



Agenda

Meeting: **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
Date: **30 January 2024**
Time: **6.00 pm**
Place: **Council Chamber - Civic Centre Folkestone**

To: **All members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

The committee will consider the matters, listed below, at the date, time and place shown above. The meeting will be open to the press and public.

Members of the committee, who wish to have information on any matter arising on the agenda, which is not fully covered in these papers, are requested to give notice, prior to the meeting, to the Chair or appropriate officer.

This meeting will be webcast live to the council's website at <https://folkestone-hythe.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>. Although unlikely, no guarantee can be made that Members of the public in attendance will not appear in the webcast footage. It is therefore recommended that anyone with an objection to being filmed does not enter the council chamber.

Please note there are 37 seats available for members of the public, which will be reserved for those speaking or participating at the meeting. The remaining available seats will be given on a first come, first served basis.

1. **Apologies for Absence**
2. **Declarations of Interest (Pages 3 - 4)**

Members of the committee should declare any interests which fall under the following categories:

- a) disclosable pecuniary interests (DPI);
- b) other significant interests (OSI);

Queries about the agenda? Need a different format?

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website
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c) voluntary announcements of other interests.

3. **Minutes (Pages 5 - 12)**

To consider and approve, as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2023.

4. **Minutes of the Finance and Performance Sub-Committee (Pages 13 - 20)**

To consider and approve, as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on 05 December 2023.

5. **Change of Membership - Finance and Performance Scrutiny Sub Committee**

Following the changes to the council's political balance, which were reported to Full Council on 24 January 2024, Councillor Godfrey is no longer a Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Committee are therefore asked to note that Councillor A Martin has now been appointed as his replacement.

6. **Cabinet Member updates**

In accordance with the Constitution Councillor Jim Martin Leader and Cabinet Member for Otterpool Park and Planning Policy will be attending the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide a general update in relation to their portfolio.

7. **FABF phase two public engagement feedback**

An overview of the feedback from the public engagement activities in November 2023 in relation to phase two of the project, and the responses to the main themes from the project team.

8. **2023 Tenant Satisfaction Survey Action Plan (Pages 21 - 64)**

This report presents the findings from the 2023 tenant satisfaction survey, and the resulting draft Action Plan which has been developed in partnership with the Strategic Tenant Advisory Panel.

Declarations of Interest

Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI)

Where a Member has a new or registered DPI in a matter under consideration they must disclose that they have an interest and, unless the Monitoring Officer has agreed in advance that the DPI is a 'Sensitive Interest', explain the nature of that interest at the meeting. The Member must withdraw from the meeting at the commencement of the consideration of any matter in which they have declared a DPI and must not participate in any discussion of, or vote taken on, the matter unless they have been granted a dispensation permitting them to do so. If during the consideration of any item a Member becomes aware that they have a DPI in the matter they should declare the interest immediately and, subject to any dispensations, withdraw from the meeting.

Other Significant Interest (OSI)

Where a Member is declaring an OSI they must also disclose the interest and explain the nature of the interest at the meeting. The Member must withdraw from the meeting at the commencement of the consideration of any matter in which they have declared a OSI and must not participate in any discussion of, or vote taken on, the matter unless they have been granted a dispensation to do so or the meeting is one at which members of the public are permitted to speak for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to the matter. In the latter case, the Member may only participate on the same basis as a member of the public and cannot participate in any discussion of, or vote taken on, the matter and must withdraw from the meeting in accordance with the Council's procedure rules.

Voluntary Announcement of Other Interests (VAOI)

Where a Member does not have either a DPI or OSI but is of the opinion that for transparency reasons alone s/he should make an announcement in respect of a matter under consideration, they can make a VAOI. A Member declaring a VAOI may still remain at the meeting and vote on the matter under consideration.

Note to the Code:

Situations in which a Member may wish to make a VAOI include membership of outside bodies that have made representations on agenda items; where a Member knows a person involved, but does not have a close association with that person; or where an item would affect the well-being of a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc. but not his/her financial position. It should be emphasised that an effect on the financial position of a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc OR an application made by a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc would both probably constitute either an OSI or in some cases a DPI.

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Minutes

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Held at:	Council Chamber - Civic Centre Folkestone
Date	Tuesday, 14 November 2023
Present	Councillors James Butcher, Bridget Chapman, Laura Davison (Chair), David Godfrey, Anita Jones (Minute 30), Alan Martin, Elaine Martin, Connor McConville and John Wing (Vice-Chair)
Apologies for Absence:	None.
Officers Present:	Andy Blaszkowicz (Director of Housing and Operations), Gill Butler (Chief Officer - Housing), Jyotsna Leney (Health, Wellbeing and Partnership Senior Specialist), Daisy Madder (Safeguarding Specialist), Fred Miller (Transportation Lead Specialist), Ola Owolabi (Chief Financial Services Officer), and Jonathan Smith (Chief Accountant)
Others Present:	Councillors Jim Martin, Tim Prater, Jeremy Speakman, Polly Blakemore and Rebecca Shoob.

27. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillors James Butcher and John Wing both declared an interest as Directors of Oportunitas.

28. **Minutes**

The minutes of both meetings held on 31 October 2023, were submitted, approved, and signed by the Chair.

29. **Cabinet Member updates**

In accordance with the Constitution Councillor Tim Prater, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Governance provided the committee with a general update, which included some of the following topics:

Budget monitoring, Treasury Strategy, Investment Strategy, MTFs, Transformation Programme, STAR Chamber, Governance, including an update on proposed committee system. Councillor Tim Prater advised the Council is closing the budget gap; however, members would still have further decisions to make.

After the update, Members raised several points, including the following:

- The role of Scrutiny in the new governance structure and the complexity in which some of the reports are written, may provide the Committee's in the new structure with a challenge on the night.

Members also wanted to thank officers for their work and we're happy to hear that more members would be involved.

Councillor Tim Prater, responded to points raised by members:

- An issue the council faces is trying to facilitate a streamlined process, where members would be able to carry out their business, scrutinise and make decisions during the meetings, but without compromising the effectiveness of the decision-making process. There would also need to be work done on the modelling of reports.

In accordance with the Constitution Councillors Jeremy Speakman, Cabinet Member for Assets and Operations, also, provided the Committee with a general update, which included some of the following:

- Waste Management, it was advised that an independent audit was carried out and a few issues were raised around street cleansing and performance monitoring. An action plan which was accepted by the auditors has been implemented.
- Grounds Maintenance and how despite the service being stretched, the council provides a good service. Councillor Jeremy Speakman went on to say our parks are something to be proud of.
- Projects including Ship Street, Bigginswood, new toilet blocks and the changing places toilets.

Members raised several points, including the following:

- What is the Council's recycling rate?
- Output from the STAR Chamber process, the proposed plan to change for replacement bins, irrespective of the cause.
- Pressures to reduce bins, despite residents wanting more.
- The Council could look at other organisations, volunteers and community engagement to help, such as Marsh Litter Pickers.

30. **Proposed On-Street Parking Charges**

Councillor Polly Blakemore, Cabinet Member for Transport, Regulatory Services and Building Control, introduced the item and made members aware of the supplementary information supplied today (attached).

The report sought the views of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on recommendations to Cabinet for parking charges to be introduced in and around shopping streets in Folkestone, Sandgate, Hythe, and New Romney as shown in appendix 1.

Members raised several points, including the following:

- Several members raised concerns that the implementation of these restrictions could have negative effects on local businesses across the district and may drive residents away from the high street. It was also discussed as to whether the restriction would have any beneficial gain for the council and whether the proposed plans would lead to the desired vehicle churn.
- Members also asked if consultation could be extended.
- If implemented, would the monies gained be ring fenced for active travel?
- Members also raised concerns as to why the closest part of Sandgate Road to the town, leading into Bouverie Place, was not included in the proposed plan?
- Members also asked as to why other areas such as Cheriton, Dymchurch and Lydd were not included in the proposed plan?
- Members also commented on the fact of poor public transportation infrastructure, and lack of bike storage.

Both, Fred Miller, Transportation Lead Specialist and Councillor Polly Blakemore, responded to the points raised by members:

- It was clarified that the map in appendix 1, titled: Folkestone – Bouverie Square, Bouverie Road, Christchurch Road, Cheriton Place, Manor Road, Sandgate Road was in fact incorrect and that the proposed pay and display plan includes the part of Sandgate Road, leading into Bouverie Place (revised map attached).
- It was also advised that the statutory consultation was already extended past the minimum 21 days, it is proposed to run from 24 November 2023 to 18 December 2023 (24 days).
- The council is looking at the four main shopping areas within the district with other areas to potentially be addressed in due course.
- Charges proposed are higher than off-street parking to encourage people to utilise the car parks.
- It was advised that monies gained could be ring fenced for active travel and infrastructure.
- It was elaborated that with the higher turnover, spaces will free up quicker with the proposed 30 minutes on-street pay & display bays in and

around shopping streets in Folkestone, Sandgate, Hythe and New Romney. Drivers must either obtain a ticket from the machine and display it or book the free session via RingGo to avoid a penalty charge.

The Committee resolved to consider the recommendation to cabinet.

31. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2023-2053

Gill Butler, Chief Officer for Housing, introduced the item.

The report set out the parameters of the work and spend that is undertaken by the Council's housing team, underpinning every decision taken in the HRA. The Business Plan (BP) model aligns with the direction and objectives of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), alongside the commitments of the HRA capital programme and acquisitions and new build ambitions for HRA led housing. The HRA BP ensures that the Council continues to provide a financially balanced housing management service that meets legislation and delivers excellent customer service to our tenants and leaseholders across the district. Once approved by Members, a summary version of the HRA BP will be published in 2024.

After the presentation Members raised several points, including some of the following:

- Members advised that they found it challenging to scrutinise the item due to the complexity of the reports and suggested that work needs to be done on the narrative of the reports and figures going forward.
- Members requested clarity on the proposed service charges de-pooling exercise.
- Is the Council on-track to deliver its target on affordable homes for people with support needs?
- 2.6 of the report details the net present value (NPV) of net zero (break-even) over 30 years. Does this need reviewing?
- The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund – Is the Council assuming future waves of this government funding?
- With the HRA proposing annual resources of £5,000,000 to deliver additional council homes as stated in the report, is there an assumption if we build on our own land those costs will come down?
- Are there any updates on the Ship Street development?
- Does the £38,000,000 capital investment for tenants' health and safety include upgrading the Council's current housing stock?
- Will the item come back to members if there are any future changes?

Members wanted to thank Officers for the extensive report provided.

Andy Blaszkowicz, Director of Housing & Operations, Gill Butler, Chief Officer of Housing and Jonathan Smith, Chief Accountant responded to comments raised by members:

- Currently the tenants pay a flat (or pooled) service charge fee, however, the council is looking at apportioning that out. (Future de-pooling of services charges will bring in income owed to the HRA (at least £400,000 p.a. from 2025/26). A separate paper on this project will be submitted to Members in the New Year.
- The targets that relate to the provision of affordable homes for people with support needs are corporate targets that cover all provision including Housing Association.
- The Council has complex modelling which looks at every scheme and assesses it's NPV / viability. Each potential scheme is reviewed on a scheme-by-scheme basis.
- The assumption in the HRA BP is that the £1million a year provision for decarbonisation will be match funded by future SHDF waves and other sources of such funding in the medium term.
- The provision within the HRA for new build and acquisitions is based on securing some funding from other sources such as Homes England or BLRF the preference will be for the council to consider smaller sites where we own the land and perhaps where we can add value to existing council stock on that site.
- Currently the Ship Street project is in the design process to formalise a planning application. Reports will be going to Cabinet in due course. The Council hopes to submit its planning application soon.
- Capital investment for tenants' health and safety includes meeting decent homes legislation, upgrading the Council's current housing stock including work on damp and mould where it relates to structural causes. Officers will be reviewing year on year, with the plan to bring items and any significant amendments back to members every 5 years.

Gill Butler, Chief Officer of Housing, advised the committee that members could contact her with further comments/feedback before the deadline for Cabinet papers.

Proposed by Councillor Alan Martin,
Seconded by Councillor James Butcher; and,

Resolved:

- 1. To receive and note report C/23/57.**
- 2. To consider the presentation and provide feedback in order to inform a report to Cabinet.**

(As there was no dissent the recommendations were approved by affirmation of the meeting).

32. **Exclusion of the Public**

Proposed by Councillor Elaine Martin,
Seconded by Councillor David Godfrey; and,

Resolved:

To exclude the public for the following item of business on the grounds that it is likely to disclose exempt information, as defined in paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 –

‘Information relating to any individual.’

(As there was no dissent the recommendations were approved by affirmation of the meeting).

33. **Refresh of the Council's Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy 2023 and general update.**

Jyotsna Leney, Health, Wellbeing and Partnership Senior Specialist introduced the item.

The Council is part of the statutory safeguarding role within the wider public sector, with responsibilities to children, young people and vulnerable adults. The children, young people and vulnerable adults safeguarding policy of the Council has been updated and is attached at Appendix 1. OSC were advised of the changes made to the 2021 policy as the refresh takes place every two years. OSC were also advised of the wide range of activity that has taken place over the last year with updates on safeguarding practice.

An explanation was given to members on why part of the meeting was to be heard in private. A redacted version of the policy will be presented to full council excluding personal details (names and mobile telephone numbers). This version will be [placed on the external website. Members asked for a flow chart on how Councillors and members of the public can make safeguarding referrals. This will be made clearer on the website and link to the new policy. Anonymised case studies will also be added to the website. Contractor training on safeguarding will be part of a further review on commissioning key contracts.

Proposed by Councillor Connor McConville,
Seconded by Councillor Elaine Martin; and,

Resolved:

- 1. To receive and note report C/23/56 and note the content of this report and accompanying safeguarding policy attached.**
- 2. To note that Cabinet will also receive a copy of the policy before being presented to full council to adopt.**
- 3. To note that the Council's website has been updated to include additional content relating to safeguarding including further advice to external contractors.**
- 4. To note additional work carried out eg statutory safeguarding audits, reviews and the creation of a care leaver support note.**

(As there was no dissent the recommendations were approved by affirmation of the meeting).

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Minutes

Finance and Performance Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Held at: Council Chamber - Civic Centre Folkestone

Date: Tuesday, 5 December 2023

Present: Councillors James Butcher, Laura Davison,
David Godfrey, Connor McConville (Chair) and
John Wing.

Apologies for Absence: None.

Officers Present: Andy Blaszkowicz (Director of Housing and Operations),
Gavin Edwards (Performance and Improvement
Specialist), Ewan Green (Director of Strategy and
Resources), Jake Hamilton (Committee Services Officer),
Lydia Morrison (Interim S151 Officer) and Ola Owolabi
(Chief Financial Services Officer).

Others Present: Councillors, Tim Prater and Elaine Martin.

10. **Declarations of interest**

Councillors James Butcher and John Wing both declared an interest as Directors of Oportunitas.

11. **Q2 Performance Report 2023/24**

Gavin Edwards, Performance & Improvement Specialist introduced the report which provided an update on the Council's performance for the second quarter of the year covering 1st July - 30th September 2023. The report enables the Council to assess progress against the approved key performance indicators arising from the Council's Corporate Action Plan.

Members raised several points, including:

- The great results on street cleanliness and graffiti as detailed in the presentation. Members were curious as to whether these results are publicised. And how the fly tipping KPI's are measured? The Performance & Improvement Specialist responded to comments,

advising that he would check with officers on the fly tipping measures. But confirmed the KPI's are published in this report online. Conversations could be had with the council's communication team on further publication of the KPI's.

- Members also raised concern regarding KPI's surrounding homelessness, rough sleepers, and temporary accommodation. And asked what more the council could do to improve those figures. The Performance & Improvement Specialist made members aware that a discussion had already taken place with officers. The number of rough sleepers remains high; however, the council is working with outside organisations, but there are still rough sleepers that are not engaging with services.
- Members commented on the significant increase in long-term empty properties and ask that more information be provided. The Performance & Improvement Specialist advised members that a written response would be provided to the committee in due course.

(As there was no dissent the committee approved by affirmation of the meeting to receive and note report C/23/60).

12. **Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 to 2027/28**

Ola Owolabi, Chief Financial Services Officer introduced the item and provided the committee with a presentation.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy ('MTFS') is the Council's key financial planning document. It puts the financial perspective on the Council's Corporate Plan priorities, expressing the aims and objectives of the various plans and strategies in financial terms over the four year period ending 31st March 2028. It covers both revenue and revenue implications for capital spend for the General Fund. Also included are the Council's reserves policies. The MTFS is a key element of sound corporate governance and financial management.

After the presentation members raised several points, including:

- Since the original report was published has the MTFS inflation assumption shifted? The Chief Financial Services Officer confirmed that the inflation percentage had decreased from 7.9% to 5.5% (as seen on slide 10 of the attached presentation).
- Is the current MTFS model based on the best- or worst-case scenario. The Chief Financial Services Officers advised the committee the current model is based on the best-case scenario.
- The other non-service related grants cover several different grants including the s31 grant. Could the committee be provided with a sense of how that figure (£284,000) could fluctuate. The Chief Financial Services Officer responded advising the council benefits from various grants

throughout the year, some of which fluctuate considerably. Until the council receives further information from central government, the council must be prudent in its projections and set aside reserves to deal with such scenarios.

- Members expressed concerns with the difficulty to consider savings when the council is still waiting on information from central government.
- In respect of Table 2 (Reserves available at Q2 – 2023/24 as at October 2023 – Page 59 of the agenda) the earmarked reserves look set to reduce by approximately 20% over the next 2 years. Is this to be expected. And do members get further updates on how these reserves are progressing. Lydia Morrison, Interim Director of Corporate Services (s151) responded advising a report was presented to Cabinet, requesting a new transformation reserve be created. Most of the movement out of the reserves next year is to support this new fund and to continue to fund a number of key front line posts. Future reports will be going to Cabinet which will detail movements.
- How is the capital programme funded and what proportion is sensible to fund by borrowing. The Chief Financial Services Officer explained that within the council treasury management, there is an operational limit. However, it is important that borrowing for capital programmes is the last resort.
- What Information will be released during the consultation to help members of the public understand. The Chief Financial Services Officer responded stating the consultation is not yet agreed, however, ideas are welcome.
- In relation to the MTFS assumption (appendix 5), how does the CT base increase percentage relate to the final tax base figure. The Chief Financial Services Officer advised the committee that CT base percentage is currently being reviewed by the Revenues & Benefits team. However, the figure presented in the report is a 1% increase based on last year.
- Can a further explanation be given to appendix 2, in relation to the (surplus)/deficit to General Reserves and the carry forward reserves.
- Will the council be reviewing the STAR Chamber process to see if any assumptions have changed. The Interim Director of Corporate Services (s151) responded stating there will not be a further review. The expectation is that the STAR Chamber process has set the budget for those services next year.

(As there was no dissent the committee approved by affirmation of the meeting to receive and note report C/23/64).

13. Budget Strategy 2024/25

Ola Owolabi, Chief Financial Services Officer introduced the item and provided the committee with a presentation.

The Budget Strategy sets out the guidelines for preparing the 2024/25 Budget. It supports the Corporate Plan and aligns with the direction and objectives of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

In terms of financial planning, the Budget Strategy takes account of current and future financial and economic conditions and the Government's Autumn Statement delivered on for 22 November 2023.

The Budget Strategy also sets out the underlying assumptions and initial budget-setting proposals and provides a timetable for delivering a balanced budget for approval and final Council Tax setting by Full Council on 28 February 2024.

After the presentation members raised several points, including:

- Members were happy to see that the consultation would run until 02 February 2024. But asked that the consultation be assessable in the context of the information being easy to understand.
- Are there any items within the general fund revenue growth and income realignment proposal that the committee might want to have a view upon. The Interim Director of Corporate Services (s151) advised that this year the council looked at the trend on income. And has been pragmatic in its approach and proposals.
- Is there an underlining reason for the reduction in income from the Lifeline service? The Director of Housing & Operations confirmed the Lifeline service will undergo a fundamental review, with the aim to understand the income trends and consider what actions should be taken.

(As there was no dissent the committee approved by affirmation of the meeting to receive and note report C/23/64).

14. **Options Report on whether to continue to maintain Kent County Council (KCC) owned grass in the District, which is subsidised by Folkestone & Hythe District Council (FHDC)**

Andy Blaszkowicz, Director of Housing & Operations introduced the item.

The report outlined the current arrangement with Kent County Council (KCC) to maintain rural and urban verges and the financial implications of this for Folkestone & Hythe District Council (FHDC). Various options were outlined in the report for consideration to reduce budgets in line with the Star Chamber exercise.

Member raised several points, including:

- Members sought clarification of option 5 as detailed in the report. The Director of Housing & Operations confirmed that option 5 is asking

Cabinet to make decision on 13 December 2023 to hand the service back to KCC in 12 months. Allowing the council time to work with KCC on a smooth transition.

- Members were concerned whether some of the options would result in more complaints from members of the public, especially on verges that effect highway vision.
- Members also raised concern as to whether handing the service back would have a negative impact on procuring local businesses. The Director of Housing & Operations explained that most of the service currently is fulfilled in-house, with the exception of the rural work. This is undertaken by a local contractor who would be keen to carry on working for KCC should the service transfer back to them.
- Members asked what the difference was with handing the service back as per option 3 and option 5. The Director of Housing & Operations advised the difference being, with option 5, the council will still hand the service back but there will be a 12-month hand-over period, allowing both authorities to work together for a clean transition of services.

(As there was no dissent the committee approved by affirmation of the meeting to receive and note report C/23/61).

15. **Waste & Street Cleansing Saving Proposals**

Ewan Green, Director of Strategy & Resources introduced the item and provided members with a presentation outlining proposed savings to the waste and street cleansing contract.

After the presentation members raised points, including:

- Why is the council charging more for the direct debit garden waste scheme opposed to the annual charge as detailed in appendix 2 of report C/23/71 (Cabinet agenda 13 December 2023). The Director of Strategy & Resources advised the committee he would come back to members in relation to this matter.
- Members were concerned that reducing litter bins would result in increased fly tipping.
- What is the rationale behind the proposed reduction of litter bins to a figure of 775? The Director of Strategy & Resources advised as part of the STAR Chamber process, services were asked to reduce costs by 12.5% as a minimum. The proposed figure equates to that circa that percentage but is also in line with officers view of the overall number of litter bins that is affordable within the contract.
- Has the council considered sponsorship in relation to litter bins. The Director of Strategy & Resources responded by advising that officers have considered options for this but that a key consideration was the quality of the litter bin. He would be happy to revisit this and feedback to members.

- Several members agreed with the sponsorship idea and proposed engagement with parish/town councils could be beneficial.
- Members were concerned that the increase in the bulky waste charge could result in the service being difficult to access for low-income families and asked whether anything could be done to mitigate this.
- Members asked whether the fees and charges would be part of the consultation process. Officers confirmed that it would.
- Members asked for clarification in relation to the addendum and the £200,000 contract savings. The Director of Strategy & Resources confirmed that the saving will be met through negotiation with Veolia and as an example this may be achieved through not filling vacant posts in relation to the street cleansing service
- Members advised they would prefer to see a fundamental review of the litter bins rather than just a figure of reduction.

(As there was no dissent the committee approved by affirmation of the meeting to receive and note report OS/23/06).

16. **Overview of Community Grants**

Ewan Green, Director of Strategy & Resources introduced the item.

The report presented an overview of grants made by the Council to external community based organisations.

Members raised several points, including:

- Members observed that ward grants are proposed to be reduced more than the community grants. The Director of Strategy & Resources confirmed that during the STAR Chamber process it was discussed that a 15% reduction was reasonable.
- Does the council analyse themes of community grants (i.e. sports, arts, etc) and how they align with the council's corporate plan. Also, has any geographical work been conducted in relation to community grant spend. The Director of Strategy & Resources advised the committee that a number of grants are distributed through service level agreements and others by the work officers do on the ground.
- Some members considered whether geographical work could be conducted to make sure that the community grants are being distributed across the district fairly. Other members advised that the work would not be accurate as some projects/organisations have an outreach across the district. The Director of Strategy & Resources advised that Member ward grants are agreed on a geographic basis and that there are several other grant programmes that operate district wide.
- Members commented on some of the proposed significant reductions in community grants for certain projects/organisations (i.e. Academy FM) and asked for the rationale behind this. The Director of Strategy & Resources advised that the proposed reductions had come from the

budget development process and discussion in the Star Chambers with Portfolio Holders.

- Members advised that ward grants are invaluable and essential to the community.

(As there was no dissent the committee approved by affirmation of the meeting to receive and note report OS/23/05).

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This Report will be made public on 22 January 2024.



Report Number **OS/23/08**

To: Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 30 January 2024
Status: Non Key Decision
Responsible Officer: Gill Butler, Chief Officer – Housing
Mike Bailey, Tenant Engagement & Wellbeing
Senior Specialist
Cabinet Member: Councillor Rebecca Shoob, Cabinet Member for
Housing and Homelessness

SUBJECT: 2023 TENANT SATISFACTION SURVEY ACTION
PLAN

SUMMARY:

This report presents the findings from the 2023 tenant satisfaction survey, and the resulting draft Action Plan which has been developed in partnership with the Strategic Tenant Advisory Panel.

RECOMMENDATIONS:


1. To receive and note report OS/23/08.
2. To note the results of the 2023 tenant satisfaction survey attached as Appendix 1
3. To note, and provide any comments on, the draft Tenant Survey Action Plan attached as appendix 2.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH)'s Tenant Satisfaction Measures standard came into effect on 1st April 2023. This requires social landlords to collect annual data on 22 Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs). The data for 10 of these TSMs comes from management information and we are required to carry out an annual tenant perception survey to gather the data for the other 12 TSMs.
- 1.2 We commissioned Canterbury City Council to undertake the survey on our behalf. They hosted the online version of the survey, input paper responses received and provided the full set of raw data. Data analysis was then carried out in house at F&HDC by the housing team.
- 1.3 All 3,351 current tenants were sent a letter in May 2023 inviting them to complete the survey online, or to contact us if they required a paper copy. A follow-up mailing was sent in July, this time including a paper copy of the survey and a freepost envelope. The survey was also promoted in the May edition of our tenant bulletin, on our tenant and leaseholder Facebook group, via Housing Online, by email to our database of involved tenants, face-to-face at Strategic Tenant Advisory Panel and Independent Living Forum meetings and face-to-face during the summer neighbourhood inspections.
- 1.4 The survey closed on 31st August 2023 and we received a total of 684 responses. This equates to a response rate of 20.4% and a margin of error of +/- 3.3%.

2. SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS

2.1 Overall satisfaction

	2020	2022	2023	Direction of travel	% change 2022 to 2023
Overall satisfaction with the housing service	68%	68%	71%		+3%

Overall satisfaction with the housing service has increased by 3%. The main reasons residents gave in their comments for being satisfied are that we provide a good service (31 comments) and that any problems are resolved quickly (15 comments).

The highest numbers of comments from dissatisfied residents referred to the length of time taken to deal with repairs (103 comments) and a perception that we are slow to respond to enquiries (25 comments).

2.2 Keeping properties in good repair

	2020	2022	2023	Direction of travel	% change 2022 to 2023
Satisfaction with repairs	61%	68%	72%	↑	+4%
Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair	N/A	61%	66%	↑	+5%
Satisfaction that the home is well maintained	N/A	65%	70%	↑	+5%

Satisfaction with all aspects of the repairs service has increased. Positive comments reflected the quality of service and workmanship. Negative comments largely focused on timeliness, work unfinished/jobs outstanding and poor communication. Comments related to windows and doors featured highly.

2.3 Maintaining building safety

	2020	2022	2023	Direction of travel	% change 2022 to 2023
Satisfaction that the home is safe	N/A	65%	78%	↑	+13%

There has been a big increase in tenant satisfaction that we keep their homes safe. This reflects the strong improvement in our compliance performance: as of September 2023, we were 100% compliant for Landlord Gas Safety Records, Fire Risk Assessments, Water Safety Risk Assessments, block Electrical Certificates and Asbestos Risk Assessments.

2.4 Respectful and helpful engagement

	2020	2022	2023	Direction of travel	% change 2022 to 2023
Satisfaction that we listen to tenant views and act upon them	52%	49%	55%	↑	+6%
Satisfaction that we keep tenants informed about things that matter to them	62%	62%	71%	↑	+9%
Agreement that we treat tenants fairly and with respect	N/A	68%	72%	↑	+4%

This is another area where satisfaction has increased for all measures. The highest numbers of comments from satisfied tenants indicated that they like the tenant newsletters/bulletins and Your District Today magazines (99 comments) and that our staff are always respectful (80 comments).

Dissatisfied residents highlighted that they don't feel listened to (74 comments) plus a perceived lack of action to deal with repairs (49 comments).

We also asked residents how they would like to be kept informed, and the most popular channels are letter (55%), tenant newsletters/bulletins (55%) and emails (36%). 18% of respondents said they like to be informed via Housing Online/MyAccount.

2.5 Effective handling of complaints

	2020	2022	2023	Direction of travel	% change 2022 to 2023
Satisfaction with our approach to handling complaints	N/A	50%	34%	↓	-16%

This is the only area where satisfaction has dropped from the previous year. Mid-year benchmarking results indicate that this is not unique to us, as many landlords have also seen a dip in satisfaction with complaint handling.

The Regulator requires us to only ask this question of people who have made a complaint in the last 12 months, yet 146 tenants answered the question despite us only having received 51 tenant complaints in 2022/23. As such, it is likely that tenants have not distinguished between the council's formal definition of a complaint, and a request for service, which is likely to have skewed the results.

2.6 Responsible neighbourhood management

	2020	2022	2023	Direction of travel	% change 2022 to 2023
Satisfaction that we keep communal areas clean and well maintained	N/A	70%	70%	—	0%
Satisfaction that we make a positive contribution to neighbourhoods	N/A	48%	59%	↑	+11%
Satisfaction with our approach to handling anti-social behaviour	N/A	51%	54%	↑	+3%

Satisfaction has increased for all areas of neighbourhood management except the cleanliness of communal areas, which has remained the same.

It should also be noted that anti-social behaviour satisfaction attracted a high level of "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied" responses (30%), which is likely to be because the Regulator requires us to ask this question of all tenants, regardless of whether they have reported any anti-social behaviour. If a tenant has not reported any anti-social behaviour, they are unlikely to be able to form an opinion on how we deal with it.

3. ACTION PLAN

- 3.1 Following analysis of the full survey results, officers have worked with the Strategic Tenant Advisory Panel to develop the draft action plan attached as Appendix 2.
- 3.2 The action plan has separate sections for each of the TSM themes the Regulator uses. Officers and tenants have compared F&HDC's results to the mid-year benchmarking information available and used this information, alongside the free text comments received in responses to our survey, to develop the objectives and actions contained in the draft action plan. This approach has been used to help us increase satisfaction in the areas where improvement is most required – particularly repairs, complaints handling and neighbourhood management.

4. OPTIONS

4.1 To approve the draft Tenant Survey Action Plan (recommended option)

This is the recommended option because the draft action plan has been developed in partnership with the Strategic Tenant Advisory Panel, based on the findings from the tenant satisfaction survey, to ensure actions are targeted in the areas where improved satisfaction is most needed.

4.2 To make changes to the draft Tenant Survey Action Plan

This option is not recommended because the Strategic Tenant Advisory Panel has worked with officers to use the survey findings to ensure the actions we propose to take are focused on the right areas.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 5.1 A summary of the perceived risks follows:

Perceived risk	Seriousness	Likelihood	Preventative action
Tenants do not support the draft Action Plan	Medium	Low	The action plan was developed in partnership with the Strategic Tenant Advisory Panel, which is in place to represent the views and interests of all tenants
The actions in the Action Plan are not delivered	High	Low	Progress on the actions in the action plan will be monitored during the housing team's monthly

			performance meetings to ensure they are delivered
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6. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

6.1 Legal Officer's Comments (NM)

As a social housing landlord the Council has a duty to ensure meaningful engagement with tenants as set out by the Regulator of Social Housing.

6.2 Finance Officer's Comments (LW)

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

6.3 Diversities and Equalities Implications (MB)

There are no diversity or equality implications arising directly from this report. The 2023 tenant satisfaction survey achieved a good cross-section of responses by age, gender, disability status, ethnicity and sexual orientation. The actions in the draft action plan are designed to increase satisfaction for all tenants, regardless of their protected characteristics.

6.4 Climate Change Implications (AT)

No direct climate change implications to this report.

7. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting

Mike Bailey, Tenant Engagement & Wellbeing Senior Specialist

Telephone: 01303 853270

Email: michael.bailey@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report: None.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: [2023 Tenant Satisfaction Survey Results](#)

Appendix 2: [Tenant Survey Action Plan 2023](#)

2023 Tenant Satisfaction Survey

Report of findings

Authors

Mike Bailey, Tenant Engagement & Wellbeing Senior Specialist
Jonathan Hicks, Policy & Performance Senior Specialist
Loren Paine, Tenant Liaison Specialist

Date

October 2023

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Introduction

About the survey

This report sets out the results of Folkestone & Hythe District Council (F&HDC)'s 2023 tenant satisfaction survey. The survey was based around the Regulator of Social Housing's Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)¹ which it expects landlords to collect data for as set out in its Tenant Satisfaction Measures Standard².

The survey was carried out between 9th May and 31st August 2023 and was hosted by Canterbury City Council on our behalf. All 3,351 current tenants were sent a letter with a link to the online survey, and asking them to contact us if they wanted a paper copy. A follow-up mailing was sent in July 2023, this time including a paper copy of the survey and a freepost envelope.

To help maximise the response rate, tenants were offered an incentive that on completion of the survey, they were entered into a prize draw to win one of three £50 Love2Shop vouchers.

We received a total of 684 responses, equating to a response rate of 20.4%. The reply rates from each method are shown below:

Surveys sent	3,351
Online replies	246 (7.3%)
Paper replies	438 (13.1%)
Total replies	684 (20.4%)

Based on the total number of current tenants and the number of survey responses received, the results of the survey are statistically valid to a margin of error of +/- 3.3% at the 95% confidence interval. In other words, if every tenant completed the survey, the answers given by 95% of them would be no less than 3.3% lower than the survey results and no more than 3.3% higher than the survey results.

Survey responses have not been weighted and the proportion of responses by stock type are broadly similar to the overall proportion of stock:

Designation	% of responses	Comparison to % of all stock
General Needs	74.7%	82.0%
Independent Living	25.3%	18.0%

Where available, comparisons to previous F&HDC tenant satisfaction surveys and benchmarking data are included.

To help with interpretation, results are expressed as consistently as possible throughout the report. All results are expressed as percentages, rounded to the nearest percentage point. Please note that this means percentages may not add up to 100% in all cases.

¹ [Annex 4 TSM Technical Requirements \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114422/annex-4-tsm-technical-requirements.pdf)

² [TSM Standard \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114422/tsm-standard.pdf)

Summary of key findings

The table below shows satisfaction levels with each of the Regulator of Social Housing's TSMs, including comparisons to previous satisfaction surveys where available.

This shows improved satisfaction with all areas of the service except:

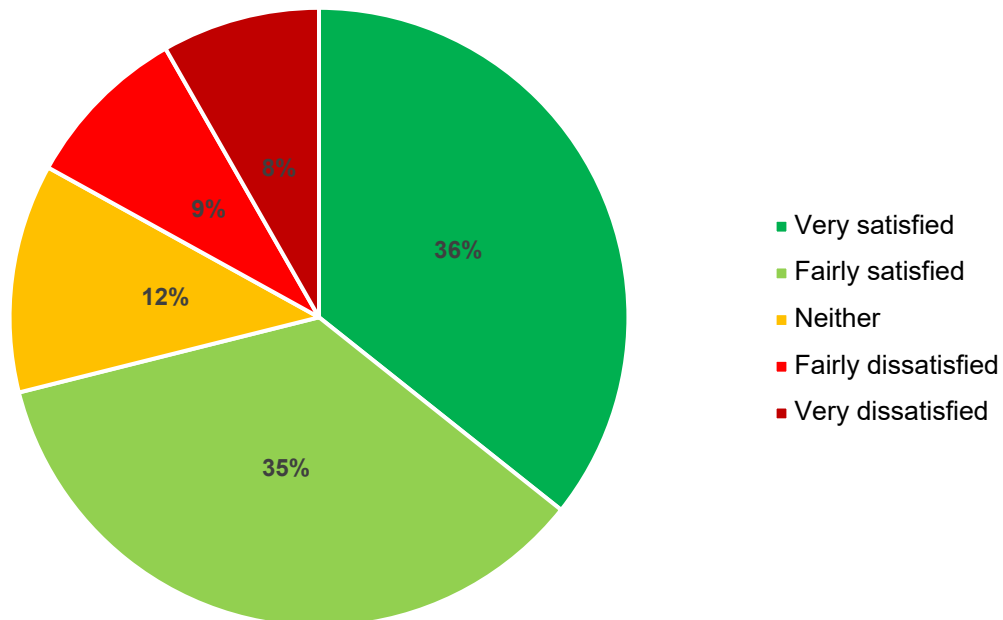
- Satisfaction that communal areas are kept clean and well maintained, which has remained consistent from last year's survey
- Satisfaction with complaints handling, which has fallen from 50% in 2022 to 34% in 2023

These areas are analysed in further detail later in this report.

	2020	2022	2023	Direction of travel	% change
Overall satisfaction	68%	68%	71%	↑	+3%
Satisfaction with repairs	61%	68%	72%	↑	+4%
Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair	N/A	61%	66%	↑	+5%
Satisfaction that the home is well maintained	N/A	65%	70%	↑	+5%
Satisfaction that the home is safe	N/A	65%	78%	↑	+13%
Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them	52%	49%	55%	↑	+6%
Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them	62%	62%	71%	↑	+9%
Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect	N/A	68%	72%	↑	+4%
Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints	N/A	50%	34%	↓	-16%
Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained	N/A	70%	70%	-	0%
Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods	N/A	48%	59%	↑	+11%
Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling anti-social behaviour	N/A	51%	54%	↑	+3%

Overall satisfaction

71% of respondents are very or fairly satisfied with the housing service provided by the council.



Base: 678 (all respondents excluding 6 no reply)

	2020	2022	2023
% satisfied	68%	68%	71%

General observations

Older age groups showed higher levels of satisfaction throughout the survey (the 70+ age group 78% overall) as did respondents living in sheltered or age-designated stock (76% overall).

In terms of equality, the following groups showed slightly lower levels of satisfaction:

- With a disability/long-term health issue (67%)
- Non-white/BME ethnic groups (67%)
- Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual orientation (50%), although no. responses very low (10)

Results are broadly reflective of overall levels if respondents had a repair in the past 12 months (72%) or did not have a repair in the past 12 months (69%)

By area, there is some variation in satisfaction levels. The most satisfied area is Folkestone Central (78%) and the least satisfied Romney Marsh (65%) and Folkestone North and Rural (67%)

Overall satisfaction breakdown by area:

	Result
Cheriton	70%
Folkestone Central	78%
Folkestone East	70%
Folkestone North and Rural	67%
Hythe	73%
Romney Marsh	65%

Why?

Respondents made the following comments:

Satisfied tenants	Dissatisfied tenants
Good service from council staff: 31 comments	Length of time taken to deal with repairs: 103 comments
Good repairs service: 26 comments	Poor quality repairs: 25 comments
Any problems are resolved quickly: 15 comments	Slow to respond to enquiries: 25 comments
Happy in home: 15 comments	Windows need repair or replacing: 13 comments
Good grounds maintenance service: 3 comments	Damp and mould issues: 12 comments
Feel safe in home due to the Lifeline service: 2 comments	Lack of action to deal with anti-social behaviour: 10 comments
Good value for money: 2 comments	Difficult to get through to the council by phone: 7 comments
	Property in poor condition when moved in: 7 comments
	Don't feel listened to: 6 comments
	Bathroom needs replacing: 5 comments
	Kitchen needs replacing: 5 comments
	Lack of Neighbourhood Officer presence: 5 comments
	Lack of Independent Living Officer presence: 4 comments

	<p>Poor standard of communal cleaning: 4 comments</p> <p>Requested aids and adaptations were refused: 4 comments</p> <p>Poor grounds maintenance service: 3 comments</p> <p>Institutional feel in independent living schemes: 2 comments</p> <p>Lack of communication from Housing Options team: 2 comments</p> <p>Poor shared ownership service: 2 comments</p> <p>Would like the council to offer a subsidised gardening service for tenants who can't maintain their own: 2 comments</p> <p>Building is not secure: 1 comment</p> <p>Missed bins: 1 comment</p> <p>Not receiving documents in large print: 1 comment</p> <p>Resent paying the Intensive Housing Management Charge as don't need independent living services: 1 comment</p> <p>Unhappy with the way Independent Living Forum members are appointed: 1 comment</p> <p>Website not user-friendly for visually impaired people: 1 comment</p> <p>Would like a downstairs toilet installed: 1 comment</p>
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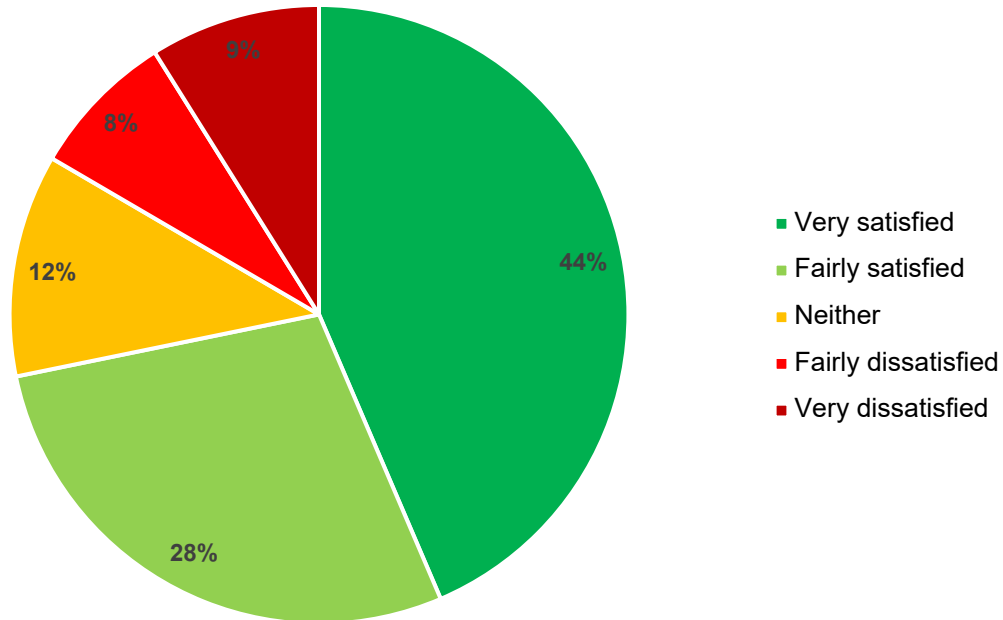
How do we compare?

	2022	2023
Folkestone & Hythe	68%	71%
Sector median	78%	

Keeping properties in good repair

Satisfaction with repairs

72% of respondents who have had a repair carried out in the last 12 months are satisfied with the overall repairs service.



Base: 404 (all respondents excluding 280 no reply)

	2020	2022	2023
% satisfied	61%	68%	72%

Respondents with a disability or long-term health condition were less satisfied with repairs (68%) than those without (81%).

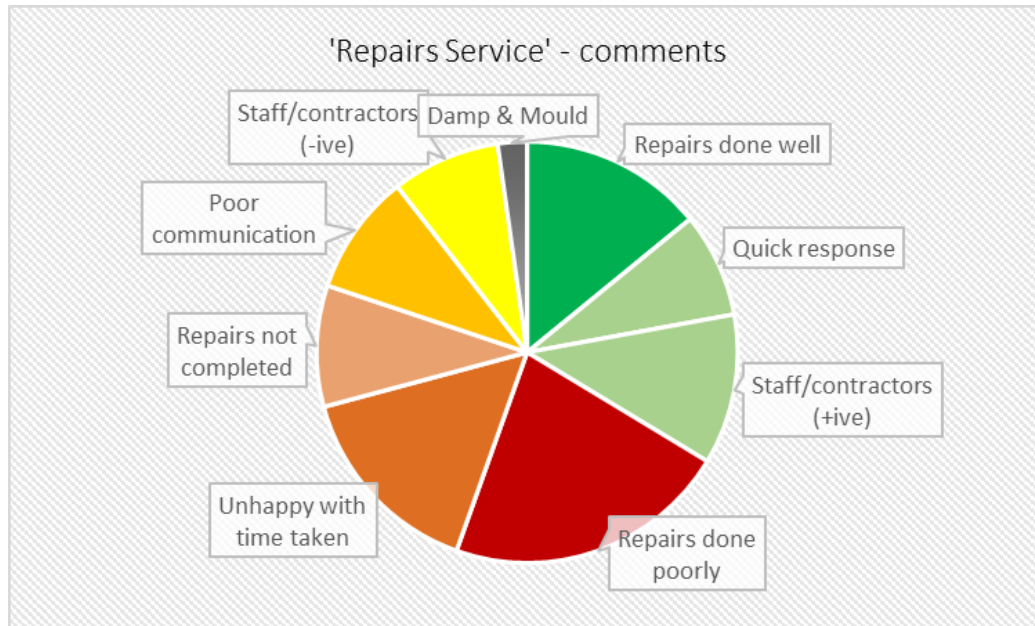
Non-white/BME groups were also less satisfied with repairs (60%)

Folkestone Central was the most satisfied area (78%); Folkestone East and Hythe the least satisfied (both 67%)

Repairs satisfaction	Result
Cheriton	70%
Folkestone Central	78%
Folkestone East	67%
Folkestone North and Rural	76%
Hythe	67%
Romney Marsh	72%

Why?

Comments largely focused around the following areas:



Respondents made the following comments:

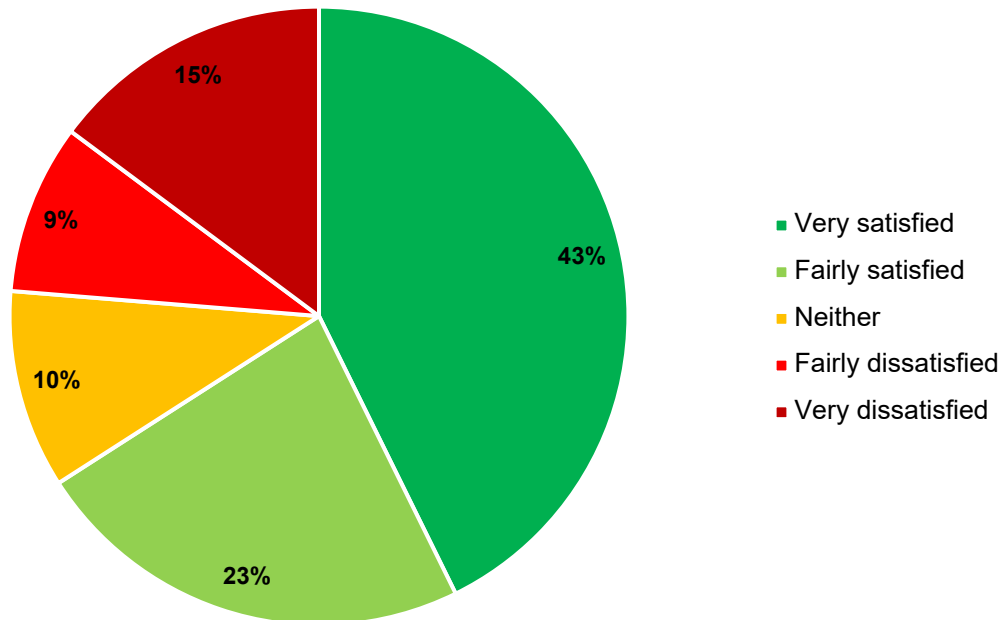
Satisfied tenants	Dissatisfied tenants
<p>The lovely gentleman who repaired my staircase wall and made it possible for me to decorate it. He was amazing and I am so pleased I can now paint my very tired hallway. staircase and landing.</p> <p>We had a new bathroom put in that we could choose, and we were given a decorating starter kit that provided us paint, rollers and brushes to freshen the place.</p> <p>Always polite and helpful and the contractors are very knowledgeable and can point you into the right direction if they aren't sure.</p> <p>Friendly staff, phone call answered quickly by a very understanding person working for Mears. Then Mears staff did a great job sorting out the problem. Quick and efficient repair done. Friendly operative explained the problem.</p>	<p>After Mears came and repaired not having any hot water, they left the sockets hanging off the wall, when anything is broken its always repaired eventually in the cheapest way possible.</p> <p>Satisfied when they actually carry out the repairs, frustrated at the length of time it takes to get hold of anyone (especially Mears) and having to ring and check they've actually logged (reported the job).</p> <p>Repairs always in a friendly and timely manner. Sometimes no thought is given to the fact that I work full time. Appointments made without consulting me.</p> <p>Long wait times for repairs to be done, mess left behind. Appointments made but no one turns up, other times Mears turn up without warning.</p>

How do we compare?

	2022	2023
Folkestone & Hythe	68%	72%
Sector median	78%	

Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair

66% of respondents who have had a repair carried out in the last 12 months are satisfied with the time taken to complete their most recent repair after they reported it.



Base: 405 (all respondents excluding 279 no reply)

	2020	2022	2023
% satisfied	N/A	61%	66%

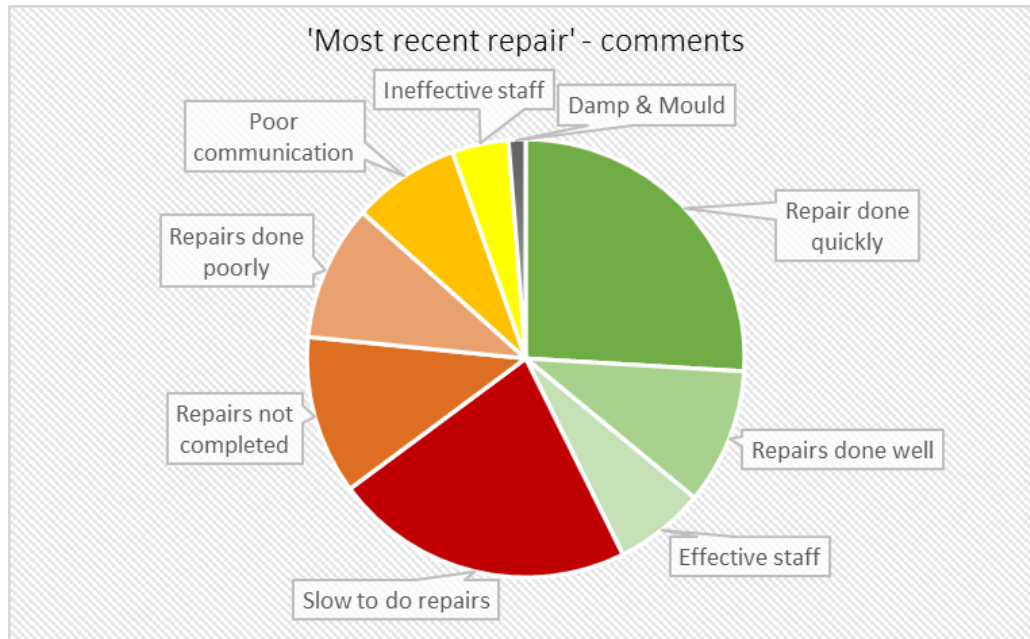
Respondents with a disability or long-term health condition were less satisfied with the time taken to complete repairs (62%) than those without (75%).

Cheriton and Folkestone North and Rural were the most satisfied areas (71%); Folkestone East was the least satisfied (55%)

Repairs timeliness	Result
Cheriton	71%
Folkestone Central	70%
Folkestone East	55%
Folkestone North and Rural	71%
Hythe	59%
Romney Marsh	67%

Why?

Comments largely focussed on the following areas:



Respondents made the following comments:

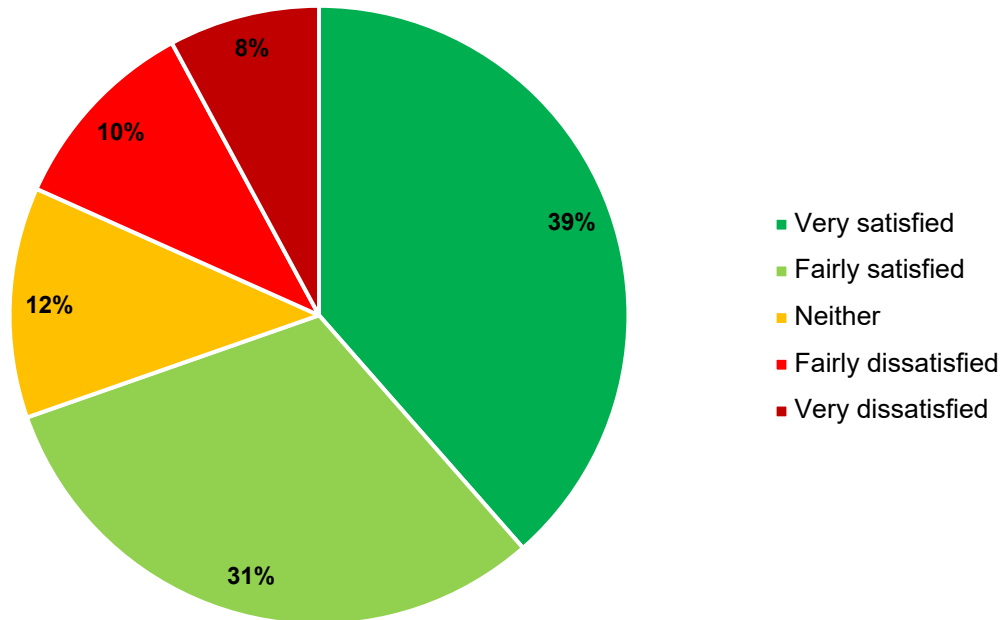
Satisfied tenants	Dissatisfied tenants
<p>It was a Saturday night and Gas call came out really quickly, they also went above and beyond by sorting my neighbour's boiler at the same time.</p> <p>Brilliant, completed the repair in less than an hour, all working ok, had no trouble. Thermostat on boiler.</p> <p>The fan in my bathroom stopped working, I reported it to the office, and the next day I received a message which a visit from a repair man who replaced a new one and explained everything to me how it would work, the repair was quick.</p> <p>They were very quick to do the repair and when in the property the repair took less than one hour to fix, and we haven't had any issues since.</p>	<p>Great job repairing our roof tiles/chimney but was left with scaffolding for weeks afterwards and I had to chase the scaffolders up myself to take it down!</p> <p>Rear step reported end of May, after many calls to Mears finally done end of July - and vent put in bedroom - mess left behind.</p> <p>My biggest repairs are for damage caused by workers installing double glazing and most recently, a new boiler.</p> <p>After inspection when I chase the repair, I get told it is waiting for approval and it takes months and months to get approved and only partial work is completed.</p>

How do we compare?

	2022	2023
Folkestone & Hythe	61%	66%
Sector median	72%	

Satisfaction that the home is well maintained

70% of respondents are satisfied that the council provides a home that is well maintained.



Base: 672 (all respondents excluding 12 no reply)

	2020	2022	2023
% satisfied	N/A	65%	70%

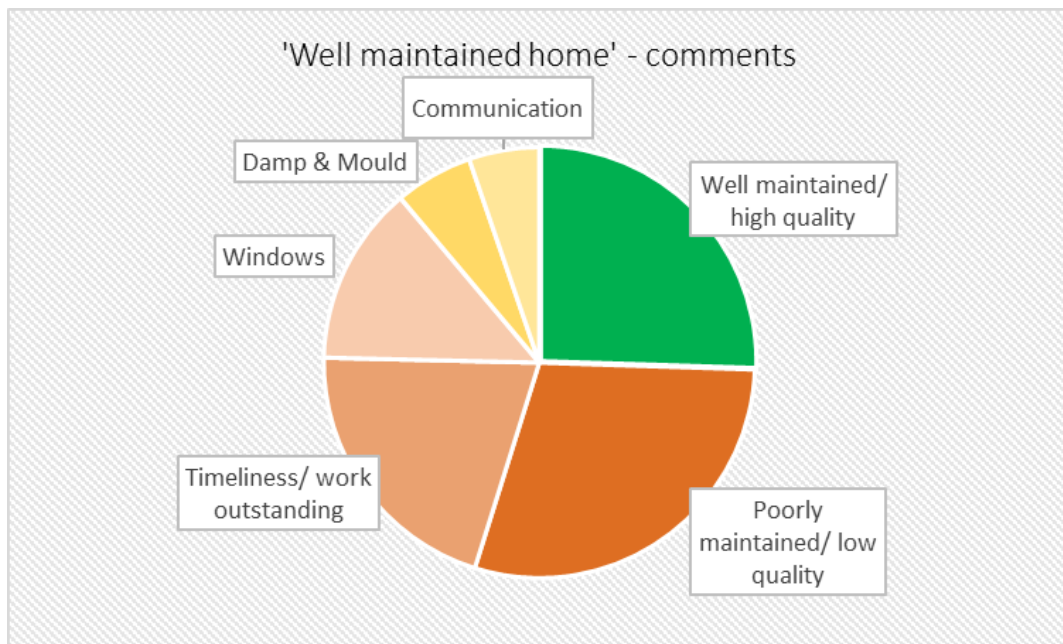
Respondents from a non-white/BME background were significantly more satisfied that their homes were well-maintained (88%) as were respondents living in sheltered/age-designated stock (80%)

Hythe residents were the most satisfied area (76%); Folkestone East and Romney Marsh the least (both 64%)

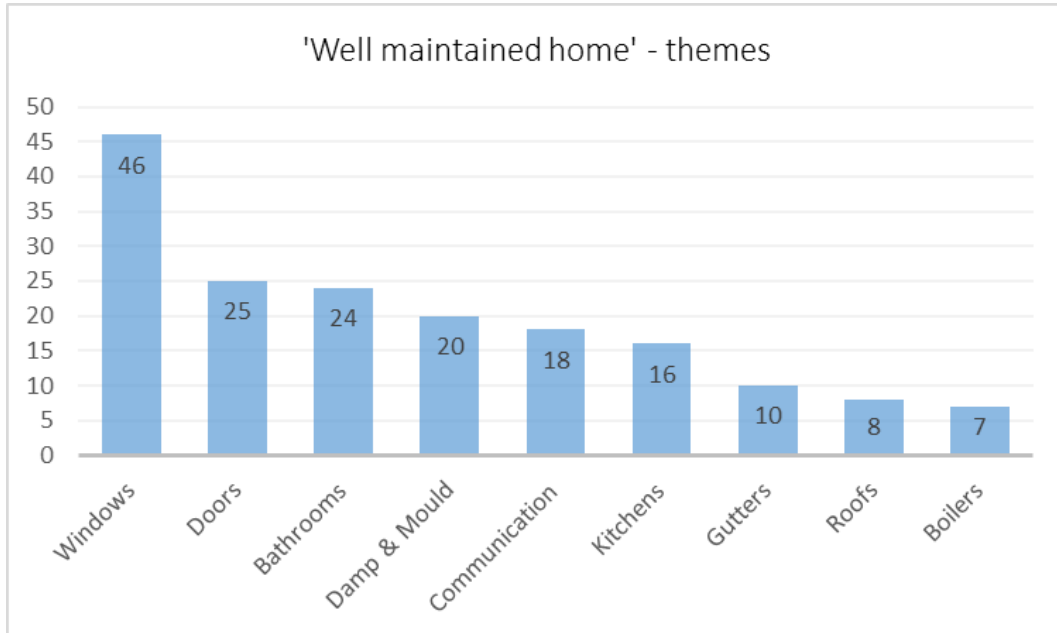
Well-maintained home	Result
Cheriton	71%
Folkestone Central	75%
Folkestone East	64%
Folkestone North and Rural	67%
Hythe	76%
Romney Marsh	64%

Why?

Comments largely focused on the following areas:



Using a 'keyword' search the following shows the proportion of comments by theme or work area (both positive and negative):



The highest proportion of comments related to windows.

Respondents made the following comments:

Satisfied tenants	Dissatisfied tenants
<p>I was impressed by the condition of the property when I moved in last August 2022 and have been grateful for that.</p> <p>We were given our first council property in 1985. We - my husband and I, were so grateful and have never raised a complaint against the FHDC because we always felt safe.</p> <p>I feel safe and well cared for in my home and like the way the property is cared for. The garden is kept in trim and makes the place look good and if repairs are needed, they are carried out with little waiting.</p> <p>The home is very well maintained, the cleaning lady keeps the corridors and common areas clean. The housing service also provides mowing grass and bushes of the garden, which is beautiful.</p> <p>This is the Council's property. I know I am so lucky to have a home with a very reasonable rent and a very good landlord. I will look after and respect your property. If I need something repaired, it is in both our best interest, to get the job done. If I am a good tenant, I'm sure you will always treat me fairly.</p>	<p>I'm a disabled person that can't do a lot my gutters next a clean out. The outside needs weeding out front.</p> <p>I feel the council have a duty of care to elderly tenants to regularly maintain our homes which has not been the case over the years.</p> <p>Was told we were having a new roof 2/3 years ago, not heard a thing since. Our windows need replacing as a lot are blown, the front door let's a horrible draught in which gets expensive during winter. When it rains, water collects at our front and back doors, if it rains heavily, we have problems. Got told it will be years before anything happens as there's no money.</p> <p>The improvements are often carried out with poor workmanship and no respect for a person's home. The subsequent repairs to put things right again can take weeks to complete and often require several visits.</p> <p>Jobs are not always finished and clearing up left to the tenant.</p>

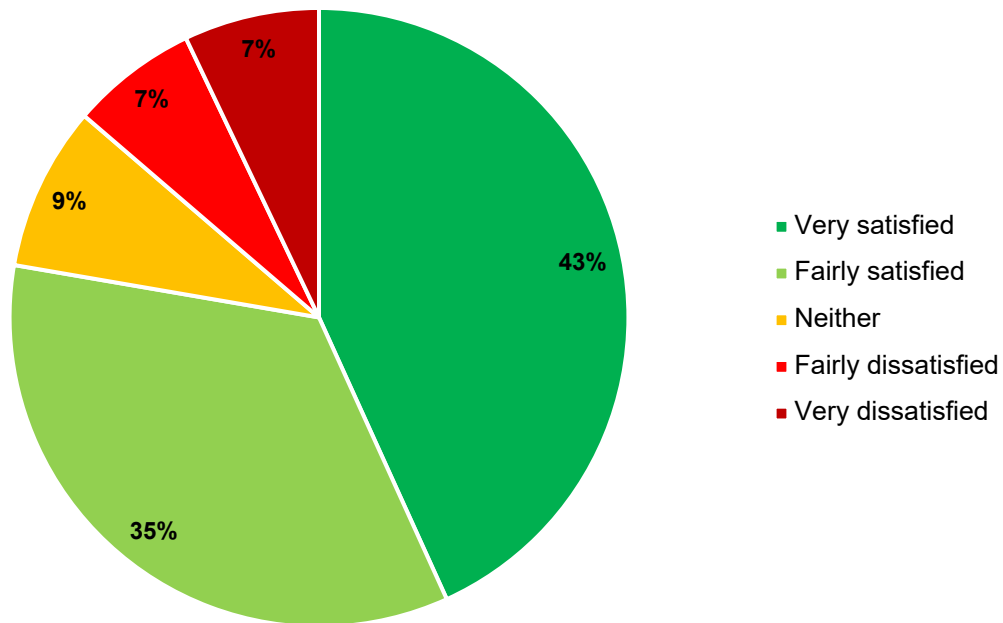
How do we compare?

	2022	2023
Folkestone & Hythe	65%	70%
Sector median	72%	

Maintaining building safety

Satisfaction that the home is safe

78% of respondents are satisfied that the council provides a home that is safe.



Base: 664 (all respondents excluding 14 no reply and 6 don't know/not applicable)

	2020	2022	2023
% satisfied	N/A	65%	78%

Respondents who had a repair in the past 12 months were slightly more satisfied (79%) than those that did not (75%).

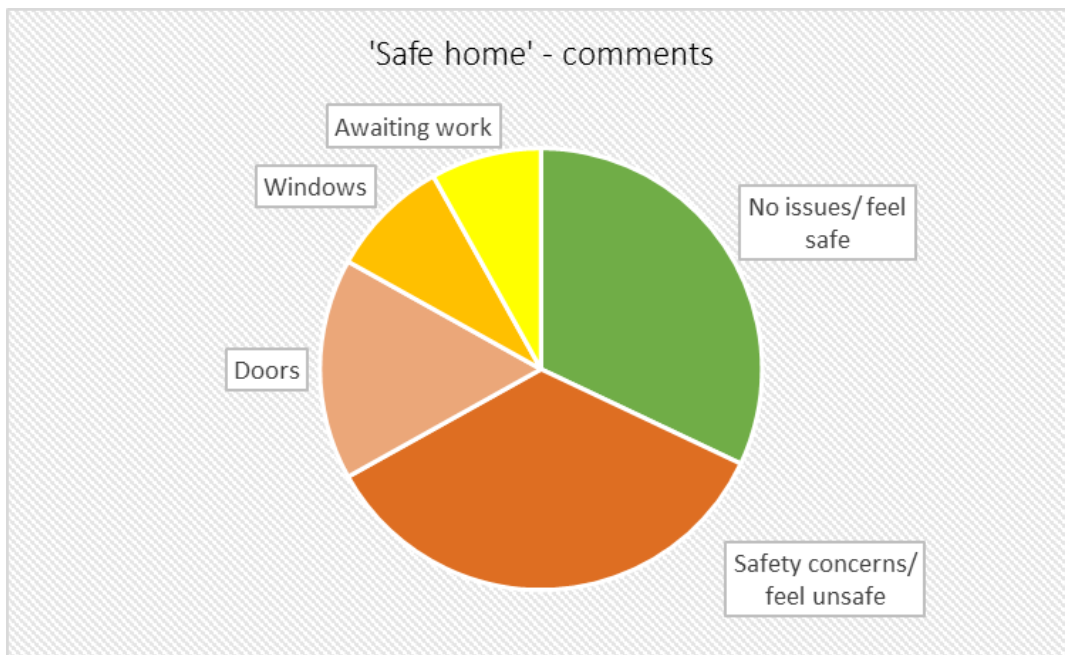
Satisfaction was significantly higher for respondents in the 70+ age group (87%) and those in sheltered/age-designated stock (85%). As too for respondents in non-white/BME groups (88%).

Folkestone Central had highest levels of satisfaction (86%); Romney Marsh the lowest (72%)

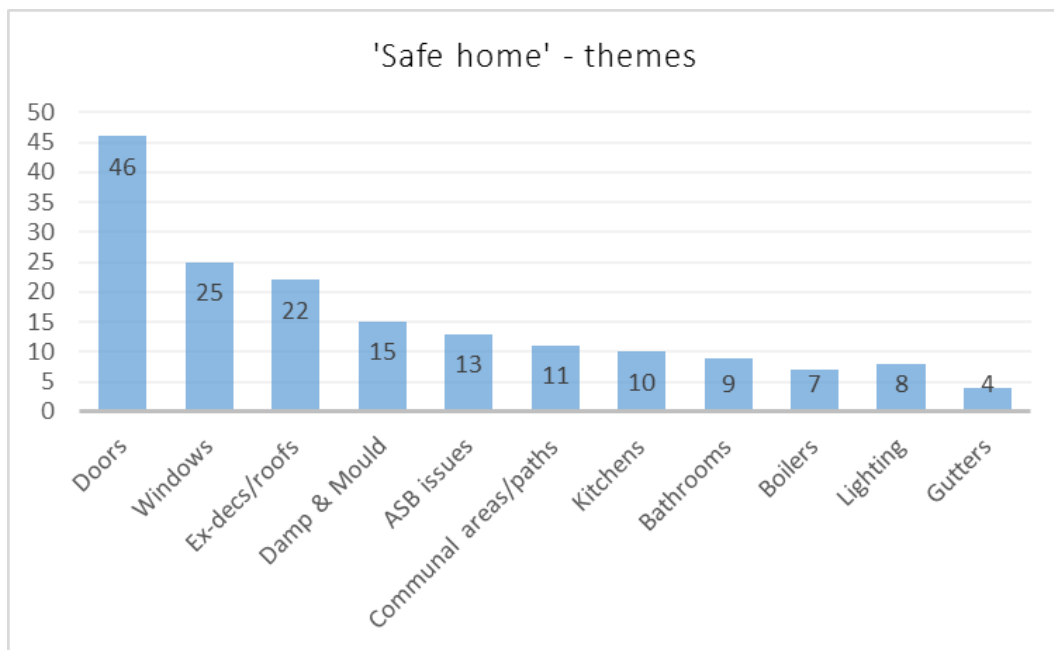
Home is safe	Result
Cheriton	75%
Folkestone Central	86%
Folkestone East	70%
Folkestone North and Rural	77%
Hythe	82%
Romney Marsh	72%

Why?

Comments largely focused on the following areas:



Using a 'keyword' search the following shows the proportion of comments by theme or work area (both positive and negative):



The highest proportion of comments related to doors.

Respondents made the following comments:

Satisfied tenants	Dissatisfied tenants
<p>Very happy with the councils help for mine and my children's safety. When I expressed my concerns, they granted me a back door instead of garden gate. They also changed my front door spindle lock to prevent from opening from the outside for our safety.</p> <p>I feel very safe living here. The Council provide a brilliant service in making our building safe and secure. Also having the Lifeline is brilliant.</p> <p>The property is always well-maintained resident safety is top shelf. In the last year to eighteen months our cctv coverage has been updated. I feel completely secure, and know the building is in top notch condition.</p> <p>We signed our tenancy agreement in 1985. Providing a clean, warm home. Over the years FHDC have made sure our property was updated, with bathroom, kitchens, windows, doors and any improvements.</p> <p>I have a Lifeline which is regularly tested and also fire alarms are regularly well maintained to ensure my safety within the home.</p> <p>We have had new door and windows and all the maintenance seems to be in good order. Our hot water and heating broke down, but they did their best to mend it. All ok now.</p>	<p>Insulated lofts to make house more energy efficient. Joke. Windows drafty and old. Condensation and hear outside noise, breezy. Mould in bedrooms and bathrooms. Had several unsightly vents in trying to solve issues.</p> <p>The communal door has been broken for over 2 months now and is currently just left open so anyone can gain access. The door to store cupboards is also broken so anyone can gain access. The buzzers to all flats haven't been working since before Christmas and have been reported by various tenants on numerous occasions.</p> <p>not safe for asbestos, wiring and garden is unable to maintain garden and has concrete steps & paths has not banisters to hold whilst going up the stairs has had a few falls in the garden.</p> <p>No working boiler, construction rubbish left within the property and in the gardens, one front door key for a family of 4 and no back door key was given for nearly a week, over five months after moving in I am still living with structural damage that is nowhere near being completed.</p> <p>They send the boiler people out, usually more than once a year. However, every time they come, we have to get them back out, after they break the system. The windows are dangerous, they don't open far enough to escape a fire, and the panels can be taken out from the outside.</p>

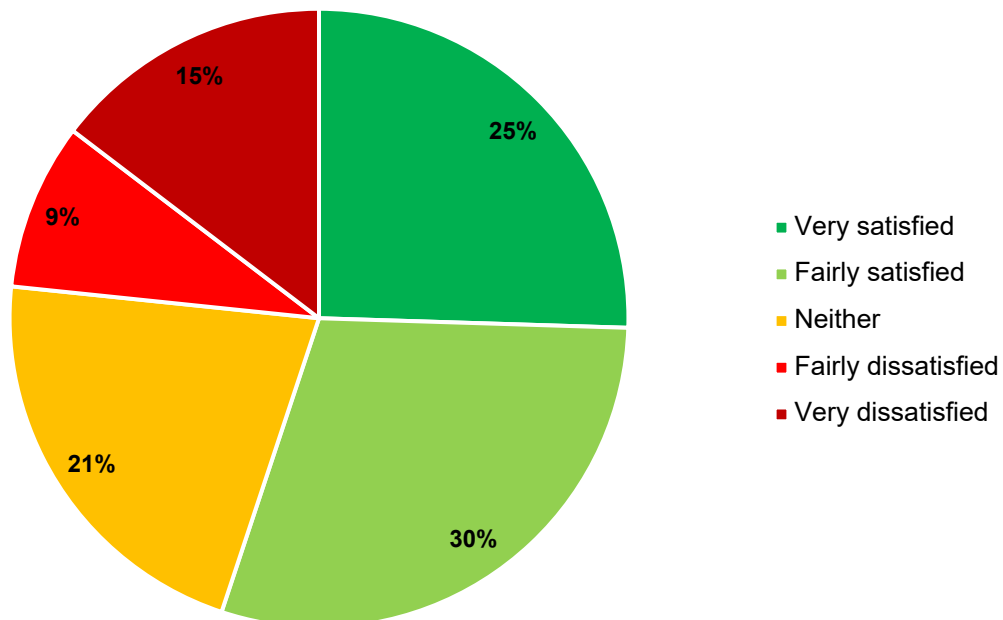
How do we compare?

	2022	2023
Folkestone & Hythe	65%	78%
Sector median	81%	

Respectful and helpful engagement

Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them

55% of respondents are satisfied that the housing service listens to and acts on their views.



Base: 608 (all respondents excluding 20 no reply and 56 don't know/not applicable)

	2020	2022	2023
% satisfied	52%	49%	55%

Respondents with a disability or long-term health condition were less satisfied that we listen to their views and act upon them (49%) than those without (58%).

Respondents from non-white/BME ethnic groups showed slightly higher levels of satisfaction (60%) as did the 18-29 age group (60%)

Folkestone Central was the most satisfied area (63%); Folkestone East and Romney Marsh the least (both 44%).

Listens to views	Result
Cheriton	52%
Folkestone Central	63%
Folkestone East	44%
Folkestone North and Rural	46%
Hythe	53%
Romney Marsh	44%

Why?

Respondents made the following comments:

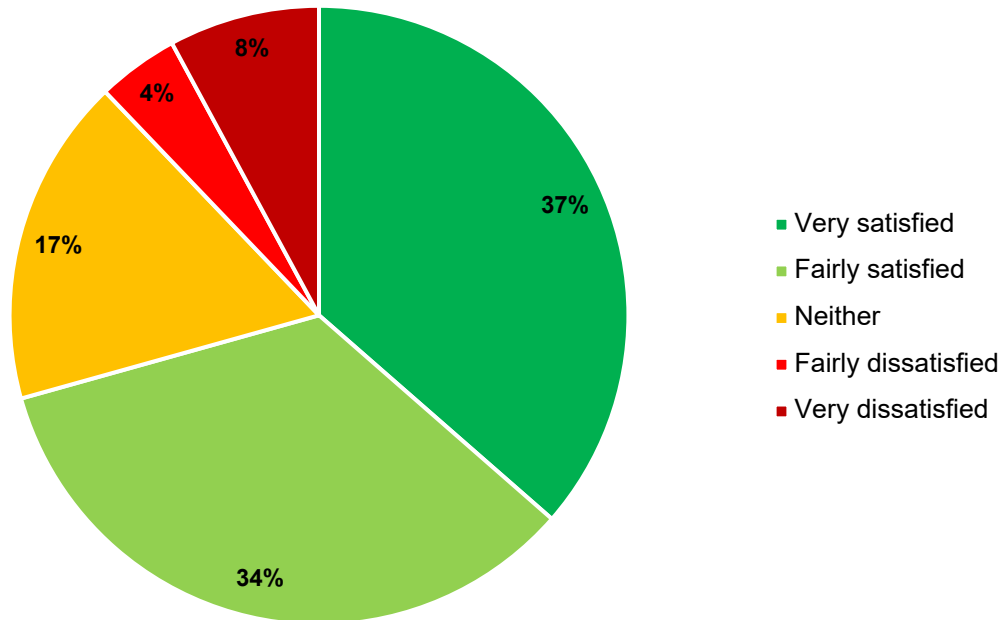
Satisfied tenants	Dissatisfied tenants
Good service, no issues: 91 comments	Don't feel listened to: 74 comments
	Lack of action to deal with repairs: 49 comments
	Lack of action to deal with anti-social behaviour: 17 comments
	Requested aids and adaptations were refused: 1 comment

How do we compare?

	2022	2023
Folkestone & Hythe	49%	55%
Sector median	64%	

Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them

71% of respondents are satisfied that the housing service keeps them informed.



Base: 634 (all respondents excluding 19 no reply and 31 don't know/not applicable)

	2020	2022	2023
% satisfied	62%	62%	71%

Respondents with a disability or long-term health condition were less satisfied that we keep them informed about things that matter to them (66%) than those that do not (76%)

Non-white/BME ethnic groups had higher levels of satisfaction (88%).

Folkestone Central was the most satisfied area (79%); Folkestone East the least (60%).

Keeps tenants informed	Result
Cheriton	66%
Folkestone Central	79%
Folkestone East	60%
Folkestone North and Rural	66%
Hythe	69%
Romney Marsh	64%

Why?

Respondents made the following comments:

Satisfied tenants	Dissatisfied tenants
Receive letters with information needed: 103 comments	Don't feel informed: 36 comments
Tenant newsletter and Your District Today magazine contain useful information: 99 comments	Not informed of cancelled repair appointments: 16 comments
Generally feel informed: 11 comments	

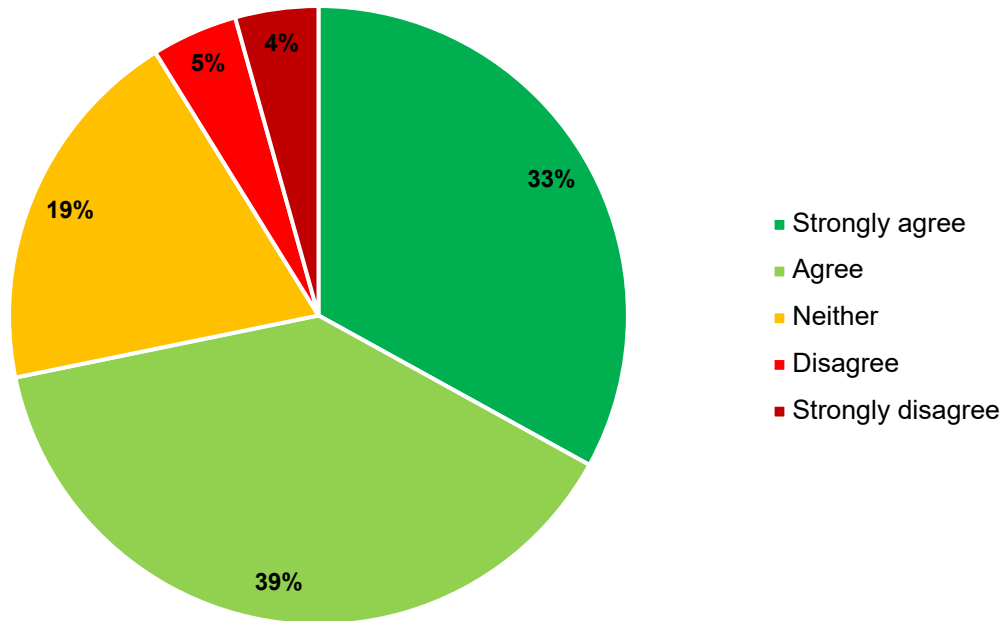
Additionally, one tenant said they would like to receive more information about things specifically happening on their estate.

How do we compare?

	2022	2023
Folkestone & Hythe	62%	71%
Sector median	72%	

Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect

72% of respondents agree that the council treats them fairly and respectfully.



Base: 645 (all respondents excluding 18 no reply and 21 don't know/not applicable)

	2020	2022	2023
% satisfied	N/A	68%	72%

Respondents with a disability or long-term health condition had slightly lower levels of satisfaction (68%) than those that did not (76%).

Non-white/BME ethnic groups showed higher levels of satisfaction (81%).

Folkestone Central was the most satisfied area (79%); Folkestone East the least (62%)

Fairly and with respect	Result
Cheriton	70%
Folkestone Central	79%
Folkestone East	62%
Folkestone North and Rural	70%
Hythe	73%
Romney Marsh	63%

Why?

Respondents made the following comments:

Satisfied tenants	Dissatisfied tenants
Respectful staff: 80 comments	Feel ignored by the council: 33 comments
Always treated courteously: 72 comments	Negative experience with contractors: 11 comments
	Feel discriminated against: 3 comments

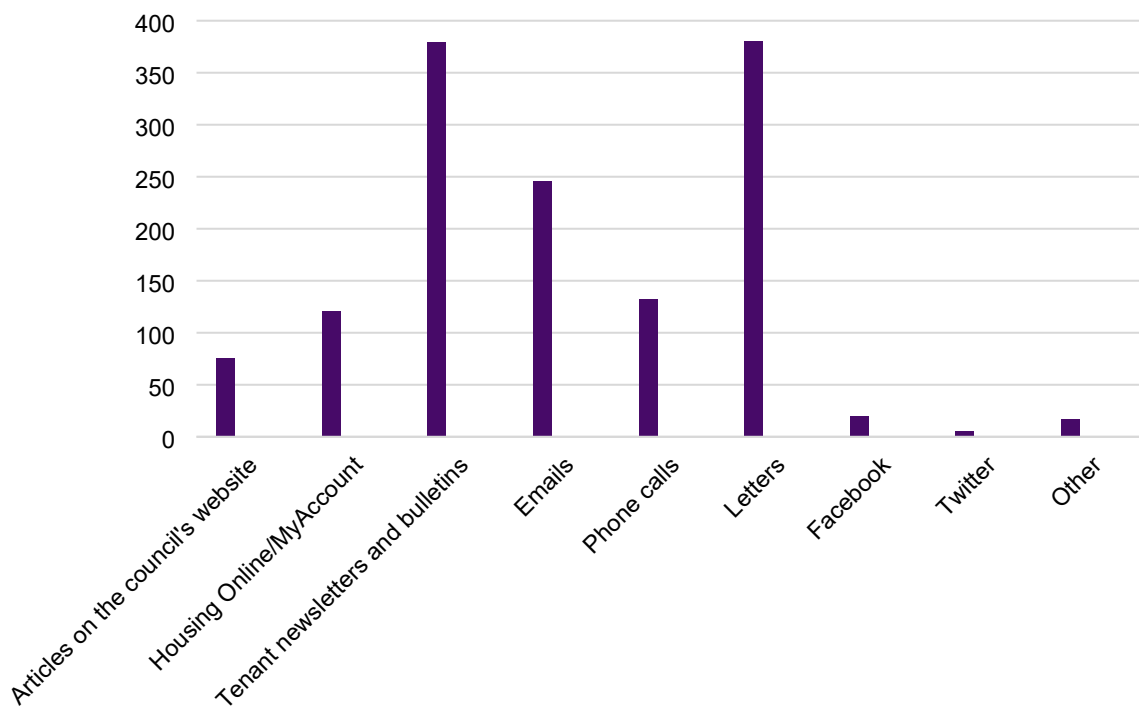
How do we compare?

	2022	2023
Folkestone & Hythe	68%	72%
Sector median	78%	

How tenants would like to be kept informed about things that matter to them

The most popular method by which tenants would like to be kept informed is letter, closely followed by tenant newsletters/bulletins and then emails. At the other end of the scale, relatively few tenants prefer to be kept informed via social media.

Please note, totals add up to more than 100% as respondents were asked to select all methods by which they would like to be kept informed.



Base: 665 (all respondents excluding 19 no reply)

Respondents who answered "other" made the following comments:

- Text message: 7 comments
- Face-to-face: 4 comments
- Communal notice boards: 1 comment
- Independent Living Forum: 1 comment
- Independent living scheme meetings: 1 comment

Whether tenants would be interested in getting more involved to help improve the housing service

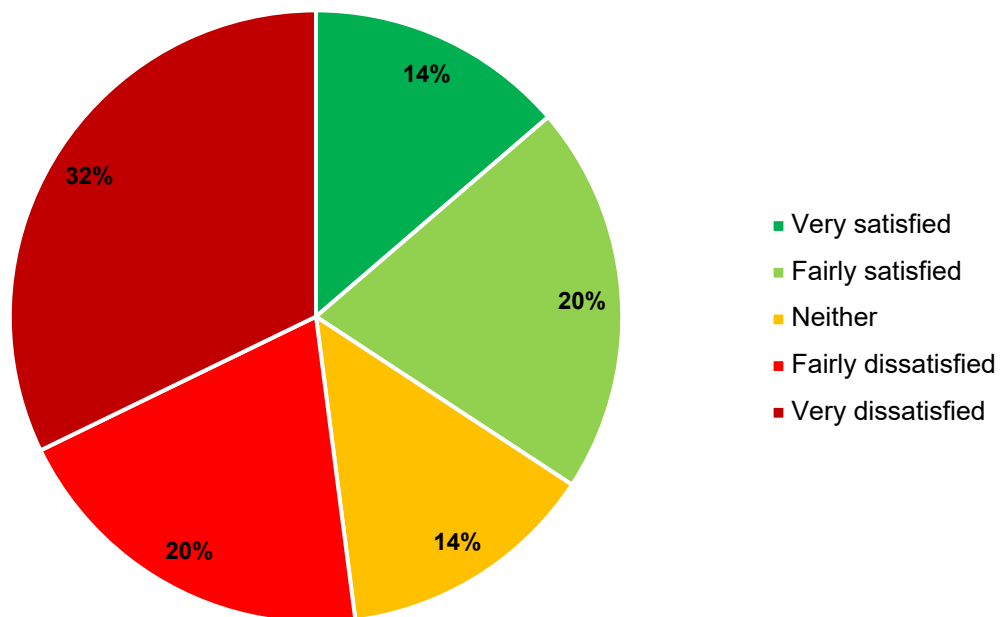
Respondents were asked whether they would be interested in getting more involved and working with us to improve the housing service. 83 respondents (12%) said they would be interested. Our Tenant Liaison Specialist will be contacting these residents to find out how they would like to be involved.

Effective handling of complaints

Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to complaints handling

34% of respondents who have made a complaint in the last 12 months are satisfied with our approach to complaints handling.

This question should therefore be focused on complaints which have been dealt with through the council's complaints procedure (Stage 1/Stage 2 complaints). However, although this question was only asked of tenants who have made a complaint, it is possible that some tenants may not distinguish between the council's formal definition of a complaint, and a request for service, which may skew the results.



Base: 146 (all respondents excluding 538 no reply)

	2020	2022	2023
% satisfied	N/A	50%	34%

Respondents with a disability or long-term health condition were less satisfied with the way we handle complaints (27%) than those that do not (50%).

Satisfaction was significantly higher in the 70+ age group (52%) and in sheltered/age-designated properties (45%).

Hythe was the most satisfied (45%); Folkestone North and Rural the least (16%)

Complaints handling	Result
Cheriton	39%
Folkestone Central	44%
Folkestone East	27%
Folkestone North and Rural	16%
Hythe	45%
Romney Marsh	26%

Why?

Respondents made the following comments:

Satisfied tenants	Dissatisfied tenants
Helpful staff: 7 comments	Slow to respond: 18 comments
	Lack of action to deal with anti-social behaviour: 15 comments
	Lack of action to deal with repairs: 13 comments
	Didn't get the outcome they were seeking: 7 comments
	Don't feel listened to: 6 comments
	Lack of action to deal with fly-tipping: 3 comments
	Bins not emptied: 2 comments
	Rude staff: 1 comment

It is surprising to note that 18 comments refer to the council being slow to respond, as this is not reflected in our complaints performance: we responded to 96.83% of formal complaints within our target time of 10 working days in 2022/23, the average response time being 7.89 days.

The number of comments regarding lack of action to deal with repairs and anti-social behaviour would suggest that respondents have not differentiated between a formal complaint and a request for service, as both repairs and anti-social behaviour issues would be dealt with as a request for service in the first instance.

Additionally, four comments specifically refer to complaints made to Mears, which would initially be dealt with by Mears rather than the council.

The fact that some respondents were dissatisfied because they did not get the outcome they were seeking highlights a lack of distinction between satisfaction with the outcome and satisfaction with the way the complaint was handled.

It is therefore recommended that to help residents understand what is being asked, future surveys should include additional wording to clarify what is meant by "complaint", and that this question is about how it was handled, not the outcome (assuming this is permissible under the Regulator of Social Housing's TSM guidance), also to remind residents of our target time for responding to complaints.

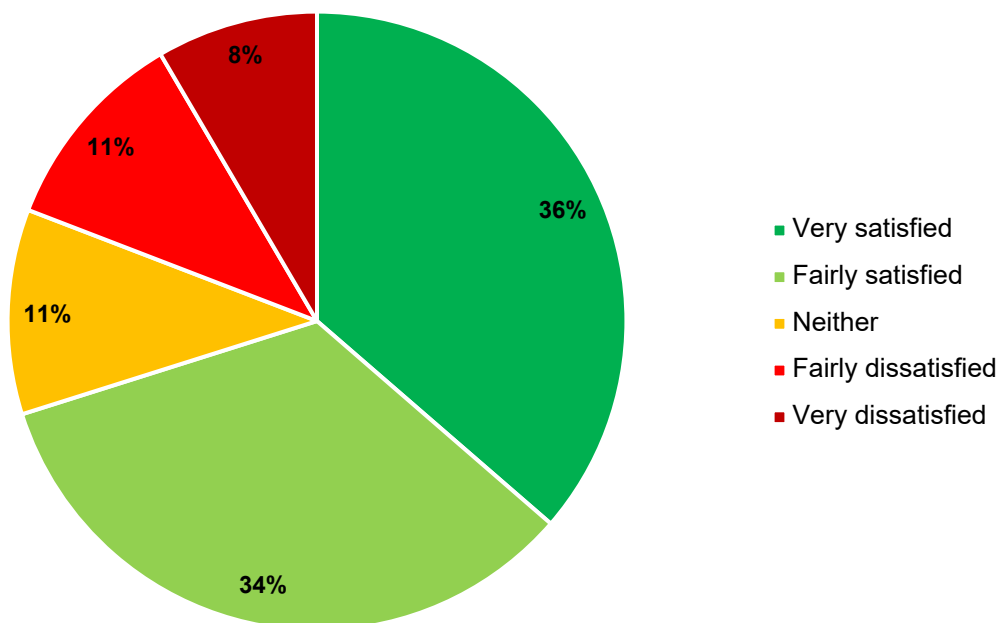
How do we compare?

	2022	2023
Folkestone & Hythe	50%	34%
Sector median	41%	

Responsible neighbourhood management

Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained

70% of respondents who live in a building with communal areas are satisfied that these areas are kept clean and well maintained.



Base: 308 (all respondents excluding 376 no reply)

	2020	2022	2023
% satisfied	N/A	70%	70%

Respondents that have a disability or long-term health condition were more satisfied with the maintenance of communal areas (76%) than those that do not (66%).

Non-white/BME groups showed higher levels of satisfaction (89%) as did tenants in the 70+ age group (80%) and in sheltered/age-designated stock (78%).

Folkestone East was the most satisfied area (85%); Folkestone North and Rural the least (55%).

Communal areas	Result
Cheriton	62%
Folkestone Central	70%
Folkestone East	85%
Folkestone North and Rural	55%
Hythe	75%
Romney Marsh	67%

Why?

Respondents made the following comments:

Satisfied tenants	Dissatisfied tenants
Good standard of internal cleanliness: 43 comments	Poor standard of internal cleanliness: 25 comments
Good standard of gardening: 23 comments	Poor standard of gardening: 12 comments
	Dumped rubbish: 6 comments
	Stained carpets need replacing: 6 comments
	Overgrown shrubs: 5 comments
	Poorly maintained pathways: 4 comments
	Broken fencing: 3 comments
	Guttering needs clearing: 3 comments
	Parking issues: 3 comments
	Dog fouling issues: 2 comments
	Drying area and bin store should not be in the same place: 2 comments
	Washing machines not kept clean: 2 comments
	Bins not emptied: 1 comment
	Broken washing line: 1 comment
	Communal kitchen poorly equipped: 1 comment
	Door entry system not working: 1 comment
	Not enough washing machines for the number of tenants: 1 comment

There is clearly a difference of opinion in how well both internal and external communal areas are well maintained, as although 43 respondents are happy with

internal cleaning and 23 are happy with gardening, 25 and 12 tenants respectively are unhappy with these.

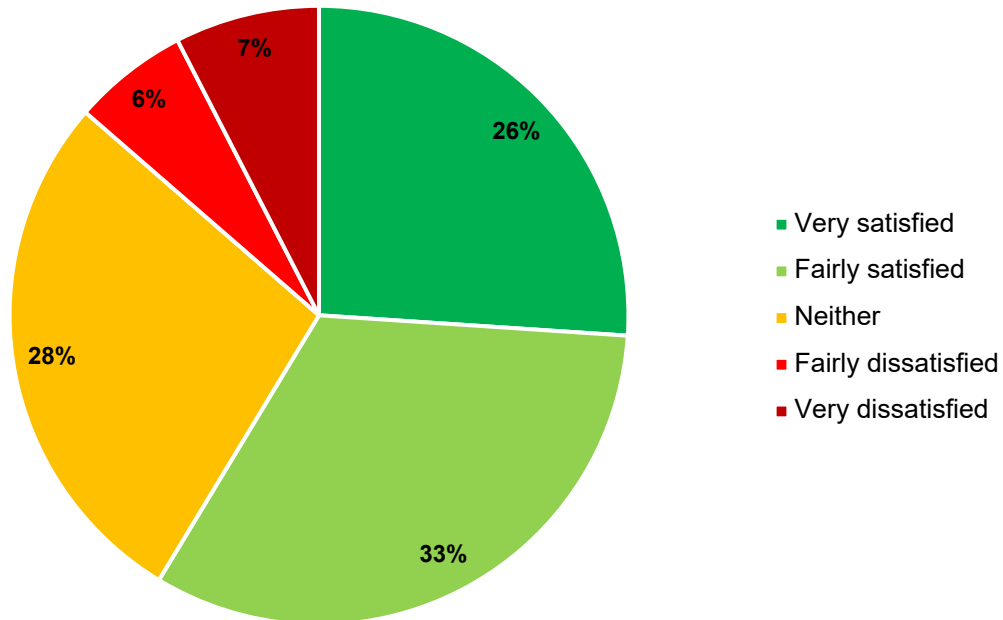
This may be down to perception and possibly a lack of awareness of the contract standards. It is therefore recommended that these are displayed on communal notice boards (where this is not already the case) and featured in a future edition of the tenant newsletter to remind residents what should be done, and when. This will be particularly important when the new communal cleaning contract starts in 2024.

How do we compare?

	2022	2023
Folkestone & Hythe	70%	70%
Sector median	68%	

Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods

59% of respondents are satisfied that the housing service makes a positive contribution to their neighbourhood.



Base: 595 (all respondents excluding 23 no reply and 66 don't know/not applicable)

	2020	2022	2023
% satisfied	N/A	48%	59%

Results were broadly the same across all groups, with the exception of the 30-49 age group (28%).

Hythe was the most satisfied area (60%); Cheriton and Romney Marsh the least (both 47%).

Contribution to neighbourhood	Result
Cheriton	47%
Folkestone Central	59%
Folkestone East	51%
Folkestone North and Rural	51%
Hythe	60%
Romney Marsh	47%

Why?

Respondents made the following comments:

Satisfied tenants	Dissatisfied tenants
Good standard of gardening: 15 comments	Poor standard of gardening: 12 comments
Hard working staff: 4 comments	Anti-social behaviour issues: 8 comments
Garden competition is good: 2 comments	Parking issues: 7 comments
Kept informed of maintenance: 1 comment	Fly-tipping issues: 5 comments
	Streets not cleaned: 5 comments
	Lack of Neighbourhood Officer presence: 4 comments
	Potholes: 4 comments
	Gutters not cleared: 2 comments
	Lack of Independent Living Officer presence: 2 comments
	Poorly maintained pathways: 2 comments
	Bins not emptied: 1 comment
	Childrens play area needed: 1 comment
	Dirty bus shelter: 1 comment
	Don't feel looked after: 1 comment
	Gates left open: 1 comment
	Lack of public toilet facilities: 1 comment
	Residents not consulted on improvements: 1 comment
	Unhappy that the communal lounge was used as a polling station: 1 comment

As indicated in the comments received, the maintenance of communal gardens, and anti-social behaviour issues, are the main reasons tenants do not feel the council makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods.

A number of comments also mention locality-based issues which Folkestone & Hythe District Council is not responsible for, such as potholes and bus shelters. It is therefore recommended that we produce communication materials to let residents know which services are within F&HDC's remit, and which services fall to Kent County Council to address.

How do we compare?

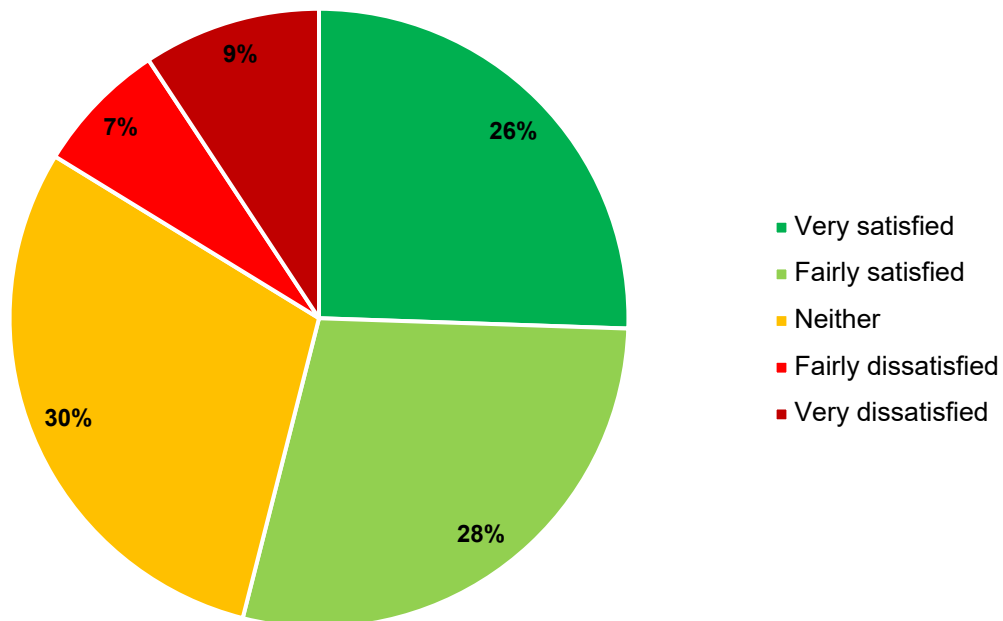
	2022	2023
Folkestone & Hythe	48%	59%
Sector median	67%	

Satisfaction with the landlord’s approach to handling anti-social behaviour

54% of respondents are satisfied with the housing service’s approach to handling anti-social behaviour.

Unlike satisfaction with complaints handling, which was only asked of tenants who have made a complaint, satisfaction with anti-social behaviour handling was asked of all tenants.

As such, the relatively high proportion of respondents who said they are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (almost a third) is likely because they have not reported any anti-social behaviour and therefore have no basis on which to form an opinion of how the council deals with it.



Base: 517 (all respondents excluding 21 no reply and 146 don't know/not applicable)

	2020	2022	2023
% satisfied	N/A	51%	54%

Results were broadly similar across all groups, except for the 30-49 age group (27%), Non-white/BME groups (38%) and those in general needs (38%).

Folkestone Central was the most satisfied area (58%); Folkestone North and Rural the least (33%).

ASB handling	Result
Cheriton	38%
Folkestone Central	58%
Folkestone East	39%
Folkestone North and Rural	33%
Hythe	46%
Romney Marsh	37%

Why?

Respondents made the following comments:

Satisfied tenants	Dissatisfied tenants
No anti-social behaviour issues: 101 comments	Lack of action to tackle anti-social behaviour: 41 comments
Council deals with issues well: 21 comments	Noise nuisance: 17 comments
Security issues have been addressed: 6 comments	Drug issues: 15 comments
	Parking issues: 8 comments
	Vandalism issues: 8 comments

The largest number of comments from dissatisfied tenants relate to a perceived lack of action to tackle anti-social behaviour. It is not always solely within the council's remit as a landlord to be able to address anti-social behaviour, as there are many instances where input from partner agencies such as the police and social services is required.

As such, it is recommended that we better communicate to tenants what the council is, and isn't, able to act on in relation to anti-social behaviour, and the processes, procedures and timescales we work to.

How do we compare?

	2022	2023
Folkestone & Hythe	51%	54%
Sector median	58%	

Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2023

Action Plan

Tenant Satisfaction Measure theme	Objective/s	Specific action/s	Output/s (deliverables)	Suggested Lead/s	Timeframe
<p>Overall satisfaction</p> <p><i>F&HDC result: 71%</i></p> <p><i>Benchmarking peer group median: 70%</i></p>	<p>Maximise potential for positive result by aligning more closely with sector re: survey methods (e.g. 80% telephone etc)</p> <p>NB key drivers for overall satisfaction are positive interactions/ communication with tenants, and satisfaction with repairs and maintenance</p>	<p>Explore alternative methodologies for the 2024 tenant satisfaction survey (e.g. telephone)</p>	<p>Report outlining proposed methodology for 2024 survey – to be agreed by STAP and CLT</p>	<p>Mike Bailey, Tenant Engagement & Wellbeing Senior Specialist</p>	<p>February 2024</p>
<p>Keeping properties in good repair</p> <p><u>Overall repairs service</u> <i>F&HDC result: 72%</i> <i>Benchmarking peer group median: 75%</i></p> <p><u>Time taken to complete most recent repair</u> <i>F&HDC result: 66%</i></p> <p><i>Benchmarking peer group median: 68%</i></p> <p><u>Home is well maintained</u> <i>F&HDC result: 70%</i></p> <p><i>Benchmarking peer group median: 69%</i></p>	<p>Increase tenant awareness of timescales of repairs, including clarification that these timescales are for day-to-day repairs, not planned works</p> <p>Improve communication with affected tenants regarding planned works programmes</p>	<p>Review 2023 survey comments around timeliness of repairs</p> <p>Review 2023 survey comments to highlight if there are particular issues in certain service areas and/or for certain types of repair</p>	<p>Article in tenant newsletter reminding residents of target response times</p> <p>Articles on website and tenant & leaseholder Facebook group with high level, indicative planned works programmes</p>	<p>Barb Wilkins, Repairs Senior Specialist</p> <p>Nicola Phipps, Assets & Major Works Senior Specialist</p>	<p>April 2024</p> <p>April 2024 and ongoing</p>
<p>Maintaining building safety</p> <p><i>F&HDC result: 78%</i></p> <p><i>Benchmarking peer group median: 77%</i></p>	<p>Maintain high levels of compliance performance, and proactively look at improving our Decent Homes performance through delivery of our capital programme</p>	<p>Explore how best to communicate with tenants to raise awareness of safety works which have been completed</p>	<p>Articles in tenant newsletters, on the website and tenant & leaseholder Facebook group</p>	<p>Keith Deane, Compliance Senior Specialist</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

Tenant Satisfaction Measure theme	Objective/s	Specific action/s	Output/s (deliverables)	Suggested Lead/s	Timeframe
<p>Respectful and helpful engagement</p> <p><u>Listens to and acts on views</u> F&HDC result: 55%</p> <p>Benchmarking peer group median: 58%</p> <p><u>Keeps tenants informed</u> F&HDC result: 71%</p> <p>Benchmarking peer group median: 69%</p> <p><u>Treats tenants fairly and with respect</u> F&HDC result: 72%</p> <p>Benchmarking peer group median: 73%</p>	<p>Better understand the reasons why people do or don't feel listened to, or kept informed</p>	<p>Review 2023 survey comments by section with service managers, to pinpoint service-specific issues</p>	<p>Report outlining summary of comments, and actions taken to address them – to be presented to STAP and featured in a “your voice, our action” bulletin</p>	<p>Mike Bailey, Tenant Engagement & Wellbeing Senior Specialist</p> <p>Jonathan Hicks, Policy & Performance Senior Specialist</p>	<p>April 2024</p>
<p>Effective handling of complaints</p> <p>F&HDC result: 34%</p> <p>Benchmarking peer group median: 31%</p>	<p>Increase tenant awareness of what is or isn't a formal complaint</p> <p>Better understand contractor complaints</p>	<p>Clarify with the Regulator of Social Housing whether it is permissible to include additional wording in the 2024 survey to clarify what is meant by “complaint” and that this question is about the outcome, not how it was handled</p> <p>Remind residents of our target time for responding to complaints</p> <p>Explore how to improve learning from complaints</p> <p>Finalise Tenant Scrutiny Panel review of complaints and where possible, implement any recommendations arising</p> <p>Review how the council monitors complaints dealt with by contractors</p>	<p>Article in tenant newsletter reminding residents of target response times</p> <p>Tenant Scrutiny Panel report</p>	<p>Mike Bailey, Tenant Engagement & Wellbeing Senior Specialist</p>	<p>February 2024</p> <p>April 2024</p> <p>February 2024</p> <p>April 2024</p>

Tenant Satisfaction Measure theme	Objective/s	Specific action/s	Output/s (deliverables)	Suggested Lead/s	Timeframe
<p>Responsible neighbourhood management</p> <p><u>Communal areas clean and well maintained</u> F&HDC result: 70%</p> <p>Benchmarking peer group median: 66%</p> <p><u>Positive contribution to neighbourhood</u> F&HDC result: 59%</p> <p>Benchmarking peer group median: 62%</p> <p><u>Handling of anti-social behaviour</u> F&HDC result: 54%</p> <p>Benchmarking peer group median: 53%</p>	<p>Increase tenant awareness of contracted cleaning standards</p> <p>Increase tenant awareness of any work the council does to improve neighbourhoods</p>	<p>Advertise cleaning contract standards once the new contract begins</p> <p>Review how best to promote work the council has done which makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods (e.g. improvements to communal areas, anonymised case studies of successful interventions to resolve ASB case)</p> <p>Remind residents what is, or isn't, considered ASB and what the council can, and cannot, act on in relation to ASB, and the processes, procedures and timescales we work to</p> <p>Explore how we review ASB cases and how learning is identified</p> <p>Complete Tenant Scrutiny Panel review of ASB</p>	<p>Article in tenant newsletter and posters on communal notice boards advising residents the new cleaning contract standards</p> <p>Articles in "your voice, our action" bulletins</p> <p>Updated ASB policy</p> <p>Tenant Scrutiny Panel report</p>	<p>Mike Bailey, Tenant Engagement & Wellbeing Senior Specialist</p> <p>Tom Harding, Neighbourhood Management Senior Specialist</p>	<p>Once new contract begins</p> <p>April 2024 and ongoing</p> <p>February 2024</p> <p>April 2024</p>

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