

July 2026

TENANT NEWS

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**Folkestone
& Hythe**

District Council

Welcome to the July edition of Tenant News

I hope you are all enjoying the district this summer.

Firstly, I'd like to thank everyone who has taken the time to complete our tenant and leaseholder satisfaction survey. Your feedback is important to us and helps shape the way our housing management service is delivered, as well as informing the actions we take in response to your suggestions.

You'll also find our Tenants' annual report in this edition of the newsletter. It offers a fuller picture of our performance over the past year, highlights some of our key achievements, and sets out the priorities and improvements we will be focusing on in the months ahead. We hope it gives you a clear overview of the work we have been doing and our commitment to continuing to improve services.

I also wanted to take this opportunity to remind you about the neighbourhood inspections taking place throughout the summer. These inspections are a valuable opportunity to share your views, raise any concerns, and help shape improvements in your local area. By attending, you can speak directly with us about the issues that matter most to you and play an active role in helping us keep your neighbourhood - a place you are proud to call home.



In this edition, you can also find out more about the Neighbourhoods Team and Housing Leadership Team, as well as the steps we're taking to ensure tenants have safe, comfortable homes to live in.

Finally, I'd like to draw your attention to our tree planting scheme. If you can spare a few minutes each week to help keep a new tree healthy, take a look at page 3 to find out how you can get involved.

Tenants are always at the heart of what we do, and I hope this newsletter reflects that. Happy reading!

Councillor Rebecca Shoob
Cabinet Member for Housing
and Homelessness



➤ Help us serve you better

To help us provide the best possible service to you, we want to find out more about you, so we'd really appreciate it if you could fill in our survey to tell us a bit more about yourself.

By giving us your gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and any other information which will help us deliver the housing service to meet your individual needs, you will enable us to tailor our services accordingly. Rest assured that your data will be stored securely and confidentially, and will not be shared outside of the housing service.

So please complete our survey at folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/tenant-data-survey, it will only take 5 minutes of your time and you will be helping us serve you better.

Do you want to see more trees in your area?

We are launching an exciting new project to plant more trees on the communal areas of housing land to make this project work, we need your help to water and look after the trees once they have been planted.

Could you give a few minutes per week to help keep a new tree healthy?

We will show you what to do and will provide you with all the equipment you need.

If you are interested in helping as a tree volunteer, please let us know.

Phone: **01303 853300**

Email: tenant.involvement@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk



What is a mutual exchange?

Mutual exchanges allow you to swap your home with another tenant living in a council or housing association property anywhere in the country. Each landlord must agree before an exchange can take place.

We use Homeswapper, a free and easy-to-use website that helps tenants find suitable swaps. Simply register, create an advert for your home, and start searching. Once you've found a potential exchange, everyone involved completes an online application and we'll let you know if it's been approved.

Approval depends on a few checks, including:

- No rent or other charges owed
- Your home being in good condition
- Having lived in your current home for at least a year and no longer on an Introductory Tenancy

If you or the other party are not registered on Homeswapper but have found an exchange, please contact the housing team who will send you an invitation via email to complete the online application form without the need for you to register.

If you have any questions please email mutual.exchange@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk or phone them on **01303 853300**.

New housing hate crime policy

The council has introduced a new policy to tackle hate crime in its housing services, putting victims first and taking a zero-tolerance approach.

Residents can report incidents in a range of ways, with support including risk assessments, safety plans and regular updates. Serious cases may lead to measures such as enhanced security or rehousing.

The council will work with police and partners to take firm action against perpetrators while promoting safer, more inclusive communities.

To read the policy visit: folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/downloads/file/6273/housing-hate-crime-incident-policy-approved-final-2026

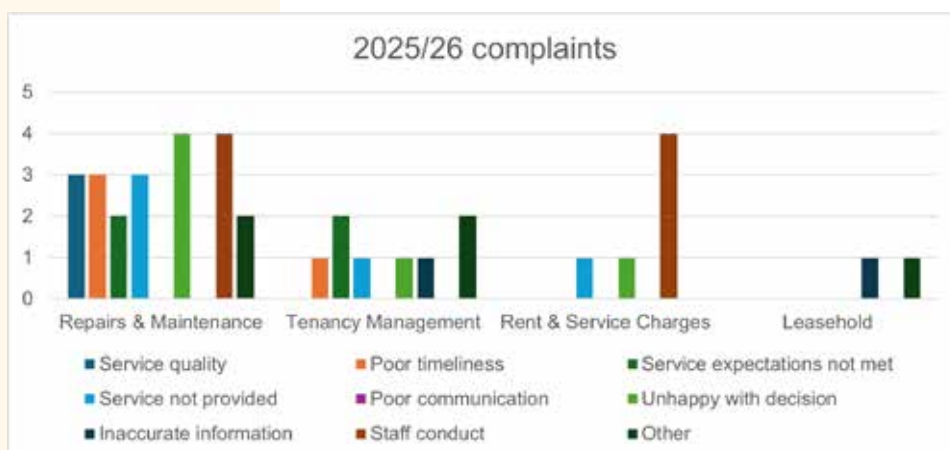
Our Annual Report to tenants 2025/26

↔ 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
- Held four Independent Living Forum meetings
- Worked with the Tenant Scrutiny Panel to complete a scrutiny exercise of of housing communications and start a review of our approach to dealing with damp and mould.
- Sent out two newsletters and two bulletins.
- Dealt with 37 Stage 1 complaints, as shown:



How are we doing?

	2024/25 result	2025/26 result
Overall satisfaction with the housing service	70%	76%
Residents satisfied the council listens to and acts on their views	54%	61%
Complaints responded to on time	96.55%	100%
Total number of tenant complaints received (per 1,000 properties)	16.22	15.33

During 2025/26 we have launched two new groups: our Tenant Communications Group, who work with us on the content, look and feel of newsletters, bulletins and other materials, and also our Block and Estate Champions Group, who help us check that your communal areas and estates are being maintained to the required standard.

We also introduced our Housing Fair Access Policy in July 2025. This sets out our commitment to ensuring all tenants can access our services fairly and receive any support they may need to do so.

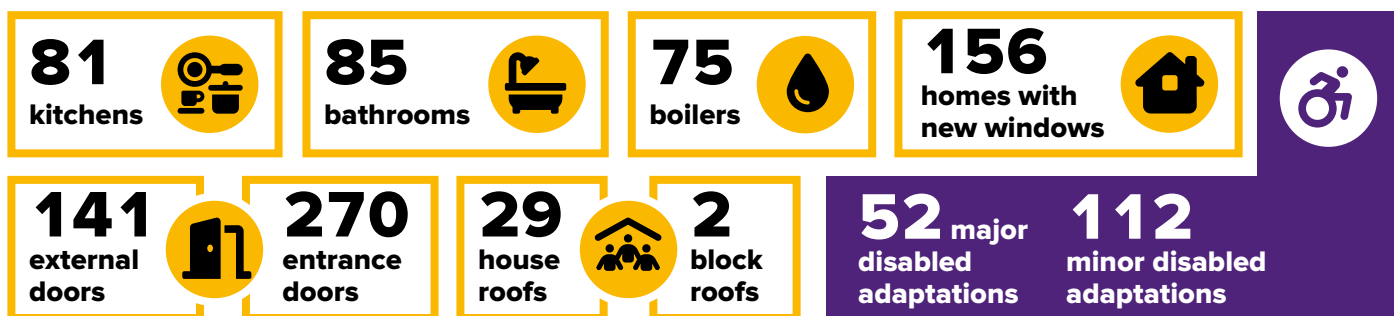
🔧 Repairs and Maintenance

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 £8.6 million on work to improve your homes, including:

Replacements of



How are we doing?

	Target	2024/25 result	2025/26 result
Day-to-day repairs completed on time	90%	98.1%	98%
Day-to-day repair appointments kept	95%	96.3%	96%
Heating repairs completed on time	98%	82%	95.7%
Heating repair appointments kept	98%	96%	96.6%
Properties with a valid Landlord Gas Safety Record	100%	100%	99.96%
Properties with a valid Electrical Certificate	100%	100%	99.76%
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%

In April 2025, we entered into a new contract with Mears. The mobilisation has been very smooth and efficient, with new offices established in Folkestone.

Unfortunately we did not meet our target for all properties to have a valid gas safety certificate at the end of March 2026; this was due to just one property being overdue, which was completed in April.

Similarly, eight properties did not have a valid electrical certificate at the end of March 2026. Three of these had been inspected and we were awaiting the paperwork, and the other five were completed in April.

We have also started a new gas contract with T Brown Group from April 2026, which we expect will result in improvements in heating repairs performance.

This year, we have:

- Introduced a new Housing Hate Crime and Incident Policy in January 2026. This sets out our approach to dealing with hate crime and hate-related incidents, and sits alongside our Housing Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.
- Introduced a new Housing Neighbourhood Management Policy in March 2026. This explains our commitments in key service areas relating to the management of housing communal areas and land. Tenant feedback on the draft policy led to several amendments to the content before the final version was adopted.
- Completed 520 wellbeing plans with tenants in our Independent Living schemes.

Find out how we've supported residents in challenging situations in our case study on page 9

Our Annual Report to tenants 2025/26

How are we doing?

	2024/25 result	2025/26 result
Satisfaction that we keep communal areas clean and well maintained	64%	74%
Satisfaction that we make a positive contribution to neighbourhoods	53%	60%
Satisfaction with our approach to handling anti-social behaviour	48%	54%

Tenant satisfaction with the way we handle anti-social behaviour (ASB) has increased by 6% compared to last year. During the year, we created a new post of Neighbourhood Relations Officer, who investigates all serious ASB cases in our general

needs stock. She has built positive relationships with tenants and is available to support any tenant who is experiencing ASB. During 2026, we will also continue our work to achieve Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation.

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:

- Introduced a revised tenancy agreement, which came into effect for all tenants in June 2025. The previous tenancy agreement had been in place since 2006 and needed updating. Tenants were consulted on the draft new agreement, and your feedback helped shape some amendments to the new terms and conditions.
- Let 200 homes: 33 to existing tenants transferring to another property / 129 to people on the housing waiting list / 38 mutual exchanges.
- Reduced the current tenant rent arrears owed to the council by over £116,000 between September 2025 and March 2026.

How are we doing?

	Target	2024/25 result	2025/26 result
Average re-let time	25 days	22.26 days	23.75 days
Rent collected as a percentage of rent owed	98%	99.93%	100%
Current tenant rent arrears	3%	2%	2.04%

We have met our targets for re-letting empty homes and for rent collection. During 2026/27 we will be reviewing our Tenancy Policy, which sets out the types of tenancies we offer and how we deal with

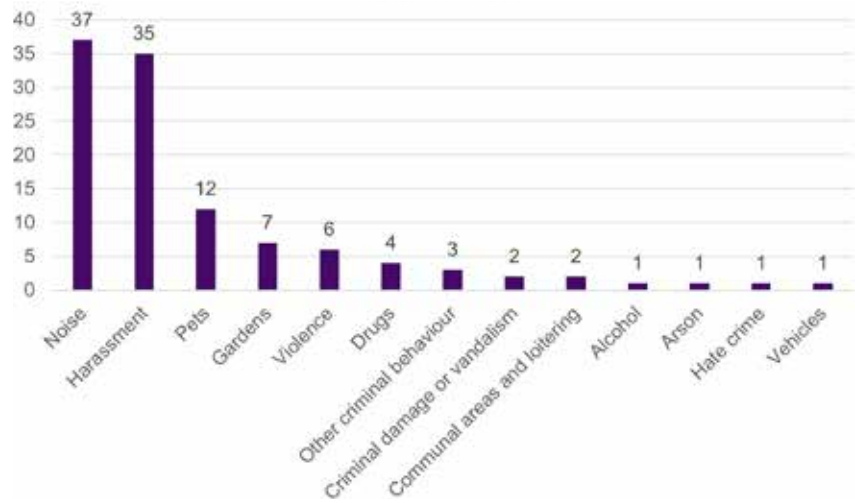
tenancy-related issues. We will also be reviewing our Allocations Policy, which sets out how we allocate homes that become available for letting.

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:

- Investigated 112 anti-social behaviour (ASB) cases, as shown:



↔ Money matters

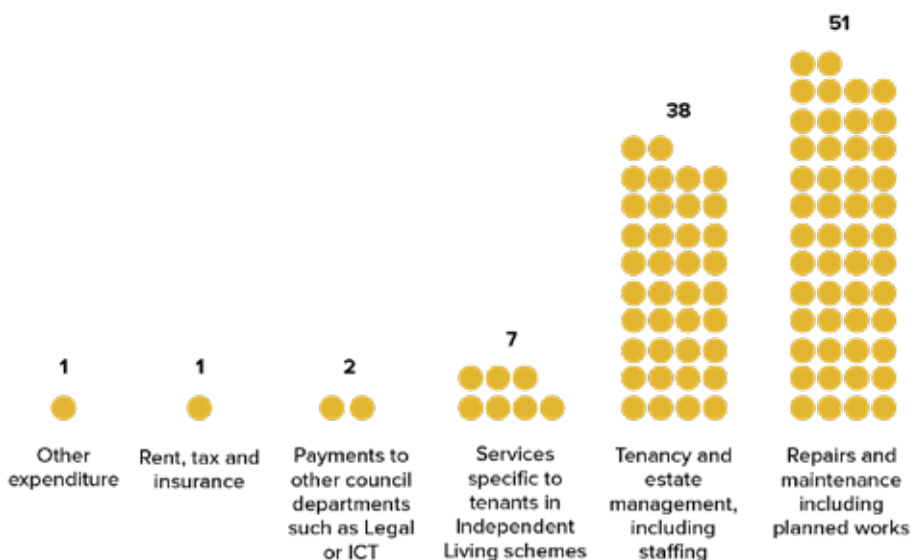
Where our money comes from...

We received over £20 million of income in 2025/26. The chart 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: £201,510
- Director of Housing & Operations: £151,634
- Director of Strategy & Resources: £151,342
- Interim Director of Governance & Finance (left towards the end of the year): £135,929
- Director of Finance (started towards the end of the year): £5,460

The housing teams managing your area

Your neighbourhood team

Neighbourhood Services works to ensure that service requests and formal complaints are dealt with promptly and that any issues such as safeguarding, harassment or anti-social behaviour are promptly investigated. Alongside this they also deal with any tenancy matters and can refer tenants to other agencies for assistance.

The team is led by **Tom Harding, Neighbourhood Services Manager**. He also oversees the regular programme of estate inspections and manages our caretakers. Alongside this he oversees our cleaning contractors as well as the in-house grounds maintenance service on estates.

Listed below are areas that each of your Neighbourhood Officers look after. You will often see them when they are out and about on your estates, but please remember that your first point of contact for any housing-related enquiries should always be to email housing.service@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk or call our Customer Support team on **01303 853300**.

Neighbourhood Services Team Leader	Neighbourhood Officer	Areas covered
Alex Stock	Sue Bunney	Lydd, Marsh Rural, St Mary's Bay
	Mark Emerson	Central Folkestone and Harbour area
	Kelly Flannery	Cheriton
	Margarita Gwanzura	North Folkestone and surrounding villages
	Debbie Helliwell	Dymchurch, Sandgate, Lympne, Burmarsh
	Hayley Kent	East Folkestone
	Nkoli Onyejeli	Hythe

Your Independent Living team

The Independent Living team supports tenants over the age of 60 to continue living as independently as possible while providing them with an enhanced housing management service. This means that tenants in independent living schemes receive regular wellbeing checks from their Independent Living Officer. The team is led by **Mike Bailey, Tenant Engagement & Independent Living Manager**.

Independent Living Team Leader	Independent Living Officer	Schemes covered
Jan Hatcher	Irene Crowley	Mittell Court, Lydd / Prescott House, New Romney / Romney Marsh House, Dymchurch
	Maria Miller	Albert Costain Court, Folkestone / Bradfoord Court, Folkestone / Stephen Court, Folkestone
	Kate Pawlica	Philippa House, Folkestone / Walmsley House, Folkestone
Jayne Lucas	Gabi Dunn	Green Court, Folkestone / Nailbourne Court, Lyminge
	Gill Thomas	Mackeson Court, Hythe / Middelburg House, Cheriton / Stockham Court, Cheriton
	John Rees	Churchill Court, Hythe / Halliday Court, Hythe / Win Pine House, Hythe



Your neighbourhood team

Other specialist supporting staff:

- Rachel Buckley, Neighbourhood Relations Officer who deals with more complex cases of anti-social behaviour in tenanted properties
- Rikki and Francis, Caretakers who make sure the communal areas in our blocks of flats are clean and well maintained
- Loren Paine, Tenant Liaison Officer who works with our involved tenants and leaseholders
- Rich Parker, Homeownership & Service Charge Manager who manages our leasehold properties, shared ownership, the Right to Buy scheme and service charges

You can always find the most up to date version of who is part of the Neighbourhood Services team on our website folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/council-tenants-leaseholder-service/neighbourhood-areas

Want to meet your Neighbourhood Officer?

Then come along to your local neighbourhood inspections.

Find out more about how to get involved on our website folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/council-tenants-leaseholder-service/neighbourhood-inspections/2

Case study: How our involvement helped Charlie*

Charlie has a child with complex needs that can result in “meltdowns”, including screaming and banging on walls. When this happens, Charlie’s neighbour, Paul, bangs on Charlie’s front door and shouts at her and her child.

We spoke to both Charlie and Paul, and found that although there was noise nuisance from Charlie’s home, it was not deliberate. We advised Charlie on practical steps she could take to mitigate the effects of her child’s “meltdowns” on her neighbour. We suggested mediation, but Paul was not willing to do this.

We also worked with the police, and we identified that Paul had used abusive and intimidating language. As such, we found that Charlie was not in fact causing ASB, but Paul was causing ASB by being verbally abusive in response.

We issued Paul with a Community Protection Warning, requiring him to not behave in an aggressive or abusive manner towards his neighbours, or anyone else.

* Names have been changed to protect identities.

Meet your Housing Leadership Team



Andrew Blaszkowicz **Director of Housing & Operations**

Andy has overall responsibility for the housing service, including ensuring we comply with the Regulator of Social Housing's consumer standards.

He also oversees other areas of the council including grounds maintenance, environmental health and licensing, new developments, engineering and buildings.



Gillian Butler **Chief Officer – Housing**

Gill is responsible for the day-to-day operations of all the housing departments; assets and neighbourhood management. Gill's focus is on ensuring we deliver high quality and customer-focused services to all our tenants and leaseholders. Gill oversees the work of the Housing Income team, Customer Support and other corporate teams that interact with tenants on a day-to-day basis.

Gill manages the following teams:



Mick Hale	Tom Harding	Mike Bailey	Adrian Hammond	Rich Parker
Housing Assets Lead Manager	Neighbourhood Services Manager	Tenant Engagement & Independent Living Manager	Strategic Housing Manager	Homeownership & Service Charge Manager
Repairs team	Neighbourhoods team	Independent Living team	Allocations team	Leasehold and Right to Buy
Compliance team	Caretakers	Tenant Liaison Officer	Homelessness team	Service charges
Planned works team			Housing Strategy team	
Retrofit team			Private Sector Housing team	

Comfortable energy efficient homes

Bringing solar power to council homes

A new solar panel programme is underway for council homes, marking another step forward in improving energy efficiency and reducing carbon emissions across our housing stock.

This is the housing service's first dedicated solar installation programme, with the two-year scheme set to install roof-mounted panels on 250 properties, helping to cut both the council's carbon footprint and tenants' energy bills.



How homes are selected

Properties have been selected based on their current energy performance and their suitability for improvement, supporting the council's work to meet Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES).

Contractor Ian Williams has already written to the first 100 households included in the programme and is now contacting tenants to arrange surveys. Once approved, installations are expected to be straightforward, with a typical solar panel installation taking less than a day. All completed work will then be inspected and signed off by council surveyors.

Improving energy ratings across our stock

The new scheme builds on the success of the council's recent Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) project, which delivered energy efficiency improvements to 463 council homes.

As part of that work, every property in the SHDF programme received upgrades that raised its Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating to C or above. As a result, 80% of the council's housing stock is now rated EPC C or higher, showing significant progress towards more energy-efficient homes.

Home improvement surveys

Why we carry out surveys

By law, social housing landlords must check that their homes meet the required standards. To ensure our homes meet these standards we carry out home improvement surveys every five years.

What happens during a survey

The surveys are designed to help assess the condition of key parts of your home, including kitchens, bathrooms, heating, windows, roofs and walls. The information we collect helps us plan ahead for repairs and replacements, while also identifying any routine issues that may need attention.

Surveys also give you the opportunity to raise any concerns you have about your home. In some cases, the surveyor may be able to provide advice during the visit or refer issues to the appropriate council team.

Booking and preparing for your visit

When a property is due for a survey, the surveyor will contact you to arrange a convenient appointment. Ensuring we are able to access your home on the allocated day is important, as this enables us to make sure the property remains a safe and comfortable place for you to live.

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

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

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.

For suggestions, compliments or complaints about the Housing Management Service

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

[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 T Brown Group on **01303 698 005** or freephone **0800 031 8849**.

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

