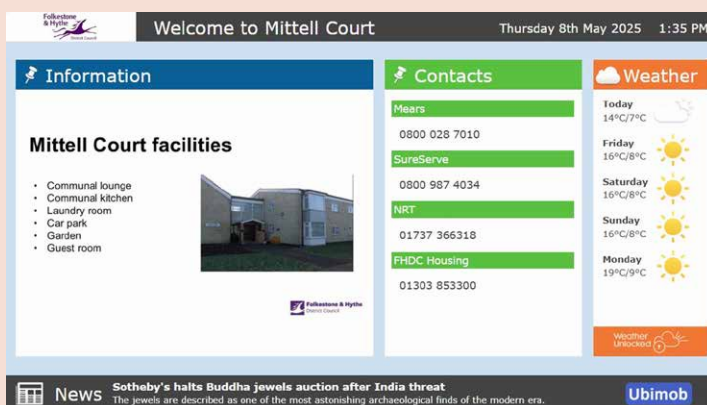


New digital notice boards launched in Independent Living schemes

We have recently installed digital notice boards in most of our Independent Living schemes across the district. These give us the ability to provide faster and more targeted news to tenants based on the scheme they live in, and will help us reduce our carbon footprint by producing fewer printed materials to display on the old paper notice boards.

What's even better is that tenants don't need to be in front of the notice board to keep in touch of what's happening at their scheme! Tenants can scan a QR code to view the notice board content on their own smartphone or tablet, 24/7, from anywhere.

If you live in an Independent Living scheme and would like to find out more about accessing the notice board content on your smartphone or tablet, please speak to your Independent Living Officer (ILO).



The Haven Café

The Haven Café is a safe space for female survivors of Domestic Abuse to meet over coffee and cake. The café aims to provide support for women who are experiencing or have experienced Domestic Abuse.



This is a drop-in session and no need to book. The venue is not open to the public whilst the session is running.

If you are thinking of coming along to Haven Café and would like some more information, please contact:

Call Mel: **07773179082**

Email: Supported.Housing@clarionhg.com

VE Day celebrations

A big thank you to the Independent Living schemes who submitted pictures of their VE Day celebrations.

We think you'll agree it looks like a fantastic time was had by all.



Smiling through song

The Smiling Sessions are free singalong sessions that aim to bring people aged 55 and over together through song.

They will be delivering their next singalong sessions at Sunflower House in Foord Road in Folkestone from 2.15pm to 3.45pm on Thursday 17 July.

The sessions are free to attend, and the musicians accept song requests. Why not go along to sing your favourite songs and enjoy a cuppa?

Our Annual Report 2024/25

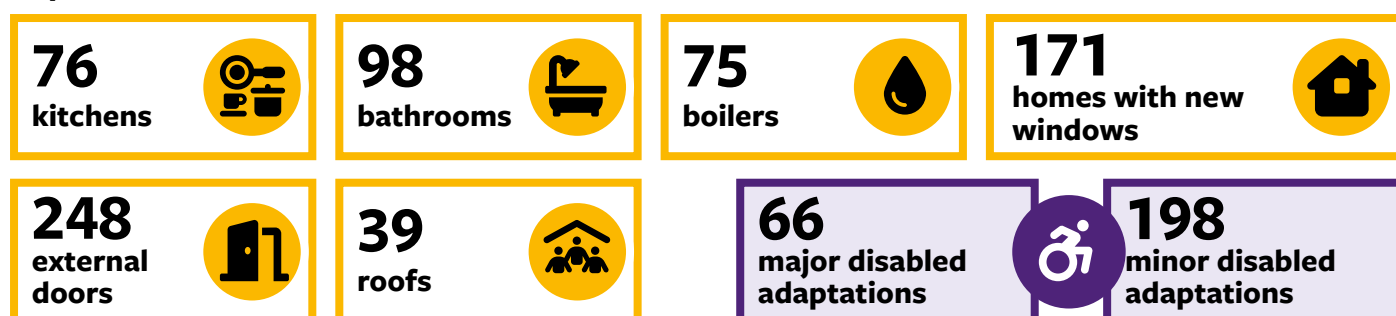
Repairs and Maintenance

The Regulator of Social Housing's **Safety and Quality Standard** expects us to provide you with a good quality home, ensure your health and safety and provide an effective, efficient and timely repairs and maintenance service.

This year, we have:

 Spent £8 million on work to improve your homes, including:

Replacements of



How are we doing?

	Our target	2024/25 result	2023/24 result
Day-to-day repairs completed on time	90%	98%	94.19%
Day-to-day repair appointments kept	95%	95%	94.98%
Heating repairs completed on time	98%	82.57% *	95.99%
Heating repair appointments kept	98%	96.38%	98.98%
Properties with a valid Landlord Gas Safety Record	100%	100%	100%
Properties with a valid Electrical Certificate	100%	100%	99.5%
Properties which are asbestos compliant	100%	100%	100%
Lift services completed on communal lifts	100%	100%	100%
Blocks with a valid Fire Risk Assessment	100%	100%	100%
Blocks with a valid water safety risk assessment	100%	100%	100%

* Our heating contractor, Swale Heating, did not meet their targets for repairs completed on time or appointments kept. Swale Heating were taken over by Sureserve Compliance South from April 2025, and we are working closely with Sureserve's management team to put measures in place to improve their performance and the service they provide to you.

Our repairs and maintenance performance this year has been excellent, including 100% compliance with our health and safety performance indicators.

Our new repairs contract with Mears started on 1 April 2025. Members of the Strategic Tenant Advisory Panel (STAP) were consulted on what the new contract should include and their feedback

influenced changes to the contract, including increasing the percentage of jobs post-inspected by Mears from 10% in the old contract to 15% in the new contract. Two tenant representatives also attended the formal interviews held as part of the procurement process.

Tenancy

The Regulator of Social Housing's **Tenancy Standard** expects us to let our homes fairly and transparently, and support residents to maintain their tenancy.

This year, we have:

- ▶ **Reduced the current tenant rent arrears owed to the council by more than £164,000 between September 2024 and March 2025.**



163
homes re-let

How are we doing?

	Our target	2024/25 result	2023/24 result
Average re-let time	25 days	22.26 days	25.31 days
Rent collected as a percentage of rent owed	98%	99.93%	99.54%
Current tenant rent arrears	3%	2%	2.04%

We have performed well this year, reducing the average time taken to re-let empty homes by more

than 3 days compared to last year, and keeping rent collection and arrears levels well within our targets.

Neighbourhood and Community

The Regulator of Social Housing's **Neighbourhood and Community Standard** expects us to ensure communal areas are kept safe, and to work with partners to promote wellbeing and tackle anti-social behaviour on estates that the council manages.

This year, we have:

- ▶ **Introduced a new Housing Anti-Social Behaviour Policy in July 2024. We listened to feedback from the consultation with all tenants and from the Tenant Scrutiny Panel, and made changes to the original draft of the policy as a result of this feedback.**

- ▶ **Investigated 83 anti-social behaviour cases.**

- ▶ **Completed 578 wellbeing plans with tenants in our Independent Living schemes.**

How are we doing?

	Our target	2024/25 result	2023/24 result
Satisfaction with anti-social behaviour handling	N/A	48%	54%

Our Annual Report 2024/25

Satisfaction with our approach to handling anti-social behaviour (ASB) has dropped from the previous year's tenant survey. We have analysed all the comments people made in their responses to this year's survey, and the main feedback from tenants who are unhappy with how we handle ASB was that they feel it sometimes takes too long to be dealt with, or that we have not acted on ASB caused by private residents.

The January issue of the tenant newsletter therefore included an article explaining what is and what isn't classed as ASB, and that we have no power to take action against someone causing ASB if they do not live in a council property.

Our new Housing Anti-Social Behaviour Policy was introduced in July 2024 and sets out timescales for making initial contact with someone who has reported ASB: this is one working day for high priority ASB (e.g. hate crime or physical violence) and three working days for normal priority ASB (e.g. noise nuisance or neighbour disputes). Please note that every case of ASB is unique and so we cannot put a definite timeframe on how long it will take to resolve the issue, as this will depend on the severity and the action we may be able to take.

Tenant Involvement and Complaints

The Regulator of Social Housing's **Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard** expects us to take your views into account in our decision-making, ensure you understand what you can expect from us, allow tenants to hold us to account, and deal with complaints fairly and promptly.

This year, we have:



Held six Strategic Tenant Advisory Panel meetings.



Completed one tenant scrutiny review of our approach to dealing with anti-social behaviour, and started one review of housing communications.



Held four Independent Living Forum meetings.



Sent out two newsletters and two bulletins.

How are we doing?

	Our target	2024/25 result	2023/24 result
Overall satisfaction with the housing service	N/A	70%	71%
Residents satisfied the council listens to and acts on their views	N/A	54%	55%
Complaints responded to on time	95%	96%	96.55%
Total number of tenant complaints received	N/A	55	82

Overall satisfaction with the housing service decreased by just 1% since last year, and satisfaction that we listen to and act on your views dropped by the same amount.

We are always looking at new ways of involving you in our housing service, and the recommendations arising from the Tenant Scrutiny Panel's review of housing communications will also ensure we are improving how we communicate with all tenants and leaseholders.

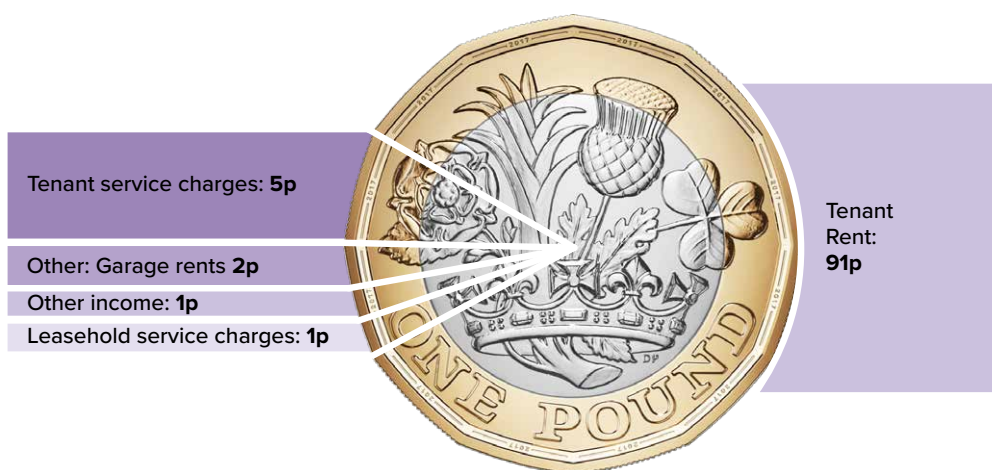
This year, we also plan to introduce a Housing Fair Access Policy, which will set out our commitment to ensuring all residents can access our housing services fairly and receive any assistance they need to do so. Look out for details of this in a future issue of the newsletter.

Across the council, we are also refreshing our Customer Access Strategy. We consulted residents on the draft strategy in April 2025 and aim to launch it later this year.

↔ Money matters

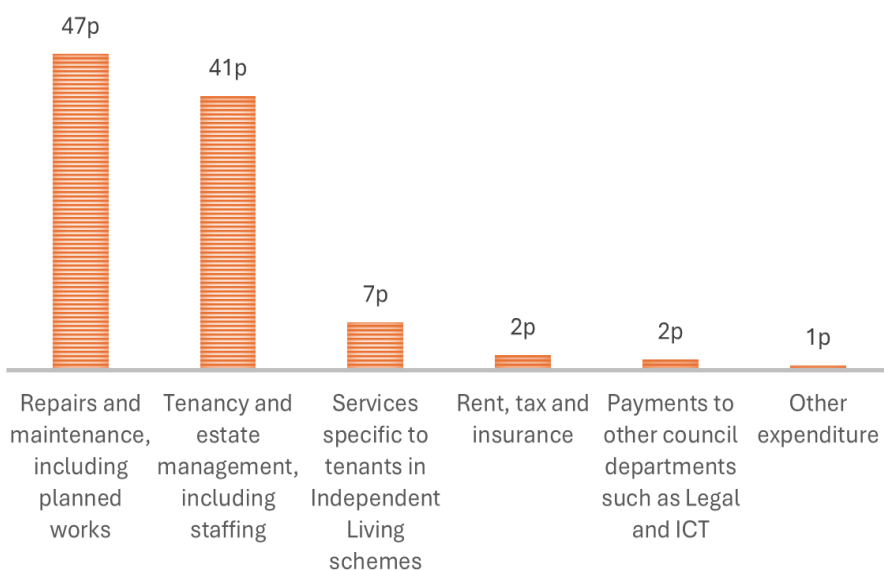
Where our money comes from...

We received over £20 million of income in 2024/25. The chart below shows how many pence in each pound came from each income source:



...And how we spend it

For every £1 of rent you paid, we spent:



The Regulator of Social Housing also requires us to give you details of our directors' remuneration costs – this includes their salary, any fees and allowances and pension contributions. These are:

- Chief Executive: £193,965
- Director of Housing & Operations: £139,735
- Director of Strategy & Resources: £139,960
- Interim Director of Corporate Services: £150,809

A warm welcome for £1m Win Pine House project

“The difference in the heating and water system is noticeable and appears to be much more efficient. The heating is much easier to control.”

“The contractors were friendly and obliging. I didn’t really understand everything, so they took their time to explain everything.”

“My bill is less than the service charge I used to pay! I’m hot so don’t put the heating on much but its easy to use.”

These are just some of the comments from tenants at Win Pine House following a project to upgrade the heating and lighting at the Independent Living scheme in Hythe.

All 44 flats in the scheme, plus all communal areas, are heated via a communal boiler. There had been several issues with the heating and hot water at Win Pine House over the last couple of years, caused not by the boiler, but by the pipework leading from the boiler to tenants’ individual flats and to the communal areas.

The council invested £1m in the project which involved installing new pipework throughout the building and fitting a Heat Interface Unit (HIU) in all flats. These HIUs transfer heat from the communal boiler to each tenant’s flat, allowing them to have full control of their heating.

Each HIU is fitted with a heat meter, which measures the exact amount of heating and hot water each



tenant uses, and ensures they only pay for their own usage. This is a much fairer approach than previously, where each tenant paid a fixed charge as part of their rent, regardless of the amount of energy they used themselves.

This project has ensured the council will recover the true cost of energy used, and by tenants being able to see how much energy they are using, this should encourage them to use less energy, which will save them money and also reduce carbon emissions.

The works were completed in March 2025 and as part of our contractor’s social value commitments, they carried out a complete refurbishment of the communal lounge, which has been very well received by the residents.

Win Pine House has also benefitted from new energy efficient LED lighting in all communal areas and the installation of CCTV throughout the building.



Join the housing team on your local Neighbourhood Inspection

This is an opportunity for residents to share any concerns and help us identify problems in their area. As part of the inspection, you will be involved in checking the condition of your neighbourhood, buildings and communal areas. You can advise on issues such as caretaking, litter and fly-tipping, as well as report any repairs required in your neighbourhood. If a problem is identified team members will do their best to put it right. Find out more about how to get involved folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/neighbourhoodinspection

Meet the team



We sat down with Rachel Buckley our Neighbourhood Relations Officer to get to know her a little better and find out more about her role in the housing management service.

Your role, Neighbourhood Relations Officer is a new one, could you explain a little bit more about it?

So basically I cover the whole of the district investigating anti-social behaviour cases within F&HDC housing stock. This can involve, for example, reports of abusive behaviour, noise nuisance, fly tipping, drug dealing etc, which I investigate to either evidence or discount the reports and sometimes can result in me taking further enforcement action if absolutely necessary.

What does a typical day involve?

A typical day is hard to describe, as every day is different. It could range from listening to tenants and taking their statement, interviewing alleged perpetrators, installing noise monitoring equipment, preparing court bundles or even just taking a walk around some of the estates, being visible and approachable.

Due to the nature of this role it has to be quite flexible how I manage my time, as emergencies or high risk situations do sometimes crop

up, meaning I have to respond to those matters before anything else.

What do you enjoy most about your role?

I most enjoy helping people be able to live peacefully in their homes. Some individuals have been enduring horrible behaviour from others and I like being able to give people the respite that they deserve. There is nothing more rewarding than seeing through an investigation to the end and making tenants feel happy and safe.

Is there anything else you'd like tenants to know?

I would like tenants to know that if they are struggling with their neighbours or anti-social behaviour in their local area (due to the behaviour of other tenants) that there is someone to turn to and I will try my utmost to be able to help them. This isn't always possible in the way they would imagine, but sometimes it's important to know someone is there willing to listen and help.

If you need to report ASB, you can do so in confidence by contacting us at housing.service@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk or on **01303 853300**.

When you complain about ASB, although you might think of this as making a complaint, it is treated as a report of ASB and is dealt with under our Housing Anti-Social Behaviour Policy; it is not treated as a formal complaint.

The housing team is not able to deal with ASB caused by people who are not a council tenant or leaseholder. In these situations, we will offer advice and guidance where we can, but we have no power to take action against the person causing the ASB if they do not live in a council property.

You can view our ASB policy on our website folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/council-tenants-leaseholder-service/asb-domestic-abuse-council-tenants

New contractor update



Mears Group was reappointed as your repairs and maintenance contractor starting on 1 April 2025. This is a 10 year contract.

Key features for tenants

- Real-time communication: stay updated through text messaging
- Resident portal: easily raise jobs, amend, and cancel appointments
- Communal repairs tracking: use QR codes to track progress
- Flexible appointments: scheduled at a time to suit you

- Resident Liaison Officer: dedicated support for complex works and improved face-to-face communication
- Customer satisfaction reviews: regular surveys to gather your feedback
- Local recruitment days: opportunities for local employment
- DIY videos: access YouTube tutorials for repairs which are a tenant responsibility

Mears will also handle work on empty properties to ensure they are ready for new tenants as quickly as possible.

You can contact Mears on **0800 028 7010**.

Dealing with repairs

Timely repairs are important to make sure tenants feel safe and secure in well-maintained homes. Contractors have targets for responding to repairs, which vary, depending on the type and severity of repair.

Please note that emergency repairs are those which have the potential to cause danger to someone's health and safety or cause immediate serious damage and destruction to a property, home or building.

Mears – Repairs & Maintenance contractor

Emergency	Urgent	Routine
4 hours, or 24 hours, depending on the issue	3 WORKING days	16 WORKING days

Sureserve – Heating contractor

Emergency	Urgent	Routine
24 hours	7 CALENDAR days	14 CALENDAR days

Please also note that some repairs are your responsibility as a tenant. You can find out which repairs you are responsible for on our website at folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/council-repairs.

Reporting repairs

For day-to-day household repairs:

- Log online via **Housing Online** our MyAccount platform on the council tenant section of the dashboard (see page 11)
- Call **Mears** on freephone **0800 028 7010**

For gas, hot water or central heating repairs:

- Call **Sureserve** on freephone **0800 987 4034**
- If you have an **air source heat pump**, please call **01303 853300**
- If you **smell gas**, please call the National Gas Emergency number on freephone **0800 111 999**

Save time with Housing Online

Report your repair, chase progress and view repair history via Housing Online

You can now request repairs at any time of day, any day of the week instantly and accurately. Your request will be logged and allocated with no middle man, and you can check for updates, appointments and progress at your convenience.

The new service allows tenants to:

- Instantly report an issue, avoiding any call waiting times
- Pin point exactly where your repair is needed with the interactive graphic tool
- Access that will guide you through your report and give advice if immediate action is required
- Check progress and appointments – Upon logging a repair, you will be given a repair reference number and target date for works
- View previous repairs.



The Housing Online service also allows tenants to:

- View and update contact and personal details
- View rent balances and statements
- Make online payments
- Set up a Direct Debit
- Respond to surveys
- Upload documents
- Make payments

To create a Housing Online account, visit folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/myaccountinfo

Please note that to create an account you will need to enter an email address, a password, your date of birth and your rent reference number. You will then receive a verification link in your emails.

This will only need to be inputted once, from then on just a username and password will be required.

What do you think of Tenant News?

We would love to hear what you think and welcome any feedback. Please email tenant.involvement@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk or drop us a line.

Want to get involved?

If you would be interested in joining a small online group of tenants to advise and give feedback on all our communications, please email tenant.involvement@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

Got a good news story?

If you have then we would love to hear it. Email tenant.involvement@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk and you could feature in the next Tenant News.



Contact your housing team

Online:

You can get in touch with us 24 hours a day, seven days a week by visiting

[folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)

In addition to calling and emailing the council you can use our LiveChat service via our website. LiveChat currently offers assistance on the following council services:

Council tax & council tax reduction

Housing benefit

Planning

Parking

Recycling, waste


and environmental services

You can also access a Contact Form on our website [folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/contact-us](https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/contact-us)

MyAccount is a new easier and quicker way to access your council services. You can register on the website and then find all the information relevant to you in one place.

You can also access our new service Housing Online via MyAccount (see page 11 for more details)

For suggestions, compliments or complaints about the Housing Management Service

 [folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/council-transparency/complaints-compliments-feedback](https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/council-transparency/complaints-compliments-feedback)

By telephone:

Call us on **01303 853300**.

Lines are open 10am - 4pm Monday to Friday

By post:

If you would prefer to write to us, please use the address below:

Folkestone & Hythe District Council, Civic Centre, Castle Hill Avenue, Folkestone, Kent CT20 2QY

By email:

housing.service@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

Social media:

To keep up to date with news from F&HDC you can follow us on social media:

 [/facebook.com/groups/fhdtenantsandleaseholders](https://facebook.com/groups/fhdtenantsandleaseholders)

 [@fstonehythedc](https://twitter.com/fstonehythedc)

 [Folkestone and Hythe District Council](#)

 [@folkestonehythedc](https://www.instagram.com/folkestonehythedc)

Need to report a repair

For day-to-day repairs call Mears on **0800 028 7010**.

For gas, hot water and central heating repairs call Sureserve on **0800 987 4034**.

Email housing.service@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk to book an inspection with your neighbourhood surveyor.

