

DOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL

**2020/21
ANNUAL REPORT
TO TENANTS**





Nadeem Aziz,
Chief Executive



Cllr Derek Murphy,
Portfolio Holder for
Social Housing and
Port Health

Foreword

A message from Nadeem Aziz, Chief Executive and Cllr Derek Murphy, Portfolio Holder for Social Housing and Port Health

Between 1 April 2011 and 1 October 2020 housing services for tenants and leaseholders were delivered on behalf of the Council by East Kent Housing. In 2019 the Council consulted with tenants about the future arrangements for this service and supported by our tenants the Council decided that these services were better managed in house. On 1 October 2020 our new housing service was launched.

This report is intended to cover the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 but for the first 6 months of the year services were still being delivered by East Kent Housing. For this reason much of the information we have provided relates to the period 1 October 2020 until 31 March 2021, when we took the service back. Where the information is for the whole year we have made this clear.

The Regulator of Social Housing is the Government body responsible for overseeing social housing landlords. They have a regulatory framework that sets standards for service delivery that all social housing landlords are expected to meet. This annual report sets out each of the standards that we need to meet and how we are doing this.

2020/21 has been a difficult year and we want to thank you all for your patience and understanding and for helping us to help you and our staff stay safe. Through a number of lockdowns and restrictions our teams have adapted to working at home and providing services differently and as safely as possible. Our priority has always been to make sure that even in these uncertain times you feel confident that we will be there if you need us. We have a busy year ahead and as we start to develop our Tenant Involvement Strategy we will be looking at new ways to work with as many of you as possible to help us shape future services.

Rents and value for money

We set our rents using a government formula. This creates a 'formula rent' for each property, which is calculated based on the relative value of the property, the size of the property and relative local income levels. Affordable rent is no more than 80 per cent of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable).

Income collection
How we are doing
281

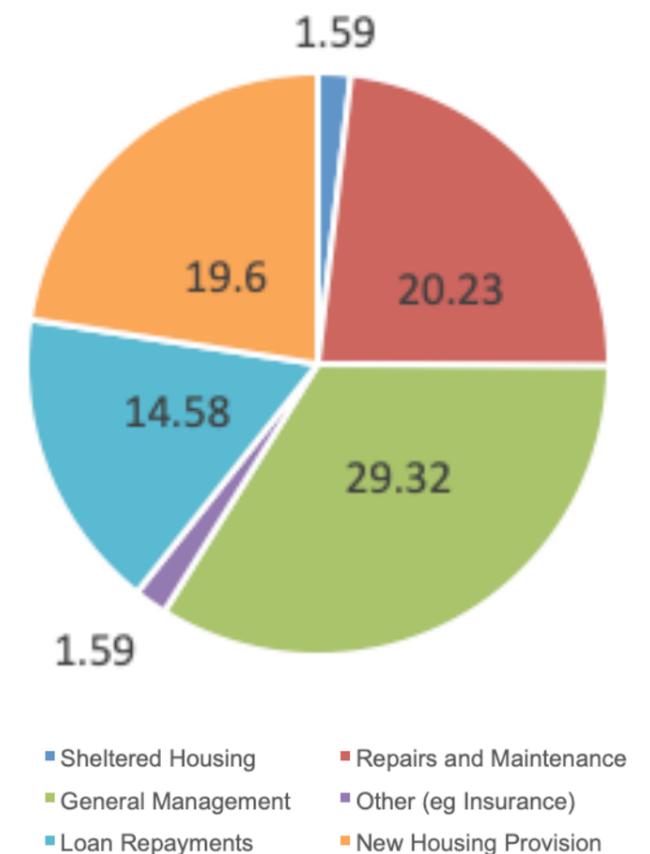
cases worked on by our Money & Benefits Officer

£19,726,337
amount of rent collectable

3.79%
of rent arrears from total

How do we spend the money we collect

How an average Weekly Rent of £86.91 is spent



The Homes Standard

This standard covers the way in which we maintain and improve Council homes and to meet it we must show that we have a cost effective repairs and maintenance service where most repair issues are resolved at the first attempt. We must also comply with all appropriate health and safety standards to keep homes safe for you to live in and invest in improvements to them including, where needed offering tenants disabled adaptations.

Repairs and maintenance

Our repairs service is carried out in partnership with our contractors. We have a landlord's duty to carry out certain repairs and maintenance works in order to keep our properties in a safe condition and good working order. Despite lockdown restrictions, a huge number of repairs and improvements were carried out between April 2020 and March 2021, here are the figures:



11051

Repairs raised

9472

Repairs completed

363

Repair orders cancelled

1216

Repairs on going

When the Pandemic struck in March 2020 our contractors were only able to deal with emergency repairs. We have slowly been catching up with all of the less urgent repair reports and if you need to report a repair please get in touch with our contractors as usual.

If you have reported a repair but are unhappy with any delays or standard of work, please get in touch with our repairs team. You can email housing.repairs@dover.gov.uk or call us on 01304 821199 and select the option to speak to a member of the DDC Repairs team (option 3, then option 2 and then option 4).

Major works



74

New kitchens fitted

96

Bathrooms replaced

36

New pitched roofs and
4 new roofs to blocks
(covering 85 flats)

12

Homes had new windows

12

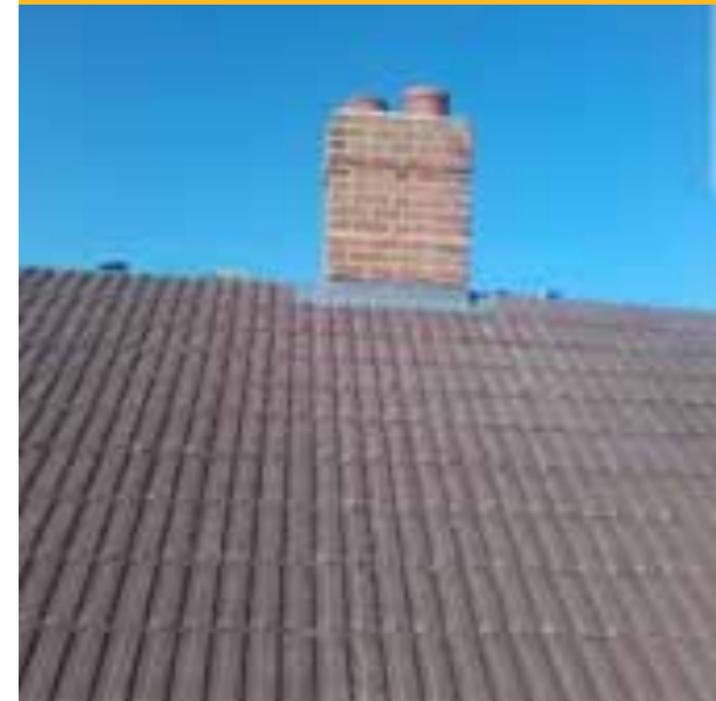
Homes had new
front doors fitted

361

homes had new
Boilers installed

£3.2m

spent on planned
maintenance work



Our planned maintenance team are working hard to increase the programme of works. This includes surveying property conditions, putting together schedules, tendering for and appointing contractors and keeping a close eye on works being carried out. We are actively reinvesting your rent money to improve homes across the district.

Safe and secure



As your landlord we want you to feel safe and secure in your home. This year we conducted:

99.98%

Properties have a valid Gas Safety Certificate

2,970

Properties have had an up to date electrical check

100%

**Water systems tested and deemed safe.
Asbestos surveys in communal areas.
Fire risk assessments are up to date.**

As the figures show communal safety checks have been easier to complete, we have had issues gaining access to a number of tenants' homes during the pandemic. We want to assure all tenants that safety checks are extremely important and we work with tenants to ensure they are comfortable with workmen inside their homes and all PPE and cleanliness standards are strictly adhered to.



Disabled adaptations

Dover District Council offer a disabled adaptations service for our tenants and wherever possible we will try to make adjustments to the home that mean that our tenant can remain living there and enjoy a better quality of life.

During the last year work has taken place where possible but a large number of the tenants who have wanted disabled adaptations have been shielding or have been cautious about having workmen in their homes. As a result fewer works than normal have been completed. The information alongside shows a sample of the type of work and numbers of each we have been doing

5

Level access showers

3

Drop down rails

5

Stairlifts

1

Through floor lift

4

Access ramps

75

Grab/Hand/Bannister Rails

21

Flush Floor Showers

What we want to do in the coming year

- We aim to achieve and maintain 100% compliance across all health and safety workstreams to keep your homes as safe as we possibly can
- Review the way in which we have day to day repairs completed as the start of the process to retender the responsive repairs contract
- Work with contractors to make sure they are delivering the services we are paying for
- Continue to build the part of our IT system that allows you to report repairs online
- Reintroduce customer satisfaction testing arrangements for both responsive and planned work.



The Tenancy Standard

This standard covers the work that we do to make sure that empty homes are allocated in a fair, transparent and efficient way, that tenants have access to an online mutual exchange system that helps them find other households with which to exchange, that we relet empty homes as quickly and efficiently as possible and that we have policies in place and tenancy types that help us make the best use of our housing stock.

Allocations and lettings

Our Housing Allocations Policy sets out the criteria you need to meet to qualify to join the council's housing register, the reasons why people may not be able to join and who we will prioritise for re-housing. We regularly review our allocations policy to make sure it helps those in greatest need and that all applicants are fairly dealt with. Empty homes are advertised through a choice-based lettings scheme called HomeChoice. It allows you to bid for the properties you want so that you can make choices about where you want to live.

The Council receives many enquiries from people looking to rent a home in the district each year. At 31 March 2021 there were 1974 applications on our housing register and the average time they waited for properties is set out here.

Sheltered accommodation
Average 51 bids per property
13 months waiting time

Studio general needs
Average 1 bid per property
15 months waiting time

1-bed general needs
Average 42 bids per property
16 months waiting time

2-bed flat or maisonette
Average 32 bids per property
18 months waiting time

2-bed house
Average 102 bids per property
15 months waiting time

3-bed flat or maisonette
Average 14 bids per property
15 months waiting time

3-bed house
Average 59 bids per property
18 months waiting time

4-bed house
Average 28 bids per property
14 months waiting time

Average waiting time for all property types is 16 months

Numbers are rounded to the nearest whole figure.
Source: Locata, 17 May 2021
Data taken between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021

Mutual exchange

A Mutual Exchange is a way that tenants can move home by 'swapping' their property with someone else. Approved exchanges can take place between tenants with council houses or housing association properties anywhere across the UK. Dover District Council is a member of HomeSwapper and this provides a popular way for our customers to find a suitable exchange. The site allows customers to add photos and a description of their property and to see what other properties are available. More information about HomeSwapper can be found at: www.homeswapper.co.uk. To sign up, just select Dover District Council as your landlord and complete the easy to follow steps.

Between 1 October 2020 and 31 March 2021 we helped 86 households exchange homes.

Reletting empty homes

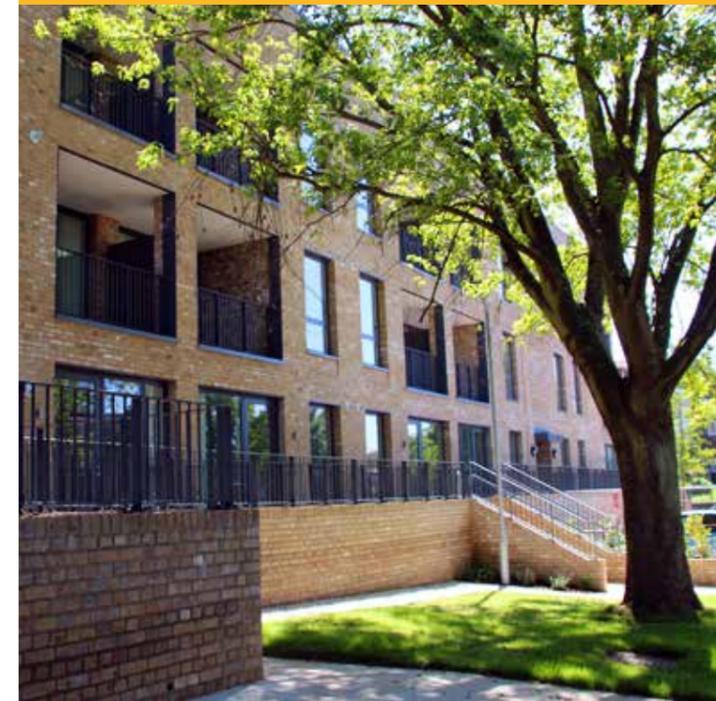
As soon as we know a property is going to become empty we start to plan the reletting of it. Our team advertise the accommodation so that housing applicants can decide whether to bid or not for it and our property services team organise the work to get the property ready. Unfortunately the restrictions introduced as a result of the Covid pandemic have affected the time that it takes to get properties ready and a shortage of building materials is adding to those problems. Despite this we have let 90 homes since we took the service back in October 2020 and the average time for all lettings across the whole year has been 41.91 days.

Tenancy types and increasing housing supply

Our tenancy conditions set out clearly both your responsibilities and ours as landlord. We also have a dedicated area of the Council's website specifically for tenants and leaseholders and use this to provide useful information about your tenancy.

Since May 2014 we have been offering the majority of new tenants 5 year fixed term tenancies. DDC is currently considering whether continuing to offer shorter term fixed term tenancies helps us achieve our ambitions for happy and resilient communities. We know how important it is for families to feel settled and part of their community. Now that Housing is back 'in house' we have an opportunity to make changes that will promote stable and contented communities and will be seeking the views of tenants on this matter.

DDC has always worked with others to provide more affordable housing for residents in our district and this year for the first time in many years we have a building programme of our own. Work is nearing completion on the William Muge/Snelgrove House site in Harold Street, Dover. With a total of 65 new homes built, they will be made up of 12 properties privately sold, 24 social housing rented properties and 29 properties will be shared ownership. We have also purchased a further 20 properties to add to our stock.



What we want to do in the coming year

- Encourage more tenants to make use of the hometracker app in HomeSwapper so that we can complete the process in a more secure online account
- Redraft our tenancy strategy and policy
- Continue with our programme to deliver more affordable housing in the district
- Continue to buy back ex-council homes when they become available for sale to increase our stock numbers
- Work with colleagues in other authorities to promote, detect and deal with any cases of tenancy fraud
- Improve the time that it takes on average to relet our empty homes.

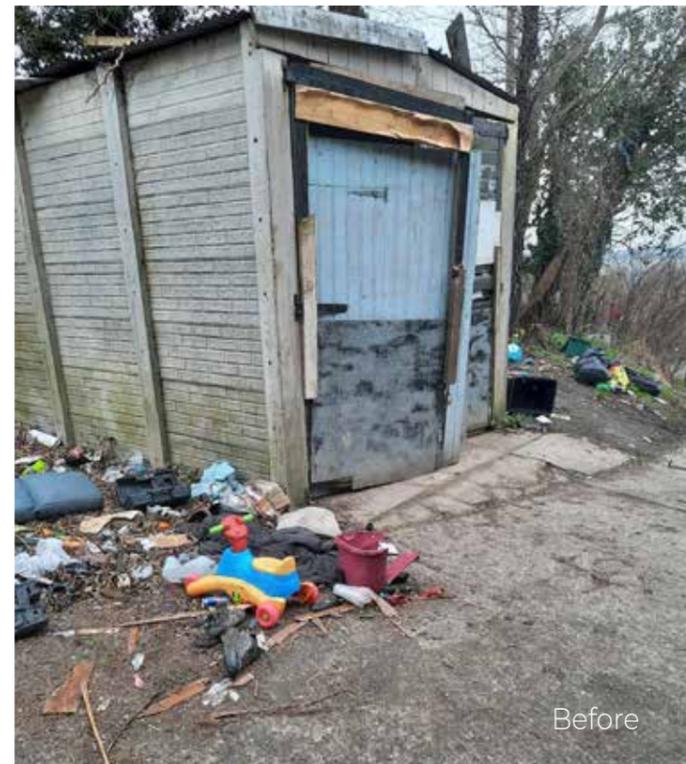
Neighbourhood and Communities Standard

This standard covers the arrangements we have in place to make sure your neighbourhoods and the communal areas of estates are kept safe and clean, the arrangements we will make to work in partnership with other agencies and the work that we will do to deal with nuisance and anti social behaviour.

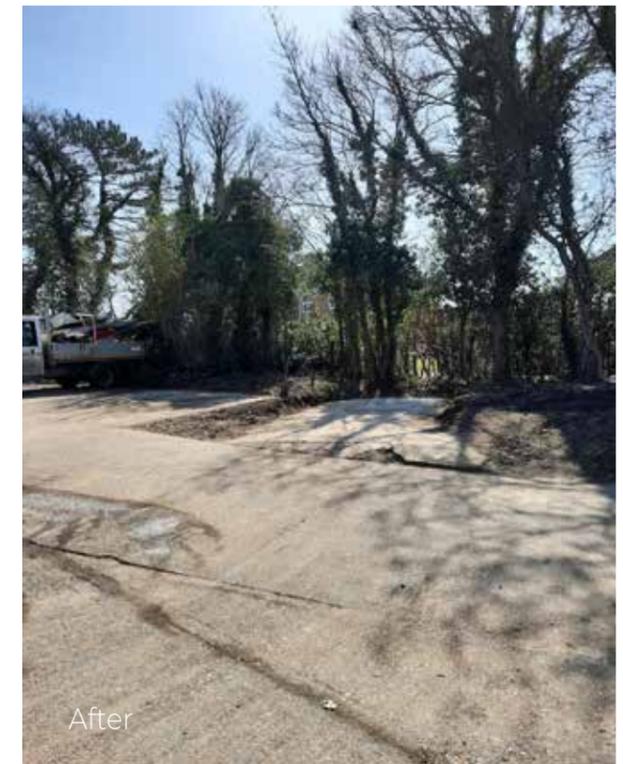
Neighbourhood management

Since October we've been working hard to clean up estates. Here are before and after photos of a clean up we organised in Elvington. We now have 2 estate assistants who travel the district inspecting and improving communal spaces. If you spot any areas in need of attention, please get in touch.

We have a team of officers who deal with housing management. We also work closely with the fire service, contractors and other agencies to make sure that our estates are kept clean and tidy.



Before



After

Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour

DDC take reports of ASB seriously and try to resolve issues of ASB as soon as possible. Once a report of ASB has been received the ASB Housing Officer will contact the complainant to gather as much information as possible and liaise with the police where they have also been involved.

Those affected by ASB can report this using our online ASB form or contact us through any of our other contact arrangements. Following all reports our ASB Officer will make contact with the alleged perpetrator to discuss the allegations made along with any information provided by the police or other agencies. In some cases the perpetrator may need support to be put in place to address their behaviour and to be able to maintain their tenancy. However, if the nuisance behaviour continues despite support being provided by the correct agency, then there are a range of options that DDC can take, providing there is sufficient evidence of the noise or nuisance behaviour.

Between 1 October 2020 and 31 March 2021 we have:
Dealt with 96 cases of reported ASB these are broken down by type below:

Noise nuisance
33 cases

Harassment and or threatening behaviour
26 cases

Drug related activity
22 cases

Garden nuisance
5 cases

Criminal behaviour
8 cases

Hate crime or incidents
1 case

Immoral behaviour
1 case



What we want to do in the coming year

- Develop and publish a neighbourhood management policy
- Launch the use of a 'noise app' that will allow tenants to download the app and record incidents of noise nuisance in cases where we are managing ASB rather than wait for us to install sound recording equipment
- Make better use of the small number of mobile CCTV cameras that we have to collect evidence of ASB and consider the possibility of a 'loan a cam' scheme so that a larger number of our customers have access to this equipment
- Continue to work with local registered providers of social housing to encourage the development of affordable social housing in the district.



We have:

- **Evicted one household for ASB**
- **Served 15 Notices of Seeking Possessions**
- **Organised 1 Acceptable Behaviour Agreement**
- **Obtained 3 injunctions and**
- **Are waiting for 3 further court hearings.**

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard

To meet this standard landlords need to demonstrate how they encourage tenants to be involved with monitoring performance and improvement of the housing service, the types of activity that they offer to encourage tenants to be involved, the information they provide to tenants and the way in which they respond to the needs of their tenants. They must demonstrate how tenants can get in touch with the landlord and what they do when things go wrong and complaints are made.

Measuring performance

We try to find a range of ways in which we can let you know how we are doing. This report is one of those ways but others include:

- Sending you a biannual tenant newsletter with information in about our performance
- Keeping our web site up to date with information about our performance
- Answering your specific enquiries when you contact us.

Finding out what tenants need

We try to find out what our tenants want and need in a variety of ways this includes:

- Sending a full tenant satisfaction survey and considering the results of this. The June 2021 Tenant magazine included a tenant satisfaction survey and we will be giving information out about the outcome of this in our November newsletter.
- We support the Dover District Tenant Group – a group of tenants who meet regularly with officers from the housing service to look at our performance, help prioritize environmental improvement work, give us feedback on any of our draft policies and generally make sure that the voices of our tenants are heard. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, recent tenant meetings have been successfully delivered online using Microsoft Teams. If you are interested in joining sessions, we can offer training and support to help you engage online
- Day to day contact we have with our tenants and leaseholders
- By looking at the complaints that we get and trying to learn from any mistakes we make.

Ways to get involved

Many of the ways in which we have traditionally worked with tenants to improve our services have involved speaking face-to-face. This hasn't been possible for most of the year and many of the activities that we normally run have needed to be cancelled or taken place online. As soon as we can, we will restart popular activities that include going out and speaking to our tenants.

Ways you can be involved at the moment:

- Take part in our surveys - we send surveys by post, text, email or telephone so we can find out what you think of our services.
- Comment on our policies – this year we will be reviewing our tenancy policy and our mobility scooter policy. Watch out for details.
- Join the Dover District Tenant Group – a group of DDC tenants who work with housing officers to help improve the services we offer
- Sign up to our points of view scheme – an messaging service that keeps you up to date with local housing news.
- Join one of our estate inspections – dates are published on our website and you are encouraged to come out and join our team as they look around the estate. Their visit is intended to check conditions but the team are also keen to hear about your ideas to improve the estate.
- If you live in one of our sheltered housing schemes join the sheltered housing forum. Unfortunately the meetings of this group were suspended because of Covid but as restrictions ease we hope to start these again.

DOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL **Tenant Survey**

We want to hear from you about the service you've received since housing management was bought back in house on 1st October 2020.

This survey is available online for you to fill in, you can scan the QR code on your smartphone or find the survey in the 'Housing For Tenants' part of our website: www.dover.gov.uk

Much like the Census you completed earlier in the year, by doing it online it saves you time and effort (no need to find a post box!) and it also ensures that more rent money gets spent on things such as improving homes, solving anti-social behaviour and supporting tenancies.

Here are the questions you will see online:

1. Title: Miss/Mrs/Ms/Mr
2. First Name:
3. Surname:
4. Are you a Dover District Council Tenant/ Leaseholder/ Garage licensee
5. Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service provided by the housing service at Dover District Council (Since 1st October 2020)?
Very satisfied;
Fairly satisfied;
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied;
Fairly dissatisfied;
Very dissatisfied.
6. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall quality of your home?
Very satisfied;
Fairly satisfied;
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied;
Fairly dissatisfied;
Very dissatisfied.
7. Thinking specifically about the building you live in, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you that Dover District Council provides a home that is safe and secure?
Very satisfied;
Fairly satisfied;
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied;
Fairly dissatisfied;
Very dissatisfied.
8. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that the Housing Service at Dover District Council is easy to deal with?
Very satisfied;
Fairly satisfied;
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied;
Fairly dissatisfied;
Very dissatisfied.
9. Generally, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way Dover District Council deals with repairs and maintenance?
Very satisfied;
Fairly satisfied;
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied;
Fairly dissatisfied;
Very dissatisfied.



Customer information and contacting us

There are a range of ways in which you can get in touch with us:

- **By letter** - write to us at Housing Landlord Services, White Cliffs Business Park, Whitfield, Dover, CT16 3PJ.
- **By telephone** - call us on 01304 821199. Lines are open 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday (except Bank Holidays). This line can also be used for out of hours emergencies.
- **By email** - for tenancy matters email housing@dover.gov.uk If you've already reported your repair and want to speak to someone in DDC's repair team email housing.repairs@dover.gov.uk.
- **In person** - face to face appointments are currently only offered in necessary circumstances. Please call or email in the first instance. If you turn up unexpected at the Council Offices, staff will be unable to see you without a pre-arranged appointment.

Information about our services is published on the Dover District Council website and through our tenant newsletters sent to all tenants every 6 months. We encourage our tenants and leaseholders to sign up to the housing specific 'Keep Me Posted' message service so that they can receive our housing updates. You can subscribe to this service through our website.

In some cases you may wish to speak to or contact your local elected Councillor and their full details are published on our website.

www.dover.gov.uk

It has been a very difficult year for us all and our team have needed to work from home for some of the time and find news ways for you to contact us. Here's what we have been doing to help with that.

About us

On 1 October 2020 Dover District Council brought its housing management service in house for the first time in 9.5 years.



**We own
4326
homes**



**1974
people
are on
our
waiting
list**



**502
homeless
people
helped**

Between 1 October 2020 and 31 March 2021 we have been:



Making sure our staff have the equipment they need to work from home, in line with government guidance, enabling them to help tenants every day by phone, text and online.



Handled 18,024 telephone calls.



Had 56,735 visitors to our web site.

We have created 10 online forms so you can get in touch with us.

When things go wrong

We try to provide a right first time service to our tenants and leaseholders but we know that we don't always get things right and that sometimes our customers need to complain. To make sure we deal with the things that go wrong quickly and fairly we have a 2 stage complaints process. Find our Feedback form in the 'Housing For Tenants' section of our website. Please note, some of the complaints we have received have been inherited issues from EKH and we have been working hard to resolve those and improve the service for residents.

74
Complaints received for the Property Team

19
Complaints for the Tenancy Team

21.5
Complaints received per 1,000 households

What we want to do in the coming year

- We think there is still more we can do to encourage tenants to share their views with us and this year we will be rewriting our tenant engagement strategy to include more options for customers to be involved.
- We will be publishing more information about our performance on the website so that tenants and leaseholders can see how we are doing.
- We recognise that when things go wrong we need to learn from this and we aim to do this by analysing complaints and adjusting our behaviour and processes. We will publish more information about complaints and what we will be doing differently.
- We will be supporting the Dover District Tenant Group recruit new members.



housing@dover.gov.uk
www.dover.gov.uk - 'Housing for Tenants'