



Tenants Annual Report

2023/2024

Foreword

Welcome from the new Chair of the Housing Committee – **Councillor Gary Luff**

I have been an active member of Housing Committee since June 2023 and following the local elections in May 2024, I am delighted to have been appointed as the new Chair of Housing Committee.

Over the last year, I have seen the hard work and dedication of the housing professionals that provide services to our tenants. I'd like to express my gratitude for their contributions and commitment to continual improvement.

I am pleased to present Stroud District Council's annual report for the period 2023/24. During this time there have been a number of challenges, changes in regulation impacting the way we deliver services in the future and many successes. I am looking forward to working with officers, partners and you, our tenants, to drive forward improvements across the housing service during 2024/25.

Councillor Gary Luff
Chair of Housing Committee



Foreword

Reflections from Strategic Head of Housing – **Andy Kefford**

As we reached the end of 2023-24, I reflected on my first full year in this role. During this period, I have met some wonderful people, colleagues, partners, members and you, our tenants. I am grateful to each of you for your honesty, support, and shared ambition for an excellent housing service.

I set out in our tenant magazine shortly after joining the council, that there would be challenges ahead but that our fantastic team is committed to delivering services that comply with regulation to keep our tenants safe, provide excellent customer services and that our approach represents best practice. We remain committed to delivering this for you.

During this year the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 received royal assent. This legislation gives the Social Housing Regulator and the Housing Ombudsman new powers and responsibility. In turn, this means the way social housing is delivered must also change and evolve. During the latter half of the year, the team has worked on completing a self-assessment against the new consumer standards that the legislation brought in from 01 April 2024, to ensure that we are working towards these new standards.

This links with the Tenant Satisfaction Measures, also known as TSMs. This is the first year that councils have been required to undertake TSMs which is a sample survey of our tenants to gather feedback of how you rate our performance against pre-defined metrics, as well as TSMs generated from management information. The TSM data for 2023/24 is included in this report.

The teams have been working extremely hard during the year and I've seen first-hand the difference our housing team make to the lives of our residents. I am very proud of the progress I have seen the team make during this period, particularly in times of complex and challenging circumstances. As the TSM results show, there is still more to do in certain areas, and I look forward to delivering on our objectives as we move forward into the coming year.

Andy Kefford
Strategic Head of Housing



Introduction



This is Stroud District Council’s housing annual report. The report sets out the key areas of the housing business, focussing on the rent standard, tenancy standard and consumer standards.

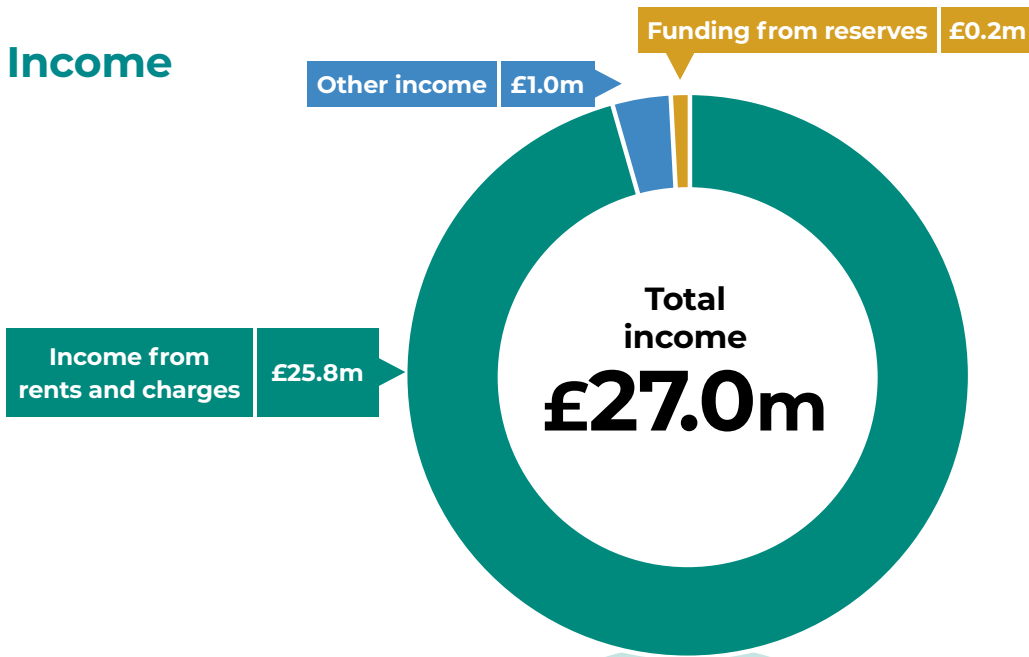
The report highlights some of the key achievements made over the year which include successfully gaining grant funding and achieving great outcomes in prestigious awards. It looks at our complaint handing and gives some examples of how we have listened and acted upon your views.

The report analyses the performance of the housing service, set against the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) which is included with a snippet of the actions we plan to take during 2024/25 to improve services for our tenants. The report gives some examples of where we have listened and acted upon the views of our tenants in our “you asked, we delivered” section and includes an overview of our commitment for the following year.

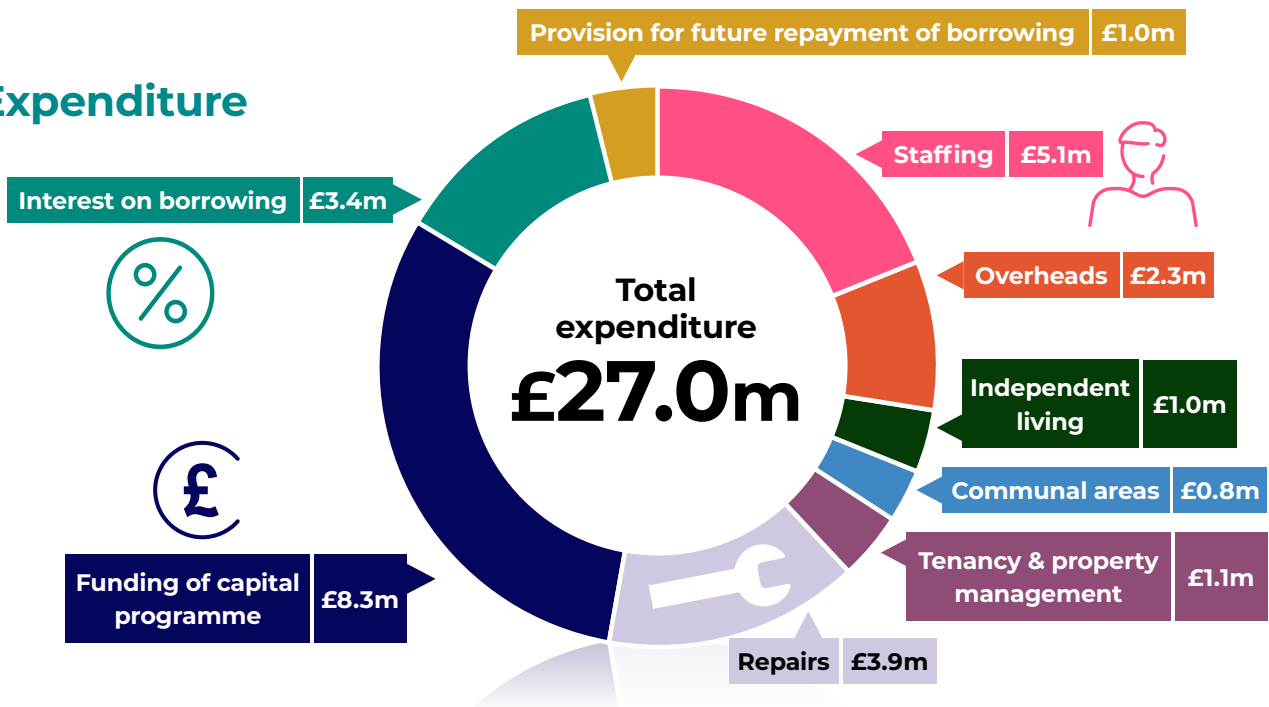
Rent Standard

The council must set rents and service charges in accordance with the Regulator of Social Housing's Rent Standard. This is to ensure affordability and fair pricing of rents for social housing tenants.

Income



Expenditure



Rent Standard

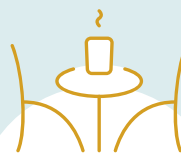
Our assets and investment team carefully produces an asset management plan. This determines what investment work is required each year to our tenants' properties.

This page shows the spend on certain aspects during 2023/24

Disabled adoptions
£141,234.85
(50 homes)



Bathrooms
£249,108
(46 bathrooms)



Kitchens
£228,210
(38 kitchens)



Central Heating Systems
£197,789
(57 homes)

External works roofs/ fascia & soffits/ External wall insulation
£2,488,073
(166)

Properties with a valid gas certificate
99.87%

Cavity & Loft
£187,000
(35 homes)

Windows
£290,114
(72 homes)

Doors
£287,044
(198 homes)



Stock condition survey carried out
216

Rent Standard



Support



In recognition of increasing rents, and the continuing impact of the cost of living crisis, the council presented a Tenant Support Fund proposal to Housing Committee in December 2023. The request received unanimous approval, and the fund was implemented, covering an initial four year period. This discretionary fund is designed to support tenants in financial hardship to be able to maintain their rent accounts and live healthy lives.

If you are in rent arrears, facing financial hardship, or need support managing your tenancy, please contact your Housing Officer for advice and assistance.

Housing Officers can be contacted on housing.management@stroud.gov.uk

Tenancy Standard

The tenancy standard sets requirements for the fair allocation and letting of homes and for how those tenancies are managed and ended by landlords.

2023/24

Tenants that transferred to another SDC home

57



Number of new Independent Living tenancies

64

Mutual exchanges completed

35



Number of new build properties

0

Number of new homes let during the year

242

Number of evictions

6

Number of households on the waiting list

4,513



Tenants waiting to transfer

698

Breakdown of number of homes sold

16

14 Right to Buy
2 disposal as unusable

Number of properties purchased

20

Consumer Standards

Consumer Standards

Whilst the Consumer Standards came into effect from 01 April 2024, the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) gathered during 2023/24 give us an idea of our performance against the new standards going into the new year, and where we need to improve moving forward.

Safety and Quality Standard

Stroud District Council -
Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2023

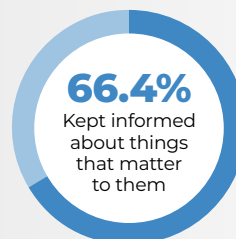
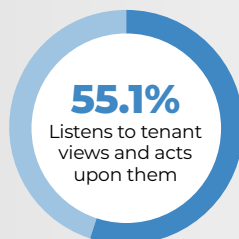
We must provide **safe** and good **quality** homes and landlord services.



Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard

Stroud District Council -
Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2023

We must be **open** with tenants and treat them with **fairness and respect** so that tenants can access services, raise complaints when necessary, **influence decision making**, and hold their landlord to account.



Neighbourhood and community Standard

Stroud District Council -
Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2023

This standard requires landlords to engage with other relevant parties so that tenants can live in **safe and well-maintained neighbourhoods** and feel safe in their homes.



Consumer Standards

Independent Living

During 2023-24 approximately 13,750 visits were made by tenants and members of the surrounding communities to the Independent Living Hubs. The Hubs are designed to ensure social inclusion for older people as part of the council's Independent Living Strategy 2023-27. The facilitation of the Hubs firmly places tenant engagement at the heart of the decision making, empowering volunteer led projects that motivate people to achieve their aspirations and a more fulfilling life. The thriving network of Hubs offers a diversely inclusive programme of enriching activities, such as, coffee mornings, lunch clubs, social and networking events, fundraisers, educational courses, exercise, wellbeing sessions and more. These activities have helped break down some of the barriers that older people can face accessing services, encourages community connections, reduces social isolation, and has significantly improved mental and physical wellbeing.

Complaints and Feedback

Stroud District Council is committed to delivering high-quality local services to support our communities, protect our environment and support the local economy. We follow the Complaint Handling Code set by the Housing Ombudsman. This Code became statutory on 1 April 2024, meaning that landlords are obliged by law to follow its requirements. The Code aims to achieve best practice in complaint handling and ultimately to provide a better service to residents.

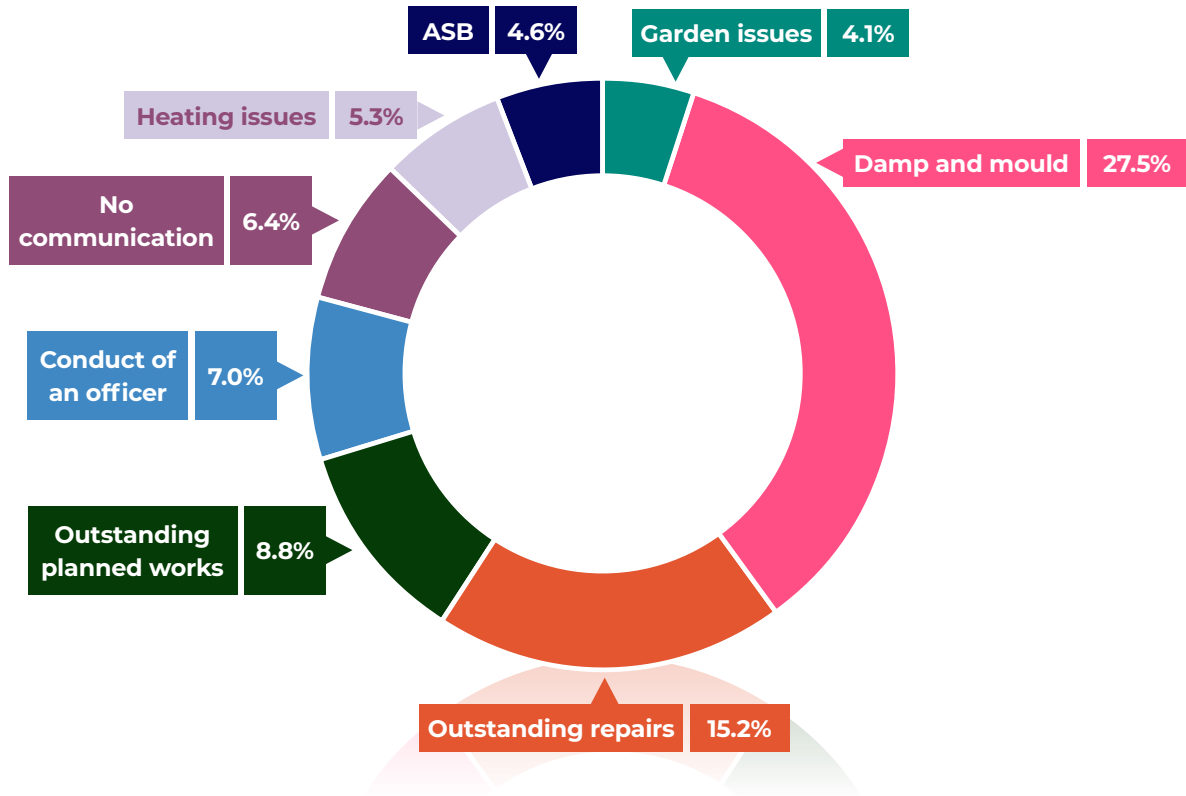
We are required by the Housing Ombudsman to annually self-assess against the Complaint Handling Code, as well as producing a complaints performance and service improvement report. A copy of these documents can be found on our website here ([I'm not happy with the service I have received \(stroud.gov.uk\)](https://www.stroud.gov.uk)). We also produce performance information on the complaints we receive, the actions we take, and areas for improvement we have identified, which are reported to and scrutinised by our senior management team and our elected members.

Complaints Data for 2023/24 - Total complaints received

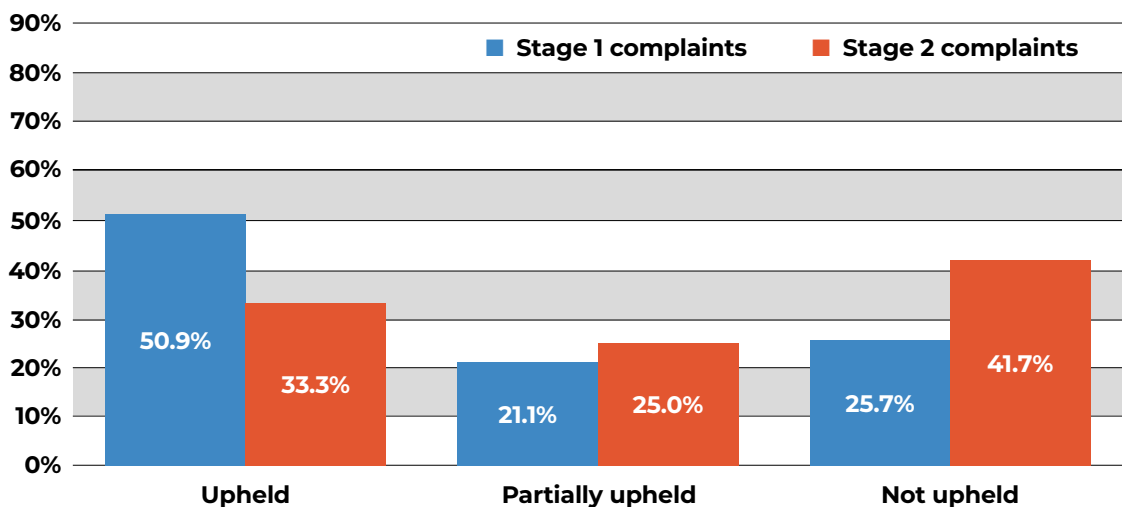
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Informal Complaints				
Service Requests	38	54	45	23
Formal Complaints				
Stage 1	64	87	129	171
Stage 2	12	9	21	24
Ombudsman	0	2	6	5

Consumer Standards

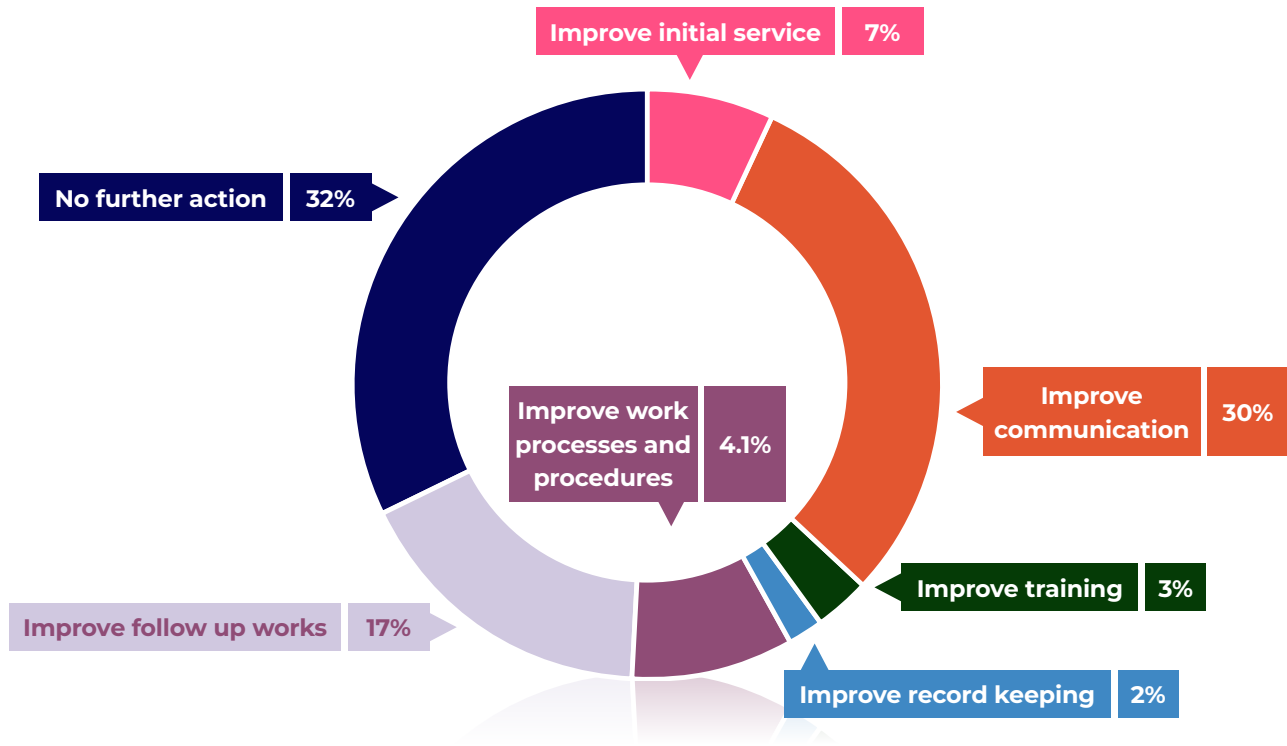
Top 8 reasons why our community complained



Percentage of Stage 1 & Stage 2 complaints upheld, partially upheld and not upheld



Consumer Standards



How you can make a complaint, compliment or give feedback

Our Complaints and Feedback policy and procedure sets out how you can provide feedback and what we will do with it. You can send us your feedback through any of our contact channels – see the last page for details. We also want to know when we've delivered a good service. Just like a complaint, we will listen to your feedback and learn from it to keep delivering the services you value.

Further information on how to make a complaint, compliment or give us general feedback can be found in our Complaints and Feedback Policy, which is available on our website here ([Complaints and feedback policy \(stroud.gov.uk\)](https://www.stroud.gov.uk/complaints-and-feedback-policy))

Safety in your home

Stroud District Council takes safety very seriously. We work hard to ensure we are compliant with all Health and Safety requirements and that we have effective controls in place to ensure your home and shared communal areas are safe. We undertook a range of inspections across our homes during 2023-24 and we regularly review key policies and data accuracy to ensure a robust approach to compliance.

More detail on what we do to keep you safe, can be found on our website here: <https://www.stroud.gov.uk/housing/im-an-existing-tenant-or-leaseholder/your-home/keeping-your-home-safe/>

Consumer Standards

You Asked, We Delivered

We always put our communities at the heart of everything we do. When you tell us something, we listen, we respond, and we deliver the best outcome we can with the resources we have. We were pleased to receive your feedback during 2023-24 and here are just a few of the examples of where we have listened to your feedback and acted on it.

Independent Living: You said you were concerned about the cost of living crisis and asked for access to allotments so you can grow your own vegetables. In response, we created eight allotments across the district. Our tenants can now grow their own vegetables and excess crops are given to local communities.

Tenant Engagement: You asked for greater opportunities to be involved and for your views to be heard. A new team has now been formed which is dedicated to resident involvement. The team are keen to both widen opportunities for tenant engagement and ensure inclusion of all those with diverse needs. Their goal is to ensure that resident involvement volunteers are representative of the whole tenant body. For more information, see the section "Getting involved during 2024-25!" on page 15.

Welling Close washing lines: You asked for washing lines in communal areas so tenants had a means of drying their clothes outside which also reduces the risk of damp and mould caused by drying them inside. Washing lines were installed in February 2024.

Feedback from tenants: The team held several Café Conversations and Love Where You Live events during 2023-24.

Here is some of the feedback received:

Great atmosphere	Money saving tips, good company
I participated in the clear up, even had a photo appear in the Nailsworth news	It was a brilliant event and so helpful and created a social community feeling that was very welcome.
I thought the idea was lovely and really helped to clean up Lawnside	It was nice to see the area looking a lot cleaner
The craft workshop - we had a laugh and made new friends"	Very good idea we had chance to talk to many peoples about our problems
Meeting and engaging with others	Easy listening
Much better than it was, but would be nice if it stayed that way	The staff were good
It was very good, I was only there for the end, but everyone was so friendly and helpful. I really feel like I was welcome, and now can say hello to council people without feeling embarrassed. Thank you So much	I was at work but thought the event was really good

Achievements



Grant Funding

Many of the UK's houses were built at a time when the energy efficiency of the building was not taken into account. Households currently account for 26% of total carbon emissions in the UK so retrofitting the UK's properties is an important part of climate change mitigation. The aim of retrofitting is to make a building more energy efficient, as this building would then require less use of its heating system throughout its lifecycle, meaning fewer fossil fuels are burned throughout its lifespan. Additionally, a retrofitted home will also provide greater health and wellbeing benefits to occupants, as there will be reduced exposure to cold and damp. It will be cheaper to run, which helps us to tackle fuel poverty within our District.

Following the council's successful bids for grant funding from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund during 2022/23, we submitted a further bid for Wave 2 funding from the scheme. This application was successful, and in total, across the three successful bids, SDC has received £3.9million to deliver retrofit improvements. This has been match funded by the council by £4.1million, meaning £8million is being invested to to deliver improvement measures to 438 homes.

The Council was also successful for the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF), securing £2,391m towards the purchase of 20 new social homes.

Awards

The council is delighted to include in the annual report that the Housing team followed up their success of being highly commended in the 2023 Retrofit Academy Awards, for the best Local Authority or Social Housing Led Retrofit Programme, by winning the Best Social Housing-led Retrofit Programme award at the Retrofit Academy Awards 2024!

This prestigious recognition highlights the team's dedication and hard work in enhancing the energy efficiency of hundreds of social homes. Our commitment to sustainable retrofitting has made a significant impact on improving living conditions and reducing fuel use and bills for tenants as well as reducing our impact on the environment.



In addition, the housing team is delighted to celebrate further success, having been awarded the RSPCA Paw Prints Bronze award. This award was achieved in recognition of promoting responsible pet ownership and having appropriate policies in place.

Commitments

Commitments

The housing team is committed to ensuring the service complies with the Social Housing Regulators standards.

Our priorities for the upcoming year are to:

- *Ensure sufficient governance structures are in place and give assurance and accountability,*
- *Increase resident engagement, encourage scrutiny and collaboration to deliver services residents want and need, ensuring tenants voices are heard*
- *Take steps to improve service delivery and improve customer satisfaction*
- *To deliver on key projects, including the successful implementation of updated computer management systems and the implementation of new service charges improvements.*
- *To continue to apply for suitable grant funding as available, and seek further external recognition of our successful services*
- *To review and deliver a new effective suite of strategies, policies and procedures for the service.*
- *To undertake a tenant household census to better understand how we can meet the different needs of tenants and ensure all tenants have fair access to our landlord services.*

Getting involved during 2024-25

Over the next 12 months, we will work with you to develop our Resident Engagement & Communications Strategy. Your feedback is essential, and we will actively seek your input in different ways, including online and in-person consultation events, question and answer sessions and estate walkabouts.

We are also preparing to launch a resident engagement survey, which will allow you to share your thoughts on our current communication methods and suggest ways to improve engagement on issues that matter to you.

The council is dedicated to fostering a culture that values tenant and leaseholder engagement. We aim to empower all residents to positively influence decisions about their homes, the services they receive, and the communities they live in.

To learn more and get involved, visit our website: [Get involved! | Stroud District Council](#) or email us at resident.involvement@stroud.gov.uk

Contact us

Everyone who contacts Stroud District Council should receive excellent service. Whenever and however you contact us, we aim to ensure you receive the highest standards of service.

Our service standards:

www.stroud.gov.uk/contact-us/our-service-standards/

The housing service can be accessed in a variety of ways including email, visiting our website, visiting, calling or writing to us.

To contact us:

Website: www.stroud.gov.uk/contact-us/

Telephone: 01453 766321

Visiting or write to:

Stroud District Council
Ebley Mill
Ebley Wharf
Stroud
GL5 5UB