

HOUSING TIMES

ANNUAL SUMMARY
2025



stalbans.gov.uk/housing



Foreword

“I’m delighted to introduce our 2025 Housing Times Annual Summary, a comprehensive look at how we’re supporting residents, maintaining and improving homes, and responding to what matters most across our communities.

Over the past year, we have strengthened tenant engagement, launched our first Resident Engagement Strategy, and continued investing in housing quality and safety. We’ve introduced a quarterly newsletter, expanded our Community Days, and taken action to improve communication, repairs, and estate management.

This report reflects not just our services, but your voices. From satisfaction surveys and complaints insights to neighbourhood clean-ups and new housing developments, every section shows how we are working to deliver safe, well-managed, and responsive housing.

Thank you to everyone who has shared feedback, attended events, or supported our improvement journey. We remain committed to learning from residents and delivering services that meet your needs.”

Christine Traill - Strategic Director
Community and Place Delivery



Resident engagement – strengthening tenants’ voices

Over the past year, St Albans City and District Council has expanded and improved the ways we engage with tenants and leaseholders.

Through the launch of our first Resident Engagement Strategy and a growing range of opportunities, residents are helping shape services and influence decisions more directly than ever before.

Our first ‘resident engagement strategy’

Launched in 2024 and co-produced with tenants, the strategy sets out clear principles for inclusive, responsive and transparent engagement. It defines how the Council listens, takes action, and feeds back on what matters to residents. We have since agreed to work with TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service), a national tenant engagement organisation, to carry out an independent review of the strategy. This will ensure it remains effective, inclusive, and fit for purpose.

Tenant and leaseholder forum

Established in October 2024, the Forum meet monthly and provides a structured space for residents to influence housing services. Members have already helped improve communication around repairs, suggested estate management changes, and shaped service standards. Forum members continue to offer valuable insight into housing services.

One member shared:

“The Forum has helped me feel more listened to.”

“Since joining the Forum, I’ve noticed a more helpful and polite approach when reporting repairs.”

Quarterly newsletter and communications

We launched a new quarterly Housing Newsletter in January 2025. Delivered online and in paper format, it includes service updates, case studies, advice, and ‘*You said, we did*’ updates.

We currently have **2,406 tenants and leaseholders** subscribed to receive the newsletter by email.

In 2024/25, the Council achieved a **98%** email delivery success rate, ensuring newsletters reached residents’ inboxes. The unique open rate was **43%**, significantly above the sector average of **25–30%**.

For residents without digital access or living in secure housing, we also provide printed newsletters and can offer alternative language formats or Braille if requested.





Community days:
Listening where it matters

Between May and October 2024, we held seven Community Days across St Albans, Harpenden, London Colney, Wheathampstead and Redbourn.

These events addressed local priorities such as fly-tipping, anti-social behaviour and repairs. Council teams were joined by Hertfordshire Police, Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, Morgan Sindall Property Services and local volunteers.

Key outcomes from the events included:

Westfield Road, Harpenden (May 2024)

Neighbourhood safety issues were raised and new community-led ideas were explored.

Cotlandswick, London Colney (June 2024)

The focus was on environmental cleanliness, fly-tipping, and bin misuse.

Southdown, Harpenden (June 2024)

Door-knocking helped identify a hoarding case and enabled timely support.

Redbourn (September 2024)

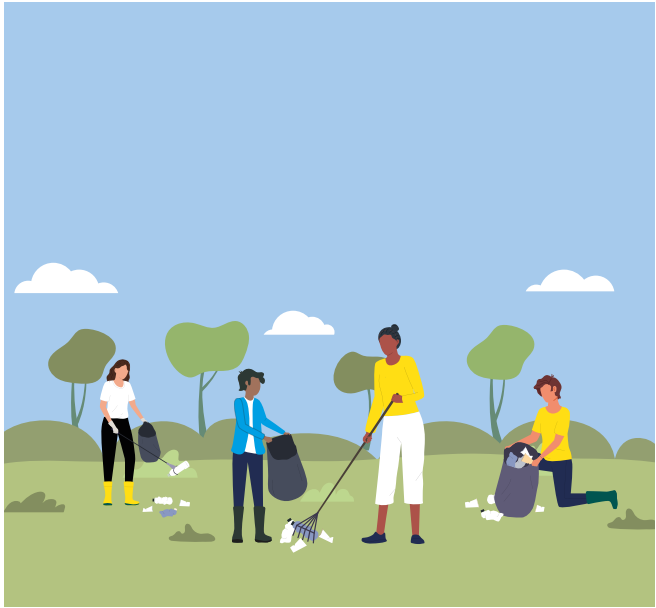
Following reports from residents, Police issued Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs).

Haig Close, St Albans (October 2024)

Fire Service, Police and Morgan Sindall Property Services provided on-site advice and support to tenants.

The final three events saw increased attendance following targeted flyer campaigns. We plan to partner with churches and community venues to improve turnout further in future.

In 2025, we introduced new Community Afternoons in Westfield Road, Harpenden, St Luke’s Church, St Albans and at Caledon Community Centre in London Colney. These sessions provided an opportunity for residents to meet local services, raise issues directly, and access practical advice in an informal setting.



Local clean-up:
Great British spring clean

In April 2025, the Council organised a clean-up in Dellfield as part of the national Great British Spring Clean campaign. The event brought together council officers and local residents to promote cleaner estates and civic pride. Bengali-language flyers were distributed to encourage participation, reflecting our ongoing commitment to inclusive engagement.

Partnerships and social value

We continue to work closely with our contractors, particularly Morgan Sindall Property Services, whose dedicated Social value Officers attend events and support wider social value initiatives. We are encouraging similar commitments across all housing contracts to ensure community benefit is embedded in service delivery.

You said, we did

Resident feedback remains central to our service improvements. We regularly publish ‘You said, we did’ updates to highlight tangible changes – from clearer repair time frames to better estate signage and improved communication. These updates show that tenant voices directly inform action.

Tenant satisfaction measures

Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) are national standards introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing to ensure tenants’ voices shape how landlords deliver their services.

Now in their second year, they provide a clear, comparable picture of performance across all social housing providers. There are 22 measures in total, covering key areas such as repairs, safety, complaint handling, engagement, and neighbourhood management. All landlords are required to collect and publish this data each year.

All social housing landlords are required to collect and publish this data each year ensuring transparency and comparability across the sector.

Between January and March 2025, 785 tenants completed our TSM survey. The results were:

Measure	Result 2024/25
Satisfaction with the landlord	54%
Satisfaction with repairs	55%
Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair	49%
Satisfaction that the home is well maintained	50%
Satisfaction that the home is safe	58%
Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them	43%
Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them	21%
Satisfaction with agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect	58%
Satisfaction with the landlord’s approach to handling complaints	21%
Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained	44%
Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods	43%
Satisfaction with the landlord’s approach to handling anti-social behaviour	43%

This is our second year of publishing TSM results, and we are committed to improving performance. We are also working with TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) – a national organisation that promotes effective resident involvement – to review our approach and strengthen engagement going forward. This information is being used as a baseline to improve and develop our services.

We are working closely with our repairs contractor, Morgan Sindall Property Services, to strengthen communication and streamline processes, particularly around more complex or long-standing repairs.

We have appointed a Housing Resident Engagement Officer to help residents have a stronger voice in shaping services. This role supports tenants and leaseholders to take part in forums, focus groups and consultations, ensuring that feedback directly informs how services are delivered and improved.

We are working with TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service), the national body for resident engagement, to strengthen local involvement. TPAS will provide training and guidance for members of our Tenant and Leaseholder Forum, resident focus groups and local residents’ associations. We encourage residents to join or form representative groups in their area, and the Council will provide support to those who volunteer to take on this role. This ensures that every tenant has a trusted voice speaking on their behalf.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures are collected and published each year by all social housing providers. A further tenant survey will be carried out this autumn.

Resident satisfaction with communal areas and the management of anti-social behaviour remains below expectations. The Council’s Housing Restructuring Plan, together with the Morgan Sindal Property Services Improvement Plan, is addressing these concerns. These initiatives will improve communication with residents, strengthen estate management, and ensure faster, more consistent responses to issues, leading to improved outcomes

We would like to thank all tenants who completed the 2024/25 survey and encourage everyone to take part this year. Your voice continues to influence decisions and improve services.

If you would like to find out more about resident engagement or get involved, please contact: residentengagement@stalbens.gov.uk

Planned works

Each year, we invest in the quality and safety of council homes through a rolling programme of planned maintenance and modernisation. These works are prioritised to ensure our properties remain safe, energy-efficient and comfortable for the people who live in them.

In 2024/25, a wide range of improvements were completed in homes and blocks across the District. Every upgrade makes a tangible difference – from warmer rooms and lower bills to improved safety and more attractive estates.

This year’s programme delivered:



Replacement roofs - individual dwellings
13 homes
received new roofs, improving weather protection, insulation and the overall lifespan of the buildings.



Replacement roofs - housing blocks
27 homes
were re-roofed, enhancing energy efficiency and reducing long-term maintenance needs across 2.5 blocks.



Window renewals
44 homes
received new, energy-efficient windows, reducing heat loss and improving comfort.



Front and rear door renewals
60 homes
had secure, insulated doors fitted, improving safety, security and energy efficiency.



Kitchen renewals
48 kitchens
were replaced with modern, durable designs tailored to residents’ needs, improving layouts, finishes and usability.



Bathroom renewals
25 bathrooms
were fully renewed, enhancing comfort and accessibility.



Fire safety improvements
10 blocks
received upgraded fire doors and associated safety measures in line with current fire regulations, offering greater peace of mind to residents.



Estate improvements
various
communal and estate-wide upgrades were delivered to improve shared spaces and facilities (*figures not applicable*).



Structural works
31 homes
benefited from essential structural repairs to maintain safety and integrity.



Garages blocks
28 garages
underwent repairs or improvements to extend their use and maintain condition.



Cavity wall and loft insulation
41 homes
were fitted with new insulation, helping reduce heat loss and improve energy efficiency.



External redecoration
23 homes
received external painting and maintenance, enhancing appearance and protecting buildings from the elements.

All works are guided by stock condition surveys, regulatory requirements and tenant feedback. We contact residents in advance and support them through every stage of the process, keeping disruption to a minimum wherever possible. Planned investment is about more than bricks and mortar – it is about delivering homes that are safe, modern and fit for the future.



Insulated Roof - Whole block with guard rails



House Roof - Dry ridge and verge



Bin store - Re-located



Upgraded – Communal ceiling, fire rated loft hatch, compartmentation in roof space



Loft Insulation – Upgraded



Upgrade Works – Garage Site



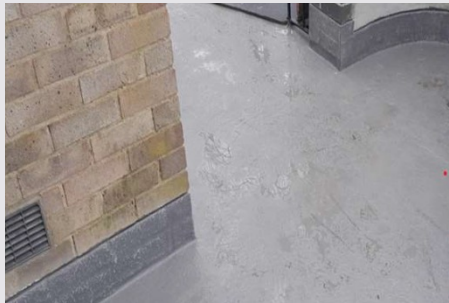
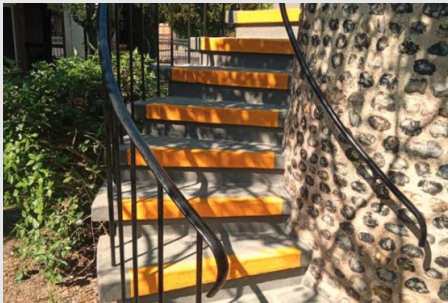
Structural Works – Underpinning



External Redecorations



Structural Works – Including concrete repairs to stairs and balconies at Malthouse Court



Mobility Scooter Store – Cyril Dumbleton House



Estate Improvements – Re-surfacing and refuse solution on Abbots Avenue West



Responsive repairs

2024/25 marked the beginning of the second term of our partnership with Morgan Sindall Property Services (MSPS), and the sixth year of the contract overall.

The Asset Management Partnership was awarded over a 15-year period, with the next potential break point scheduled for March 2029.

Over the first six years, the service has navigated significant legislative changes and national challenges, many of which continued into 2024/25.

During the year, Morgan Sindall Property Services, completed 12,206 responsive repairs, with 10,157 of these resolved on the first visit at a time convenient for residents. Resident satisfaction, measured through our text messaging surveys, achieved an overall score of 4.08 out of 5. While this represents a slight decrease compared to the previous year, the volume of surveys returned increased, providing a broader and more representative picture of resident feedback.

A total of 252 vacant property refurbishments were completed, enabling properties to be re-let promptly. Our Contact Centre handled 24,212 calls relating to responsive repairs, with an average answer time of 5 minutes and 4 seconds.

The service continued to face recruitment challenges in 2024/25, reflecting the ongoing national shortage of skilled labour. This impacted appointment scheduling and service delivery due to higher-than-average staff turnover, as operatives were offered alternative employment opportunities. To address this, the partnership has invested in staff retention measures, including enhanced training and a stronger focus on apprenticeship programmes to develop new talent internally.

Following the completion of the first five-year term, the partnership reviewed stock condition data collected through asset management surveys. Over 95% of our properties have now received a survey, and the second cycle of surveys has commenced as part of our rolling five-year programme to maintain up-to-date asset information.

Delivering warmer, greener homes for St Albans residents

In 2024/25, the Council made significant progress in improving the energy efficiency of its housing stock – helping tenants save on energy bills, reducing carbon emissions, and supporting our commitment to tackling the climate emergency.

All homes improved under these schemes will meet modern energy performance standards, achieving at least an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of Band C (EPCs measure the energy efficiency of a property on a scale from A to G).






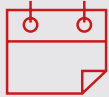


The **Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) – Wave 2.1**, a Government programme providing funding to improve the energy efficiency of social housing, has been a major driver of this work. Backed by **£4.62 million** in Government funding and **£7.6 million** from the Council's ring-fenced Housing Revenue Account (HRA – the budget used for managing and maintaining Council housing), the programme will






deliver upgrades to 576 Council homes. By the end of April 2025, 314 properties had already been improved, with the remainder due for completion by March 2026. Measures include external wall insulation, solar panels, cavity wall insulation, ventilation upgrades, and other improvements to boost energy efficiency.

Building on this momentum, the Council has also secured **£2.48 million** from the **Warm Homes Social Housing Fund (SHF) – Wave 3**, another Government funding stream for energy upgrades to social housing. Matched by **£9 million** from the Housing Revenue Account and delivered in partnership with **Morgan Sindall Property Services**, this three-year programme will run from April 2025 to September 2028 and will improve a further 353 homes. Planned works include loft, cavity wall and external wall insulation, solar panels, low-energy lighting, upgraded windows and doors, and enhanced ventilation and heating systems.

Together, these programmes will deliver warmer homes, lower running costs, and improved comfort and wellbeing for tenants, while reducing the overall carbon footprint of our housing stock. At a time of rising living costs, this investment provides lasting benefits for residents across the District.

Social value outcomes for 2024/25 included:

 17 Sessions of digital inclusion	 106 Adults supported with employability sessions/skills	 12 HEAT cafés hosted online	 123 Employee volunteering hours
 100 Oaklands College students attended a Q&A session with our apprentice quantity surveyors	 187 Apprenticeships and work-experience course enrolments	 1-1 1-1 CV writing support and a range of online courses for residents	 8 Community days hosted by Morgan Sindall Property Services

 314 Homes upgraded in 2024/25 under SHDF Wave 2.1	 576 Improved homes by March 2026	 353 Warmer homes SHF Wave 3 between Apr 2025 – Sep 2028	 £11.48m Investment for Wave 3, including £9m from the Council's housing budget	 EPC Band C All upgraded homes to achieve minimum EPC Band C
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Winner!

Social Value Employer of the Year 2025



Social value

Morgan Sindall Property Services (MSPS), as the Council's principal contractor and social value delivery partner, has worked closely with us this year to deliver extensive community benefit across St Albans. From supporting young people into work to helping older residents get online, and from transforming community spaces to empowering survivors of domestic abuse, the Social Value programme has achieved measurable and lasting impact.

Helping young people succeed

Through MSPS-led initiatives, three new schools were engaged this year, supporting **181 students** through CV workshops, employability training, and careers events. At Links Academy, students excluded from mainstream education received one-to-one guidance, with two going on to complete college applications.

MSPS also delivered a **40-hour Apprenticeship Academy**, which resulted in the recruitment of three apprentices and provided all participants with CPD-accredited training, mentoring, and team-building experience. The company partnered with ELSA CIC to challenge stereotypes in construction and took part in National Apprenticeship Week at Oaklands College, speaking to over 100 students about career opportunities.

Three students completed week-long work experience placements with MSPS, gaining hands-on insight into social value, repairs, surveying, and community engagement.

Supporting residents into work

MSPS delivered **101 hours** of employability support for **106 adults**, including Job Centre sessions, CV writing, mock interviews, and confidence-building mentoring.

Eight weeks of employability workshops were provided to Salaam Women's Café, and members of LeeAnna's Wish charity received in-person Food Safety and Health and Safety training, enabling several residents to volunteer in community cafés. Two long-term unemployed residents secured full-time jobs in childcare following tailored mentoring and interview support.

Building stronger communities

MSPS staff contributed **123 volunteering hours** and supported eight Community Days, repairs clinics, and mental health workshops.



At Hatfield House, the achievements of Graham, a former MSPS apprentice who overcame addiction to qualify as a Multi-Trade Apprentice, were celebrated. 100 orange tulip bulbs were donated for the **Orange the World** campaign, marking 16 days of activism against domestic abuse.

The first Housing Repairs Clinic was held at Cottonmill Community Centre, logging six repairs and connecting residents with Council, Citizens Advice, and Communities 1st staff.

At Gertrude Peake Place, raised flower beds and a greenhouse were installed, transforming the garden with the support of MSPS's supply chain partner E&C Construction.



Phoenix project – supporting survivors

Through the MSPS Phoenix Project, three survivors of domestic abuse received skills training, CV support, and mentoring. One participant has since started full-time work as a nursery assistant, saying:

"It's absolutely perfect, I love it and fit in perfectly. I'm so excited and grateful that I was given the opportunity!"



Bridging the digital divide

In partnership with local charity Computer Friendly, MSPS delivered **13 hours** of digital inclusion sessions in Wheathampstead and Redbourn, supporting older residents with using phones, laptops, and email, while also providing valuable social interaction.



Learning, donations, and measured impact

Through the Morgan Sindall Property Services Staff Skills Academy, 116 residents successfully completed 187 free online courses. These covered a range of subjects including Food Safety, Safeguarding, and Mental Wellbeing. All figures are externally verified through the Staff Skills Academy.

MSPS also provided **£1,603** in direct donations to community projects and raised **£1,150** in its Christmas Appeal, benefiting Citizens Advice, Computer Friendly, St Albans and District Foodbank, and LeeAnna's Wish.

The measurable outcomes were:

£1,121,071

in Social Wellbeing created (verified by HACT) – a return of **£25** for every **£1** spent.

£1,516,706.66

recorded in the Social Value Portal (pending validation)

Looking ahead to 2025/26

MSPS will continue to work with the Council to grow school and college engagement, expand volunteering, provide energy and health advice, strengthen digital inclusion, and support the most vulnerable in our community. These priorities build on the strong stakeholder relationships and successful projects delivered over the past year, and align closely with the Council's housing and community objectives.



It is hoped that upcoming new housing developments across the District will help reduce pressure on temporary accommodation and provide more opportunities for families to settle into secure, long-term homes.



Sheltered accommodation

At **Cyril Dumpleton House**, fire safety upgrades have now been largely completed. To mark the occasion and thank residents for their cooperation, Morgan Sindall Property Services hosted a celebratory fish and chip lunch. The event brought together residents, Council representatives, and project staff in a relaxed and positive setting – offering time to reflect and engage with the team.



Meanwhile, at **Gertrude Peake Place**, improvement works are currently underway to enhance the external grounds. Our Housing Projects Team is working collaboratively with residents to ensure the final landscaping plans reflect their needs, preferences, and feedback.

Supported housing services

The Council's Accommodation Support team manages and supports residents living in temporary accommodation, as well as tenants in our two remaining Council-run retirement housing schemes – Cyril Dumpleton House and Gertrude Peake Place.

Temporary accommodation for homeless families

We primarily support households placed in temporary accommodation within the District. Most residents are awaiting the outcome of a homelessness application and have expressed a wish to be rehoused locally. Our team offers tailored guidance and support throughout their time in temporary housing, and we work closely with them to achieve a stable and successful move-on when appropriate.

The number of households in temporary accommodation has risen over the past year. In response, the Council has sourced additional properties – including a greater number of adapted homes to meet the diverse needs of those we support.



Affordable housing

Affordable housing In 2024/25, a total of 107 new affordable homes were delivered across the District 47 for social rent and 60 for shared ownership.

These were provided across 3 key development sites:



1. Jubilee Square, St Albans

A mixed-tenure scheme of 1 and 2 bedroom flats, managed by Watford Community Housing Trust.



2. Warner Close, Sandridge

14, 3 bedroom family homes, to be managed by Hightown Housing Association.



3. The Hedges, Woollam Crescent, St Albans

12 social rent properties completed in April 2025.

The Council continues to deliver new homes directly and to work in partnership with Housing Associations to meet the needs of residents on the Housing Register.

Looking ahead to 2025/26

New affordable housing developments are due to complete at the following sites:

1. York House, Ashley Road

A St Albans City and District Council-led development

2. Abbots Avenue West, St Albans

King Offa site

3. Bullens Green, Colney Heath

In addition, a decision is expected in Autumn 2025 regarding the long-term redevelopment of Telford Court. The Council is exploring a partnership with a Housing Association to deliver a significant number of new affordable homes at this site.

Housing income

We understand that managing rent payments can be challenging – particularly with the rising cost of living and ongoing changes to the welfare system. That’s why we offer a range of services to help tenants stay on top of their rent and access support when needed.

Online rent services

Tenants can register for an online account at www.stalbans.gov.uk/mystalbans to:

- View their rent balance and payment history
- See a full breakdown of charges
- Make secure payments online
- Book appointments with their Housing Income Officer

It’s quick and easy to register, and our team is available to help if support is needed to set up an account.

Universal credit and financial pressures

The number of tenants claiming Universal Credit in St Albans has continued to rise. Many households have been moved from legacy benefits to Universal Credit, which has sometimes resulted in payment delays and budgeting difficulties.

If you are struggling to pay your rent, please contact your Housing Income Officer as early as possible. We can offer tailored advice, explore available options with you, and refer you to additional support services if needed. Early conversations help prevent problems from escalating.

You can reach the Housing Income Team through the online portal at www.stalbans.gov.uk/mystalbans or by calling 01727 866100.

Tenancy sustainment

Our Tenancy Sustainment service plays a vital role in helping residents maintain their homes and prevent arrears. In 2024/25, the original two posts in this team were made permanent, and a third post was created and successfully recruited to.

This expansion has strengthened our capacity to provide tailored support, including help with benefit claims, budgeting advice, and signposting to local services, ensuring more tenants can access the assistance they need to sustain their tenancy.

Rent collection and prevention of arrears

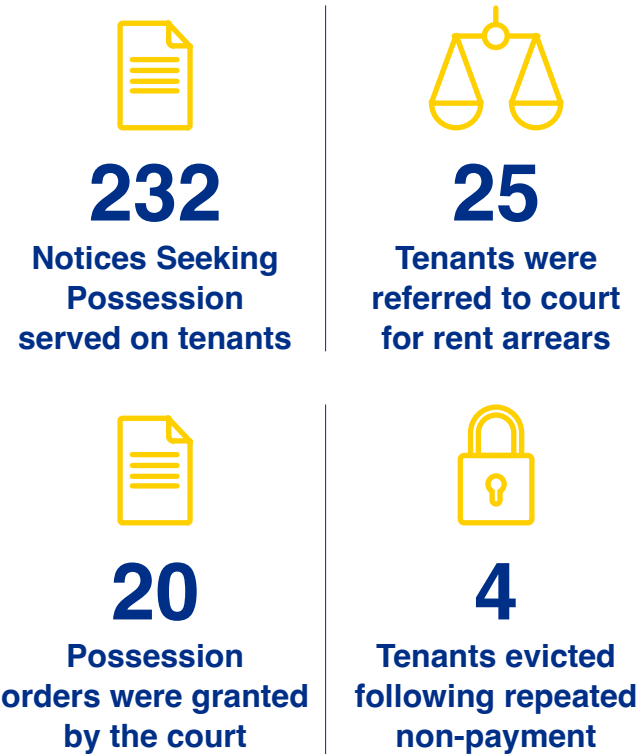
The vast majority of our tenants pay their rent on time. When difficulties arise, our Housing Income Officers always aim to resolve issues informally before legal action is considered.

Support available includes:

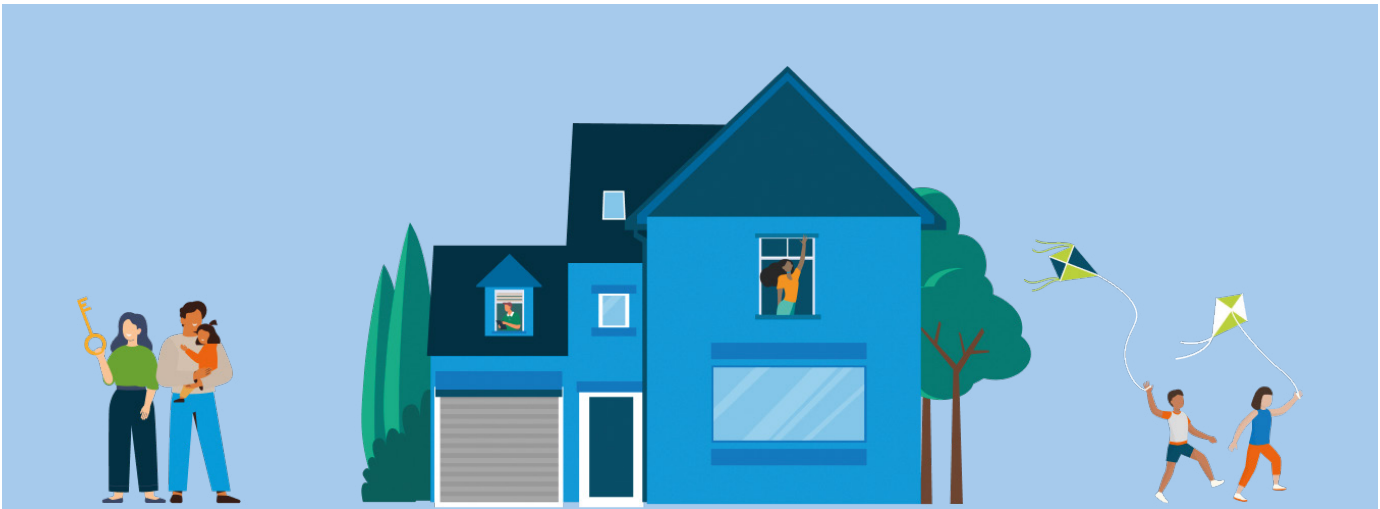
- Help with benefit applications
- Budgeting and financial advice
- Signposting to local support services
- Court action is only taken as a last resort

Formal action in 2024/25

Where informal support did not resolve the issue, the Council was required to take the following action:



We remain committed to early intervention, respectful communication, and supporting all tenants to sustain their tenancies wherever possible.



Mutual exchange

If you are a council or housing association tenant and would like to move, a mutual exchange could be the right option for you.

A mutual exchange allows two or more tenants to swap their homes - with landlord approval - provided certain conditions are met. This can be a quicker and more flexible alternative to waiting on the housing register.

Tenants often choose to exchange to:

- Move closer to family or work
- Downsize or upsize
- Find a home that better suits their needs



You can sign up at: www.homeswapper.co.uk and create a property advert, and message other tenants directly.



If you find a suitable match, you must obtain written permission from your Housing Officer before proceeding. Each property involved in the exchange will need to pass a property inspection, and any rent arrears or breaches of tenancy must be resolved before approval can be granted.

Find out more

More information on mutual exchanges, including eligibility and how to apply, is available on our website: www.stalbans.gov.uk/mutual-exchange

Tenants’ incentive scheme: helping you move to a home that fits your needs

Are you currently living in a council property that is larger than your household requires? The Tenants’ Incentive Scheme is designed to support tenants who wish to downsize to a more suitable home.

Whether you are managing rising utility costs, mobility challenges, or maintaining a large garden, this voluntary scheme can make the process of moving easier and more affordable.

Who can apply?

The scheme is available to current St Albans City and District Council tenants who are occupying properties that are under-occupied based on the size of their household.

What are the incentives?

Tenants can choose one of the following 3 incentive options:

Option 1: DIY move grant

Receive £1,700 if you arrange your own move
Plus an additional £250 if the property is left in good condition.

Option 2: Council-arranged move + bedroom bonus

The Council organises and covers removal costs
Receive £500 for each bedroom released
Plus an additional £250 if the property is left in good condition.

Option 3: Council-arranged move + new carpets

The Council organises and covers removal costs
The Council will re-carpet your new home (limited colour range available)
+ Plus an additional £250 if the property is left in good condition.

Please note: Only one incentive option is available per household. These incentives are for transfer applicants only. Only one incentive package can be claimed per move, and eligibility applies to transfer applicants only.

2024/25 achievements

- 17 households downsized
- 24 bedrooms released for families in housing need
- 6 tenants received the £250 good condition bonus

Incentive package selection

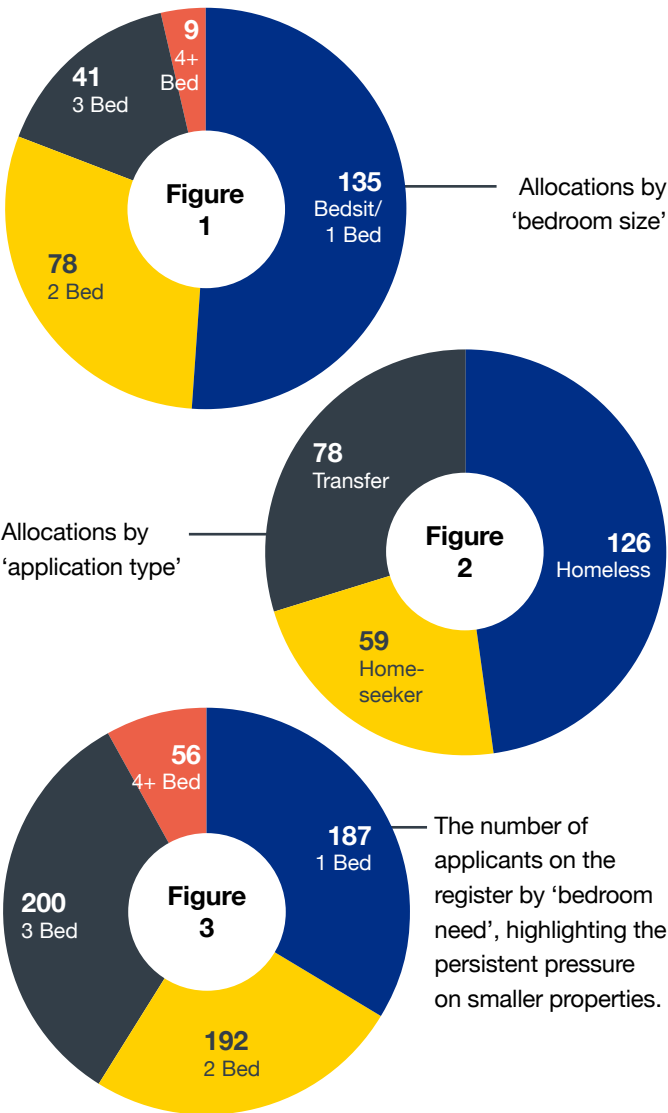
- 59% chose ‘option 1 (DIY move grant)’
- 6% chose ‘council move + bedroom bonus’
- 35% opted for ‘council move + new carpets’

Interested in downsizing? Find out more and apply at: www.stalbanshomechoice.co.uk

Social housing allocations: meeting high demand

Between April 2024 and March 2025, a total of 263 properties were let to households on the Housing Register. This figure includes direct lettings by the Council and nominations to our partner housing associations.

Demand for affordable housing continues to outstrip supply. Households currently on the Housing Register include those living in overcrowded accommodation, in temporary housing, or requiring a move on welfare or medical grounds.



Rough sleeping in St Albans District

Rough sleeping continues to be a complex issue requiring a multi-agency response. The Council works in close partnership with local services, including the Open Door Hub, Hightown Outreach, and Hertfordshire Constabulary, to identify and support individuals who are sleeping rough or at risk of doing so.

Regular walkabouts are undertaken in the city centre, both during the day and at night, to engage with individuals, offer advice, and facilitate referrals into support services. These include assistance with accommodation, benefit applications, safeguarding concerns, and access to food and other basic needs. While not all individuals who are begging in the District are homeless or have a local connection, the Council remains impartial and committed to ensuring that support is available for anyone in need. Officers work to build trust over time to encourage engagement with appropriate service

The official definition of rough sleeping includes people sleeping or preparing to sleep in the open air (e.g. streets, parks, doorways, bus shelters), or in places not intended for habitation (e.g. stairwells, sheds, cars, tents). It does not include individuals in hostels, shelters, squats, or those 'sofa surfing'. The reasons people experience rough sleeping are often complex and may relate to mental health, trauma, immigration status, or personal choice. While the Council cannot require individuals to accept help, every effort is made to provide support and promote sustainable housing outcomes.

Members of the public concerned about someone sleeping rough are encouraged to report it via the StreetLink app or by visiting: stalbans.gov.uk/rough-sleeping

Approaches for homelessness: 2024/25

During 2024/25, 1,110 households approached the Council for support with homelessness or the risk of becoming homeless.

Many were supported through early advice and assistance, with only a proportion requiring a full homelessness assessment. This reflects the Council's focus on early intervention and prevention.

The 10 most common reasons given for approaching the Council were:

10 main reasons for homelessness...	
01. Asked to leave by their family	198
02. Fleeing domestic abuse	142
03. Received a S21 eviction notice from their landlord	95
04. Sofa surfing	73
05. Previous rough sleeping	62
06. Evicted without a formal notice	58
07. Leaving prison	56
08. Leaving Home Office accommodation	46
09. Asked to leave by friends	46
10. Exhausted informal housing options	44

Despite the challenges, the Council continues to work closely with statutory and voluntary sector partners to prevent homelessness wherever possible and to ensure access to safe, suitable accommodation for those in need.



Housing Compliance – Annual Summary 2025

Safety and compliance remain at the heart of our housing service. This year, we achieved 100% compliance in multiple key areas – a result we are proud to share.

The following figures are accurate as of 31 March 2025.

Gas servicing

99.7% compliant

We achieved **99.7%** compliance with annual gas safety checks for our **4,765** properties with gas central heating. These checks also include carbon monoxide (CO₂) and smoke/heat alarm testing.

- **14** properties (0.3%) were outstanding at year-end – with no property left unsafe
- **4** cases are with the courts for injunctive action
- **3** cases are being prepared for legal intervention
- **4** cases involve complex household circumstances being supported by the Tenancy Team
- **3** cases are in the standard access process

Gas servicing records are currently updated manually. Over the next 5 years, this data will be cross-referenced with our new stock condition survey system to further strengthen accuracy and reduce risk.

Water safety

100% compliant

We achieved **100%** compliance with water hygiene requirements.

- Covers **362** tenanted and leasehold properties across **48** blocks with shared water tanks
- All inspections passed at the time of testing
- Any actions are addressed immediately – there are currently no outstanding works

Lift servicing

100% compliant

We achieved **100%** compliance with lift servicing requirements.

- Covers **6** lifts serving **152** dwellings across **6** blocks
- All lifts are in good working order
- **1** lift is scheduled for refurbishment in the next couple of years

Electrical safety (5-year checks)

97.8% compliant

At year-end, **4,847** properties required electrical testing.

- **97.8%** (4,739 properties) have a valid certificate
- **78** properties (1.6%) required follow-up works
- **30** properties (0.6%) required full rewires

No property is left unsafe. Access challenges and tenancy-related issues are managed closely with Housing Officers to ensure prompt resolution.

Fire risk assessments (FRAs)

100% compliant

We achieved **100%** compliance with:

- All Fire Risk Assessments being in date
- All annual interim reviews completed
- All FRA actions recorded and tracked

Risk levels have reduced since the last quarter:

- **0** higher risks (down from 3)
- **531** moderate risks (down from 670)
- **111** lower risks (down from 135)
- **4** advisory items

Telford Court, previously a high-rise block, is being decommissioned. Once complete, we will have no blocks above 18 metres, removing the Council from Building Safety Regulator oversight unless regulations change.

Asbestos management

100% compliant

We achieved **100%** compliance with annual asbestos inspections in communal (non-domestic) areas.

- Latest inspections carried out in Quarter 4 of 2024/25 by Morgan Sindall Property Services
- Data is being added to our asbestos register in line with our asbestos management plan
- All contractors are provided with the asbestos register; tenants receive information at tenancy sign-up, in the repairs handbook, and on the Council's website.



Adaptations – making homes safer and more accessible

Our home adaptations service helps residents who need changes to their homes so they can live safely, independently, and with greater confidence.

Each adaptation is tailored to individual needs and can make a lasting difference to everyday life.

In 2024/25, we completed **97 major adaptations**, an increase from 92 the previous year. These included fitting level-access showers, installing stair lifts, providing ramps, widening doorways, and altering kitchens to improve accessibility.

We also carried out **125 minor adaptations**, such as fitting grab rails, installing small ramps, and adding lever taps designed to assist residents with limited

Summary and forward look

In 2024/25, we delivered **100%** compliance in four major safety areas – water hygiene, lift servicing, fire risk assessments, and asbestos management – and maintained exceptionally high compliance in all others. In the year ahead, we will focus on completing the small number of outstanding cases, further integrating our safety data systems, and continuing to ensure every home meets the highest possible safety standards.

hand mobility. These smaller changes, can usually be arranged quickly and help make daily tasks easier and safer.

The number of major adaptations completed each month varied during the year. The highest monthly total was **33 adaptations**, while the lowest was **11**.

Importantly, the overall speed of completing major adaptations improved. On average, it took **199 days from the time a resident was referred to us to the work being finished**, compared to 265 days in 2023/24. This is a **25% improvement** and means residents are receiving the support they need more quickly.

Every adaptation, whether large or small, is about making a home work better for the person living in it – helping them to stay independent, feel safe, and enjoy a better quality of life.

The 2024/25 financial position

In 2024/25 the overall income to the housing service was £36,232,000.

The main source of the income is the rent and service charges received from tenants and leaseholders.

All income collected by Housing is kept in the Housing Revenue Account and this is “ring fenced” so that money can only be spent on service to tenants such as staffing, repairs and maintenance. We also pay c.£20 million to the Government each year for loan repayments and to service the historic debt from building houses and flats in the last 80 years.

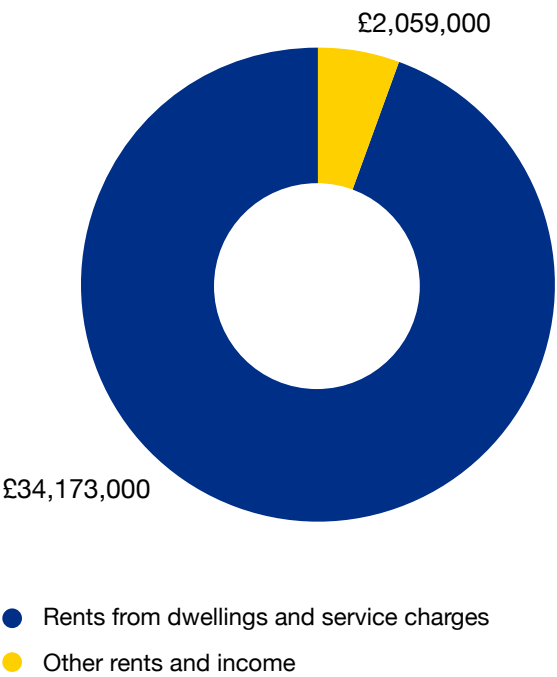
Capital expenditure

During 2024/25 the Council spent £12.8m on improvements to our housing stock. This includes boiler upgrades, window replacements, roofing, electrical rewires, kitchens and bathrooms and disabled adaptations.

In addition to this, £7m was spent on affordable housing projects in the District, with two projects scheduled for completion in 2025/26, adding an additional 26 dwellings to our housing stock.

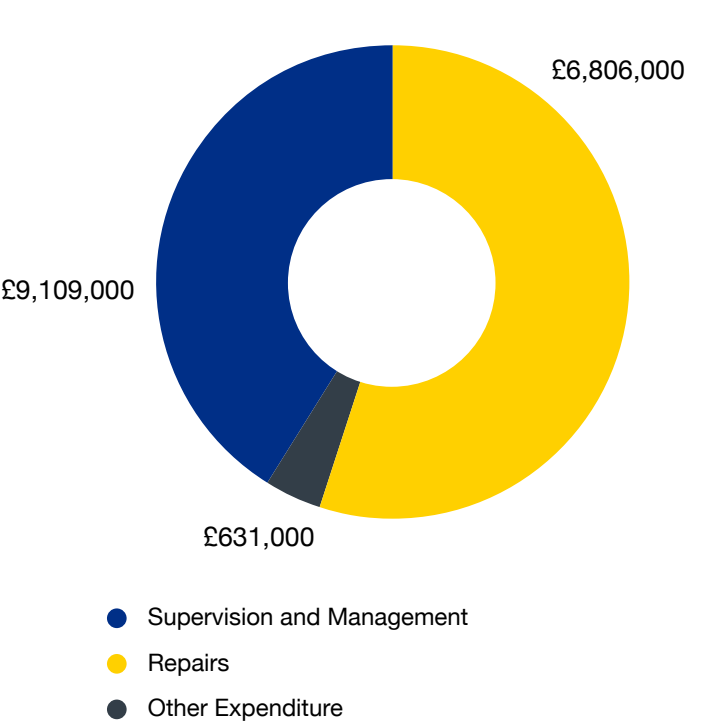
Housing income

Housing income	How much £	Percentage of total
Rents from dwellings and service charges	34,173,000	94%
Other rents and income	2,059,000	6%
Total	36,232,000	100%



Housing expenditure

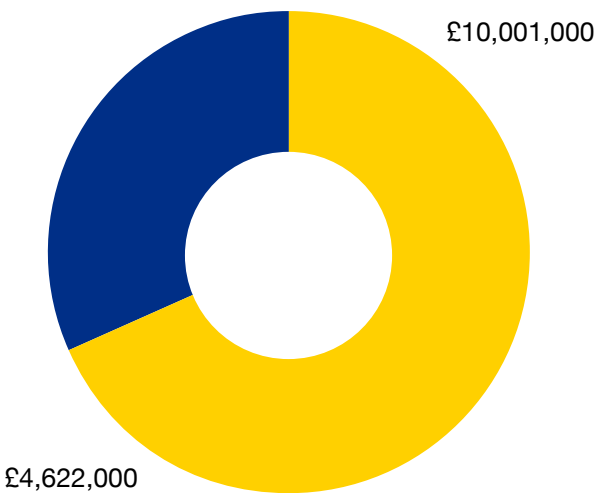
Housing expenditure	How much £	Percentage of total
Supervision and management	9,109,000	55%
Repairs	6,806,000	41%
Other expenditure	631,000	4%
Total	16,546,000	100%



Other charges to the housing revenue account

Other charges to HRA	How much £
Capital Programme Charges	10,001,000
Loan Interest Paid	4,622,000
Total	14,623,000

- Capital programme charges
- Loan interest paid



Housing complaints

The Council is committed to delivering housing services that are fair, responsive and accountable. A clear, consistent complaints process is central to this – ensuring issues are resolved promptly and learning is embedded to improve future performance.

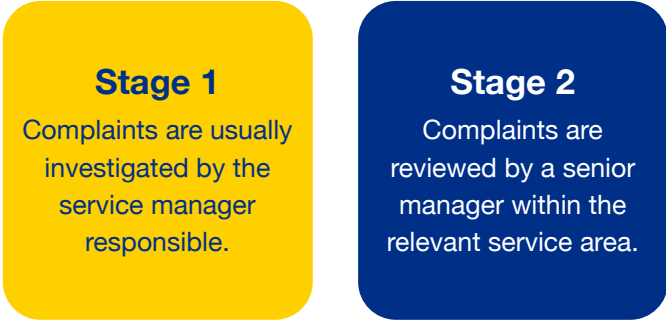
First full year of the new portal

This year marked the first full year of the Council's online complaints portal, which enables residents to self-serve by selecting whether they wish to log a complaint, make a service request, provide feedback or record a compliment. Clear step-by-step instructions are available on the Council's website, and residents can also raise issues by phone, by post, or in person via the Customer Delivery Team.

The portal was introduced in late 2023 to improve accessibility, streamline processes, and support compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, which became statutory in April 2024. This reflects the Ombudsman's enhanced role in identifying systemic failures, making determinations, and issuing recommendations to social landlords.

Our complaints process

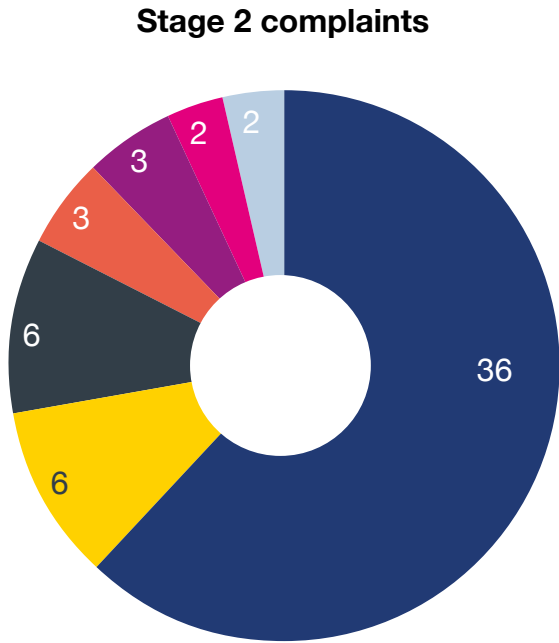
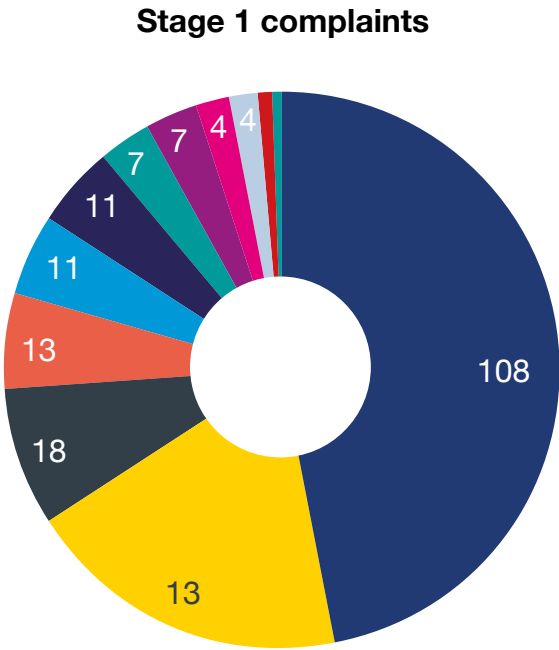
The Council operates a two-stage complaints procedure:



If the issue remains unresolved, residents may escalate the matter to the **Housing Ombudsman** (if they are a tenant or leaseholder), or to the **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman** (if they are an applicant or private sector resident). Residents may also contact the Ombudsman at any stage for advice.

How we performed in 2024/25

Below are some complaint statistics showing the most common housing concerns that our tenants and leaseholders have.



Service Area	Stage 1	Stage 2
Repairs and Maintenance	108	36
Tenancy Services	44	6
Major Works	18	6
Housing Allocations	13	3
Gas/Central Heating/ Compliance	11	0
Estates	11	0
Homelessness	7	0
Adaptations	7	3
Leasehold Services	4	2
Garages	4	2
Private Sector Housing	2	0
Lettings	1	0
Total	230	58

149 service requests, 19 compliments and 5 feedback items were also recorded during the year.

See charts opposite for a visual breakdown of Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints by category.

Learning from complaints

The Council uses insight from complaints to improve services, strengthen communication, and prevent issues from recurring. While detailed thematic analysis is underway, we are actively engaging with tenants through community events and the Tenant and Leaseholder Forum to understand experiences and priorities.

We will shortly be launching **resident-led focus groups** to review complaint themes and identify where service improvements are most needed. This work will help ensure lessons from complaints shape future delivery and align with the principles of **resident scrutiny** and **co-production**, in line with expectations set out by the Regulator of Social Housing and the Housing Ombudsman.

Housing ombudsman cases

In 2024/25, the Housing Ombudsman issued **6 formal determinations** involving the Council, resulting in **11 findings** (5 maladministration and 6 service failures) and **£3,001 in compensation**. A total of **20 orders** and 6 recommendations were made, all of which have been reported transparently to maintain accountability.

In line with usual Ombudsman practice, where maladministration or service failure is identified, we act promptly to implement any recommended remedies. These typically include formal apologies, compensation, or service improvements. In several cases, the Ombudsman's findings have already informed training and policy reviews.

Looking ahead

Complaints remain an essential part of how we learn, adapt and improve. In the coming year, the Council will focus on strengthening visibility of service standards, improving communication during case handling, and embedding learning through formal action planning and tenant involvement.

Our aim is to continue developing a culture where feedback is welcomed, resolution is swift, and improvement is driven by insight.



Photography credited to Simon Jacobs

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