

# Open Door, Autumn/Winter 2025



## For the Tenants & Leaseholders of Cambridge City Council

### Contents

Open Door, Autumn/Winter 2025 .....	1
Message from Samantha Shimmon, Assistant Director.....	3
Why not receive Open Door by email instead of on paper?.....	4
What's the score? .....	5
How do we compare with other council landlords? .....	6
What actions now, as a result of the Inspection?.....	6
How Regulatory Inspections are scored .....	7
Annual Report For Tenants and Leaseholders .....	7
Tenant & leaseholder representatives on the Council's Housing Advisory Board...	8

Residents' influence - How you as residents influence your housing services.....	10
Tenants' satisfaction levels .....	11
Tenant Kay Harris, Kings Hedges, Involved with Repairs.....	11
Council's transparency and openness - Complaints about housing services .....	13
The inside story behind the figures .....	14
Learning from your complaints .....	14
The safety of your home .....	15
Meeting the Decent Homes Standard.....	16
The Regulator's 2025 inspection verdict on our Compliance.....	16
Tackling damp and mould - improvements we've made .....	17
The quality of your home - Improving repairs for you.....	17
Maintaining quality for the long term .....	18
From Liz Forte, Arbury, Involved tenant.....	18
Supporting tenants & leaseholders - Serving customers .....	19
Extra support for residents in need .....	19
From Michelle Davies, Housing Support Manager .....	21
Letting homes - What did our 'Tenancy Visits' to homes achieve last year?.....	21
Managing tenancies.....	22
From Linda Roland Danil, Cherry Hinton, new tenant this year .....	23
Your neighbourhood & community - Community Development teams.....	23
Estate Services.....	24
Anti-Social Behaviour Team .....	25
Value for your money - How your rent was re-invested in homes in 2024/25 .....	25
How the housing budget was invested in homes .....	26
Have your say on our new strategy for involving you.....	27
Have your say.....	28
Housing Advisory Board vacancies! .....	29

For Leaseholders - Traditions around leases .....	30
For Leaseholders - Avoiding damp and mould .....	31
Residents' Garden Competition winners.....	32
Winning Gardens, 2025 .....	33
Home gardeners on council estates help Nature recover .....	33
Who to contact for services .....	34
Council's contractors on estates .....	37

## **Message from Samantha Shimmon, Assistant Director**

Welcome to this edition of Open Door.

Your housing service recently underwent a thorough inspection by the Social Housing Regulator, as part of their routine inspection regime. We are proud to advise that we received a C2 grading, which is a compliant grade with some areas for improvement.

Possible scores range from C1 (best) to C4 (worst). An article below explains what the different possible scores really mean; how our score compares to those of other council landlords; and where you can read the full Inspection Report if interested.

We are excited now to move forward to implement the Regulator's recommendations for further improvements, as part of our ongoing Housing Improvement Plan that we already had in place.

This edition also brings you, for the first time, our Annual Report for Tenants and Leaseholders. Covering the financial year 2024/25, it gives you snapshots of the performance of our services; an overview of your satisfaction with each service area; and insights into the ways we are learning from complaints.

There is information on the work we did last year to keep your homes safe; the work of our repairs service, and the long-term maintenance of homes. You can read about how we manage tenancies and the wide range of extra support that we provided last year for tenants in need. There is a snapshot of how we cared for your estate environment and communities. And finally, you can see how we re-invested your rent in the housing service, and the value for money it gives compared to the open rental market.

This Annual Report is introduced by Councillor Gerri Bird, the city's Cabinet Member for housing, and by your own elected tenant and leaseholder representatives, who have helped to oversee the housing service across the year. Coincidentally, we are looking for more tenant representatives. So please do get in touch if you are interested.

The report also includes thoughts and messages from some of the many other resident volunteers who shape your services, along with a simple overview of how you can do the same.

We are consulting you about our new Tenant & Leaseholder Involvement Strategy. Please do take a moment to send us your feedback on the best ways to involve you.

With best wishes, Samantha Shimmon

### **Why not receive Open Door by email instead of on paper?**

It's easy to read on any device with wifi, saving on paper and carbon. To receive it by email instead of by post, visit <https://camcit.co/opendooremail>

A Residents' Editorial Panel meets to help guide and edit the content of every Open Door edition. They ensure that Open Door continues to reflect residents' needs and interests. To get involved, please email [opendoor@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:opendoor@cambridge.gov.uk)

## What's the score?

The government has appointed a national Regulator of Social Housing, to ensure high standards around the country. Recently this Regulator did a full inspection of Cambridge City Council's housing service. The results have just been published.

Possible scores range from C1 (best) to C4 (worst), and your housing service has scored C2. This means that it complies with the Regulator's national standards, while still having room for improvement.

The inspectors noted the Council's 'respectful, fair and positive culture towards tenants'. They recognised that the Council provides a good repairs service, with rising tenant satisfaction. And they consider that the Council is performing well in areas like:

- managing anti-social behaviour
- transparently sharing information with tenants
- providing tailored, individual support for tenants who need it
- our 'Tenancy Audit' visits, that brought individual support to 700 tenants last year

For the areas needing improvement, the inspectors acknowledged that the Council already has action plans in place to improve them. Improvements needed include a backlog in surveying the condition of homes; addressing a backlog of medium risk actions from our Fire Risk Assessments, including updating signage and removing clutter from communal areas; and fully updating our IT systems for managing data.

To see the full report and its recommendations for improvement, please visit [www.gov.uk/government/publications/cambridge-city-council](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cambridge-city-council)

To see the Regulator's Standards that inspections are based on, visit [www.gov.uk/government/collections/regulatory-standards-for-landlords](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/regulatory-standards-for-landlords)



## **How do we compare with other council landlords?**

By summer 2025, the other council landlords inspected had achieved these scores:

Score C1: 3 landlords

Score C2: 13 landlords

Score C3: 22 landlords

Score C4: 2 landlords

Your housing service scoring C2 puts it in the top 42% of council landlords inspected so far.

## **What actions now, as a result of the Inspection?**

The improvements needed were already on our Housing Improvement Plan. We will continue to prioritise their completion, and will report our progress to the Regulator.

Open Door will bring you regular updates on how we are making these improvements.

## How Regulatory Inspections are scored

Landlords are scored on how well they meet the Regulator's Consumer Standards (shortened to 'C'). The possible scores are:

C1: Fully meets the Regulator's requirements

C2: Meets the Regulator's requirements but with some areas for improvement in delivering the Consumer Standards.(This is Cambridge's score.)

C3: 'Serious failings' in delivering the consumer standards, with 'significant improvement' needed.

C4: 'Very serious failings' in delivering the Consumer Standards, and 'fundamental changes' must be made.

## Annual Report For Tenants and Leaseholders

From Cllr. Gerri Bird, Cabinet Councillor for Housing



Welcome to Cambridge City Council's new Annual Report for Tenants and Leaseholders.

I am the lead Councillor for Housing at the Council, and a local City Councillor in the East Chesterton area. I am very pleased to welcome you to this annual report.

The City Council has recently undergone a Regulatory Housing Inspection. And we are pleased to let you know that we were given a grading of C2: it means that we are looking after our tenants and your housing.

This Annual Report for 2024-25 brings you a range of insights and highlights - from our performance and your complaints, to the safety checks that we do on your homes, to the planned maintenance that we invest in for you.

I want to say thank you for all the help that your tenant and leaseholder representatives have given us over the years. You'll see many involved residents in this report. They work very hard to report back to us if they find things that have not been done, or not done properly for you. The Regulator's inspection praised this hard work done by involved tenants and leaseholders.

Some are also members of the Council's Housing Advisory Board, so they can have their say and influence issues that come to the Board for discussion. Why not apply to join them?

With best wishes, Councillor Gerri Bird

## **Tenant & leaseholder representatives on the Council's Housing Advisory Board**

Message from Harmony Birch, Diana Minns, Diane Best and Mandy Powell-Hardy



Welcome to this Annual Report for Tenants and Leaseholders, covering April 2024 to March 2025.

We are your elected tenant and leaseholder representatives. Our role is to be a 'critical friend' to your housing service, making sure that you're getting the best service, to make our homes a safe and secure place to live.

As your voice at the City Council, we're part of the new Housing Advisory Board which examines and comments on key issues around services to tenants and leaseholders.

During the recent inspection by the Regulator of Social Housing, we discussed what we do with the Regulator, and the impact that we hope our input has. We aren't just part of the Housing Advisory Board. We also work alongside other tenants and leaseholders to monitor what the Council is doing in key areas such as repairs, damp and mould problems, support for tenants and leaseholders, and lots more. We meet regularly to check - and also criticise, where needed - what's being done by the Council.

This Annual Report is a picture of how the Council is doing, covering many of the areas that were a focus for the recent inspection. The Regulator's assessment of how we're doing is based on a wide variety of sources. These included the annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey sent to all tenants, which asks how you think the housing service is delivering in areas that affect your lives. And it drew on performance data gleaned from the day-to-day delivery of services.

We are pleased that there have been improvements in many areas. But we note the need to improve in others that concern us all, such as dealing with anti-social behaviour, and the handling of complaints. We'll be continuing to press hard for all services to be improved, making sure that the voices of those receiving the service are not forgotten. In challenging times, we do also thank the council staff who deliver our services.

Don't forget that you too can get involved in helping to keep an eye on the Council. Why not come forward to join the Housing Advisory Board? We have two tenant vacancies, to get involved and have your say.

Your resident representatives on the Council's Housing Advisory Board

## **Residents' influence - How you as residents influence your housing services**

Last year, tenants' and leaseholders' involvement influenced 48 different aspects of housing services. Key examples included our:

External Planned Maintenance Contract for £35 million, with residents on the evaluation panel

Damp, Condensation and Mould Policy, and the review of our Repairs and Planned Maintenance Policy

Tenant Satisfaction Survey Action Plan, where resident reps recommended areas for improvement

Reasonable Adjustments Policy, which ensures our housing services and communication are accessible and inclusive

Fire Safety in Communal Areas Policy

Review of our Parking and Garage Charges

Estate Walkabouts for estate improvements, cleaning and grounds maintenance

48: was the number of housing service areas influenced by residents in 2024/25

## **Tenants' satisfaction levels**

Below are tenants' satisfaction rates with each aspect of their housing service last year. Compared to the previous year, tenants were more satisfied with almost all aspects of the housing service. But our handling of complaints - low at just 28% satisfaction - is now a big focus for us this year, to improve your satisfaction with that for next year.

Tenants' 'Overall satisfaction with the Council as your landlord' is always considered the 'headline' result. This year this scored 73%, up by 6% since last year. Other scores are summarised below. Some show the percentage who agree, for instance, that they have a 'Well maintained home', a 'Safe home', or that it's 'Easy & affordable to heat'. Other scores show the percentage of tenants who feel the Council is 'Easy to deal with', or that it 'Listens & takes action'. Most scores have improved over the past two years.

### **Key Results**

Satisfaction rates have mostly improved since last year.

73% are satisfied with the overall service - up by 6%.

Highest satisfaction is with the repairs service, at 78%.

Next is satisfaction with the time taken for repairs, at 76%.

But still low is satisfaction with our handling of anti-social behaviour, at 50%.

And our handling of complaints, with only 28% satisfied, down 1% since last year.

Here are the main percentages of tenants' satisfaction with specific aspects of their home and the Council's services:

71% Well maintained home

57% Council's positive contribution to neighbourhood

73% Safe home

50% Council's handling of anti-social behaviour

55% Home is easy and affordable to heat

76% Time taken for last repair

67% Repairs - Overall satisfaction

64% Communal areas clean and well maintained

64% Council keeps them informed

70% Council treats all fairly & with respect

28% Council's complaints handling

69% Council is easy to deal with

The next edition will bring you the Improvement Plan for the year ahead, showing how it will tackle low satisfaction with our handling of complaints and of anti-social behaviour.

## Tenant Kay Harris, Kings Hedges, Involved with Repairs



"Engagement is about tenants and leaseholders helping to monitor and shape the housing service. Many involved tenants have a main interest. Mine is repairs, one of the biggest council services and one that every tenant or leaseholder may use at some stage.

But do residents know their rights on repairs? Which repairs they are responsible for, and which the Council must do? Being one of the largest services, repairs also has a large number of complaints, on things like waiting times, missed appointments, etc.

We meet with officers online to monitor trends in complaints, and the performance of the teams doing long-term maintenance work on homes. Why not join us?"

### **Council's transparency and openness - Complaints about housing services**

Last year, of all the City Council's services to the public, 0.01% gave rise to a complaint. 80% were resolved within the target time (up from 72% in the previous year).

The housing service received 401 complaints. The most were on Repairs (162, down from 184 the previous year). Next was Planned Maintenance (102 complaints, up from 74), Tenancy Management (80, down from 85) and Housing Advice (57, up from 44).

## **The inside story behind the figures**

The Repairs and Planned Maintenance services are always among the Council's highest complaint-receivers. But this is because they have the largest number of in-depth interactions with residents, making thousands of interventions on homes each year.

As in the previous year, a large proportion of Repairs complaints were about damp, condensation and mould. But there were 22 fewer such complaints this year.

This is because a specialist Damp, Condensation and Mould Team was created last year to tackle reports of these issues before they reached the complaints stage.

## **Learning from your complaints**

81.7%: Tenants' satisfaction with their new-built home

Satisfaction with new-built homes: 81.7%, but the target is 90%...

Residents' negative feedback included: Heavy doors; lifts not always working; and developers being slow to respond to requests for repairs.

Residents' suggestions for improvement: Make clearer which teams are responsible for what (between developers, contractors and the Council). Give clearer guidance for using the home, eg. its heating system. And provide CCTV in communal areas to prevent anti-social behaviour.

86%: Repairs complaints responded to within target time

The housing service improved the speed at which we responded to complaints. Last year, we passed complaints more directly to key staff, significantly reducing response times on Repairs complaints. 86% were responded to within target times in 2024/25, compared to only 46% in 23/24.

Our goal going forward is to a) respond to all complaints promptly; b) ensure our Stage 1 response tackles the root cause of the complaint, so it doesn't need to go to Stage 2.

43.1 Days: the time it took to re-let sheltered properties

Last year, the average time from a sheltered property being vacated to it being re-let was 43.1 days. This is longer than it should be.

It is partly due to the need to complete assessments for each new sheltered tenant, to ensure their individual needs can be met before offering them a tenancy.

But the delay was also partly due to not having enough staff time available. So we will review this to make improvements for 2025/26.

## **The safety of your home**

How many required safety checks did we get done?

100% of gas safety checks

100% of legionella risk assessments

99.2% of asbestos management surveys or re-inspections

96.1% of homes have a satisfactory Electrical Installation Condition report

94.2% of communal passenger-lifts safety checked

86.1% of fire risk assessments done

The outstanding safety checks are being done as a priority this year.

## **Meeting the Decent Homes Standard**

In the past year, 7,601 of our 7,639 homes were kept up to the national Decent Homes Standard. Just 38 (0.5% of all homes) failed to meet it. These are being brought up to the Standard as a priority this year.

Overall, 5,200 inspections were done on homes to monitor their condition and plan their future maintenance.

Out of 3,400 planned maintenance jobs done on homes, there were complaints about 2.4%. These were: 75 complaints about planned maintenance, and 25 about gas heating maintenance. The complaints were about delays, or quality of work done, or poor communication around the work. Managers reviewed them to ensure they won't happen again.

## **The Regulator's 2025 inspection verdict on our Compliance...**

"Overall compliance performance is satisfactory".

But there is "a backlog of overdue fire-risk assessments", with "further improvement required".

And we must "improve quality and storage of some compliance data".

We are doing that by commissioning external support and using a new asset management system.

Open Door will bring you updates on our compliance with national standards across the year.



## **Tackling damp and mould - improvements we've made**

From Laura Herrera-Martin, Service Improvement Manager

"In the past year we have created a specialist team for surveying cases of damp, mould and condensation, and claims of tenants' homes being in serious disrepair. We also appointed a dedicated contractor to do these remedial works. We are pleased to say that this has improved resident satisfaction, and we now get these problems resolved more quickly, in fewer visits. The number of ongoing damp and mould cases by the end of last year was 216, or 2.82% of our homes. These will be resolved in the current year."

## **The quality of your home - Improving repairs for you**

Last year 80.45% of residents surveyed were fully happy with their repair.

But your recommendations, so we can achieve 100% satisfaction, were to:

communicate better with the resident about any unavoidable delays or changes to the job

ensure staff have all tools and equipment they could need, with them on the first visit

give staff some reminder training on being sensitive around different cultural backgrounds

16,373 repair jobs were done on your homes

97.2% of our repair appointments were kept with you

79.1% were finished on first visit

0.9% residents were unhappy with a repair

86% repair complaints were resolved in target time

Up from 46% repair complaints resolved in target time last year

To help us improve, we survey your satisfaction with all aspects of a repair done on your home - our timeliness, efficiency, politeness, cleanliness, etc.

## **Maintaining quality for the long term**

£24 million was invested in the planned maintenance of your homes last year.

3,400 planned maintenance jobs were done, including new replacement doors, windows, roofs, kitchens, bathrooms, boilers and energy efficiency works.

Meanwhile, 248 new council houses were built, plus 84 more were started.

And 118 new affordable homes were built on non-council sites.

## **From Liz Forte, Arbury, Involved tenant**



"I have lived in Arbury for over twenty years. I became involved as a tenant volunteer with the City Council just before the Covid pandemic. It is a pleasure to participate in meetings with committed, knowledgeable residents, even though I consider myself a well-intentioned amateur.

I am happy to witness that the groups want to hear voices from all members of the community. For instance, I have disabilities, and I feel completely comfortable and welcome.

I would like resident groups to be even more inclusive. I think it would be good to welcome sight-impaired residents, for example, to help us consider all perspectives of an issue.

My particular interests are Health and Safety; risk assessments for asbestos in buildings; and compliance with the 'Asbestos Act 2012'. I'm also an advocate for public art, such as wall murals."

## **Supporting tenants & leaseholders - Serving customers**

Last year, the Council's Customer Service Centre responded to customers overall in more than 225,000 phone calls, emails and face to face contacts.

Only 10 residents made complaints about the response they received as customer service (down from 24 in the previous year).

This was 0.009% all the interactions our Customer Service staff had with the public. All the complaints were responded to within our target times.

## **Extra support for residents in need**

The housing service has specialist teams who give extra support to residents of all ages. The youngest supported last year was 20 and the oldest was 93.

These services were commended when we were inspected by the Social Housing Regulator this year. We give this extra support through our:

Independent Living Service, providing sheltered and extra care housing for older people

Visiting Support Service, making support visits to the over 65s

Tenancy Sustainment Service, ensuring tenants don't lose their home when they have difficulties

Specialist Worker for domestic abuse

Neighbourhood Support Officers, supporting newly housed tenants who used to be homeless

Here are the numbers of residents we supported last year:

41 residents, disability adaptations for their home return

70, safer home via repairs help with hoarding

154, that are finances via benefits grants and advice

60, help with physical or mental health addictions or fire safety

45, social activities leisure transport and community contact

59, moved or downsized started or maintain their tenancy

44, increased mobility and personal safety avoiding falls

125, attended social activities for older people

## From Michelle Davies, Housing Support Manager



"Our Financial Inclusion Service supports tenants to achieve greater financial stability and wellbeing. Through tailored advice, practical support and close partnership working, the service helps residents to increase their income, manage debts, and receive benefits, grants and one-to-one guidance.

An example is tenant Mrs K., who was experiencing financial hardship, and struggling to complete essential forms due to a learning difficulty. We helped Mrs K. to apply for Personal Independence Payments and Universal Credit, as well as financial support through Cambridge Aid and the Household Support Fund.

When she received unexpected debt letters, we got her debt advice. We also helped her with neighbour issues, and with registering on Homelink. Thanks to this holistic support, Mrs K. was able to improve her wellbeing, manage her finances, and maintain her tenancy."

## **Letting homes - What did our 'Tenancy Visits' t homes achieve last year?**

700 homes visited for tenancy audits

220 tenants given an extra support as a result for instance with finances food disabilities et cetera

500 problems addressed with repairs done adaptations needed and hoarding problems

150 actions tackling antisocial behaviour drugs and domestic violence

50 vulnerable tenants given safeguarding protection

27 actions taken against tenants miss using their property

## Managing tenancies



What was the focus of complaints to City Homes? Last year, among our 8,807 tenants and leaseholders, only 0.9% made a complaint about our management of their tenancy or leasehold.

51% of complaints were about Housing officers, who also have by far the most interactions with tenants.

Out of 80 complaints in all, 96% were responded to within the target time.

The top two complaint themes overall were: Neighbour Disputes (17.5% of complaints) and Unmanaged Expectations (37.5%), where a resident was seeking a service that the Council doesn't deliver.

## **From Linda Roland Danil, Cherry Hinton, new tenant this year**

"Since moving into my new home, I've really enjoyed becoming a member of the Residents' Editorial Panel for Open Door, the Council's magazine for tenants and leaseholders.

It's a microcosm of the democratic decision-making process, and the resident involvement, that I've found characterises living in a Cambridge City Council property.

I'm really enjoying learning about tenants' and leaseholders' rights and responsibilities, and the responsibilities of the Council in turn. And how to improve services and living conditions for everyone...

The Open Door Residents' Panel is made up of wonderful people, so it's also a really enjoyable experience meeting these other residents."

## **Your neighbourhood & community - Community Development teams**

Our Community Development officers help residents build stronger connections and create thriving communities. They support local projects, events, and partnerships that bring people together. Examples of their work last year were;

582 residents given an extra individual support last year

35 holiday lunches in community spaces £120,000 invested in building capacity and local communities.

30 spaces created for engagement and collaboration.

## Estate Services

These officers work to keep your estates clean and safe, and they do improvement projects on your estates. From caretaking to resolving estate issues, they're the frontline of neighbourhood upkeep. Here are some of their activities from last year: -

35 neighbourhood cleanup days

90 tons of waste connected

171 estate improvement projects £800,000 invested in the estate improvement projects

800 visits tackling items left in common areas

600 estate inspections

115 visits tackling fire risks

44.2 antisocial behaviour cases tackled

1000 council homes 1.6 cases per thousand homes involving heat incidents

50.3% residents happy with the Council's handling of antisocial behaviour

## Stan Best, Cherry Hinton, Involved leaseholder





"For me, the key words are fire safety and value for money. As an involved leaseholder, I focus on issues in blocks of flats. Are services like building cleaning, communal window cleaning and grounds maintenance being delivered to standard?

Are they giving value for money? We meet regularly with the service providers to examine this. I also keenly promote all the Council's fire safety measures for communal areas in flat blocks. As involved residents, we advocated and got a dedicated staff member appointed to implement the rules that keep communal areas clear."

## **Anti-Social Behaviour Team**

These staff work closely with our Housing Officers, tackling anti-social behaviour on and around our estates, to ensure safer communities. They respond to reports of anti-social behaviour, assess risks, and coordinate interventions with police, enforcement teams, and other agencies.

## **Value for your money - How your rent was re-invested in homes in 2024/25**

As a housing service, we must manage the housing budget in a prudent, sustainable way. For instance, we have to plan sufficient funds well in advance for maintaining and repairing homes, year on year. Unlike in the private housing sector, no commercial profit is taken out of the housing budget. All the rent that you pay is re-invested in the long-term upkeep of your homes, and the provision of new social housing as well.

Your elected tenant and leaseholder representatives on the Housing Advisory Board help to oversee the annual cycles of housing budgets, which are always published on the Council's website.

About £123.30 : average weekly rent for a two bedroom council home in Cambridge

From this average rent, we reinvested :

about £52 on improving kitchens and bathroom sheltered housing building new council homes et cetera

about £38 on day-to-day repairs and maintenance inspections preparing properties to let et cetera

about £17 on paying interest on the debt of the housing service

about £12 on lettings managing tenancies antisocial behaviour support services and resident involvement

about £4 on other costs in providing social housing as a council

## **Does your rent give value for money?**

Average weekly rent for two bed Cambridge Council home last year : £123.30

Average weekly rent for a two bedroom home Cambridge home on the open market last year : £392.75 (data from City Council report 'Private Rented Housing', March 2025)

## **How the housing budget was invested in homes**

59% on building or buying more council homes

32% on our decent homes program that improves kitchens bathroom stores and windows

7% other investments in homes

1% on the estates improvement scheme

1%t on maintenance equipment and vehicles IT et cetera

## **Have your say on our new strategy for involving you**

At Cambridge City Council we are doing a refresh of our Tenant & Leaseholder Involvement Strategy, to ensure you have the most meaningful opportunities to shape housing services and the decisions that affect your homes.

Your elected tenant and leaseholder representatives have shaped the draft objectives and actions of the proposed new Strategy in the coloured box below. It continues the work that we already do to involve you, as well as committing to improving through new actions.

The Strategy will now be further shaped by your feedback, and we want to hear from as many of you as possible please. We are asking you...

1. Do our proposed Strategy objectives listed below reflect your needs and priorities?
2. What involvement activities work best for you?
3. Are there barriers that prevent you from getting involved?
4. How can the Council improve communication with its tenant & leaseholders, and build trust?

Please reply online to the questions above by visiting this webpage:

<https://forms.office.com/e/SPKiHSdXX8>

Or if you prefer to reply by post, please post your answers to the Resident Involvement Team, PO Box 700, Cambridge, CB1 0JH.

## Our proposed draft Strategy

1. Embed resident involvement across housing services build a culture of trust transparency and accountability by involving residence in the way that the council operates

New actions : establish resident voice in all policies principal to ensure resident input is considered and integrated into the development and review of housing policy to

2. Ensure inclusivity give all residence opportunities to engage meaningfully regardless of background or circumstance

New actions : Develop an annual multi channel engagement plan including digital platforms printed materials and community outreach work towards abroad and representative group of involved residence to reflect the diversity of our communities

3. Enable an empowered resident voice strengthen the role of residence in shaping decisions and influencing outcomes.

New actions : promote an impact tracker showing how different resident input has shaped decisions

4. Listen, learn and improve : use feedback and data to ensure residence are heard on that we are improving services and meeting standards

New actions : publishing annual tenant and leaseholder report combining performance data and engagement outcomes Introduce a task and finish group for residence to play a role in understanding key performance areas for example complaints

## Have your say

Getting involved gives you the opportunity to influence the housing services that we offer, and the chance to make a real difference. It brings lots of other rewards too.

You can meet new people, learn new skills and directly change how services are provided, to improve homes and neighbourhoods. You could:

- Be an 'Armchair Reviewer': if you want to help influence our housing service but don't have time to attend meetings, you could be part of policy reviews in your own time, and give us your feedback from home.
- Join the Resident and Officer Asset Management meetings 4 times a year to discuss key issues and projects around property repairs and maintenance.
- Join the Open Door Residents' Editorial Panel online three times a year to help shape each edition of Open Door magazine.
- Suggest topics for councillors and elected tenant and leaseholder representatives to examine at the Housing Advisory Board.

For these and other involvement opportunities, please email [resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk) or phone 01223-458323.

## **Housing Advisory Board vacancies!**

We are looking for two tenant representatives to help shape housing services in Cambridge. We have two vacancies for council tenants to join the Board - the main forum where tenants and leaseholders influence how their housing services are run.

No experience needed. Support and development are provided, plus an annual allowance of up to £1,400 for your time. If you're passionate about improving housing and want to represent fellow tenants, we'd love to hear from you! Please email [resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk) or phone 01223-458323.

## **For Leaseholders - Traditions around leases**

A common frustration for leaseholders is the physical paperwork and notices that we send by post. While digital communication is now the norm in many settings, leases still require paper 'hard copies', signed in 'wet ink'. Many documents are required to be sent by post, such as notices under Section 146 of the Law of Property Act 1925, or payment requests for ground rent and service charges.

This stems largely from legislation and case law that either predate the digital era, or fail to explicitly authorise electronic communication. Some landlords are hesitant to embrace digital methods out of caution.

Improperly served documents can be legally invalid, potentially undermining enforcement action and the ability to collect monies due or impose forfeiture of a lease. Even when parties agree to communicate by email, formal notices are usually posted by first-class mail in addition to email.

Leaseholders are sometimes surprised to receive a demand for service charges dated Christmas Day, of all days! This isn't the Council being unseasonably mean. Being legally rooted in the past, leases still refer to the 'quarter days' of the medieval English year, namely:

Lady Day, 25th of March

Midsummer Day, 24th of June

Michaelmas, 29th of September

Christmas Day, 25th of December

These days marked the times of year when rent was due, servants were hired, and agricultural contracts began or ended. In older leases, these dates remain 'set in stone' for rent payments and service charge periods.

Newer leases may use modern calendar quarters or monthly payments, but the legacy of the old 'quarter days' persists in thousands of residential agreements that are still in force. For ease of management, any new leases granted by the City Council are done on similar terms, so that all of our 1,100+ leases are essentially the same.

What can you do? To limit the amount of paper correspondence as much as possible, please do set up a Direct Debit payment if you haven't done so already. Also, use the City Council's online portal for leaseholders. On there you can view your account, and all invoices added and payments made. If you rent out your leasehold property, you can download an annual account statement from there for tax purposes.

Please also ensure that we have your email address on record. We will always try to communicate by email where we can, for example when we need to advise leaseholders of leaks and other such issues.

For any queries, please email [leasehold.services@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:leasehold.services@cambridge.gov.uk) or phone 01223-457835.

## **For Leaseholders - Avoiding damp and mould**

These can be caused by condensation, affecting both your health and your home. The Council maintains the external structure and shared parts of your building. But you should tackle early signs of damp inside your own home by:-

- heating rooms adequately, ideally between 18°C and 21°C
- checking regularly for leaks and faults in windows, heating and extractor fans
- keeping air vents uncovered, and extractor fans switched on when needed, especially in kitchens and bathrooms
- ventilating, for instance by opening windows slightly when cooking or bathing

- ensuring wall vents and trickle vents in windows are kept open and clean

The Council encourages leaseholders to take out household contents insurance to protect against potential damage caused by damp, mould, or condensation. But if you do notice these in your home, please report it online at <https://forms.cambridge.gov.uk/REPORTDAMP/launch>

A surveyor will inspect your property and confirm where the responsibility lies. If the cause is structural, the Council will arrange any necessary repairs. But if the issue arises from within your own property (for example, from internal plumbing or heating faults), you may need to arrange and fund the work yourself.

For more advice, visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk/reducing-damp-in-your-home](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/reducing-damp-in-your-home)

To contact the Council about damp or mould, please email [condensation@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:condensation@cambridge.gov.uk) or phone 01223-457000.

## **Residents' Garden Competition winners**

Thanks to all the entrants of this year's Tenant and Leaseholder Garden Competition. A Ramsden Square garden that won the Anna Vine-Lott Cup this year.

We had fabulous tenant and leasehold gardeners at the prizegiving event. As always, we were impressed with the variety of gardens.

There is a major shift now among council estate gardeners to this safer, healthier way of gardening, avoiding the toxic chemicals that kill our bees and songbirds, as well as the slugs they are used against.

Nature-friendly gardens on council estates are now building up a mosaic of refuges that help wildlife and biodiversity across our city. The gardeners also find this type of garden is a private haven of relaxation and wellbeing for themselves too.



## **Winning Gardens, 2025**

Wildlife Garden ~ St Kilda Avenue Environment-friendly ~ Godwin Way Community Garden ~ Rawlyn Court

New Garden ~ Kings Hedges Road

Kitchen Garden ~ Nuns Way

Tallest Sunflower ~ St. Kilda Avenue

Small Garden ~ Golding Road

Established Garden ~ Ramsden Square

Tubs & Baskets ~ Apthorpe Way

Anna Vine-Lott Cup ~ Ramsden Square

Special Mention ~ Pen Close

There are lots of prizes to be won so next Spring, get your 2026 Garden Competition entry form online at [www.cambridge.gov.uk/tenant-and-leaseholder-gardencompetition](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/tenant-and-leaseholder-gardencompetition)

Or email [resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk) or phone 01223-458323.

## **Home gardeners on council estates help Nature recover**

They:

... stop using chemical pesticides, herbicides or fertilisers: as well as potentially harming human health, these harm bees, butterflies, birds, hedgehogs, toads and other wildlife.

... mow their grass a lot less: they let daisies, buttercups, dandelions, plantain and nettles come through to feed birds, bees, butterflies and other insects.

... grow natural flowers with single blooms, because bees and butterflies can't feed from artificially-bred 'double' blooms.

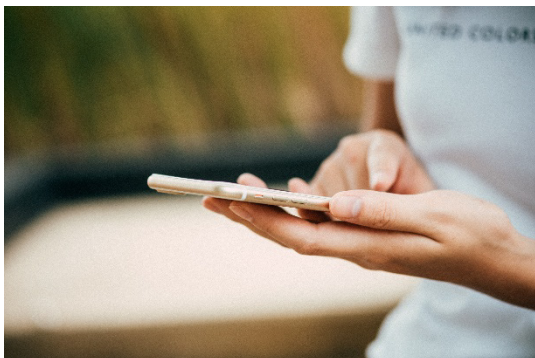
... compost their garden and kitchen waste, producing their own free fertiliser that constantly improves their soil.

... collect rainwater, so they can water their garden for free, including during draughts.

... put mulch down to prevent weeds, protect plants and reduce watering.

... grow their own organic veg to save money and eat healthily; they use physical barriers like fleece, rather than chemicals that poison wildlife like thrushes and hedgehogs.

## Who to contact for services



Register for your personal Housing Services account at  
[www.cambridge.gov.uk/online-accounts](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/online-accounts)

When the phone number below is 01223-457000, please tell us the specific service you want.

To make council payments: Visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk) and click on Pay  
Or tel: 01223-457000, with a bank card

Rents, tenancies, lettings, renting a council garage:  
Visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk/council-tenants](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/council-tenants)  
Tel: 01223-457000

Homelessness & temporary accommodation, outside office hours:  
Tel: 03300-538-109 (same cost as a normal landline)

Repairs:  
Tel: 01223-457000; or 0300-303-8389 for out of hours emergency repairs

Contact the Council in Sign Language:  
Register at <https://signlive.co.uk>, then dial 01223-457000 for a live interpreter

Council Tax:  
Visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01223-457000

Housing for Older People and Visiting Support Service:  
Email: [independent.living@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:independent.living@cambridge.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01223-457000

Home-Link lettings:  
Visit [www.home-link.org.uk](http://www.home-link.org.uk)  
Tel: 01223-457000

Housing & Council Tax Benefits:  
Visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01223-457000

Bins, recycling, street-cleaning:

Visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk/bins-recycling-and-rubbish](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/bins-recycling-and-rubbish)

Tel: 01223-457000

Bulky waste collection:

Visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk/arrange-a-bulky-waste-collection](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/arrange-a-bulky-waste-collection)

Leasehold services:

Visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk/leaseholders](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/leaseholders)

Email: [leasehold.services@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:leasehold.services@cambridge.gov.uk)

Tel: 01223-457835

Report anti-social behaviour:

Email: [asbsection@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:asbsection@cambridge.gov.uk)

Tel: 01223-457000

Report tenancy fraud:

Email: [fightfraud@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:fightfraud@cambridge.gov.uk)

Noise complaints

Email: [env.health@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:env.health@cambridge.gov.uk)

Tel: 01223-457000

Domestic Abuse 24-hour Helpline

Visit [www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk)

Tel: Freephone 0808-2000-247

Council emergencies out of hours

Tel: 0300-303-8389

To complain about council services:

Visit [www.cambridge.gov.uk/compliments-complaints-and-suggestions](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/compliments-complaints-and-suggestions)

Tel: 01223-457000

## **Council's contractors on estates**

TSG Services:

Email: [enquiries@tsgplc.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@tsgplc.co.uk)

Tel: 01223-828777

For gas or hot water, tel. 0800-111-4044

Foster Property Maintenance:

Email: [info@fpm-ltd.co.uk](mailto:info@fpm-ltd.co.uk)

Tel: 01945-586999

Goshen communal cleaning

Email: [cs@goshenmultiservices.com](mailto:cs@goshenmultiservices.com)

Tel: 0800-037-1958

Crystal Clear window cleaning

Tel: 01375-370800