



Annual Report 2023-2024.

For Milton Keynes City Council
Tenants and Leaseholders

Welcome

Welcome to your 2023/2024 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 1600 of our older properties across the city with new doors, windows, and roofs, to make the properties more energy efficient and reduce bills.



Work is underway to deliver Milton Keynes' first regeneration project on the Lakes Estate. Building contractors GRAHAM have started on-site to build over 180 new council homes, a community centre and retail space with the first homes being built by Summer 2025.

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 Ed Hume
Cabinet Member for Housing

1. Year in summary

Last year we....

Spent more than **£70m** on housing

Made **£1.11m** of adaptations to help people live independently

Helped **47** tenants downsize, paying **£71,397** in cash incentives

Made more than **65.000** repairs

Carried out more than **14,000** safety assessments

Helped **55** tenants find paid work

Helped tenants remain safe and compliant by carrying out:

- **9,744** gas safety checks
- **2,327** domestic electrical tests and fire detection upgrades
- **249** electrical tests within communal areas
- **228** Emergency lighting tests

....And much more

2. Tenant satisfaction

Thank you to everyone who took part in our first Tenant Perception Survey and congratulations to the five prize draw winners.

Here's the main findings and we'll review all results to consider how we can improve. You can find the full results on our website.



The 2024 Tenant Perception Survey is now open.
Have your say by scanning the QR code.

MKCC Tenant Perception Survey 2023-2024	Tenants (1122)	Shared Owners (116)
Overall satisfaction	55% (617)	45% (52)
Keeping properties in good repair		
Satisfaction with repairs	61% (684)	NA
Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair	61% (684)	NA
Maintaining building safety		
Satisfaction that the home is well maintained	51% (572)	NA
Satisfaction that the home is safe	54% (605)	53% (61)
Respectful and helpful engagement		
Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them	37% (415)	17% (19)
Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them	49% (549)	40% (46)
Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect	53% (594)	43% (49)
Effective handling of complaints		
Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints	22% (246)	8% (9)

Responsible neighbourhood management		
Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained	45% (504)	50% (58)
Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods	38% (426)	32% (37)
Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling anti-social behaviour	36% (403)	25% (29)

The 2024 Tenant Perception Survey will start in September. Voice your opinion by taking part if you receive a survey. You can also 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.

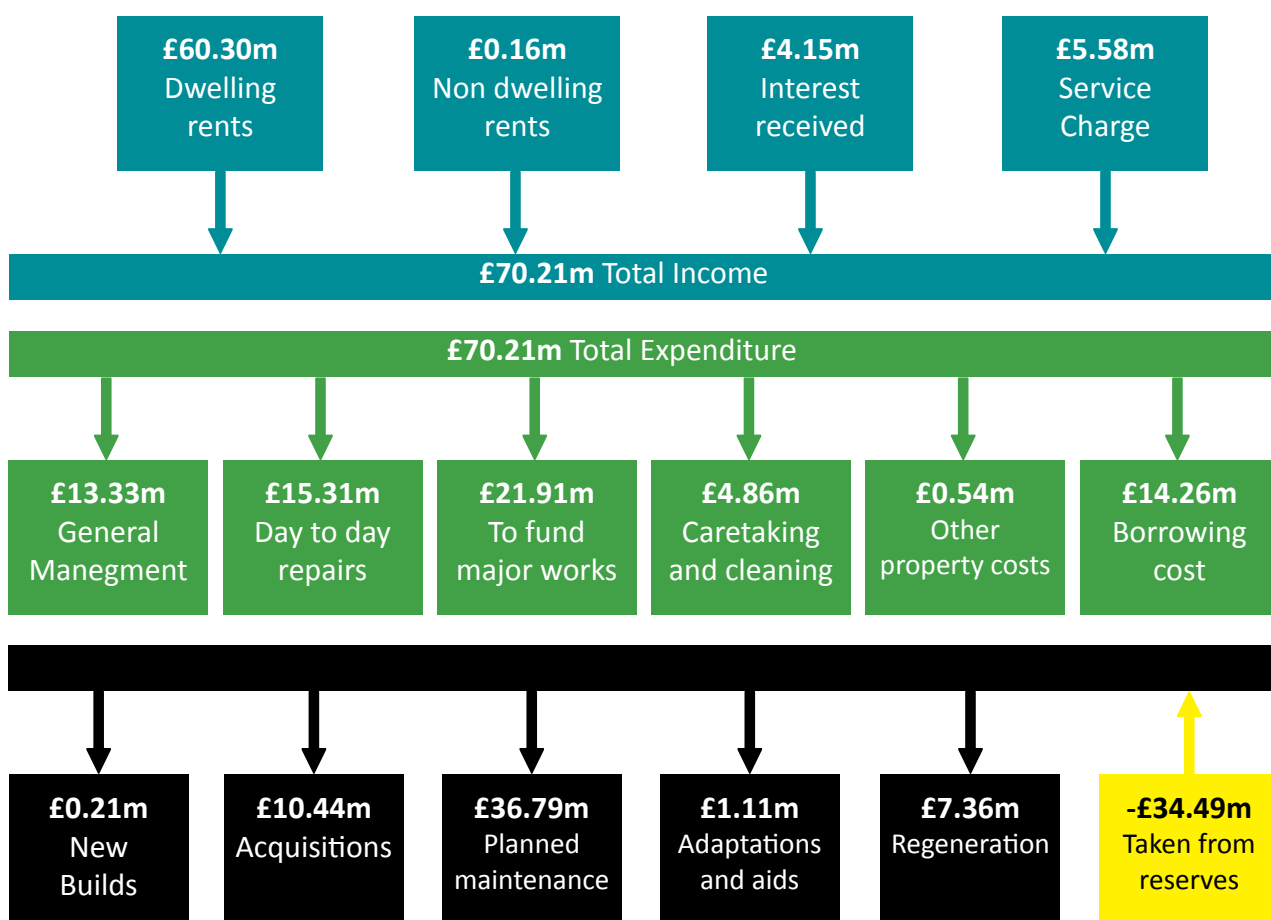


3. Money matters

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

Milton Keynes City Council manages 11,000 homes, and our main source of housing income is rent from those homes. We use this to pay for the management and upkeep of these homes as well as other essentials such as major improvements.

The money that comes in and gets spent on our housing stock is recorded in what's called our Housing Revenue Account.



4. Rent collection

How much rent we charge is determined by Government in what's called The Rent Standard.

Until this year, the maximum rent increase related to inflation. It was equivalent to the Consumer Price Index (which measures changes in how much people pay for everyday items like groceries) plus 1%. That would have meant an increase of 11.1%

However, this year Government capped the increase at 7% which means our Housing Revenue Account has a loss equivalent to £2.3m for 2023-24. Resulting reductions in investment in our stock and the council building less new homes.

Average Weekly Rents	Social Rent	Shared Ownership	Affordable Rent
2023-24	£97.56*	£89.15	£194.13
2022-23	£90.62	£85.63	£177.51
2021-22	£86.67	£81.01	£170.57
2020-21	£85.38	£78.87	£177.55

**2023-24 Social Rent was capped at 7% instead of 11.1% inflation and would have equated to £100.67.*

How do increases in rent get decided?

In 2023/24 we collected more than 99% of the rent we were owed.

We've been working with tenants who are in arrears (almost 1,000 as of March 2023) and as a result, 76% have seen an arrears reduction in the last year and 35% are completely out of debt.

If you're having problems keeping up with your rent and bills, it's important you tell us early. Get in touch on 01908 252937, option 1 or Email Rents@milton-keynes.gov.uk

We've helped
35%
 of tenants in debt
 to become debt free

How our rents compare with others

We review the local housing market every year to compare our rent prices with those of other landlords and to ensure we are offering good value for money.

You can find our latest full report by scanning the QR code.



Scan here for
more information

On average our rents are:

2.7% lower

than the average
rents of Local
Authorities in
England

9.5% lower

the average
rents of Local
Authorities in the
South-East

15.6% lower

than the average
rents of Housing
Associations in
Milton Keynes

36% lower

than the rents of
Private Landlords in
Milton Keynes

Spend is prioritised and goes into the:

- The management of neighbourhoods/estates
- Investing in properties in line with our priorities so they are safe and decent and cost effective to heat
- this means that your kitchen or bathroom for example will take longer to replace
- this means there is less investment in the delivery of new affordable homes

We consulted with you between February 2022 and January 2024 about service charges, sending several letters throughout the period to keep you informed. We also set up a Service Charge Working Group which consisted of residents and city council teams.

As a result of your feedback:

We changed rent year to 52/53 week year.

Enabled reinvestment into homes by reviewing service charges.

Introduced consistent service charging across tenants and leaseholders.

By working together we could make sure any increase in service charges and other changes to the service we provide were fair, reasonable, and transparent.

You can find details of the consultation, including video recordings, meeting minutes and what happened as a result at www.milton-keynes.gov.uk. Search for Housing Consultations or scan the QR code



Scan here for more information

Helping you get what you're entitled to

Paying your rent on time – weekly in advance – should be your priority and we will take action to recover rent arrears. However, if you're struggling to pay your rent, please let us know as soon as possible. Help is available and we are not here to judge.

We can make sure you're getting all the help you're entitled to.

This year we've helped more than **600 Milton Keynes residents secure £567,000 in unclaimed and backdated benefits.**

We also have access to various funds that can help with rent and other essential costs in a crisis. Read our cost of living support page for ways we may be able to help or call us on **01908 252937**.

5. Helping people find paid work

Everyone's journey is different. It might mean retraining in a new career, getting a forklift license, securing a job in a school, volunteering at an animal shelter or much more besides. We have lots of local contacts and are expert in helping tenants into a more positive place regardless of circumstances.

We hold drop-in sessions around the city. To find out more, call us on **01908 252323**.

6. Helping you from day one

Some of what the Neighbourhood Team did last year

In the last year the team have successfully identified 30 homes owned by the council which were being sublet, which is against the law, and taken action to get them back.

We need to make sure every council property goes to people who really need it, which rules out people advertising council houses for rent while living elsewhere.

If necessary, we'll take people to court to make sure homes are returned to proper use, and we ask neighbours to let us know if they think something is not right.

Do you have concerns about a property? You can report them here [Council tenancies | Milton Keynes City Council \(milton-keynes.gov.uk\)](https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/council-tenancies)

Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

We take ASB very seriously which is why we have six ASB officers who work with 15 Housing Officers, Thames Valley Police and other agencies to tackle things like drug activity, harassment, threatening behaviour, violence, and noise nuisance. We dealt with more than 200 cases in the last year.

9 premises have been closed in full or part. We do this where ASB and criminal behaviour such as drug crime is having a serious negative impact on local community

9 ASB injunctions granted by the court have stopped ASB including the exploitation of vulnerable people.

8 possession orders have been set up in response to serious ASB and criminal behaviour, restoring order to these areas.

In May 2023 we launched our first ever Annual ASB Forum – an open forum for residents and other members of the public to see what their local authority has been doing to make the city a better place to live.

1980

Tenancy Audits

757

Introductory
Tenancy Visits

954

Estate
Inspections

696

New
Tenancies

58

Mutual
Exchanges

Caretaking and cleaning

Our Caretaking and Cleaning Team look after 533 internal communal areas.

Thanks to feedback from our tenant engagement group, we've developed a Cleaning and Caretaking Service Standards Handbook which will give you more clarity about the service we aim to provide. You can read this and send us comments by scanning the QR code.

If you'd like to get involved in the upkeep of your communal areas, consider becoming a Block Champion.

This means giving us regular feedback on the condition of communal areas. Anyone can let us know if something needs to be done – just scan the QR code in your communal area.



Scan here

Get involved

Some of the ways we've been working with and listening to tenants in the last year:

An Anti-Social Behaviour Monitoring Group run by a tenant chair, working with the ASB team to make improvements to the service.

We're recruiting Block Champions to occasionally make a ten-minute inspection of communal areas of where they live and give us feedback.

We continue to support and fund 14 resident associations who have quarterly network meetings, with guest speakers from different agencies.



Scan here for more information

If you would like to find out more or get involved, get in touch. We would love to hear from you. Scan the QR code to register.

6. Repairs and maintenance

Last year we made 65,383 repairs and maintenance jobs (18,029 of those in an emergency). While we had to prioritise some safety works throughout the year, we also fitted hundreds of new roofs, bathrooms and other essentials:

73	Kitchens
697	Doors
219	Bathrooms and wet rooms
33	Toilets
127	Boilers/heating systems
944	Roofs
2	Lifts

What's new

We've developed a Repairs and Maintenance Policy which pulls together our responsibilities, tenants' and residents' responsibilities and how we approach things when there are challenges. This will be published soon.

We're working to develop how we will procure and manage repairs and maintenance work once the current contract has ended. We appreciate your feedback on this and the ongoing support from the dedicated Working Group.

If you want to join the Working Group and help influence how the service is delivered, please email repairsconsultation@milton-keynes.gov.uk

We continue to review our homes and make sure that we are maintaining them or making decisions in the longer-term best interests of our residents.

For instance, we have been decommissioning REEMA blocks with tenants already being moved to suitable alternate properties. During the decommissioning process, which will be carried out over three phases in the coming years, we're taking measures to ensure the safety of residents and visitors. This includes ongoing maintenance and compliance checks, visual inspections and monitoring, and protection of walkways and high-risk areas with canopies and fencing.

We're also decommissioning Serpentine Court with construction already underway.

Looking after your home

All the work we do in homes and communal areas is funded by our tenants paying rent, and by residents paying service charges. Your tenancy handbook and tenancy agreement confirms what we are responsible for and what you are responsible for.

If you need support looking after your home your Neighbourhood Officer is there to work with you.

We are increasingly working to identify and support tenants who are struggling to look after their home or have other things going on. We hope this work will mean we spend less money bringing properties up to standard when tenancies end or fixing things that have been done to the property without our authorisation.

While tenancy agreements legally mean we can recover these costs from tenants, doing so is time consuming and can be distressing for the individuals involved. It also means that it takes longer to get properties habitable again, so people are waiting for homes for longer.

So please do get in touch with your Neighbourhood Officer for support in looking after your home if this is challenging for you. We are here to support and help you.



Building safety

We work closely with our residents and our partnering contractors to ensure you are safe in your home, including risk assessments and checks on fire safety, asbestos, water safety, gas and electric and lifts. Our activity during the year:

9,744	Domestic gas safety checks
64	Communal gas safety checks
2,327	Domestic electrical tests and fire detection upgrades
1,512	CO2 detectors installed
249	Communal electrical checks
467	Communal asbestos inspections
228	Emergency light tests

Gas and electrical safety

We check gas appliances we have provided once every 12 months. This includes making sure that carbon monoxide alarms are fitted in rooms with gas appliances in. These are either hard wired, or battery ones which have a 10-year battery life.

We are moving to checking electrical safety in the home once every 5 years instead of once every 10 years. When we are in homes, we also take the opportunity to upgrade fire detection systems within our properties, install CO2 detectors, and improve mechanical ventilation if it is needed.

7. Fire Safety

We have been working through actions from previous fire risk assessments and are recommissioning new ones. As well as fire risk assessments and any remedial work, our Caretaking Team also do regular health and safety inspections. They follow up with residents to ensure that communal areas and escape routes are kept clear of things that would otherwise block routes out or burn in event of an incident.

We also have a fire door inspection program where we check fire doors. This means we look at front entrance doors in blocks and internal communal doors. This is because those doors protect escape routes in event of fire. This inspection programme runs alongside our fire door replacement programme which repairs or fits new fire doors.

We work closely with the local fire authority, Bucks Fire and Rescue Service and meet regularly to share updates or discuss issues. They give fire safety talks and information to residents at our Sheltered Housing schemes, and routinely follow up if individuals create fire risks to themselves or others, as well as completing criminal investigations into arson incidents.

8. Regeneration and Renewal

The Lakes

Work is underway to deliver Milton Keynes' first regeneration project on the Lakes Estate. Building contractors GRAHAM have started onsite to build over 180 new council homes, community centre and retail space. This is the result of a great deal of hard work by members of the community, Serpentine Court Steering Group, officers and councillors and our development partner GRAHAM. The first homes should be built by Summer 2025 with completion of all Phase A homes and facilities by Summer 2026. Once all Serpentine Court residents have moved out, we will demolish the flats.

The Locals of the Lakes and Lakes Estate Renewal Forum are extremely active, providing a great deal of activities for families, funded by Milton Keynes City Council.

Last year Community Payback in conjunction with our Safer Communities Team did an excellent job of clearing an area at Serpentine Court, making the area safer for residents.

Fullers Slade

Despite the halt on regeneration plans, the Fuller Slade Estate Renewal Forum has had a very busy 12 months working with partners and funders to deliver projects aiming to tackle the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, poor health and wellbeing, crime and ASB. **This includes:**

- Consultation on new play equipment resulting in a new play area on Spider Park
- Consultation on measures to tackle anti-social behaviour resulting in new bollards and bunding to minimise fly tipping
- Community events including 50th anniversary summer carnival, free social clubs, days out to the seaside and elsewhere, and much more
- Training sessions for Forum members, and visits to other projects to learn how to increase engagement
- Women's football team who went on to win a local tournament
- Estate tidy up/skip day to remove fly tipping and bulky items from homes

Bradville

The Community Engagement Team worked with community members and stakeholders to set up a Bradville Estate Renewal Forum. A new committee will look at local priorities for the area, such as proposed home improvements where city council properties could be upgraded with new doors, windows and roofs to help lower energy bills.

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

Last year the team earmarked Shared Prosperity Funding for initiatives to help reduce flooding to parts of Woughton. They also worked with the Community Council to identify priorities and local issues for the area and will work together through that list.

Helping communities access funding

The Community Engagement team have been busy working with Estate Renewal Forums, Residents Association, Parish Councils, and other community groups to help them secure grant funding. They held a number of free training sessions with the organisations on how to apply for grants including help with completing forms and where to find grants.

They've helped organisations secure grants of over £250,000, including three from the National Lottery Community Fund:

- £20,000 by The Lakes Estate Renewal Forum
- £20,000 by The Fullers Slade Estate Renewal Forum
- £10,000 by Give Back 2U UK

9. Sheltered housing

Our Sheltered Housing Service continues to offer secure and supportive independent living to tenants primarily aged 60 years and over.

We are continually looking at how the schemes can be improved, and in 2023-2024 retained the nationally recognised EROSH accreditation.

This year we have:

- Upgraded bathrooms and communal kitchen in Courteney's Lodge along with full redecoration.
- Upgraded lifts and pathways.
- Rapidly allocated properties to people waiting for accommodation.
- Worked closely with colleagues in the Neighbourhood and Anti-Social Behaviour Teams to address tenant concerns regarding EROSH accreditation.

For more information, please visit www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/sheltered-housing-care or call **01908 222616**.

10. Lettings and Allocations

We opened our new housing allocations scheme in May 2023. Milton Keynes City Council operate a housing register to allocate affordable social housing. The demand for affordable housing exceeds availability, our housing allocations scheme prioritises applicants so properties that become available are offered fairly, transparently and in an effective way. The scheme prioritises applicants who are most in need and makes the best use of the homes available to let.

Those who are eligible and have a qualifying housing need to be on the housing register are awarded a priority based on their level of housing need. Once an applicant is short-listed for a property, this could be either council owned stock or a housing association property.

For more information regarding the housing allocations scheme please see our website: [Housing Allocations Scheme | Milton Keynes City Council \(milton-keynes.gov.uk\)](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/housing-allocations-scheme)

Between May 2023 and March 2024, we received 4,889 applications for housing and following assessment

648 city council properties were offered

666 families were nominated to other providers for permanent homes.

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 47 tenants and paid £71,397 under the downsizing 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 up to **£500**
- Help disposing of unwanted furniture

11. If we get things wrong

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 assessments at www.milton-keynes.gov.uk.

Search for Complaints Handling Code.

We received and resolved 588 complaints last year, and we've been making changes to do that better:

- **Quick response time:** Our average acknowledgement time is two working days. This is well below the regulatory standard of 5 working days.
- **Taking action:** We established a Housing Complaints Board to identify recurring issues and understand how we could reduce those issues and complaints.
- **Training for our teams:** Retraining colleagues in complaints handling means a better and more consistent experience for you.

Where we receive complaints	Number resolved	Number outstanding
Assets and Investment	344	107
Neighbourhoods	95	7
House Allocations	68	2
Temporary Accommodation	26	0
Home Ownership	19	3
Anti-Social Behaviour	18	2
Income	13	0
Sheltered Housing	4	0
Regeneration	1	0
Total	588	121

We received 15% more complaints this year compared to last year. This would suggest that you are becoming aware and confident in raising your concerns with us and we are listening.

Scan the QR code to find the full Complaints Report for 2023/2024



Housing Ombudsman Complaints

When issues are not resolved to a person's satisfaction, they can raise it with the Housing Ombudsman.

In the last year we received 36 contacts from the Housing Ombudsman and 31 of those cases have been identified as premature by the Ombudsman.

We received 8 determinations from the Ombudsman, which is where we need to take action. 6 had an adjudication of maladministration for one or more parts of the original complaint, and 2 had an adjudication of severe maladministration for one or more parts of the original complaint.



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