

Tenant Engagement Impact Assessment

2020-2025



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Introduction

This document aims to show the impact made by tenants involved in shaping the housing service at Folkestone and Hythe District Council, both strategically and operationally from 2020 to the present, 2025.

2020/2021 were difficult years for tenant involvement because the national pandemic curtailed many of the traditional face-to-face activities. Therefore, the focus had been on empowering existing key tenants to remain involved through better use of technology and building our digital offer to enable more tenants to have a say on service improvements. The housing service was brought back into the council in October 2020, with very little in place in terms of meaningful tenant engagement. At that time, the council was subject to a regulatory notice from the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) for a breach of consumer standards, but by addressing these issues as our first priority, and working closely with the Regulator, we were the first of the four ex-East Kent Housing councils to have our regulatory notice lifted, in August 2021. Starting with a STAR survey in October 2020, to gauge the satisfaction of the tenants in the district, it was clear that there was much work to do.

The existing tenants' groups were provided with laptops or tablets in order to facilitate continuous communications with us, and on occasion, we facilitated Covid-safe meetings in person. This group were key in helping us create our Tenant Engagement Strategy. From the feedback of the STAR survey, it was clear there was an appetite in the district for more involvement from our tenants, we received over 400 responses from tenants that had indicated that they would like to become an involved tenant. At the time, the White Paper was being developed, which set out enhanced, specific expectations for tenant engagement, so the structure would need to be redesigned and recruited for, from scratch.

When there are issues that can be informed by tenants' views, we use online and postal methods to consult. This might involve emailing a short online survey or competition or asking them to take part in consultations for example. Tenants can choose whether to take part, but if they do, they are entered into prize draws for shopping vouchers.

Consultations & Influence

In the earlier days, we did send out a lot of consultations and mailings, to gauge the feedback from our tenants. This was prior to forming the main strategic level groups and the Tenant Engagement Structure within the strategy. Between 2020 and 2022, some of these included:

Otterpool Consultation	Tenant Engagement Strategy Consultation	STAR Survey 2020	PULSE Survey
Tenant Engagement Survey	Tenant Handbook	Leaseholder Forum	Recruitment campaigns for Strategic Tenants Groups

EIP Consultations with Tenants	Tenant Champions for Assets and Development	Digital Inclusion – In partnership with Kent County Council	Private Facebook page for Tenants and Leaseholders
STAR Survey 2022	Rents and Income Tenant Consultation (comms)	Independent Living Service Modernisation consultation with Campbell Tickell	Corporate Social Responsibility with Mears and Gas Contractor
Neighbourhood Inspections with Officers and Involved Tenants	New Build- Highview Project	Housing Asset Management Strategy Consultation	Fixed Term Tenancy Consultation
New Build- Ship Street Consultation	Digital Inclusion Mailer and Survey	Tenant Handbook and Leaflets	Leaseholders Service Charges Consultation
Stock Survey with Rapleys	Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey	Responsive Repairs Policy Review	Tenant Data Mailer

New in 2020/21: Enabling key tenants to remain involved during COVID-19

To enable our key tenants from strategic groups to remain involved during the pandemic we provided equipment and bespoke training, so they could continue to participate in online meetings. How did we do this?

We conducted a survey and meetings, where possible, of all tenants involved in tenant engagement to determine what IT equipment and training each person needed.

We sourced funds and purchased new equipment such as laptops and tablets. Equipment was provided to 10 involved tenants who were part of key groups and bespoke training was delivered by officers and TPAS. This enabled them to take part in online meetings and make valuable contributions. Most of our engaged tenants were able to take part using online meetings technology and many developed new skills to help them in non-tenant engagement, for example shopping and connecting with their families online. Which was especially relevant and important during the pandemic.

Quantified Time and Cost	
Financial Outlay	£500
Staff Time	2 hours per officer, per meeting
Tenant Time	2 hours per tenant, per meeting

Strategic Tenants Advisory Panel (STAP)

STAP was formed in October 2021 following consultation with all tenants and is a strategic-level group which brings together tenant representatives from the district. At the beginning of their tenure, they met monthly, however it was decided that bi-monthly was more practical, with longer, more condensed meetings. They have full

support from the tenant engagement team, but also have high-level Influence and access to:

- The Regulator of Social Housing
- Cabinet Member for Housing
- Director of Housing & Operations
- Chief Officer for Housing
- Housing Leadership Team
- Operations Managers from main contractors
- Neighbourhood Management Team
- Assets and Development Management Team
- Case Management Leads
- Rent & Income Management Lead
- Allocations Management Team



STAP's purpose is to hold the leadership and the housing teams to account on performance, strategy, policy, and procedures, and make sure that everyone is involved in and consulted on key decision making that affects the everyday lives of tenants. STAP works cooperatively with Scrutiny Panel and the Independent Living Forum. STAP oversees the tenant involvement strategy, and they have also been heavily involved in the early pilot inspections with RSH. Below is a table of the items that STAP have covered and helped to shape since their inception:

Rechargeable Repairs	Decarbonisation Project	Housing Asset Management Strategy	Reactive Repairs Communal Cleaning
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Allocations – Allocations Policy update 2023.	Regulator for Social Housing – Pilot Inspection Framework	Tenant Engagement Strategy & Action Plan	External Enveloping
Repairs & Maintenance	Ross House – Major Works, including decant and Decarb.	Performance Overall	Tenant Satisfaction Survey – Based on TSM's
Ending of Fixed Term Tenancies		Tenant Satisfaction Measures	Telecare (Lifeline) replacement
Disabled Adaptations Updated 2023	Tenant Satisfaction Survey (after your session about the new TSM's) 2023/2024/2025	Regulator of Social Housing Inspection pilot	Main Repairs Contractor
Renewal of the Tenancy Agreement/Full Consultation		Housing Online - NEC (Northgate)/website content/app roll out.	Complaints Policy Update
Customer Experience Project	Independent Living Review	Housing	Tenant Charter
Housing Ombudsman complaint handling code self-assessment	Under Occupancy	Communications overall	Repairs / Planned Works
Asset Capital Programme	Tenant Handbook & online content	Operations & A&D	SHDF Decarbonisation Project 2023-2025
Independent Living Improvement Plan	Capital Works Programme	Corporate Social Responsibility – Various Contractors	Corporate Plan Consultation
Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) Accreditation	Kitemark	Inside Housing	Telecare Procurement
	Fair Access Policy	Tenant Engagement Conferences- Annually	Cleaning Contract Procurement
	HRA Overview		Responsive Repairs Contract Procurement
Housing Revenue Account Business Plan	Service Charges De-Pooling Project	RSH Continuous Improvement Plan	
	Housing Carbon Reduction Approach		

STAP have ensured that FHDC Housing delivered on its commitments to tenants outlined in the Tenant Involvement strategy and action plan and held the Tenant

Involvement team to account on the delivery of their action plan and made sure that key milestones were achieved.

Influenced service delivery - challenged the service on changes to the advice and support tenants were receiving on:

- Rent Income & Benefits
- Fixed term (flexible) tenancies
- ASB procedure
- Changes to the complaints procedure
- Supported contractors with training and roll out.

About STAP

STAP were developed in line with the Charter for Social Housing Residents Housing White Paper. Previously much of the tenant engagement activities were centred around operational issues, however the new expectations of this paper and the RSH meant that tenant engagement would need to be robustly covered at a strategic level.

This presented several issues, such as the personal interests of the current groups. They liked covering neighbourhood level issues because they were visible and affected them directly. Also knowledge levels, so we were tasked with recruiting a brand-new group who had the interest and willingness to cover the strategic level subjects, who could also hold us to account on these subjects.

Luckily, we were able to retain the Chairperson of the previous tenant board, to oversee the recruitment and establishment of the strategic group. The Chair has a very long and supportive history in tenant engagement within the district of over 30 years.

After running a district-wide campaign to recruit, we held many interviews with key members of management of the housing service and the Chair. From those interviews we were able to recruit seven excellent members. Any tenants that were not chosen for the strategic group were immediately signposted to other groups that were more aligned to their interests.

Amongst the new strategic panel we have tenant representatives with building regulations, gas, heating and renewable energy backgrounds, representatives from Independent Living, some with social care backgrounds, education backgrounds, young families, previous experience in service scrutiny and tenant engagement, and all of them put together make an incredible team, who are fully committed and they do a wonderful job supporting us as we journey through changes, challenges and improvements together.



We are always looking for more tenants to join STAP. If you feel that you would complement this group, please get in touch via tenant.involvement@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk.

Quantified Time and Cost	
Financial Outlay	£70 per meeting
Staff Time	4 hours per officer, per meeting
Tenant Time	3 hours per tenant, per meeting

Tenant Scrutiny Panel

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel was formed in September 2023 at the request of STAP. This is another strategic group, made up of tenants from across the district. They carry out in depth reviews of the Housing Service areas, deciding for themselves which areas they wish to examine.

It was felt that STAP alone could not do the deep dives, down to operational level on some subjects, because there just was not enough time with their existing workload.

Each review concludes with a report showing the strengths and weaknesses of the service area, together with recommendations for service improvements and how it ties back to the expectation of the RSH and the consumer standards. The focus this year has been on complaints management, antisocial behaviour, and tenant communications. There is no set time for each subject, the first 2 reports were ready in approximately 3 months, however, communications took longer because the subject is so broad. They also have a forward plan for the coming year.

TPAS Scrutiny Assured Quality Mark

Having undertaken a desktop review and analysis of performance information, the scrutiny panel are now one of the first organisations to be undertaking the SAQM with TPAS. This will lead to further strengthening of the panel and greater understanding of the housing service, including limitations, challenges and how their empowerment is directly supporting us in improving the service we deliver to all our tenants.

1. Complaints Procedure

Recommendations

Online complaints form.

Recommendations for making the form easier to use and find and to make detailed complaints.

- Instantly accessible to tenants, no account required.
- Accessed from a main page as well, no search bar required.
- Drop down menu for main areas of complaint.
- The ability to make several points within the complaint, so that it can be sent to the necessary teams to respond to.
- There were concerns that visitors from outside of the district could make complaints if there was no first identification layer in the first instance of making a complaint.
- Officers will make the request to IT to see if making basic changes, if possible, as it has now been identified from a report of recommendations from the panel. It bears more weight and shows the reasoning and value.
- There is a general consensus that the process needs to be accessible to people of all abilities. A simple link to the form- straight forward. By the time a tenant has searched and failed to gain access to make a complaint they are angry, annoyed, and now have to vent to the person who takes their call.
- There was a request to ask if there could be complaints form specifically for tenants?
- Request to ICT to ask if it is possible to have a drop down to ask if you are a tenant or not, as a main option box of complaints.
- There were concerns that this channel would open up numerous issues that are not complaints - often they are service requests.

Recommendation overview

- Clear pathway – better signposting
- Clear definitions of complaints, so the team are not bogged down with service requests.
- More than one box- or a drop-down selection menu
- To have this option on a main, clearly labelled page.

Suggestions

- To support the Ombudsman's decision to reword the standard letter- excluding the need to explain why they do not agree with the outcome of a complaint and wish to escalate.
- It will be interesting to see if improving the process makes any difference to the number of complaints that come in.

2. Anti-Social Behaviour

Recommendations and feedback

- ASB is different in Independent Living schemes due to communal areas and people living in closer proximity.
- Concerns that the alleged perpetrator may be able to work out who has reported the ASB.
- Linking tenancy agreement with ASB if they breach it what are ramifications regarding ASB.
- Non ASB matter should be signposted.
- Data protection should be in the policy.
- Possible wording change in allocations policy to highlight to tenants with a history on ASB on their tenancy or any other breaches – ASB history in tenant records to be considered.

3. Tenant Communications

Recommendations

- Establish a tenant communication group.
- Include a “cut out and keep” slip containing contractor responsibilities and contact details in a future issue of the tenant newsletter.
- Add contractor contact details to the tenant handbook.
- Publish communal gardening standards to tenants so they are aware what gardening tasks the council is responsible for carrying out, and how often.
- Improve communication to tenants around planned works programmes.
- Create some communications around community safety – cuckooing, blackbirding, subletting / tenancy fraud.
- Create some communications around electric vehicles and charging points.
- Include an article around unacceptable tenant behaviour in a future issue of the tenant newsletter.
- Communications Tenants Group to review all newsletters and bulletins prior to being sent off for approval.
- Usage of photos within our district, rather than stock photos of homes not from the district.
- Communications Group to be part of the design process for new leaflets, posters, and info videos.
- Council tax analysis

Quantified Time and Cost	
Financial Outlay	£20 per meeting
Staff Time	4 hours per officer, per meeting
Tenant Time	3 hours per tenant, per meeting

Independent Living Forum (ILF)

The Independent Living Forum holds quarterly meetings, rotating between schemes across the district. ILF was a core existing group when the housing service was brought back into FHDC, so we had a great foundation to work with. In the last four years we have worked together to make the meetings far more structured and involved in the service itself as a whole, acting as a consultative group rather than just a medium to lodge issues with their individual schemes, although they still have the opportunity to this, as the Operations Manager for the repairs contract attends each meeting and takes away any issues that she is unable to update the tenants on then and there.

Currently the ILF allows up to two members per scheme, with constant promotion and recruitment going on to fill any vacancies as and when they arise. Independent Living makes up 18% of the council's overall stock, so it is critical that we ensure their empowerment and that their voices are heard.

They have been fully involved in a complete review and consultation of the Independent Living service, with all feedback being taken on board and acted on where possible.

The meetings include guest speakers on topical housing issues and with our main contractors, so they can explain their function and what to expect from them as standard.

ILF currently comprises of 22 tenants who are elected via scheme meetings.



Outcomes

23 Meetings held – all very well attended and in supplement to the monthly scheme meetings.

- Review of the Independent Living service
- Lifeline replacement project

- Lifeline charges
- IL Improvement Plan
- Independent Living guest room consultation
- Mobility scooter storage installations
- Mobility scooter policy
- Person-Centred Fire Risk Assessments
- Digital notice board installations
- TVs in communal lounges

Quantified Time and Cost	
Financial Outlay	£220 per meeting
Staff Time	4 hours per officer, per meeting
Tenant Time	3 hours per tenant, per meeting

Your Choice

Your Choice is a separate layer of the tenant engagement structure within the tenant engagement strategy. Your Choice covers more of the operational subjects of tenant engagement.

Several groups are set up under this umbrella, such as:

- Leaseholder Forum
- Gardening committee
- Estate Champions
- Tenant Communications
- Task & Finish
- Armchair Critics
- Tenant & Leaseholder Private Facebook Group
- Neighbourhood Inspectors

This new approach has resulted in numerous groups of different sizes, with different aims, and it was designed so that it was accessible to every tenant in the district. Our tenants all have different priorities, areas of expertise and commitment, this approach means that they can have as much, or as little involvement as they like. Some of the groups are temporary, whereas others have taken on more and more importance and integrity, especially in terms of holding our external operatives to account on the quality and value for money of their contractual services, such as cleaning, grounds maintenance, repairs, and compliance.

Garden competition

The Tenant and Leaseholder Garden Competition has always been popular throughout the years. It is a chance for our residents to show off their hard work and a good news story, as well as helping encourage tenants to have pride in their gardens. It is purely run by tenants; they judge and set the categories, and the Tenant Engagement team supports them with administration and facilitation.

We have an average of around 30 entrants a year, with less in 2021, but over 40 in 2022, and it has settled since. We rely solely on the generous sponsorship of businesses and councillors to generate the prizes, which can be high street vouchers, garden centre voucher, or gardening tools and equipment. Our main sponsors are our main contractors:

- Mears
- Sureserve Compliance South (formerly Swale Heating)
- Cleanscapes

With an honourable mention to Grovewell Garden Centre, who provide us vouchers and seed packets annually, without fail. There is usually about £400 - £500 raised for prizes, meaning a first prize can be £50 and second place £25. This can fluctuate, depending on the number of winners and the amount of sponsorship we receive. We have previously held a small presentation event for the winners and sponsors, which is a good opportunity for the winners to connect and for us to present them with their prize. However, this is depending on budget available, so it is more likely that the prizes and certificate will be delivered, which is a great photo opportunity for future promotion via our newsletters, bulletins and social media, as below:



Quantified Time and Cost	
Financial Outlay	None – covered by sponsorship
Staff Time	4 days per officer
Tenant Time	4 hours per tenant for preparation
	3 days per tenant for judging
	1 day per tenant for prizegiving

Your Choice Outcomes

Stemming from the foundations of the previous engagement groups formed under the Your Choice category, this year we are looking to develop a few more groups that will be influential and beneficial to the district.

Tenant Inspectors

This group will apply to tenants in estates, blocks and flats who receive communal services and live in close quarters with each other.

Block/Estate Inspectors

These tenants will carry out real time surveys on works completed by the housing service, or by contractors that have been bought in by the housing service, and fall under 4 categories:

- Grounds Maintenance
- Cleaning
- Maintenance
- Neighbourhoods

We will work with tenants and operatives to devise a grading and reporting system, which will have agreed response times and a chain of communication to ensure that contractual service levels are being undertaken and maintained. This will include visual guides and training.

Communications Champions

This group will oversee the content of the tenant newsletters and bulletins, as well as website content, letter wording and social media that is aimed at tenants in the district. They will work closely with the Housing Communications and Campaigns Officer and the Tenant Engagement Team and have the support of STAP and ILF, where they will share regular updates.

Both new groups will be open to tenants and leaseholders of FHDC only.

Assets & Development Tenant Engagement

There are a small number of tenants that were approached to be Tenant Champions for the Assets and Development (A&D) teams within the housing service.

- Repairs Champions
- New Build HRA Champions
- Compliance Champions
- Major/Planned Works Champions

These tenants were chosen because of their experience and skill sets. For example, the tenants involved in the Compliance group are ex fire fighters and gas, heating, and solar specialists. New Build has tenants who live with serious disability, so they can give open and honest feedback on place planning and accessibility. This makes their feedback even more valuable and useful.

A&D Champion Outcomes

Meetings were held in person and consultation still occurs on a range of current matters. An overview of the typical content covered is below:

Compliance

- Water Hygiene
- Asbestos
- Electrical
- Fire Protection

- Mobility & Lifts
- Gas Compliance

Major/Planned Works

- Ross House
- Adaptations
- Kitchens & Bathrooms
- Doors & Windows
- External Enveloping
- EIP

Repairs

- Customer Satisfaction
- New contract Procurement
- Mobilisation
- Rechargeable Repairs
- Voids
- Operations/Training

New Build HRA

- High view Planning
- Ship Street Consultation
- Accessibility
- Green Space & Families First
- Otterpool Consultation
- Biggins Wood Planning

Housing Online

After the pandemic, there was a clear need for more tools for our tenants for communication with us. FHDC developed an application called Housing Online, this is a customer portal that allows tenants to access a secure space where they can:

- View rent balances, make payments and set up direct debits.
- Change and update personal details.
- Upload documents
- Take part in surveys.
- Request repairs at any time of day, any day of the week instantly and accurately. The request will be logged and allocated with no go-between, and you are able to check for updates, appointments and progress at your convenience.
- Pinpoint 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 and view previous repairs.

A full consultation was done with tenants, and it was brought to the main tenant engagement groups for feedback before, during and after development, with regular contact with the team that manage this function, to gauge performance and usage. This function was a big investment for the service, and it is promoted regularly in the hopes it will become the go to method of communications for our tenants, which in turn will hopefully drive-up satisfaction with our efficiency by cutting call wait times, and tenants having more of a sense of control and transparency over their accounts

Housing Online Outcomes

While the figures are great for Housing Online, we are very keen for more tenants to sign up to use this service. We have been promoting it regularly on social media and various newsletters and bulletins, including prize draws for decorating vouchers.

- 629 Repairs raised via Housing Online
- 711 Repairs enquiries
- 1,028 New Registrations
- 69,319 Recorded actions

Regulator for Social Housing, TPAS & Tenant Training

We have:

- Carried out a training needs and skills assessment of involved tenants and used this to design Individual bespoke training profiles, which involved tenants can use as they wish. We are planning our ongoing training programme based on the training events that are most requested.
- Drafting a tenant training induction pack for all involved tenants which includes basic training on topics such as an introduction to Housing, working well as a team etc.
- Sent information by email to all tenants, linking to external training events which could benefit their well-being or employment opportunities.
- Offered IT workshops to Independent Living Tenants
- Supporting tenants' personal development, such as attending specialist conferences, training sessions on specific topics, such as housing policy, decarbonisation and learning about the White Paper.

Other Tenant Engagement Activities

Tenant involvement staff have run several other involvement activities to help us inform or consult with our tenants. These are not accounted for in the impact assessment, but they include:

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

From the start of tenure, FHDC have undertaken tenant satisfaction surveys, however for the last 4 years we have done TSM Surveys, either via a contractor or in house. This is to determine satisfaction levels within key areas of our service. The results of this are presented to STAP prior to them being published in the autumn bulletin.

Neighbourhood Inspections/Estate walkabouts

Full estate inspections are carried out quarterly by the Neighbourhood Management Team, however, in the summer we advertise the summer estate inspections and actively encourage tenants to come and join the team. They are also attended by representatives from the repair's contractors and local councillors. Any issues that are raised are recorded and collated to be actioned by the relevant team. Then a full report is produced to go out in the autumn newsletter. It is a nice transparent way of showing the value of this type of tenant engagement.



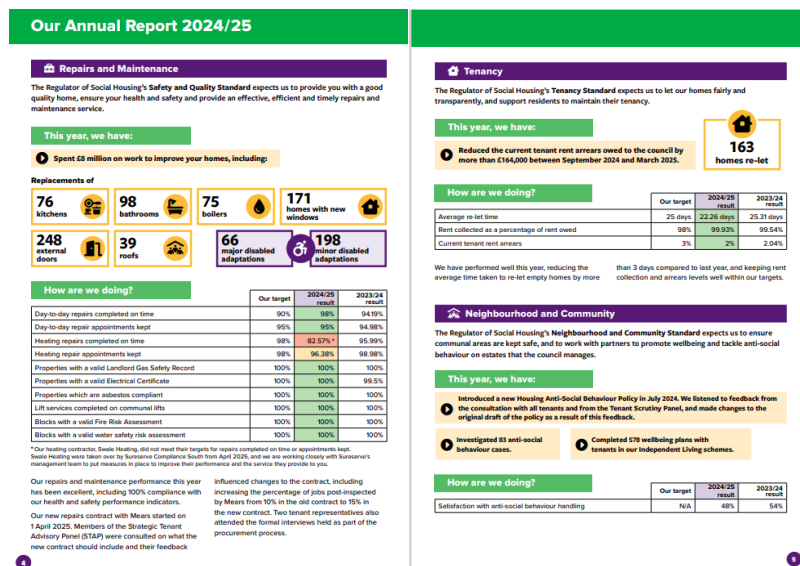
Tenant Newsletters & Bulletins

We produce two editions of the newsletter and two editions of the bulletin per year; these are posted to all tenants alongside the quarterly rent statements and the newsletters and bulletins are also available [on our website](#) in both PDF and HTML formats. STAP have a say in what content we use, but they tend to follow a pattern of relevant information, such as the results from the TSM survey and the summer estate inspection outcomes. Looking to the future, there are plans to form a dedicated tenant communications group. This group will help steer and shape the way the service communicates with the tenants via these publications, website, letters, and face to face.



Annual Reports

Since 2023, we have published our annual report as the main focus of our July newsletters. We ensure that the content is based around the RSH's consumer standards and includes the relevant KPIs and performance information, as well as setting out what we are doing to improve where we have not met our targets.



Consultation 'drop-in' sessions

We have run several consultation events on larger scale projects that will affect many, if not all, tenants. For example, most recently there were drop-in sessions arranged for feedback on changes made to the tenancy agreement for all tenants at the end of 2024. There were also drop-in sessions for feedback on plans for new builds and place planning for Ship Street and Highview, as well as open session when there was a full review of the Independent Living Service.

Decarbonisation project

This team has their own Resident Liaison Officer (RLO) because it will affect so many households. The team's aim is to bring FHDC housing stock up in terms of EPC ratings. In line with our Housing Carbon Reduction Approach, this is done in a variety of ways; each home is assessed individually with a 'fabric first' approach. Some of the works may include:

- Double Glazing/door or window replacements
- Air or ground source heat pumps
- Cavity wall/loft insulation
- Solar panels

The PAS (Publicly Available Specification standard) assessment by the contractor generally takes between 1 and 2 hours to complete.

This is where all the energy assessments are done and they will research with the tenants about household occupation, and how they use their energy. From there

agreement is made for the works needed to the property, and further appointments are made to carry out the works. The RLO is available at all points during this process, including aftercare, to help educate and promote using the new equipment and measures that have been installed.

Decarbonisation project success 2022 – 2024

“I am now able to be in a nice warm home and it is reassuring not to have to choose between health and finances.”

This is the view of tenant, Amanda French, whose home was part of the first wave of our Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Project (SHDF).

Amanda’s home is just one of the 125 properties that were most in need of being brought up to date with a range of energy efficient measures making them cheaper to run for tenants.

The first wave of the SHDF was completed in March and tenants are already appreciating lower bills as a result of the new measures.

All 125 homes that were part of the project were upgraded from EPC ratings of between D and G, to ratings between A and C.

The 125 homes had the following energy efficiency measures installed:

Energy efficiency measure	Number of properties
Ventilation	125
Loft insulation	100
Solar photovoltaic (PV) panels	87
Cavity wall insulation	43
External doors	26
High heat retention storage heaters	18
Air source heat pump	17
Underfloor insulation	6
Windows	4
Flat roof insulation	2

Improving energy efficiency at Win Pine House

During 2024/25, we also invested £1m in upgrading the heating and lighting at Win Pine House, one of our Independent Living schemes in Hythe.

“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.

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 project 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.

What’s next?

Property assessments for the next Wave of the government’s SHDF funding have begun and will enable the council to improve the energy efficiency of a further 300 homes over the next two years.

The funding has again been matched by the council and will cost £5.2 million, bringing the total spend on improving the homes and wellbeing of tenants to £8.2million.

We have also secured £15,950 in revenue funding from the government’s Heat Network Efficiency Scheme (HNES) to allow us to complete feasibility studies to improve the heat networks and decarbonise our Independent Living schemes.

Quantified Time and Cost	
	£50 for Handover Pack

Staff Time	1-2 hours per meeting, per officer/contractor
Tenant Time	1-2 hours, per meeting, per household