

Milton Keynes Council Tenants and Leaseholders Annual Report 2020-2021

Address: Milton Keynes Council, Civic Offices, 1 Saxon Gate East, Milton Keynes, MK9 3EJ
Website: www.milton-keynes.gov.uk
E-mail: customerservices@milton-keynes.gov.uk
Phone: 01908 691691
(Mon, Tues, Thurs and Fri 9am - 5.15pm Wed 10am - 5:15pm)



Welcome

2020/21 has brought significant challenges to us all due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the lockdowns our staff worked tirelessly to ensure they supported residents, carrying out emergency and urgent repairs as well as building safety work. We ensured that we contacted and supported vulnerable people with shopping, prescriptions, loneliness, welfare and debt advice.

We also accommodated and supported those made homeless during the pandemic and carried out a significant amount of work to support the residents of our two tower blocks, Mellish Court and The Gables as some building safety concerns came to light.

We continue to look forward and consider what more needs to be done to ensure that MKC delivers good quality services to our tenants and leaseholders, and to deliver new council homes for future generations.

Our aims are to build on the significant work we have undertaken in relation to building safety, ensure tenants live in a decent home and most importantly empower them by placing them at the heart of everything we do, and ensure that they are offered a wide range of opportunities to give their views and help us improve the services we offer in the future.

Our priorities

Our Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan sets out how we will invest in our existing homes, regenerate local estates, build new council homes and improve the services we deliver to our tenants over the next 30 years.

In September and October 2020, we carried out a consultation on a refreshed HRA Business Plan, to find out what our tenants wanted to prioritise for investment. The response rate was 19%, with 2,384 tenants responding. Thank you to everyone who took the time to respond.

The consultation feedback emphasised the importance of investing in our existing housing stock so that our tenants and leaseholders can feel safe and secure in a decent home

We are still planning a significant investment programme to bring our homes up to a decent standard and improve energy efficiency. However, we need to look at the programme given the economic impact of COVID-19.

Some of your feedback

What types of new council homes should we focus on building?

Of the 1,454 tenants who answered this:

- **55% said family sized homes**
- **17% wanted us to prioritise bungalows**
- **17% want to prioritise flats and smaller homes**

What are your top priorities for home improvements?

(1,349 tenants answered this)

- 27% kitchens
- 18% energy efficiency
- 13% mould prevention
- 13% bathrooms

What are your top priorities for estate improvements?

(1,349 tenants answered this)

- 33% paving and paths
- 25% fences and gates
- 16% pest control
- 14% grass and shrub cutting

What are your top priorities for flats and sheltered housing?

(633 tenants answered this)

- 33% entrance security
- 16% lighting

What are your top priorities for flats and sheltered housing?

(1,296 tenants answered this)

- 4% want improved tenancy support and guidance

Money matters

Where our housing income comes from and how it is spent

£57.40m Total Income

- £53.12m Dwelling Rents
- £0.21m Non-Dwelling Rents
- £0.08m Interest Received
- £4m Service Charges

£57.40 Total Expenditure

- £10.89m General Management
- £10.92m Day-to-day Repairs
- £24.80m Major Works
- £2.57m Caretaking and Cleaning
- £0.25m Other Property Costs
- £1.03m Arrears and Bad Debts
- £6.94m Borrowing Costs

Breakdown of the £24.80m Major Works Expenditure

- £3.40m New Builds
- £12.23m Purchases
- £22.19m Planned Repairs
- £0.91m Adaptations and Aids
- £0.22m Regeneration
- **with -£14.14m Taken from Reserves**

Rent Collections

In 2020/21 we collected 99% of all the rent we were owed.

Average Weekly Rents

2020/21

- Social Rent £88.79
- Shared Ownership £82.03
- Affordable Rent £184.65

2019/20

- Social Rent £86.19
- Shared Ownership £82.85
- Affordable Rent £183.53

2018/19

- Social Rent £86.98
- Shared Ownership £83.68
- Affordable Rent £179.10

2017/18

- Social Rent £87.81
- Shared Ownership £84.50
- Affordable Rent £170.20

How we spend each pound

- 31p Planned Maintenance
- 15.3p Day-to-day Repairs
- 15.2p General Management
- 17.1p House Purchases
- 9.7p Borrowing Costs
- 3.6p Cleaning and Caretaking
- 0.3p Regeneration
- 4.7p New Builds
- 1.3p Aids and Adaptations
- 1.4p Arrears and Bad Debts
- 0.3p Other Property Costs

Supporting tenants

Universal Credit

Universal Credit (UC) is claimed from the Department for Work and Pensions and replaces the six means-tested benefits and tax credits (including Housing Benefit). New benefit claimants in MK are now receiving UC.

UC is paid monthly into the claimant's bank account, unlike Housing Benefit which is paid straight to the landlord. Tenants on UC are at an increased risk of falling behind on their payments and experiencing financial difficulties. It is important that tenants who are or may be claiming UC:

- **Have a bank account ready to receive UC payments**
- **Talk to us about moving to monthly payments and how to get yourself into advance on your rent**
- **Consider paying by direct debit**
- **Contact us as soon as you can if you are struggling to pay your rent, or need advice on other debts**

Neighbourhood Employment Programme (NEP)

The NEP offers support to tenants to find paid work and has a focus on tenants who are claiming or have recently made a claim for Universal Credit, residents entering temporary accommodation and those accessing homeless prevention services.

The NEP is now working with Citizens MK and Work for Us on projects to reduce digital poverty, concentrating in areas of higher deprivation, the elderly and women returning to the workplace.

Alongside our employment support sessions in Bradville, Coffee Hall, Fullers Slade and Lakes Estate, we will be opening two new community support sessions in Netherfield (in partnership with Woughton Community Council) and West Bletchley. We will also be working with the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) to enable 100 tenants and residents to achieve the required training and permits to allow them to work in the construction industry.

To contact the NEP call 01908 252323 or email nep@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Resident involvement

Engaging with residents over the past year has been particularly challenging as we were unable to hold any face-to-face meetings and were all getting to grips with virtual tools such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams. We did however continue to support our residents' associations, carry out a number of important consultations and worked towards setting up two new Estate Renewal Forums on The Lakes Estate and Fullers Slade.

Residents Associations

We continued to work with and support 14 residents' associations across MK during 2020/21 and held two virtual network meetings, bringing all associations together to share good practice. Despite the lockdown restrictions, six of our associations received community grant funding to deliver a range of projects to support their communities.

Estate Renewal Forums

MKC's new Community-Led Regeneration and Estate Renewal Strategy set out plans to develop Estate Renewal Forums (ERFs) as the main way in which MKC will engage with local communities on regeneration plans. Early in 2021, we worked closely with residents and other key stakeholders on The Lakes and Fullers Slade to set up the first ERFs. There is still work to do and we are always looking for more council tenants to get involved. If you are interested in attending ERF meetings or you want to find out more, contact us at: regeneration@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Future plans

MKC is a member of the Tenants Participation Advisory Service (TPAS). We plan to work with TPAS this year to assess our resident engagement work against their standards. This will help us to identify any gaps and decide how we can improve our engagement work and give tenants more opportunities to get involved

GET INVOLVED!

Be part of the future of where you live. Have a say and make a real difference.

Email: residentengagement@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Phone: 01908 253148 / 01908 252415

Sheltered housing

Our ongoing aim is to ensure that our 840 tenants in Sheltered Housing remain living independently, in their own homes for as long as possible. In the last year alone, our Sheltered Housing officers submitted 278 referrals to other supporting agencies on behalf of our tenants.

We have continued to invest heavily in our schemes, with many major work projects completed alongside responsive repairs. For example:

- Falaise Nook received new brighter lighting, along with new fire doors throughout
- Lincoln Court had new lighting, ceilings and new flat floor doors
- Hinton Lodge flats received new front doors
- Bellfounder House and Dexter House had new communal kitchens
- Dexter House, Magdalen House and Pritchard Court are all undergoing lighting upgrades

Information about all our schemes can be found in our information booklet:

www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/milton-keynes-council-sheltered-housing

or to request a copy please call 01908 222616

Complaint handling code

Last year, The Housing Ombudsman Service published a new Complaint Handling Code setting out a good practice to allow landlords to respond to complaints effectively and fairly

Key areas in the code

- Universal definition of a complaint
- Providing easy access to complaints procedure and ensuring residents are aware of it
- Informing residents of their right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service
- Recommending two stage process and fair time frames
- Ensuring a resident-focused process
- Creating a positive complaint handling culture through continuous learning and improvement
- Demonstrating learning in annual reports

Landlords were asked 36 questions about their complaints handling process.

How are we doing?

The code reassured us that our Policy and Procedures are mostly in line with The Housing Ombudsman's expectations, although we have also worked on the following:

- Reviewing our complaints handling processes
- Reducing number of outstanding complaints
- Contacting some of the residents who made complaints, and asking about their experience with our complaints process
- Updating contact details on our website to clarify how to make a complaint and how to escalate it
- Sharing lessons learnt from the complaints with our staff, contractors and residents

We will be reviewing our self-assessment annually.

To find out more about the complaints handling code please visit Housing Ombudsman: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Our self-assessment can be found on our website in the complaints section: www.milton-keynes.gov.uk

Housing complaints results

Complaints handling results

67% in open complaints at the end of 2020/21

- 137 complaints we addressed in 2020/21. Of these, 93 were upheld.
- We have reduced the total number of complaints by 7%.
- Number of outstanding complaints at the end of March 2021 was 67% down.
- 61 complaints were resolved as early resolution.
- We received 14 compliments.

Complaints across services

	Total resolved complaints in 2020/21	Total outstanding complaints on 31/03/2021
Assets and Investment	69	37
Neighbourhoods	34	5
Home Ownership	14	2
Income	10	1
Private Sector Housing	5	0
Housing Access	3	1
Anti-social Behaviour	2	0

Listening to residents

70 quality control calls were made asking for feedback

We have been contacting some of the residents who made complaints asking them about their experience with our complaints asking them about their experience with our complaints process, to find potential improvements.

What have we learnt?

- We need to keep residents updated more often on the results of our investigations
- We need to explain more clearly on our website when and how to escalate complaints
- We need to work better with our contractors to ensure quality service

How will we improve?

In 2021 we will continue getting in touch with the customers who have made a complaint. We will be acting on their feedback to further improve the quality of service we deliver and to ensure our residents' voice is included.

Repairs and maintenance

We are continuing to work to improve your homes, through our Planned Investment Programme. We had to reduce our programmes last year due to Covid related restrictions.

However we still managed to complete a range of works including 212 new kitchens, 196 bathrooms and 1201 homes with new fencing as well as new roofs to homes in Newport Pagnell, New Bradwell and Bletchley.

Day to day repairs, we carried out 28,187 repairs. 23,040 were routine repairs and a further 5,147 were emergencies, which we aim to attend to in four hours. This is less than in previous years in part due to the restrictions in place due to COVID-19. There were also 12,889 heating repairs completed and annual 11,534 gas checks carried out.

Residents Safety

Ensuring homes are safe for our residents is a top priority for the Council when planning any work or investment into homes. The Council continues to prioritise safety work in homes to ensure they meet current health and safety standards and has structured safety works into its investment programme across its housing stock on a risk basis.

There has been a focus on fire safety in particular in order to ensure the Council meets future anticipated changes in regulation for this area and this work continues into 2021/22 and beyond.

Aids and adaptations

Last year, Mears carried out 139 adaptations to enable people to stay living independently in their own homes. The top ten adaptations were:

Wet room/level access shower	78
Other	25
Bathroom adaptations	16
Remote door opener	15
Kitchen adaptations	13
Access ramp	12
Stairlift	12
Hoist	7
Tubular hand rails (outside)	6
Door widening	5

The amount of work carried out in 2019-20 was a significant increase on previous years and the anticipation was that we would continue at the same pace in 2020-21. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, in late March work on site was stopped and is only beginning to restart in June, initially with external works and internal works of a health and safety nature, but at a slower pace to allow appropriate safe methods of working around residents. It will mean that our kitchen and bathroom replacement programme will be smaller this year, but we will continually review what can be safely delivered.

Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

This year has been a challenging one for the ASB team. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns, reports of ASB remained steady.

County Lines issues (where illegal drugs are transported from one area to another, often across police and local authority boundaries) have affected several estates. This has contributed to 61 drug related ASB cases and 16 cases of 'cuckooing' where drug dealers take over a property, normally belonging to a vulnerable person, and use it to operate their criminal activity from. The number of drug related cases is steadily increasing, and 6 Closure Orders have been obtained as a result.

Between April 2020 – March 2021 the ASB team responded to:

- 241 cases of high level ASB of which 4 were hate crimes
- 196 cases of low level ASB
- 148 cases of possible breach of tenance
- 28 cases of possible housing fraud

Neighbourhoods Service Team

They have facilitated 142 mutual exchanges and signed up over 400 new tenants into their homes.

New Council housing

We now have six separate sites where we are building 102 new homes with a wide range of types, including, bungalows, flats and houses alongside a variety of sizes including, 2, 3 and 5 bedroom homes.

We have secured planning permission at the former Cripps Lodge site in Netherfield for 66 new council homes. We have also submitted a further 8 planning applications for 56 new council homes. However, we are not stopping there and are working on a number of other schemes which we hope to submit planning applications for in 21/22.

Many of these homes will be built with the latest renewable energy technologies, including personal electric vehicle charging points and the highest elements of insulation, as part of our commitment to become a carbon neutral city by 2030.

Regeneration

In September 2020 the new Community-led Regeneration and Estate Renewal strategy was adopted and progress has been made on some of the renewal estates.

The Lakes

In October 2020 planning consent, subject to various conditions, was approved for Phase A of the Lakes. Such large regeneration schemes involve a large amount of complexity and progress continues to be made with the recent agreement to undertake detailed ground investigation works on the estate. Phase B of the Lakes was also granted outline consent subject to reserved matters submissions and similar conditions.

Following the hybrid application being progressed funding has been brought forward to speed up the delivery of the public realm within the Lakes estate. Consultation with the community has already begun with works expected to start later in 2021. Alongside this piece of work officers linked in with the Bletchley Towns deal and successfully helped bid to improve the existing leisure route from the Lakes estate to Bletchley town centre, via the Blue Lagoon. This extra funding will improve the existing route up to 'redway' standards and allow for an extra toucan crossing to be installed.

Engagement with the local communities has also been improved with new Estate Renewal Forums being formed on both Fullers Slade and the Lakes estates. For more information on these forums please email regeneration@milton-keynes.gov.uk. Members of the local communities make up the

membership and chair these forums with MKC officers assisting the organisation of them. It is envisaged that more of these forums will be implemented on other estates within Milton Keynes as the programme progresses, with the other 5 estates referenced within the strategy being prioritised.

Melish Court and The Gables

A decision was also taken in 2020/21 to demolish both Mellish Court and the Gables tower blocks. It is expected that both of these blocks will be demolished in early 2022 and work is being undertaken to ensure residents living in these blocks are successfully decanted, with Milton Keynes Council tenants being offered suitable alternative accommodation. Engagement will be undertaken in 2021/22 with the residents of these blocks and the local communities to explore what can be built in their place. We are keen to ensure that we work to replace at the least the same number of council homes lost from the demolition of these two towers

Lettings and allocations

472 MKC properties were let in 2020/2021, a decrease of 1 from the year before.

General Needs (256)

Bedsits	9
1 bed	70
2 bed	63
3 bed	96
4+ bed	18

Sheltered/Older People (216)

Older person 1 bed	55
Older person 2 bed	29
Sheltered bedsit	15
Sheltered 1 bed	112
Sheltered 2 bed	5
Sheltered house	0

Nominations to Housing Associations

413 nominations were made to Housing Associations, an increase of 130 from the year before.

Bedsits	4
1 bed	168
2 bed	184
3 bed	45
4+ bed	12
5 bed	0

There has been a significant decrease in the number of Housing Association lets during 2020/2021. This is due to the delay of new build handovers during the COVID-19 building site safety restrictions. The new properties scheduled to be handed over during 2020/21 will start being released throughout 2021/22 – 2022/23.

Downsizing Incentive Scheme

To increase the number of larger properties that become available each year, the Council will utilise a Downsizing Incentives Policy to support tenants seeking to downsize from family sized council homes (2 bedrooms and above) to homes that better meet their needs. There is a need to make the most effective use of council housing stock to meet demand for family sized homes.

If you are living in a home that is now too large for you and would like to move somewhere smaller, cheaper and easier to manage, why not take advantage of Milton Keynes Council excellent cash incentives available to social housing tenants.

If a tenant moves from family sized accommodation of two or more bedrooms to a smaller property a payment will be made to match the cash incentive below (conditions apply)

- £1000 to be paid per bedroom as a result of downsizing
- An additional £1000 if a tenant moves to a flat in a sheltered housing scheme
- Up to £500 towards relocation costs (if required we may be able to pay your removals direct to the removal company and this will be deducted from your final payment)

Downsizing Incentive Payments - Examples

Current Property Size	New Property Size	Max Grant Payable	Removal Expenses	Total Grant
4 Bed Home	3 Bed Home	£1,000	£500	£1,500
4 Bed Home	2 Bed Home	£2,000	£500	£2,500
4 Bed Home	1 Bed Home	£3,000	£500	£3,500
3 Bed Home	2 Bed Home	£1,000	£500	£1,500
3 Bed Home	1 Bed Home	£2,000	£500	£2,500
2 Bed Home	1 Bed Home	£1,000	£500	£1,500

We will also assist with the cost of removals.

The scheme is designed to:

- Encourage and assist tenants to downsize to better meet their needs
- Release much needed family accommodation and make best use of existing stock
- Support tenants with a contribution towards the costs incurred as a result of moving

If you're interested please contact Housing Allocations on 01908 252937, option 4 or email housing.allocations@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Useful contacts

Milton Keynes Council Housing Enquiries

Phone 01908 252937

out of hours emergency 01908 226699

Neighbourhood services, Welfare and Rent Team (Option 1)

neighbourhood.services@milton-keynes.gov.uk

rents@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Housing Access/Allocations (Option 2)

emptyhomes@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Anti-Social Behaviour (Option 3)

asb@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Report a Repair (Mears)

Phone 0330 123 2522 24hours, 7 days a week

repairs.miltonkeynes@mearsgroup.co.uk

Stay connected

Facebook - MKCouncil1

Twitter - @mkcouncil

Resident Involvement

Phone 01908 253148 or 01908252415

residentengagement@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Housing solutions and Homelessness advice

01908 253481

RoughSleeperTeam@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Housing Benefit

Phone 01908 253100

benefits@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Complaints, Compliments and Feedback

Phone 01908 253817

customerservices@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Regeneration

Phone 07557 318943 / 07557318900

regeneration@milton-keynes.gov.uk

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