

Welcome to

Crawley Homes' Annual Report 2017-18

In May 2018, I took up my new role as Cabinet Member for Housing, and found a wide and varied portfolio. Council housing is close to my heart, as is delivering a great service to our tenants. I have been busy out and about meeting new tenants, seeing how some of our building work is progressing and have also met with tenants' representatives.

This report contains some great news, reveals some of our challenges and shows you how well we are doing.

More homes for the people of Crawley is essential, so adding 13 houses in Forge Wood and 24 flats in the town centre at Apex Apartments to our stock in 2017-18 was wonderful news.

Universal Credit full service started in June 2018 and it looks as though it might be impacting on our rent collection figures, but it is early days yet with rents mostly being paid, so our income collection rates are good. This means we have the money to run the service.

Next year is an exciting time, as we'll finish building more than 100 new homes across the town and we'll continue developing the old car parks in Kilnmead and at Crawley College. These are just the start of many new council homes that will be coming through as part of this council's ambitious programme to tackle the borough's housing waiting list, so watch this space.

The results of the satisfaction survey done in June 2018 look promising and the final report will be interesting reading. We're always listening and I will seriously consider what you tell us.

The next year sees the award of a new contract for gas servicing and repairs, with the contract starting in April 2019. The procurement process for a new responsive repairs and planned maintenance contract starts this year and as this is a multi-million pound contract we want to get the best contractor for the job.

I've discovered council housing isn't just about us, it's about you, our tenants, as well and when we all work together, everything works well.



Councillor Michael Jones
Cabinet Member for Housing

Working with you – making a difference

Thanks to Raquel, Dilly, Eileen, Martin, Darren, Caroline and Kokila for their thoughts on this report.

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**.



Your council homes

Money

Crawley Homes is a multi-million pound business and managing our money well is vital if we are to provide you with an excellent service.

Most of our income comes from your rent, other income includes rents from garages and leasehold service charges.

Rent changes

Last year your rent went down by one per cent, great news for you but it meant the amount of money we had coming in went down too. Our income in 2017-18 was £751,420 less than the year before.

This decrease in rent was announced in July 2015 by the Government and will happen again in April 2019.

In October 2017 the Government announced that rent increases from 2020 will be limited to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus one per cent for five years.

The decrease was just for council housing rents. There was a two per cent increase for shared ownership rents and garage rents.

Money for housing only

The rent you pay goes into a specific account called the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The HRA has rules that mean we can only use the money in it to pay for council housing services such as repairs and maintenance, housing management and staff.

We can't use money from the HRA to pay for things like rubbish collection, maintaining parks, community centres or temporary accommodation; your council tax pays for these.

Ultimately, councillors make the final decisions on spending whilst following the rules, as they are responsible for the finances of the council.

The balance sheet

Financial year 2017-18

Income		Expenditure	
Rents	£45,234,577.89	Repairs and maintenance	£9,327,064.05
Other income	£1,751,631.32	Planned maintenance	£10,096,000.98
		New homes	£11,139,790.00
		Sub-total	£30,562,855.03
		Paying for the service (includes staff, premises, running costs, etc.)	£7,759,639.81
		Loan interest repayment*	£8,308,924.86
		Money put aside to build new council homes and in case of emergencies	£354,789.51
		Sub-total	£16,423,354.18
Total	£46,986,209.21	Total	£46,986,209.21

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

A few statistics for 2017-18

Below are a few statistics about the homes we own, and the people who live in them.



Homes at
31 March 2018



New homes added



Homes sold under
the Right to Buy



New tenants



Tenants mutually
exchanged homes



Tenants transferred
to a new home



Homes became
empty in 2017-18



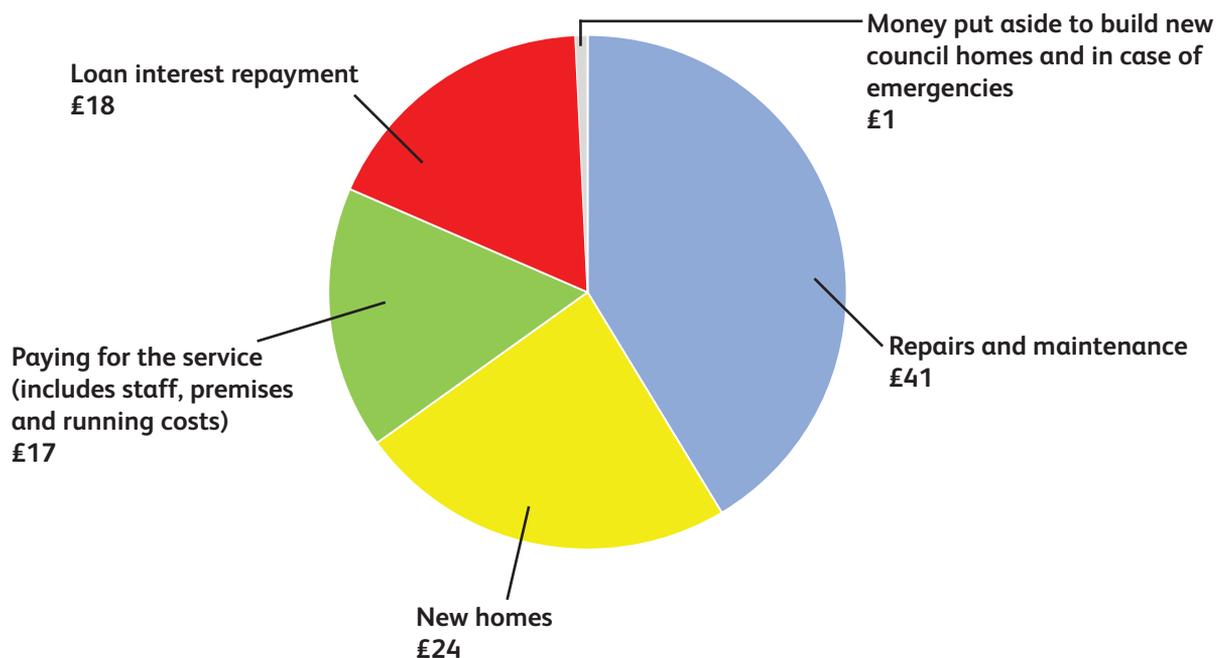
Households on the
housing register at
31 March 2018

“ I have been really impressed by the speed, efficiency and professionalism of the people to whom I have spoken at Crawley Council about my payments.
Mr D ”

“ Thank you for all the help. I feel in a better position now financially and less stressed about my finances.
Mrs G ”

What your rent paid for

In 2017-18 every £100 in rent you paid was spent in the following way:



Satisfaction survey 2018

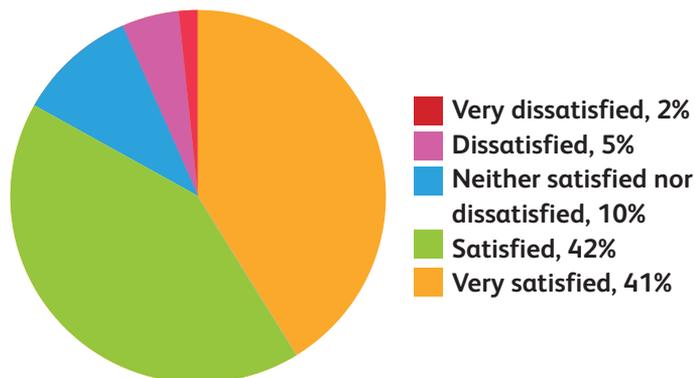
Although not strictly in 2017-18, we're taking this opportunity to share with you some of the findings of the tenants' satisfaction survey we carried out this summer.

We sent out 4,010 surveys, 3,140 by email and 870 as paper versions. We received 915 replies, a 23 per cent response rate. Thanks to everyone who responded.

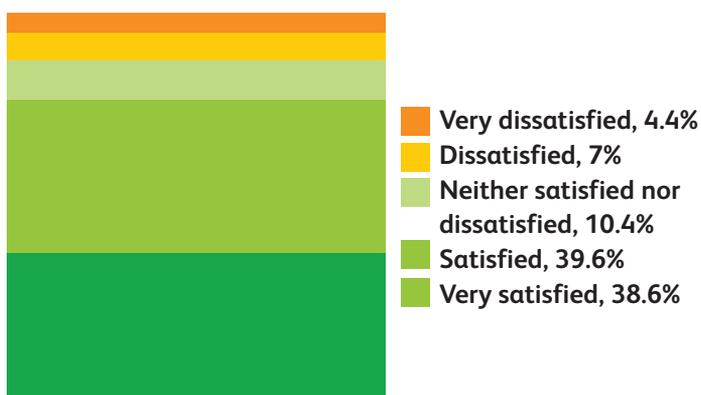
Below you can find some of the main results. A full report is being prepared and will be available on the council's website later in the year.

How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall service provided by Crawley Homes?

83 per cent are satisfied with the service.



How satisfied are you with the way Crawley Homes deals with repairs?



78.2 per cent are satisfied with the way we deal with repairs.

171 respondents had made a complaint and the survey results show that if they were not happy with the outcome of the complaint they were likely to be dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled.

4.2 per cent of people who answered the question didn't know how much rent they had to pay. We think this might be because they receive Housing Benefit, but we need to look into this a bit further.

It was good to know that the vast majority of people, 93.8 per cent understood their rent statements. We'll investigate further as to why some people don't.

When asked what were the three most important things to you, it was no surprise when repairs and maintenance came out top.

What are the three most important things to you?



Getting in touch

As we had sent most of the surveys out by email, we expected most people who replied to be happy for us to contact them by email and that is what we found, with more than half happy to use email.

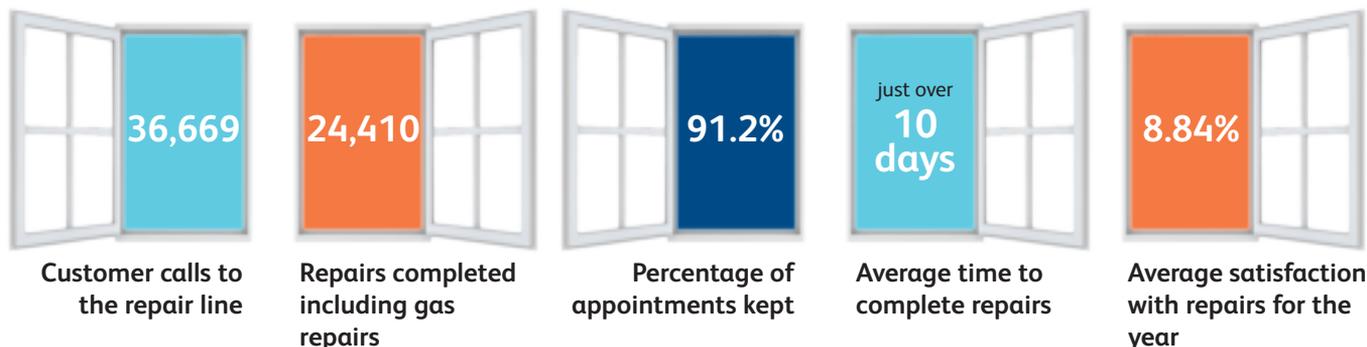
If you'd like to see a copy of the full report when it is produced email housing.news@crawley.gov.uk or visit crawley.gov.uk/crawleyhomes

Prize draw winners

The lucky two who won the prize draw vouchers for returning the survey were Roger from Broadfield and Julie from Ifield.

Maintaining your homes

Crawley Repairs Team carry out day-to-day repairs, with our partners Mears and Mitie. This is all about fixing the problems you tell us about.



More than **97** per cent of you find it easy to report a repair and ringing us is still the most popular way to do this although more of you are using email or eforms.

“Operatives were very polite, did the job quickly and efficiently. Explained the reasons why there was a failure. Very punctual. Tidy as well.
Mr D”

Right time

Our data shows we were late or missed about five per cent of all the responsive repair appointments made and your feedback on this gives us something to think about.

However, there are times when you can also miss appointments. We appreciate there are many reasons for this, but it does cost us time and money, and that's your rent money. There were times last year when one in four of the appointments made for a gas safety check were missed because the tenants were not in. Help us out; if you know you can't make it, please let us know.

Investing in the future

We continue to encourage young people to learn a trade. Students at Crawley College regularly do work experience with Mears, giving them a taste of the workplace. Mears and Mitie had seven apprentices working for them and the council's Apprentice Surveyor has completed his first year with flying colours. Our Housing Management Apprentice did really well and has now got a job with the council's procurement team.

“The electrician had an apprentice with him and even had the courtesy to smile when I said the age old joke about how many men does it take to change a light bulb (they were there to get a security light working)!
Miss W”

Contracts

The current contract with Mitie for gas servicing and repairs ends in March 2019. This means that over the last year we've been busy following a strict procurement process to get the best contractor for the job. The final decision on the appointment will be made at the meeting of the Full Council in October.

Next year we're starting work on the procurement process for the Responsive Repairs and Planned Maintenance contracts. The current contracts with Mears and Mitie end in April 2020.

Getting involved

There are many ways to help us deliver an excellent service to you. Filling in our satisfaction surveys is a great way to help.

TLAP (The Tenant and Leaseholder Action Panel) is our scrutiny panel. It meets every three months, with a few project meetings in between these. The panel looks at our performance measures and provides an independent check on performance. From time to time, the panel looks a bit deeper into a subject and last year it focused on missed appointments.

If you think you might be interested in joining the panel give Anne a call on **01293 438257** or email tenantparticipation@crawley.gov.uk to find out more.

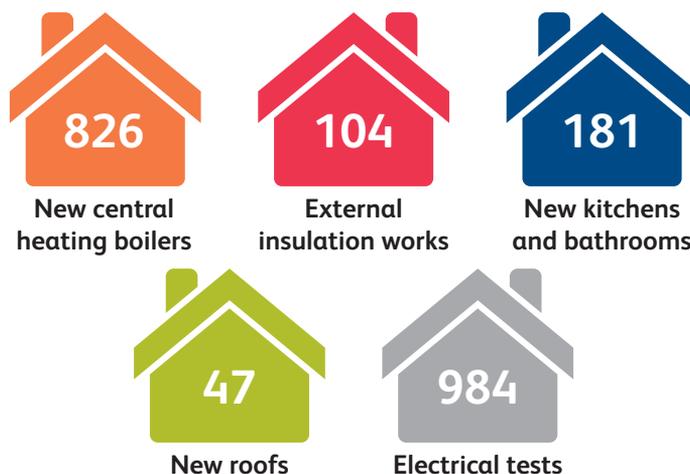


Planned maintenance

As well as the day-to-day repairs, we also work proactively to maintain your home. If we get this right, you shouldn't have to call us so often for a repair.

This work includes:

- Programmes for safety checks, such as gas and electrics
- Programmes for replacing elements of your home that reach the end of their life, such as boilers, roofs and kitchens
- The external redecoration programme
- Energy efficiency works such as insulation
- Garage refurbishment
- Fire safety.



External Wall insulation

We have some properties of a non-traditional build, which means they can't have cavity wall insulation. We've been able to add extra insulation to these by fitting it externally. This winter, tenants of these homes should reap the benefits of this.

Major works

In 2018-19 we'll carry out some major renovation work at Dalewood Gardens. The design of this block of flats means we'll need to use bespoke scaffolding to do roof works. We'll also be replacing lifts in some of our sheltered housing schemes along with other refurbishment work, including new carpets in the communal areas at Schaffer House and Carey House.

Housing fraud

The council's successful anti-fraud team investigates housing fraud. This includes unlawful subletting and obtaining housing by deception. Last year's key successes are below.



“ Superb gas engineer. Polite, on time, clean and tidy with a smile on his face; can't fault him or his work.
Mr C ”

If you think someone is committing tenancy fraud call 0800 634 0180 or visit crawley.gov.uk/fraud to report it.

Getting it right

Our satisfaction results show you are generally happy with our service.

We try our hardest to get things right, but sometimes things don't go as planned.

Any complaint gives us a chance to look at what we do and to use our findings to improve the service.

Last year we received 195 formal complaints, two-thirds (129) of these were about repairs. This isn't a surprise as we know from the satisfaction survey that our repairs and maintenance service is the most important thing to you. However, these complaints came from a very small percentage (0.5 per cent) of the total number of repairs we completed.

We upheld 75 per cent of these complaints, meaning we need to work on the issues raised.

Your tenancy

Rent

Paying your rent is essential, not only is it part of your tenancy agreement, we need you to pay so we can do your repairs and run the service.

We realise that sometimes people need some support to help them get things back on track if life takes a wrong turn. Our Housing Officers and Tenancy Support Team are here to help. If you are having trouble paying your rent get in touch with us; we'll try to help or we can suggest someone who could.



Sheltered housing service

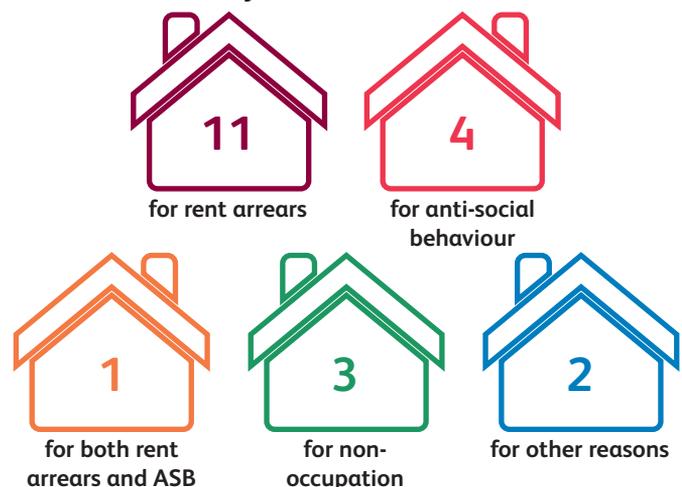
Last year we implemented changes after a major review of the service. Our Sheltered Scheme Managers have become Older Persons Support Officers and their role is slightly different.

They no longer call every tenant in the morning because we found most tenants were still active and many were still working. Instead, they now focus on the most vulnerable tenants visiting them on a regular basis. They also support vulnerable older tenants who don't live in sheltered housing and complete service visits for Lifeline customers.

We'd like to thank our tenants, as we couldn't have done it without their support.

Evictions

Unfortunately, there are occasions when we have to take action and last year we evicted 21 tenants.



Looking forward to 2018-19

The next year promises many challenges for the service. Here's an overview of some of them.

Flexible tenancy reviews

We started using our fixed term flexible tenancies in 2013. These are for a fixed term of five years, with a one-year introductory tenancy for new tenants and these tenancies will start ending in April 2019. We have to carry out a review during the 12 months before the tenancy ends, so a decision can be made as to whether or not to grant a new tenancy at the end of the current tenancy.

The review will look at how the current tenancy has been conducted e.g. if there has been rent arrears, anti-social behaviour or other tenancy breach; and the tenant's housing needs. Tenants will be required to provide information on their finances, health, family composition and future housing need. We expect to offer a new tenancy to most tenants after the review, but as a new process it will be a challenge.

Universal Credit full service

This arrived in Crawley on 6 June 2018. We've sent out lots of information on this, but experience from other council's suggests more tenants might get behind with their rent.

GDPR

May 2018 saw the General Data Protection Regulations come into force. We've been looking at our procedures and sent out our Privacy Notice to all tenants in July.

Becoming more digital

The use of technology is increasing. We now have email addresses for about half of all our tenants and mobile phone numbers for most of you. We're increasing our use of text messages to get in touch with you and for updates on some repair appointments and our newsletters have gone electronic.

The council has introduced *myCrawley*, so you can access council services when it suits you. Visit my.crawley.gov.uk to sign up or find out more.

New homes

Last year we added 43 homes to our stock, 37 brand new homes and six we brought. The 37 new homes continue our commitment to building new council homes, and next year we expect to get over 100 more.

Forge Wood

As the new neighbourhood continues to expand, the number of council homes in the neighbourhood increases. Last year we let six two-bedroom houses and seven three-bedroom houses in Windermere Close.

Next year we expect to get more houses in Crommock Street and our first properties in Phase 3A of the development behind Heathy Farm Pub.

Apex Apartments

In March 2018, we let four two-bedroom and 20 one-bedroom flats close to the town centre in West Green. These are part of the large development in West Green Drive, and next year we hope to get another 21 two-bedroom, 13 one-bedroom flats and three studio apartments in the development.

Looking to the future

Barnfield House

Not all our brand new council homes are part of a big development. The derelict shop in Northgate has been demolished to make way for a block of five flats. This was let to new tenants in August.

Work under way

There are several sites around town where we are building new homes. Some will be ready to let in 2018-19, some will take a little longer. This quick round up will give you an idea of the works under way.

Three Bridges Road

Following the demolition of the old hostels, we're building 14 flats, in two blocks.

Goffs Park

The whole of this development on the old council depot will be council housing, 22 houses and 22 flats.

Kilnmead

We're building five houses and 32 flats.

Dobbins Place

Our second Passivhaus development consists of four houses and two flats.

Crawley College car park

Work has started on 98 flats.

Contact us

Repairs Hotline

Including gas heating and hot water repairs **01293 438592** Email: housing.repairs@crawley.gov.uk

Housing Officers

For Housing Management queries please contact the Neighbourhood Team for your area.

East Neighbourhood Team Pound Hill, Maidenbower, Three Bridges, Northgate, Bewbush, Forge Wood **01293 438687**

Email: HousingEast@crawley.gov.uk

South Neighbourhood Team Furnace Green, Tilgate, Broadfield, Gossops Green **01293 438390**

Email: HousingSouth@crawley.gov.uk

West Neighbourhood Team Ifield West, Ifield, Langley Green, West Green, Southgate **01293 438724**

Email: HousingWest@crawley.gov.uk

