



Annual Report 2022-2023

For Milton Keynes City Council
Tenants and Leaseholders

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Welcome

Welcome to your 2022-2023 annual report. This report tells you about some of Milton Keynes City Council's achievements and how we are continually improving as a landlord.

It really matters that we deliver a great service to you, and we are always looking at how we can do things better. We are investing in our older properties with new doors, windows, and roofs, to make the properties more energy efficient and reduce bills.

We have been working hard on safety improvements to make a difference to our tenants. We visited our Sheltered Schemes and Serpentine Court after dark, to ensure lighting and footpaths were winter ready.

Your views are crucial in helping us make sure we're getting things right and letting us know when we are not. We will continually improve services.

I hope you enjoy reading this report and please do get in touch with suggestions on how we can continue to improve.



Councillor Emily Darlington

Cabinet Member for Adults, Housing and Healthy Communities

1. Year in Summary

Last year we....

Spent more than **£56m** on housing

Made **£1.77m** of adaptations to help people live independently

Helped **21** tenants downsize, paying **£36,000** in cash incentives

Made more than **55,000** repairs

Carried out more than **12,000** safety assessments

Helped **103** tenants find new paid work

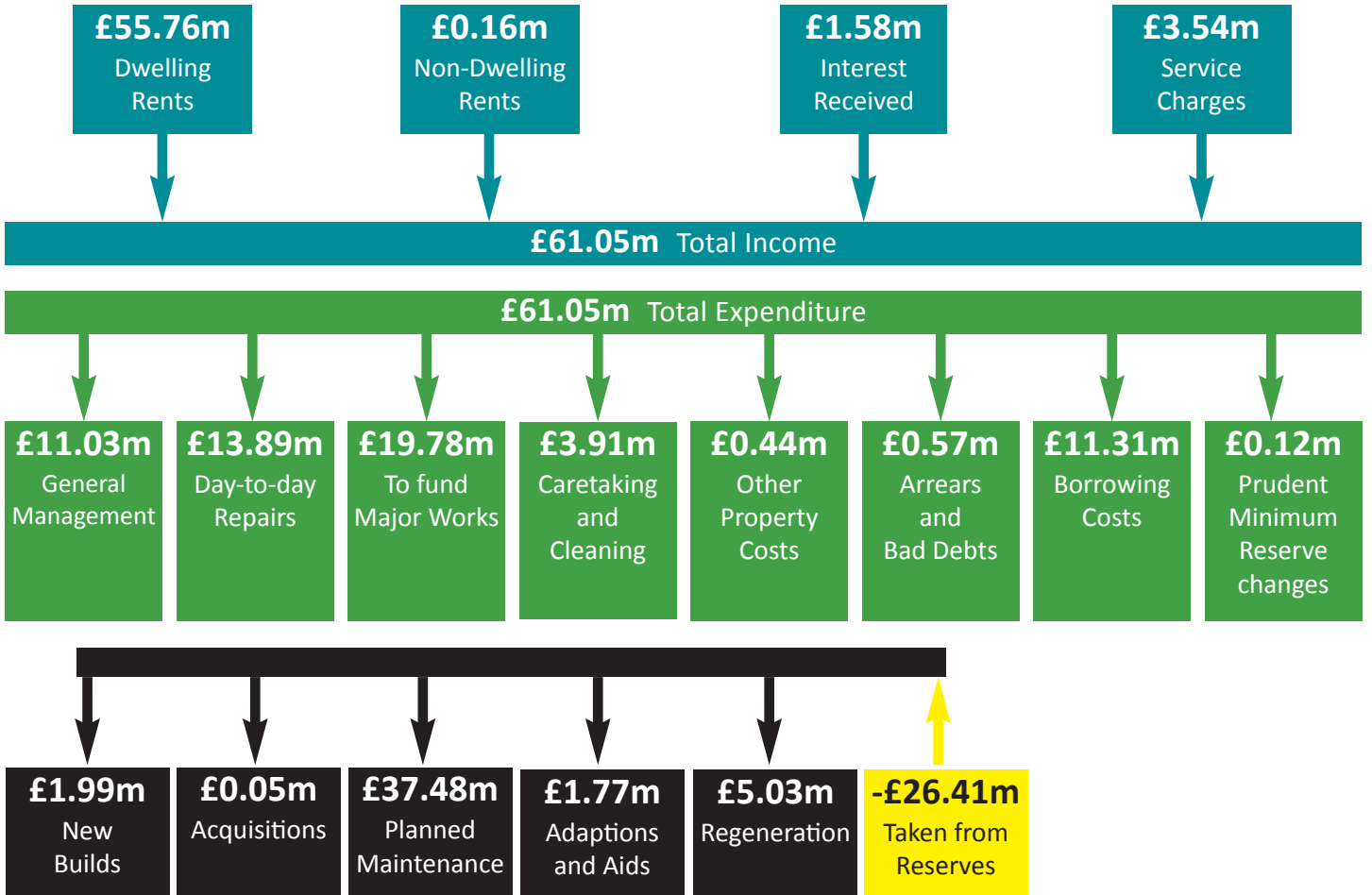
Helped tenants remain safe and compliant by carrying out:

- **10,000** gas safety checks
- **3,300** domestic electrical tests and fire detection upgrades
- **120** electrical tests within communal areas
- **114** emergency light tests

... And much more

2. Money matters

Where our housing income comes from and how it's spent:



Rent collections

Average weekly rents	Social rent	Shared Ownership	Affordable rent
2022-23	£90.62	£85.63	£177.51
2021-22	£86.67	£81.01	£170.57
2020-21	£85.38	£78.87	£177.55
2019-20	£82.55	£79.66	£176.47

In 2022/23 we collected approximately 99% of all the rent we were owed

How we spend each pound

General Management



12p

Day-to-day Repairs



16p

Caretaking and Cleaning



5p

Other Property Costs



1p

Arrears and Bad Debt



1p

Borrowing Costs



13p

New Build



2p

Acquisitions



1p

Planned Maintenance



42p

Aids and Adaptations



2p

Regeneration



5p

=



£1.00

3. Are you struggling financially?

Paying your rent on time and in accordance with the terms of tenancy should remain your priority. Your rent is due weekly in advance as part of the terms of your tenancy agreement. This means that your rent account should not fall into arrears in between your rent payments.

We will take action to recover rent arrears. If you can see a problem coming, do not wait until it arrives - talk to us as soon as possible. It is always easier to sort things out when arrears are small, and even when arrears are high.

If you're struggling to pay your rent, please let us know as help is available. We are not here to judge, and you don't need to be receiving welfare benefits for us to give advice.

On top of funds that we can use to help tenants, we have put aside money in this year's city council budget to help even more people pay their rent. We recognise that working tenants who don't receive benefits towards their rent may still need help. If you are a working tenant in a financial crisis (who isn't usually entitled to assistance with rental costs) please call us on 01908 252937 as we may be able to help. Find more support at www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/cost-living-support

Helping tenants find paid work

Our Community Employment Service helps tenants to find paid work. Last year we helped 103 tenants to either find new paid work, achieve a formal qualification, or start a volunteering placement. Our focus continues to be in areas of the city with higher deprivation or particularly vulnerable communities as well as older adults and those with low earnings.

We have expanded our offer of employment support drop-in sessions; sessions can be found in Beanhill, Bradville, CMK, Coffee Hall, Fullers Slade, Lakes Estate, Netherfield, and West Bletchley, and we continue to provide a one-to-one service, both face-to-face and online.

An area of focus for this year is 'Meet the Employer' where local employers visit neighbourhoods to meet and talk with the community and employ local people. We are looking forward to working closely with Brioche Pasquier, IKEA, ASDA and more in the coming year.

Find out more by calling **01908 252323** or register online at www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/community-employment-service

4. Helping you from day one

Our Neighbourhoods Teams act as 'landlord' for the city council, signing up prospective tenants, supervising tenancies during the introductory period and deciding whether an introductory tenancy can become a secure tenancy.

The team also manages household details and changes, enquiries such as mutual exchanges and low level anti-social behaviour issues, tenancy audits and estates inspections, caretaking and facilitating gas safety inspections.

Some of what the Neighbourhood Team did in the last year

1931	Tenancy audits
150	Estate inspections
200	Gas safety compliance visits
600	New tenancies
40	Neighbour disputes
172	Engagement and residents' surgeries
60	Mutual exchanges
60	Tonnes of waste dealt with
120	Welfare referrals

Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

There are six ASB Officers within Neighbourhood Services, who work in partnership with all agencies across the city to reduce ASB and criminality linked to the use of our housing stock.

In 2022-2023, the ASB Officers have dealt with 192 high-risk cases, with the main themes being drug related (27), cuckooing/taking over a person's property (18), subletting (22), threatening behaviour (35) and criminal offences (12).

The team takes a proactive and low-tolerance approach to offending, obtaining 11 Injunctions against people who have impacted our tenants and other residents. We have focussed on identifying those who exploit vulnerable people.

Work to recover sublet properties continues, with 9 properties returned, enabling families who are desperately in need of housing to be offered accommodation sooner.

We partially or fully close properties where the ASB and criminality is having a negative impact on neighbours, with one property fully closed in the last year, with partial closures also being used to restrict the freedom of criminal gangs.

Neighbourhood Services now has the ability to refer cases to an independent mediation provider, who will support neighbours to speak with each other about disputes. This will enable us to deal with cases quickly and to prevent issues escalating to a point where formal powers are needed.

Residents Associations

We support and fund 12 Residents Associations who support their local communities and organise resident focused activities. Eight Residents Associations received Community Grant Funding from us, which went towards Jubilee and Christmas events and newsletters.

New tenant handbook

We published a new tenant handbook containing all the information a tenant could need to know including useful phone numbers. It also provides clear information about our responsibilities as a landlord.

Summer Roadshows

Colleagues from Milton Keynes City Council, partner agencies and Mears came together to deliver 12 summer roadshows across Milton Keynes. This was an opportunity for residents to speak to us directly and get an immediate response to any questions they may have.

Get involved

We have developed even more ways to get involved.

Informal involvement

- Tenant callers
- Landscaping monitoring
- Estate inspections
- Void inspections
- Annual Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) forum

Occasional involvement

- Staff interviews
- Armchair readers
- Surveys
- Garden competition



Formal involvement

- Scrutiny
- Repairs and maintenance monitoring group
- Engagement monitoring group
- Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) monitoring group

For full information on involvement opportunities contact your resident engagement team or go to; www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/tenant-involvement

5. Repairs and maintenance

Our goals are to:

- Make it easy for you to report repairs.
- Do repairs as per our tenant handbook – urgent repairs within 24 hours and others in 28 days.
- Make homes more energy efficient so they cost less to heat and this helps tackle climate change.

Repairs and home improvements

Last year we made 50,551 repairs and maintenance jobs (37,784 day to day repairs and 12,767 heating repairs) including:

996 new kitchens	425 new doors	714 new bathrooms and wet rooms
242 new toilets	471 new boilers/heating systems	179 new windows
374 new roofs	One new lift	One Refurbished lifts

6. Safer communal spaces

We work hard on safety improvements that make a difference to residents, for instance:

- We made winter ready checks at all of our sheltered housing schemes to check paving, lighting and that footpaths were not overgrown.
- We visited Serpentine Court in the dark to identify where lighting and paving improvements were needed.
- We continued our programme of fire safety works, electrical upgrades and gas safety checks.
- We also checked work, with 64 audits done.

7. Regeneration and Renewal

The Lakes

Detailed designs are being worked up and we plan to appoint the preferred contractor in December 2023 to start building work in early 2024. This will include 183 new homes and facilities. The four new play parks are proving popular with children and families. Work continues to tidy and improve open spaces, with new seating being installed and planters for residents to grow their own plants and vegetables.

The Locals of the Lakes group has arranged activities from seaside coach trips to children's discos, many funded through The Lakes Club set up by the city council. During a health and wellbeing day, local people helped to clean road signs and got free minor bike repairs from the 'bike doctor'. To help local people through the cost-of-living crisis, advice sessions were held to help residents save money on utility bills, avoid loan sharks, and access free or discounted food. The city council has also funded warm spaces and foodbanks.

Fullers Slade

Several factors, many of which are outside the Council's control such as inflationary pressures, have impacted our large scale new housing or improvement schemes plans. We are still committed to renewal work in Fullers Slade but this will need to be on a longer timeframe. The new housing plans are on hold until the financial situation improves.

In the meantime, we continue to work with the Estate Renewal Forum to improve the estate. New youth services and the Fullers Club (where local people and community groups can apply for funding for projects) have been set up. The Fuller Slade Estate Renewal Forum has been working with partners to set up events including a money saving masterclass, homework club and coffee mornings.

Bradville

The Estate Renewal Forum has been set up with local people to review and agree priorities and policies. On the list for discussion is the potential for home improvements similar to those in Netherfield, where council homes could receive new doors, windows, and roofs to reduce energy bills.

Woughton (Coffee Hall, Beanhill, Netherfield, Tinkers Bridge)

Conversations continue with residents and residents' associations plus the parish council and initial plans are taking shape for an Estate Renewal Forum in Netherfield. This will be the first area to benefit from an energy efficiency project where 300+ council homes will receive new windows, doors, and roofs to reduce energy bills significantly.

Grant Funding

Our Community Engagement team have been busy working with estate renewal forums, residents' associations, parish councils and other community groups to help them secure grant funding. Free training sessions were held to show representatives from the organisations how to apply for grants, how to complete forms and where to find grants. To date, organisations have been supported to secure grants of more than £200,000.

Alongside this we are using funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Funding scheme to help improve our regeneration and renewal estates. This allows us to help fund a variety of community projects whilst also working to improve open spaces and community safety initiatives.

8. Sheltered Housing

Our Sheltered Housing service has recently retained the nationally recognised EROSH Code of Practice standards.

We are continually investing in our schemes to ensure they are safe and supportive places to live. Examples of achievements this year include:

- Installing additional fire safety measures, eg, smoke detectors and fire doors, across all schemes.
- Arranging drop-in sessions with Income and Welfare Officers and colleagues from Tenant Engagement to advise on benefits and allowances that may be available to tenants.
- Working with tenants, Sheltered Housing Officers and Health & Safety advisors to ensure schemes are compliant with safety regulations.
- Investing in new lounge carpets and furniture in 3 of our schemes.
- Relocating the office at Dovecote so that it is now fully accessible to tenants, visitors and contractors. The old office has been returned to general housing stock.

For more information please visit www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/sheltered-housing-care or call **01908 222616** to request a copy of our brochure.

9. Lettings and allocations

571 Council properties were let.

Property Size	Number of Lets
1 Bed	369
2 Beds	110
3 Beds	77
4 Beds	14
5 Beds	1

679 families were nominated to other providers for permanent homes.

Property Size	Number of Lets
1 Bed	208
2 Beds	359
3 Beds	90
4 Beds	20
5 Beds	2

Could you benefit from moving to a smaller home?

We're in urgent need of more family-sized accommodation. If you're living in a Council home that is now too large and would like to move somewhere smaller, cheaper, and easier to manage, we can offer you a generous downsizing cash incentive.

Last year we rehoused 21 tenants and paid £36,000 in cash incentives.

If you move from a property with two or more bedrooms to somewhere smaller, you could receive:

- £1,000 per bedroom
- An additional £1,000 if you move into a sheltered housing flat
- Up to £500 towards relocation costs
- Help to buy carpets
- Help disposing with unwanted furniture

Some examples (conditions apply):

Current Property	New Property	Maximum Payable	Removal Expenses (up to)	Total (up to)
4 Bed	Sheltered	£4,000	£500	£4,500
4 Bed	3 Bed	£1,000	£500	£1,500
4 Bed	2 Bed	£2,000	£500	£2,500
4 Bed	1 Bed	£3,000	£500	£3,500
3 Bed	Sheltered	£3,000	£500	£3,500
3 Bed	2 Bed	£1,000	£500	£1,500
3 Bed	1 Bed	£2,000	£500	£2,500
2 Bed	Sheltered	£2,000	£500	£2,500
2 Bed	1 Bed	£1,000	£500	£1,500

Call Housing Allocations on **01908 252937 (option 4)** or email housing.allocations@milton-keynes.gov.uk to learn more.

Home Ownership

Earlier this year we invited all tenants, leaseholders and shared owners to join a group to help shape our formal consultation around service charges, which will be sent to every resident later this year, and how else we communicate and listen. Around 70 residents signed up to become part of the group. You can find the latest on the consultation at www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/consultationb

10.Complaints

The Complaint Handling Code sets out good practice for landlords to respond to complaints. You can find it online at www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk. Each year we assess ourselves against the code, and you can find our current assessment at www.milton-keynes.gov.uk.

Things we have improved in 2022/23:

- reviewing communications to ensure we meet customer expectations,
- acting upon feedback from residents received through consultation,
- introduced a new reporting tool to manage performance,
- dedicated housing complaints page for residents.

Where we receive complaints	Number resolved	Number outstanding	Escalated to HO	Upheld by HO
Assets and Investment	185	86	2	1
Housing Solutions	146	30	0	0
Neighbourhoods	90	6	0	0
Housing Allocations	43	27	0	0
Home Ownership	29	5	0	0
Supply and Acquisitions	19	6	0	0
Income	17	1	0	0
Anti-Social Behaviour	14	1	0	0
Private Sector Housing	8	0	0	0
Total	551	162	2	1

11.Rents and Service charge

The rents and service charge consultation continues and stakeholders will shortly receive details of progress so far this year and be asked to vote and give observations.

12. Tenant Satisfaction Measures

The Regulator of Social Housing has introduced new Tenant Satisfaction Measures that will help tenants to scrutinise our performance and give feedback about where we can improve.

From next year, we'll be reporting how we are performing in areas such as repairs, safety checks and complaints.

We're also going to be asking tenants and shared owners to take part in our anonymous Tenant Perception Survey. Feedback will be used to:

- shape and improve our services,
- allow the Regulator of Social Housing to scrutinise landlords,
- allow residents and landlords to see how we perform compared to other landlords.

If you receive this survey, please take part. You can help by updating your contact details so we can reach you. Visit www.milton-keynes.gov.uk and enter 'tenancy changes' in the search box.

If you would like to share your views on this annual report, to tell us what you liked or what you would like to see included next year, we'd be very happy to hear from you.

Email your thoughts to
residentengagement@milton-keynes.gov.uk