

Welcome to

Crawley Homes' Annual Report 2019-20

As Cabinet member for Housing I've found the last year to be full of challenges for Crawley Homes, culminating with our biggest yet, the lockdown for the Covid-19 pandemic.

I've been impressed by how staff and tenants have tackled the issues and made 2019-20 a successful year for Crawley Homes.

We've welcomed Liberty Gas and a new repairs and planned maintenance contract with Mears and Wates was agreed although lockdown meant its start was deferred.

The change to Mole Valley Life as our alarm call monitoring centre saw the team's careful preparation ensure a smooth transition.

Our commitment to housing was reinforced with 184 brand new homes in five neighbourhoods and we passed the 100 house milestone at Forge Wood. The future is looking good as there's more to come across the town next year including new shared ownership flats.

The council's longstanding connection to the Armed Forces was reinforced with the naming of our development in Kilnmead after Private John Brackpool, who was sadly killed in action in 2009.

I'm proud to say our new homes included Passivhaus energy efficient homes, flats with a green roof, our first homes using a District Heat Network for their heating and hot water, all of which contribute to the council's commitment to reducing the town's carbon footprint.

I'd like to extend a heartfelt thank you to you, our tenants and leaseholders, for your patience and forbearance during the coronavirus crisis and I cannot thank the staff of Crawley Homes enough for responding in the way that they have, adjusting to new ways of working and new roles in these incredibly difficult times.

I'm looking forward to being part of the team next year.

Councillor Ian Irvine
Cabinet member for Housing

Contact Us

Repairs

Including gas heating and hot water repairs

Telephone: **01293 438111**

Email: housing.repairs@crawley.gov.uk

Housing Officers

Contact information for your housing officer can be found at the top of your rent statement.



At the new homes in Goffs Park with Southgate councillor, Mike Pickett

Any comments

If you have any comments about this Annual Report, let us know. Email

TenantParticipation@crawley.gov.uk or call Anne on **01293 438257**.

Produced September 2020

The last year

This annual report is for the 2019-20 year, which was a busy year but became overshadowed by the pandemic and the restrictions imposed in March.

We were fortunate we had already been changing to a more agile way of working before the lockdown happened and this helped ease us into new ways of working, and more digital solutions have been put in place.

We've had to make changes to how we work in your homes and how we meet you face to face, and these are likely to be around for the foreseeable future, but it's important to keep everyone safe. Your help and cooperation with this is greatly appreciated.

When lockdown was imposed in March, we got in touch with all our tenants who we knew to be vulnerable plus all tenants over 70 years old to make sure they had someone to help them and, if not, what sort of support they needed. Making time for this was worthwhile and created many positive outcomes and relationships.

We've also become very good at online meetings, even the discussion about this report with the Tenant and Leaseholder Action Panel was done online.

We've built new homes, maintained our existing ones, carried out gas and electrical safety checks, processed mutual exchanges, let homes to new tenants, pursued rent arrears, managed garages, installed Lifelines and much more. This annual report gives a flavour of the year.

Karen Dodds

Head of Crawley Homes

About council housing

Some numbers to give an overview of council housing in Crawley during 2019-20.



Getting involved

The Tenant and Leaseholder Action Panel (TLAP) are our tenant scrutiny group and they too are also embracing new technology.

Thanks go to Anne, Gloria, Ali, Darren and Parvinder who all helped to put this report together with an online meeting in MS Teams.

We're looking for new members so if you think you might be interested give Terry a call on 01293 438434 or email tenantparticipation@crawley.gov.uk to find out more.

Money

Our income comes from your rent, with some from garage rents, Lifeline charges and recovering costs and recharges. This makes us a multi-million pound business so it's essential we manage our money well if we are to provide you with an excellent service.

Rent changes

April 2019 saw the last year of the one per cent decrease in rents announced in July 2015 by the government. Even with this decrease our rental income increased, this was in part due to the number of newly built homes we have let on affordable rents.

From April 2020 new rent guidance means we will increase rents in line with a new formula set by the government.

The decrease was just for council housing rents, there was a small increase for shared ownership rents, service charges and garage rents.

Income		Expenditure	
Rents	£45,878,059	Repairs and maintenance	£9,875,774
Other income	£2,277,817	Planned maintenance	£9,112,686
Money moved from reserves to pay for new developments	£6,514,620	New developments funded from rents	£12,079,125
		New developments funded from reserves	£6,514,620
		Sub-total	£37,582,205
		Paying for the service (includes staff, premises, running costs, etc.)	£8,779,366
		Loan interest repayment*	£8,308,925
		Sub-total	£17,088,291
Total	£54,670,496	Total	£54,670,496

*The interest on a loan from the Public Works Loan Board taken out in 2012 to cover our share of the national housing debt.

Our income in 2019-20 did not cover all of our expenditure on new homes so we dipped into our reserves, the money we put aside to help pay for our new developments. This includes some money from Right to Buy sales.

Money for housing only

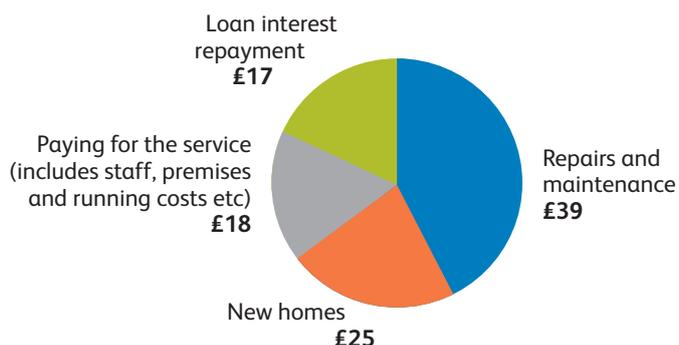
The rent you pay us goes into a specific bank account called the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). This has rules on what we can use this money for.

We can only use it to pay for housing related items, we can't use it to pay for things like rubbish collection, temporary accommodation or maintaining parks. Your Council Tax pays for these.

Councillors are responsible for the finances of the council and make the final decisions on spending whilst following the rules.

What your rent paid for

In 2019-20 every £100 in rent you paid was spent in the following way:



Repairs and maintenance

2019-20 was a busy year for Crawley Repairs Team, with a few changes all aimed at making our service better for you.

New contract

Following a thorough procurement process the contract for Responsive Repairs and Planned Maintenance works for 2020 to 2030 was awarded to Mears Group and Wates Property Services.

This 10-year contract was due to start on 1 April 2020 but the coronavirus pandemic delayed the start for Wates until 1 July.

Recycling

Mears acquisition of Mitie in 2018 resulted in Mears completing repairs across the town from April 2019. The necessary behind the scenes changes meant there were a number of computer tablets that were no longer needed.

With operating systems set back to factory settings these were donated to Manor Green School, one of the Mayor's charities. Sam from the school happily picked them up from Mario, the Responsive Repairs Manager.

Scrap metal

Discussions during the year about the disposal of our scrap metal has led to an agreement with a local registered dealer. This means it is now recycled and we make a bit of money for community projects.

How did we do?

	2018-19	2019-20
Repairs completed, including gas repairs	24,501	25,818
Customer calls to the repair line	36,946	50,596
Percentage of appointments kept	92.9%	96.9%
No access	5.07%	5.08%
Average time to complete a repair	9 days	17 days
Average satisfaction with repairs for the year	87.6%	88.8%

Storms Brendan, Ciara and Dennis accounted for many of the extra calls to the team this year. We had over 1,000 calls in one day, on 10 February, equal to our average weekly calls.

Even with more calls and more repairs, we are keeping to more appointments and tenants' satisfaction has increased. The average time to complete a repair has gone up but the long completion times for some storm damage repairs added to the average timescales.

For about five out of every 100 appointments, there is no one at home when we get there. Please let us know if you need to change the appointment so we don't waste our time.



Planned Maintenance

Day to day repairs are just part of what we do. Our planned maintenance work covers safety checks, for gas and electrics, fire safety, energy efficiency work, improvements, external decoration and replacement of elements in your home that have reached the end of their life.

Gas safety checks

Liberty started as our gas contractors on 1 April 2019 and it's all going well. At the end of March 2020 our compliance for gas safety checks was 100 per cent. Our check looks at the whole system and we replace boilers if they become uneconomic to repair. Last year we replaced 93 central heating boilers.



Major refurbishment work

During the year we completed refurbishment work at Southwell Lodge to create more family sized temporary accommodation. We created a new sheltered housing flat from a community room at Gossops Green and installed a door entry system at Barley Close.

Major works on the flats at Southgate West will take place during the next year, along with work at Milton Mount which includes improving the water supply.

Your tenancy

Rent

£103.54

Average weekly rent for a two-bedroom flat

£684,445

Current tenant arrears at 31 March 2020

1.6%

Arrears expressed as a percentage of the total rent due

Evictions

We do take action against tenants who don't keep to their tenancy agreement and in 2019-20 we evicted 11 tenants: seven for rent arrears, two for anti-social behaviour and two for both rent arrears and anti-social behaviour.

Getting it right

Whilst we make every effort to provide you with an excellent service, sometimes things don't go quite to plan.

Last year we received 249 formal complaints for the whole of Crawley Homes, after investigation we found 58 per cent of them were justified to some extent, and we put things right when we could. The remainder were complaints about services Crawley Homes were not responsible for or our service had met our standards.

It's not all complaints though; we also get some lovely compliments:

“ Thanks again for your help it is nice to know there are a lot of decent people like yourself helping people who are struggling. Mr M – Bewbush ”

“ I'd like to say how professional and generally excellent the surveyor was. Miss W – Tilgate ”

“ I can't believe the help you have given me and all the support. I can't tell you the feeling of this weight being lifted. Ms C – Broadfield ”

“ A very prompt repair carried out by an efficient and very pleasant engineer. Mr W – Gossops Green ”

“ The worker was very friendly and polite. I felt they were very thorough and nothing was too much trouble. Ms S – Bewbush ”

New monitoring centre for sheltered housing and Lifeline

During February and March the monitoring centre for the emergency alarms moved to Mole Valley Life's care centre based in Surrey. The actual move was carefully planned so everyone understood what was happening. The procurement was done jointly with Horsham District Council to make sure we are getting the best service for our customers.



Coming up in the future

Our ways of working will continue to change as the country deals with the coronavirus pandemic and we develop ways to deliver the best service we can for you.

We're looking forward to implementing a brand new IT system, replacing our current one that is 20 years old. This will improve our service to you and will enable us to make more information available online.

We'll continue a review of our tenancy agreement and review service areas as required to deliver value for money and modernise the way we work.

New Homes

During 2019-20 we added 184 brand new homes to our stock. Next year in 2020-21 we're expecting over 150 including new flats for shared ownership.

● Forge Wood

88 new homes in Forge Wood were completed in 2019-20. 30 flats and 58 houses, completing phase 3A. During the year we passed the milestone of 100 new homes in Forge Wood.

● Lonsdale Court

These two blocks of 14 flats in Three Bridges Road were ready for letting in May 2019.

● Newtimber Close

Built on the edge of Goffs Park on the old council depot the 22 houses and 22 flats were let to tenants in September.

● John Brackpool Close

Let to tenants in September, these five houses and 32 flats are named after Private John Brackpool who died whilst serving with the Welsh Guards in Afghanistan. A dedication ceremony with his family was held. This development has a District Heat Network and the flats have a green roof.

Accessible homes

Some of our new build developments now include accessible properties, built to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities. Three of these flats were let last year, one at Lonsdale Court, one in Newtimber Close and one at Apex Apartments.

Looking to the future

Forge Wood

- Next year will see the completion of phase 3B, more homes in Phase 4A and the first in Phase 2C.

Bridgefield House

- Work continues on the block of 98 flats next to Crawley College, these should be ready to let in October 2020. There will be 31 flats in this block available for shared ownership.

Woolborough Road

- On the site of the old doctor's surgery in Northgate, we are building six maisonettes and three flats that we anticipate will be ready to let at the end of September.

Ifield Road

- Following the demolition of two houses at the end of Ifield Road, West Green, five two-bedroom houses will be ready in September.

London Road

- On a smaller piece of land we are building a four-bedroom house in London Road, which will be ready in September.



Lonsdale Court



Bridgefield House



Forge Wood



Ifield Road

If you or someone you know would like help to understand this document please contact the Housing Service Promotion Officer on **01293 438257** or email housing.news@crawley.gov.uk