



Tenant Annual Report 2022





As Portfolio Holder for Housing and Welfare, it is my privilege to present to you the Wigan Council Tenant Annual Report for 2021/22.

The last twelve months has seen some enormous changes including the sad death of Queen Elizabeth II, who devoted her life and her 70-year reign to this country and the

commonwealth. Her Majesty gave us unwavering and devoted service and many of us will mourn her passing.

There have also been many happy occasions for us to celebrate including the spectacular events for the Platinum Jubilee and a fantastic summer of sporting events. Leigh Sports Village hosted four of the Women's Euros games and gave the teams and visitors a very warm welcome. I am sure LSV hosting of Rugby League World Cup matches this Autumn will be equally successful. Not only do these events show how proud we are of our borough and residents, it also builds on our longstanding sporting tradition and encourages more people to take part in local sport and activities.

This year the cost-of-living crisis is very real for many of us, and it is a really worrying time as our energy, fuel and food prices increase. Our Welfare Team can provide help, support and advice, and have provided a useful summary within this report of helpful information and contacts.

As a landlord, we have longer term plans to improve the energy efficiency of your homes to help reduce bills, by retrofitting properties. We are currently testing this out in some of our empty homes to get an idea of costs and the time it takes to do the work, so we can minimise disruption to tenants. These positive improvements to homes should make a real difference, but I know some of you are concerned about paying your bills now. Within this report you will find some handy tips for saving energy.

Listening to, and acting on, your ideas and concerns is a key priority for us this year. We have listened to your feedback on accessing housing services online and work is underway to improve the digital offer. Thank you to all who have been involved in this work. It is so important that your views shape the way services are delivered. This partnership working has also resulted in changes to the estate caretaker service to increase visibility on our estates - read the update from your Tenant Scrutiny Panel to learn more.

After listening to Housing Advisory Panel and Tenants Voice Group, on what they would like to read about, this 2021/22 report includes the areas they felt to be of most interest, outlines how we have been performing and includes some of the work we have planned, as well as including some tenant stories in their own words. I hope you enjoy reading it.

**Cllr Susan Gambles -
Portfolio Holder for Housing and Welfare**

Update from your Tenant Scrutiny Panel



Hi, we are the Tenant Scrutiny Panel, we are all volunteers, and we review the services that all tenants receive. We do this by carrying out scrutiny to see what is working well and where we want to make recommendations for improvement. We want to affect change and make a difference to our local community and make services better for everyone who lives here. We find the work satisfying and love the challenge and the opportunity to socialise. We have all got different skills but are so together in our thinking!

We believe tenant scrutiny of council services is important as we are an external eye looking in, and most importantly, we have lived it and have experience of receiving these services. This year we are recruiting a young panel member as it is so important to have a range of voices on our group.

Sometimes we are asked to look at specific services and sometimes we identify areas we want to

scrutinise, but it is our choice what we look at and how we approach it. A recent review of the estate caretaker service is such a great example of the difference our work can make. We began by looking online to see what we could find out about the service, then spoke to senior managers to learn more about the work the caretakers did and who we needed to speak to. As well as speaking to caretakers and other officers, we spoke to tenants across different neighbourhoods, as well as to our Tenants Voice Group. What we love is that you start the review with no agenda, just start it off and see where it takes you.

Once we had finished and discussed all our findings, as a group we set out our recommendations and presented to the Housing Advisory Panel, answering their questions. Wigan Council has responded so well to our review, really supporting us from beginning to end, and everything we highlighted they agreed would happen. One recommendation was that caretakers should be more visible on our estates. In response the Council reviewed their housing model and now caretakers will be part of an enhanced estates team, so you will see them more. This just shows what a difference we can make as tenants!

So, what would we say to anyone else who wanted to get involved in tenant scrutiny? We would definitely recommend it, so talk to us and learn more about it!

You can email us at THAP@wigan.gov.uk

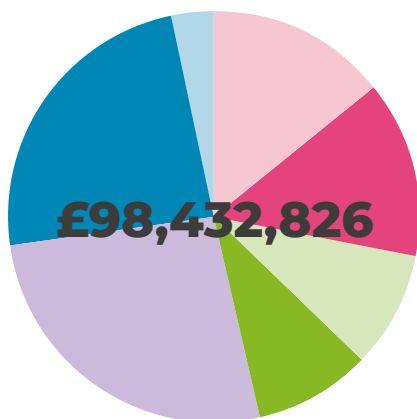
Chris, Ellen, Lucas, Neil, and Tom – Wigan's Tenant Scrutiny Panel

In last year's annual report, we set out some of our priorities for 2021/22, across different housing services. So, what progress have we made?

Priority	Progress
Review how we engage with you so we can offer a range of methods that help more of you to get involved in shaping housing services in ways that suit you	We have been running more Talk & Tidy Tuesdays during the year to listen to your views. This year we have more work to do to further develop our engagement strategy with you.
Continue to develop closer working with neighbourhoods to improve the way we deliver tenancy services locally	A review is being carried out to improve processes and outcomes for our tenants, as well as increase capacity within the team so that more officers are on the ground working on the estates directly with our customers.
Start work on a kitchen replacement programme as part of our plans to invest in your homes, consulting with you on the different options that are available	We have had to reconsider the roll out of the kitchen programme due to other important priorities, including the climate change emergency and fire safety legislation.
Engage with residents on building safety, including developing how we communicate fire safety information to new tenants moving into the high-rise blocks in Scholes	A new high-rise tenants panel gave us feedback on the safety information we display in the blocks, to make it clearer and easier to access. We are continuing conversations with residents at regular coffee mornings and pop-up sessions.
Complete the redevelopment of the site of the former Brackley House in Goose Green, building 17 new family homes for affordable rent	We completed these new homes to a really high standard and have had great feedback from those who have moved in, with one tenant telling us "moving here will improve my independence and become my forever home".
Continue to complete option appraisals on the sheltered schemes and look to make improvements to lounges and communal areas where required	We have been focusing on providing communal areas with the more homely feel that residents have asked for and this year redesigned the lounges within 2 of our schemes.
Review information and documentation we provide to tenants, ensuring this is accessible and relevant to all, including those who are learning disabled, autistic, and to our care leavers	We are planning to introduce a new Readers Panel so tenants can tell us how information can be made clearer and how we should communicate with you.
Continue to bring more empty homes into use, including working with our partners Resonance to purchase these, bring them up to standard, and let through our Ethical Lettings Agency	Resonance purchased 5 homes and we are currently looking at how these could be leased through our Ethical Lettings Agency. We have also recently launched our Empty Homes strategy.
Work with the local college to identify programmes that will develop green retrofit skills across our maintenance staff and apprentices, to support our aim to become carbon neutral	Learning for our electrical apprentices now covers alternative energy sources such as solar panels, and air source heat pumps. Other upskilling of staff on green technology will be on specialist external courses, rather than through the college.
Continue to develop how we use technology to make our repairs processes more efficient and to improve your experience of the service	In April 2022 the structure of our repairs team changed to improve service delivery to you, and since then, an IT working group has been set up to look at processes with tenants and internal staff.

How we spent our housing budget in 2021/22

We want you to know what your rent pays for. Below is a breakdown of how we spend our housing budget. As always, repairing and improving your home is key to us along with delivering quality tenancy services and improving the availability of affordable housing for people in the area. Go to page 11 to read more on how we invest in your homes.



- Day to Day Responsive Repairs (£14,176,160)
- Void Properties (£8,991,129)
- Programmed Repairs (£8,942,343)
- Major Works and Capital Investment (£26,017,583)
- Cost of Delivering Landlord Services (£23,567,763)
- Other Landlord Functions (£3,185,314)
- Interest on loans (£13,552,534)



How are we doing?

We review how we are performing throughout the year and compare this to previous years, so that we can see where we are performing well and where we need to improve.

You have told us that you want us to publish a smaller group of measures within this year's annual report but to make these more meaningful to you by comparing the figures to the last couple of years.

This information on the next page sets out measures that are important to you and shows where we have got better or where we need to focus our attention to make improvements.

We have also included some 'information only' ones such as the number of council homes, which we hope you will find interesting.

Measure	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	
Number of council homes	21,676	21,575	21,447	Blue
Number of repairs completed	75,401	57,685	53,062	Blue
% of repairs completed right first time	92%	93%	90%	Orange
Tenant satisfaction with repairs	93%	95%	90%	Orange
Number of homes receiving planned works	6,204	8,760	8,448	Blue
% of planned works done right first time	98.6%	99.6%	99%	Orange
Tenant satisfaction with planned works	99.6%	99.8%	99.9%	Green
Number of electrical checks completed	1,506	3,627	3,788	Green
Number of gas safety checks completed	21,448	19,251	18,196	Orange
Number of applicants on housing register	8,634	10,365	13,278	Blue
Average number of bids per property	111	94	110	Blue
Number of new tenancies arranged	1,688	1,196	1,228	Green
% of tenancies sustained longer than 2 years	86%	87%	88%	Green
Number of tenants who pay their rent by direct debit	4,819	4,981	5,683	Green
Funding for projects that work with tenants	-	£232,280	£305,090	Green
Number of tenants on our Tenants Voice Group	58	53	28	Orange
Number of referrals to our Community Resilience Team	960	2,122	1,826	Blue
New council homes we have built	60	96	17	Blue
Council homes we have purchased	-	-	52	Green
Tenant satisfaction with new build home	83%	94%	91.6%	Orange
Number of tenants signed up to our Ethical Lettings Agency	-	24	43	Green
Number of formal complaints received	299	181	547	Red

Key

Green	Our performance improved compared to last year
Orange	Our performance dipped this year, but we are already working to improve it.
Red	Our performance dipped this year, and we will take action to address this.
Blue	This figure is for information only

Responsive repairs

We now have a partnership with British Gas that means when a tenant moves into a new home, they are given a £5 credit on the gas and electric meters, are given smart meters that allow them to monitor their energy usage and are offered the best tariff available to them or the choice to find their own supplier.

We listened to the concerns of our young care leavers about the challenges of moving into their own home, by setting a new target of 14 days for their repairs to be completed, to support them to make a success of their first tenancies.

This year we are prioritising improving your online experience of reporting a repair as well as getting better at how we communicate with you about your appointment.

Keeping your homes safe

We have commenced a programme of installing carbon monoxide detectors linked to our gas service contract, to improve safety of our homes.

Our high-rise tenants told us they did not want sprinklers and we have agreed alternative measures with the fire service that include a voice activated warning system that will keep people safe.

We will be surveying and, if necessary, replacing fire doors in low rise flats across the borough to ensure they are compliant with new regulations.

Planned works and cyclical maintenance

We have held a series of coffee mornings and tenant events over the Spring /Summer with residents of the high-rise blocks, to listen to any concerns and discuss proposals around a range of planned investment works.

Following resident feedback, we have started an important project to replace all 14 passenger lifts in the 7 high-rise flats, working closely with tenants to ensure any disruption is minimised and those with mobility concerns are supported by our officers.

We have been successful in securing Green Homes Grant that is helping to fund the installation of solar panels to suitable homes when re-roofing some of our estates. The solar panels are in roof design leading to a much better aesthetic look.

Investing in solar panels



This year we secured £500k Green Homes Grant to support the installation of solar panels, linked to our re-roofing schemes in Butts Bridge in Leigh and Worsley Hall in Wigan. This exciting opportunity not only improves the energy efficiency of homes, but also reduces carbon emissions, an important part of our commitment to climate change.

Over 260 homes will benefit, with work due to be completed in the Autumn. We are working with our partner contractors Connolly's and Baas Construction to install solar panels on homes that are already having new roofs, and incorporating the panels into the roof covering rather than being sat on top of the roof. The scaffolding is already in place for the roof work so this means that we are able to minimise any disruption to tenants.

Connie, who recently had a new solar panel installed to her home on Butts Bridge estate, tells us "I was very pleased to hear about the initiative to fit solar panels on my roof as I know they will help me save money on my energy bills over time, and also know I will be doing my bit for the environment. I like the way the panels have been incorporated into the new roof covering, which I think looks neat and less obtrusive than other solar installations I have seen".

Although the amount of free electricity generated can depend on things like the available roof space and orientation, typically tenants may see savings of over £170 per year, whilst carbon is reduced by half tonne annually as less electricity is imported into homes from the national grid.

We want to continue to provide you with quality, energy efficient homes. We are currently analysing our housing and seeking other grant funding opportunities to invest in your homes, help reduce energy bills, and achieve our carbon reduction targets

Tenant involvement:

We have focused our 8 Talk and Tidy Tuesdays this year to look at smaller areas, adding an estate inspection to the event, and door knocking so we speak to local residents about their experiences, any issues in the area, and how they would like to get engaged.

With the Tenants Voice Group we have begun to explore new ideas for how we can improve engagement and communication, including reviewing the website to see how easy it is to find key information and advice.

Tenants have told us that our written communications should be reviewed by tenants to make sure they are clear and presented in a way you want, so this year we will be recruiting tenants to a new Readers Panel and asking them to review key documents, such as this annual report.

£305,090 Funding to projects for tenants	Community cafe	Arts project	Social groups	Community garden
	Fire safety training	Outdoor classroom	Skills sharing	Friendship project

Read more on community funding on our website at [Deal-Communities/Funding](#)

Allocations and homes:

We have recently launched a new digital service called 'automated bidding', meaning customers who are searching for a Council property do not need to keep checking for properties each week, but the system automatically places bids on their behalf and ensures they do not miss out on properties.

We are now able to offer decorator packs to new tenants on a low income who would otherwise struggle to decorate their new home – we can offer all the tools needed to complete the job along with a choice of paint colours to help tenants make their new house a home and give them a great start in their tenancy.

This year we will bring in a digital new tenancy welcome pack giving tenants all the information they need to set their new home up, as well as a new tenant survey to continue to improve the service using the feedback we receive from people moving into a new home.

Increasing access to affordable homes



Improving access to a quality, safe, affordable home is key to delivering our Deal ambition of A Home for All. Demand for housing in the borough is high and we are working proactively to increase access to affordable homes. This includes expansion of our Ethical Lettings Agency, bringing back into use empty properties on our estates, working with other housing providers and investors, and development of new homes as part of our new build programme.

Chloe recently moved into a family home in Standish, which we acquired to increase our housing supply to meet housing needs in the borough. This property had previously been sold under the Right to Buy scheme but is on one of our existing estates where we have high demand. We carried out a range of works to bring it up-to-date and ready to be a home for a new family. It was perfect to meet the needs of Chloe and her family, who had been living in temporary accommodation.

She tells us that her new home has “made a big impact on the children’s lives now we are back near our family for support, and handy for the kids’ schools and my work. It has had a big refurbishment and is better than I imagined it would be. The neighbours are lovely, and it is on a really quiet street. I can’t believe how lucky we were to get this property”.

Looking after the estates where you live:

Estate Caretakers are now part of our Tenancy Management Team, with each estate having a dedicated caretaker managing it and working alongside the Tenancy Services Officers in the neighbourhood, to identify and address any issues early on and without delay.

Tidy up Tuesdays are back and will be completed on a weekly basis on a different Estate each week, involving clean ups of areas, removing waste accumulations, treating weeds and a general tidy up.

We plan to continue to integrate the Estate Caretaking Team back into the neighbourhoods, where they will be working closely with the housing officers and wider teams. We hope to continue to improve the estates.



Sheltered housing:

The Sheltered Development Officer has been working with scheme residents to consult on upholstery and furniture choices to create communal spaces residents are happy to share with their neighbours, families and visitors. Thorburn House and Hollydene have been completed.

The number of residents attending our Sheltered Accommodation Forums has increased since we started to stream these as virtual meetings across different scheme settings, enabling more residents to have their say on the way their services are delivered.

Continuing our pre-pandemic success, we will be creating community hubs within schemes that residents, families and local communities can attend and take part in activities and events.

"I thought the forum was a good way to find out what was going on at other schemes and allow residents the chance to raise issues to the council"

- Sheltered Housing Tenant



Community resilience

Our simplified Resolution Model for nuisance and anti-social behaviour complaints, which was introduced last year to give greater emphasis on problem solving the root cause of issues, now means matters are resolved at the earliest opportunity, allowing more complex cases to come through to the Team.

The problem-solving approach has helped see a reduction in reports, with a 9% reduction in reports of neighbour related anti-social behaviour cases and reports of noise nuisance has seen a significant 22% decrease.

We will continue to work with wider housing colleagues to refocus our relationships with residents built on trust and visibility, clearly hearing the voice of the tenant, but taking enforcement against tenants who cause most harm to our communities.

New build and regeneration:

We are continuing to improve the environmental performance of our new homes to meet our climate commitments and new homes will be built to "Passivhaus" standards where viable, meaning they will require minimal heating most of the year, saving energy and cutting bills for tenants.

Community consultation has been held this summer on a new extra care housing scheme for older people in Shevington, responding to a locally identified need. It is hoped that construction will begin in early 2023.

We are accelerating our delivery programme to respond to demand across the borough, and will complete 182 new homes by March 2023, including 2 new extra care schemes at Wharfdale Leigh and Sandalwood Drive, Beech Hill.

Moving into one of our new build homes



The first residents to move into a £2.7m housing development have described their new home as "life changing".

The new build development at Brackley Court, Goose Green, is made up of seventeen 2, 3 and 4 bedroom homes, including one which has been fully adapted for a wheelchair user with a through floor lift and ground floor wet room. This scheme is as a result of a £2.16m investment from Wigan Council, supported by a £540k Homes England grant. All the properties have now been allocated to residents on the Council's housing waiting list and are let at an affordable rent.

Among the residents settling into their new home is Claire Markey who is living in a 4-bedroom property specially adapted to suit her needs as a wheelchair user. She said "They have built a house from scratch and adapted it, even looking to the future with additions such as hoists. They have thought of everything. Having this house has completely changed the way I live."

We caught up again with Claire recently and she told us "it's fantastic what they've done for me to be able to live more comfortably and independently. It's unbelievable the difference it's made."

As part of the Deal, we ask you to have your say and tell us if we get it wrong.

We value your feedback and use this to help improve the services that you receive.

Last year we received 547 formal complaints relating to tenant services, compared to a total 181 in 2020/21. We feel that the priority of the pandemic probably impacted on the number of complaints we received through our formal process.

How did we handle your complaints?

We investigated all complaints thoroughly to see if we needed to take any action.

547

Formal complaints received

35%

Not upheld

45%

Upheld

18

were not resolved at stage 1 and were escalated to stage 2

20%

Partially upheld

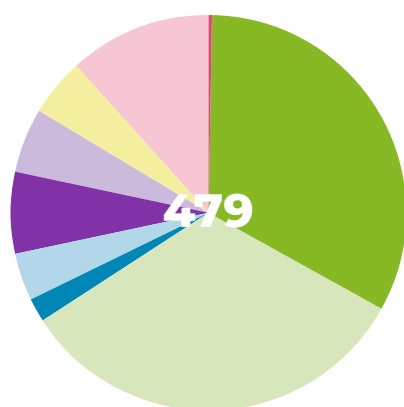
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other informal issues were quickly resolved by the team

A focus on complaints to our repairs service

Most of our formal complaints are received by the customer care team based in our repairs service – last year they handled 479 of our complaints. This is understandable as our repairs service receives a high volume of contact from our tenants – they carried out over 53,000 repairs last year, meaning the number of complaints relates to less than 1% of those contacts.

We review these by complaint type to see if there are trends so we can make improvements to our services.



- Contractor Mess (1)
- Delay in doing something (157)
- Failure to do something (158)
- Incidental damage (9)
- Incomplete work (18)
- Policy and Procedure (33)
- Poor customer care by contractors (25)
- Poor customer care incl. staff attitude (22)
- Poor quality or something done wrong (56)

We received a higher volume of complaints of every type, but a lower percentage are about failure to do something we promised to do or the quality of customer care from our staff. We have seen an increase in the proportion of complaints about work that is delayed. Earlier this year we contacted you to explain that there were delays with non-urgent repairs due to shortage of materials and labour – we have since targeted resources at these jobs and have significantly reduced the backlog.

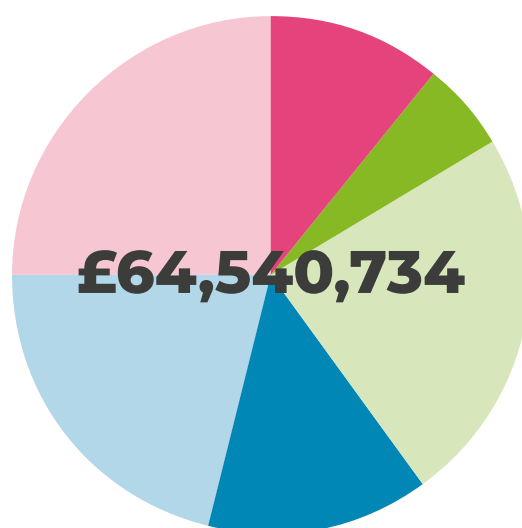
We have listened and now we...

Ask our Contractors, Inspectors, and Supervisors to share relevant contact details between each other to improve communication and help minimise delays for our tenants but to get jobs completed right first time.

Issue cheques towards decorating instead of decorating vouchers as there were no local retailers on the voucher scheme in some areas, giving tenants more flexibility as to where they can shop and even the option to spend online for decorating items if they do not have transport.

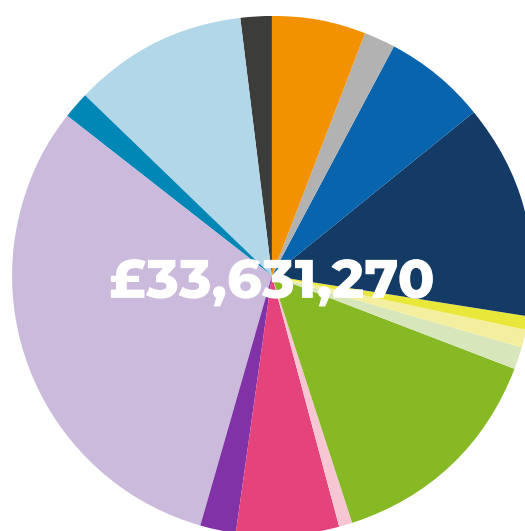
Read our self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Code to see how we comply, at www.wigan.gov.uk/Aboutcouncilhomes

How we spent our Repairs and Maintenance budget during 2021/22



- Improvement works (£7,018,634)
- Property purchase (£3,689,581)
- New Build (incl estate regeneration) (£15,259,312)
- Work done to maintain properties to a good standard (£8,877,123)
- Repairs requested by tenants (£13,739,395)
- Work on empty properties (£15,956,688)

How we invested in Council Homes during 2021/22



- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| ■ Aids & Adaptations £2,027,866 | ■ Fire safety works £211,946 |
| ■ Bathrooms £635,146 | ■ Kitchens £2,148,780 |
| ■ Boiler replacement & heating changes £2,112,257 | ■ Lift replacement £800,824 |
| ■ Capitalised repairs £4,562,430 | ■ New build £10,488,115 |
| ■ Carbon Reduction £273,305 | ■ Other capital works £ 473,068 |
| ■ Electrical rewiring £370,590 | ■ Property purchase £3,689,581 |
| ■ Environmental works £458,464 | ■ Roofing works £607,701 |
| ■ Estate regeneration (inc demolition) £4,771,197 | |

It is important to us to listen to your views on what matters to you about your home and neighbourhood, as well as to engage with you so that you can help shape the services that we provide.



Our Talk and Tidy Tuesdays take place out in our local neighbourhoods and bring together a range of council officers, our partners like the Police, and tenants & residents from the area. They provide a great opportunity to work together to improve the appearance of the area, whilst having a chance to ask questions, give views, and share information. Details of where events are to be held are published on our website at Talk and Tidy Tuesday's

Tenants tell us:

"Good to speak to the police and staff"

"Really good idea to talk to tenants and have a clean-up"

"It's nice to know that residents are involved, and their input is considered"



Our Tenants Voice Group is key to making sure tenants are at the heart of the housing services we provide. They act as an important link between us, partner organisations, tenants, and residents to help improve communities and the visible appearance of estates. They also suggest improvements to housing services to improve tenants' experience. Recently they have been reviewing how easy it is to access information on our website and feeding their views back to our Web Team.

"This group gives tenants the opportunity to put their points of view across. We feel listened to, and our questions are answered"

– **Jacqui Farrington, Tenant Voice member.**

Sheltered accommodation forum



Hi, I am Ellen Rhind. As well as being a tenant representative on the Housing Advisory Panel, I am also an older person's advocate on the Sheltered Accommodation Forum. I love being involved as I really care about tenants and what happens in their sheltered schemes. I also want tenants to know that their views are really valued and it is really heart-warming to see how much the council is currently promoting working with you.

I am a sheltered accommodation tenant myself and my role has allowed me to visit many other schemes to see what is happening and to talk to those who live there. I visited one scheme recently and was really impressed to see the lounge full of vibrant people who both lived in the scheme and within the local community. It showed just what an important role schemes can play in bringing people together.

Our next Sheltered Accommodation Forum in the Autumn will be a large face-to-face event, with lots of stalls giving out information that is helpful to people. We want to do more face-to-face events in the future but, when available, also give people access to join online if that is what they prefer.

Looking forward, I want to see forums encouraging even more feedback from tenants and for the council to ensure that they regularly keep tenants advised on what they are doing with that data. I want tenants to feel that their feedback is important to the council.

So, what would I say to anyone thinking of attending the Sheltered Accommodation Forum for the first time? Go for it, it is worthwhile attending as you will get lots of new and interesting information and will also have the opportunity to have your voice heard!

The next meeting is on 1st November – email sheltered@wigan.gov.uk for further details or speak to your scheme manager or scheme assistant to be updated.



In May we held our first Cost of Living Event at Higher Folds Community Centre with a number of our partners, to give people important information to help them during these challenging times. This included energy saving tips to help reduce bills and advice on how to get online to look for the best deals. People could also take away energy saving light bulbs, room thermometers, and radiator reflectors.

We will be holding more of these events as we have such fantastic feedback from those tenants who attended, who told us:

"These events are really needed in these difficult times"

"The free energy saving lightbulbs are great, and will save me on my electric bill"

You can read more on energy saving tips later in this annual report. Our partner Liberty Gas also provide information on their website at Liberty Gas customer hub.

Here for you

Working together, our residents, communities, council officers and partner agencies worked tirelessly to support our tenants during the pandemic. We now find ourselves learning to live with Covid while facing the biggest cost of living crisis in 40 years. With food price increases, soaring fuel costs, higher childcare costs, and wages and benefits not keeping pace with inflation, we know many of you are struggling. In particular, we know that the single biggest impact to our tenants will be felt from the huge increases in energy prices, and that many who could have previously coped will now experience difficult choices when paying their bills.

Sometimes it can be hard to know where to turn or to ask for help, but our teams are here to point you in the right direction. As well as holding our cost-of-living events, we have enhanced some of our procedures to include more early intervention and prevention work that focuses on maximising people's income, with signposting to welfare and debt advice services when this is needed. Also, if one of our tenants is struggling to pay their rent or council tax, we will work with them to agree an affordable payment plan, by ensuring we understand their individual circumstances. If needed, we can then refer people into our Local Welfare Support and Rights teams, as well as the Household Support Fund.

Our Local Welfare Support provides a cash first solution, because we understand that when finances are squeezed, cash is often the preferred method of support. We believe that our cash first approach is the best way to support people during these difficult times. It also gives more choice and the ability to shop in local communities, supporting small independent businesses and helping build community resilience.

On the next couple of pages, you will find more detail on where to go for advice or help, as well as some tips on how to save energy. We hope this is helpful.

Welfare Support and Debt Advice

Our friendly staff are on hand to support you without judgement at this difficult time. They can offer:

- Advice and support on a range of welfare benefits
- Help with completing claim forms
- Guidance and support when making appeals
- A referral to Citizens Advice Bureau if you need debt or money advice
- Crisis support including emergency gas and electric vouchers, furniture packages and food parcels.

For more information and to apply visit www.wigan.gov.uk/localwelfaresupport or phone 01942 705221

Benefits

If you are on a low income you could qualify for help towards rent and Council Tax through Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction

If you already receive some Housing Benefit or Universal Credit but not enough to cover all your rent, you could qualify for extra support through Discretionary Housing Payments.

You can get an estimated assessment of benefits you may be entitled to with our online calculator www.quickcalc.co.uk/wigan

For more information and to apply visit www.wigan.gov.uk/benefits or phone 01942 489002

Council Tax and Rent Payments

If you are finding it difficult to make your payments, please contact us and we will do everything we can to help:

Council Tax:

revenues@wigan.gov.uk or **01942 489001**

Wigan Council Rents:

myrent@wigan.gov.uk or **01942 486865**

Business Rates:

businessrates@wigan.gov.uk or **01942 489001**

Or visit www.wigan.gov.uk and search struggling to pay

Reducing Your Council Tax Bill

There are several Discounts and Exemptions that can reduce your Council Tax bill if you meet the qualifying criteria.

For more information and to apply visit www.wigan.gov.uk/counciltax or phone **01942 489001**

AWARM

If you struggle to keep warm at home or have a health condition affected by living in a cold damp home, support may be available through the AWARM service.

For more information and to apply visit www.wigan.gov.uk/Warmhomes or phone **01942 404261**

Household Support Fund

This fund helps households in most need with food, energy, water bills and other essential items. You do not need to be in receipt of benefits to apply.

For more information and to apply visit www.wigan.gov.uk and search Household Support Fund or phone **01942 705221**

Other Help and Support Available:

Advice

You can get free independent, trusted advice from the below sources:

- AdviceUK www.adviceuk.org.uk
- National Debtline www.nationaldebtline.org/ or **0808 808 4000**
- Money Advice Service www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en or phone **0300 500 5000**
- Citizens Advice www.cawb.org.uk or **0808 2787 801**
- Turn2Us www.turn2us.org.uk/
- Gov.uk visit www.gov.uk

For information on support available and how to save money visit www.wigan.gov.uk/hereforyou

Are you entitled to Pension Credit top up?

If you have reached state pension age or if you are a couple and you both have reached state pension age you may be eligible. It is estimated that over 4,000 Wigan pensioners are eligible but have not made a claim. The average Pension Credit claimant receives over £50.00 per week. Claiming is straight forward and staff.

People getting Pension Credit may be entitled to other benefits like, help with Council Tax, housing costs and heating in colder months. If you're unsure if you might be entitled, there's nothing to lose by applying. Make sure you don't miss out.

Apply online: www.gov.uk/pension-credit or phone **0800 319 6789** to speak to an adviser.

You can find a lot more information and advice to help you on our website at www.wigan.gov.uk/hereforyou

Money saving tips

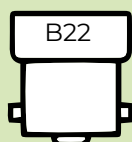
A list of handy Hints & Tips to help you live comfortably while saving money.

- 1. Change all your existing light bulbs from Halogen to LED.** This will cut your bills significantly. Changing from 60-watt bulbs across your home can reduce your lighting electricity consumption by 85%. Essentially the lower energy light bulbs will pay for themselves over the course of just a few months.
- 2. By turning down the thermostat to your Central Heating by 1 degree, you will lower your heating bills significantly.** This could save you up to £100 per year and you most likely will not feel the difference.
- 3. Bleed your radiators every 6 months** to make sure your radiators are working at their optimum temperature.
- 4. Only boil what you need.** Try not to fill your kettle when making a brew. On the side of your kettle will be an indicator of how many cups of tea or coffee you need to make.
- 5. Reduce the usage of your appliances.** A washing machine / tumble dryer costs around £0.50 pence per hour to use. An electric heater costs around £0.70 pence per hour to use. Try to purchase A* rated appliances where possible when you need to replace them.
- 6. Plug your wash basin when washing your dishes.** This will reduce your water usage and your bills.
- 7. Have a shower instead of a bath.** You can save up to 25% on your household bills.
- 8. Extractor fans are a very important part of your home's ventilation.** The fans that we fit run constantly and adjust with the level of condensation as required. These fans typically cost around £1.50 per year to run. Please do not turn these fans off. They drastically reduce the risk of condensation and mould in your home.
- 9. When showering and cooking it is very important to remove all excess steam from your home.** Prior to showering or cooking please make sure that the door to the Kitchen or Bathroom is closed to prevent moist air from entering the rest of your home. Your extractor fan will remove the majority of this, but it will also help if you open a window after showering or cooking. The steam that you see, eventually cools, and settles as condensation allowing mould to grow on surfaces and windows. It is important to get this air out of your home as soon as possible.
- 10. Wigan Council will provide you with the following bins.**
 - Black** - General waste.
 - Green** - Grass, Twigs, Leaves, Food.
 - Brown** - Cans, Tins, Glass, Plastic.
 - Blue** - Paper / Cardboard.

For more information, please go to www.wigan.gov.uk/WhichBin
Please recycle to help save the environment

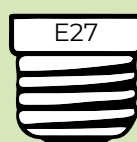
Common UK Light Bulb Fittings

Large Bayonet



22mm

Large Screw



27mm

Small Screw



14mm

Bi-pin



10mm

Bi-pin

GU5.3/MR16



5.3mm

Here are just some of our key priorities to improve housing services for our residents across the borough – this year we will:



Working with our Tenant Scrutiny Panel, undertake a review of the customer journey from applying to join the housing register to getting the keys to a new home.



Work with you to develop a new Engagement Strategy with a range of ways to get involved, so we listen to the views of tenants across all our frontline services



Review the information we provide to new tenants, including new tenant visits for residents in our high-rise properties to provide general advice and building safety information.



As part of our ambitious plans to increase council home delivery, we are starting construction this year on 85 new homes at Priory Road, Ashton, former St Mary's Ince and Shevington Extra Care, Miles Lane.



Work with care providers to have more accommodation available to allow people to live independently, including integrating 2 new extra care schemes with over 100 residents.



Review our strategy to get the best from our council owned housing, so we can provide quality, safe, and energy efficient homes for our tenants where they are proud to live.



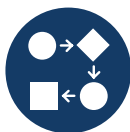
Continue to upskill our inhouse maintenance operatives on emerging technology and new ways of working that will help our Housing Repairs team to deliver their priorities.



Give those asking for housing assistance more coordinated advice and information, to ensure residents are guided towards a range of housing options which will suit their circumstances.



Look at the housing offer for care leavers to ensure they have access to quality sustainable homes and good housing services, as well as feeling that they have strong community links.



Review our aids and adaptations policy to ensure support from this fund is used to make homes right and reaches the people that need it most.

You can read more about our exciting plans for housing in our [**Wigan Borough Housing Strategy**](#).

Useful information on housing services

As part of our commitment to being open about what you can expect from your housing services and supporting you to hold us to account, here are some links to information on housing service standards. We have also included some links to websites that will tell you how to get involved in influencing local housing services, or scrutinise the performance of your landlord, or volunteer in your local neighbourhood.

Regulatory Requirements

If you want to understand what national standards the government expects social landlords to deliver to their tenants, there is a good summary at Regulation of social housing providers - Shelter England. Or check out the Regulator's site at [regulator-of-social-housing](https://www.regulator-of-social-housing.org/)

Wigan's local offer with its tenants

If you want to see the local standards that we developed with our tenants, that set out what you can expect from your housing services and what your responsibilities are. Our local housing service standards

Wigan's repairs local offer

If you want to read our repairs local service standards developed with tenants, setting out repairs we are responsible for and those that are your responsibility. Our local repairs offer

Report a repair online

If you want to book a non-emergency repair online. This means that you can book, amend, and cancel a job online 24 hours, 7 days a week. You will also be able to choose a convenient date and timeslot for your appointment. Repairs online

TPAS – Tenant Participation Advisory Services

If you want to know more about this not-for-profit organisation that champions tenant involvement in social housing across England and find out how to sign up to become a member. Tenant Participation Advisory Services

Getting involved in your housing services at Wigan

If you want to get involved and have a real say in the services you receive, to make sure they improve and continue to meet your needs, then email the Tenant Voice and Engagement Team at TVAET@wigan.gov.uk

Volunteering opportunities in Wigan

If you would like to find out more about the range of rewarding opportunities to volunteer. Wigan borough volunteer hub

Support for carers in Wigan

Do you help a family member, partner or friend regularly? Would this person have difficulty managing without your support? Did you know support is available to you in your caring role? Please visit our website to find out about the support available to you: www.wigan.gov.uk/supportforcarers or contact us at carers.mailbox@wigan.gov.uk