



Annual report for
Tenants and Leaseholders
2022-23



Melton
Borough
Council

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Understanding Smoking in Melton



Leicestershire County Council in partnership with Melton Borough Council are conducting a survey to understand the larger picture of smoking in the Melton borough, particularly within social housing.

We would like tenants that live within Melton to help us understand the levels of not just smoking, but the experiences of those that do not smoke but encounter it by kindly taking a couple of minutes to complete this short survey.

Foreword

Dear Resident,

We are pleased to share this year's annual report. Your questions or views are welcome.

The past twelve months has been another period of challenge but also significant improvement. We have been investing to make your homes safe, energy-efficient, and welcoming places for you to live. We know that many of you will have experienced these benefits. But of course, there is much more to achieve.

As properties become empty or "void" we take the opportunity to improve and update them before they are re-let. We would like to thank those tenant representatives who have supported us to improve as a landlord over the last year through the 'Your Choice' group. Their comments have and will change the following as an example:

1. The standards of our void properties before they are re-let.
2. Views on the letters we send to tenants who are in rent arrears.
3. Visiting Gretton Court and providing feedback on upgrades and changes.
4. Reviewing how easy the website is for you, and much more.

We'd love more tenants to get involved, and you will find details about how to do so within this annual report.

We will shortly be sending a tenant satisfaction survey to all tenants. This will help us better understand how satisfied you are with your home and with the council as a landlord. Please complete this survey. Your views will help us to continue to improve.

One problem for all of us is rent collection. Our ability to maintain and improve your homes depends on rents. So, we must take a 'firm but fair' approach, ensuring wherever possible that tenants falling behind with their rent, have help to get things back on track.

The world of council housing is always changing. This includes new Government rules and regulations. We are preparing for this change, and we take our responsibilities as a landlord and your views, as people who live in our homes, very seriously. We will continue to be open and honest about the challenges and areas that we are still trying to improve.

Thank you for reading.



Councillor Pip Allnatt
Leader of the Council



Meet the Tenancy Services team



Jake Coggins – Housing Officer

Covering the Craven, Warwick and Dorian wards

Villages (Barsby, Burrough, Gaddesby, Garthorpe, Great Dalby, Knossington, Pickwell, Somerby, Twyford, Wymondham)

Jodie Neville – Housing Officer

Covering Melton Town Centre

Villages (Barkestone le Vale, Bottesford, Harby, Hose, Holwell, Long Clawson, Muston, Plungar, Redmile, Stathern)

Tracie Waldron – Housing Officer

Covering Fairmead Estate and St Johns Court

Villages (Ab Kettleby, Asfordby, Frisby, Grimston, Kirby Bellars, Nether Broughton, Old Dalby)

Vanessa Leach – Housing Officer

Covering the Egerton and Sysonby wards

Villages (Croxtton Kerrial, Eastwell, Eaton, Knipton, Saltby, Scalford, Sewstern, Sproxton, Waltham on the Wolds)

Sunita Atkar – Income and Tenancy Sustainment Officer

Covering all the wards

Babli Trehan – Income and Tenancy Sustainment Officer

Covering all the wards

Lesley Armstrong – Customer Engagement and Service Improvement Lead

Covering all the wards

Henry Dunger – Housing Assistant

Admin Support for all the team.

Compliments and Complaints

We really like to hear from you, whether your feedback is good or bad, as we look at all feedback as an opportunity to learn and improve our services.

We receive some wonderful compliments from you every year about our services and what they mean to you. Every compliment that we receive is shared with the person who provided the service. It really does mean a lot when our tenants take the time to contact us and share their experiences.

We really would like to hear more from you and about the difference we make to you as individuals and in our neighbourhoods.

We also appreciate that we don't always get it right and hearing from you about how we can make it better and improve our services, is one way that we can make sure we are getting it right in the future.

How to provide a compliment or make a complaint:



Call us on:
01664 502502



Submit an online form:
www.melton.gov.uk/feedback



Email:
contactus@melton.gov.uk



Write to us at :
Melton Borough Council, Parkside, Station Approach,
Burton Street, Melton Mowbray, LEICS, LE13 1GH

Introducing our new Income and Tenancy Sustainment Officers Sunita Atkar and Babli Trehan

You might have been contacted by or seen by our newly appointed Income and Tenancy Sustainment Officers, Sunita Atkar and Babli Trehan over the last couple of months or you may do so in the future.

We conducted an interview with Sunita to provide you with some insight as to what her role is. Sunita joined us from the Housing Options and Homeless Prevention Team but has a long history of collecting rent arrears at other housing providers.



Sunita Atkar



Babli Trehan

Surely your job is just to collect outstanding debt from Council Tenants?

Some people may have views about what an Income and Tenancy Sustainment Officer does, and that this role is purely about collecting debts. But my role is much more about supporting our customers to be able to pay their rent.

I help residents maximise their incomes and I am currently working on around 900 cases on behalf of those living in the Melton Borough area. My role is to help customers in financial difficulty as early as I can so I can help to stop any debts from escalating. I would remind all our customers it's important that they get in touch with us if they are struggling to pay their rent or any other charges as ignoring the problem can lead to court action and in some extreme cases evictions. Please remember we are here to help regardless of your enquiry and can always signpost or refer you to further support where it is needed.

So, what do you do when people are in arrears?

Firstly, I contact those customers who are in arrears, to identify how the debt has occurred. This would normally be by a telephone call, text message, or arranging a home visit. At this point I would find out the reason for arrears and establish the root cause. I would then do an income and expenditure assessment, to identify if they are able to make a reasonable agreement to clear the debt alongside managing the rent payments on top.

What happens if they need more support than you can provide?

It would be at this point I would refer to our Case Management Team or any other professional if I felt further support was needed. This could be the: Mental Health Team, Adult Social Care team, a doctor or medical professional, Turning Point or Money Advice. It is important that when we identify customers who need support that we get their consent and refer or signpost them on to the appropriate agency.



What are the steps to enforcing a tenant who does not pay their outstanding debt?

As an officer I must be mindful that we have a procedure to follow which is roughly:

- Issue a 1st arrear letter between 3-4 weeks in arrears.
- Issue a 2nd arrear letter around 6 weeks in arrears.
- Send a 7-day Pre-Notice of seeking Possession, which is issued at 10 weeks rent arrears.
- Serve a Notice of Seeking Possession around 10 weeks in arrears.
- Issue a 7-day pre court warning letter after 12 weeks in arrears.
- Make a Court application.
- Warning of Warrant of Eviction is issued.
- Eviction (this is a last resort).

I would point out that this is the letter process for the collection of our debts, but during this time I would be attempting to speak to customers about their debt and looking to support and get payment or an arrangement to clear the debt in place to prevent escalation of our process.

Can you give me an example of a customer you recently helped?

Recently I had a customer whose housing benefit had stopped. I gave advice on what they needed to do and linked them in to our Revenues team. This allowed them to get their payments back in place once they had supplied the correct paperwork that the team required.

Another time I found a tenant who had missed rent payments, and upon contacting them I found out that they were struggling to make ends meet. I put in place tailored support, to help them through. Our Case Management team looked at their income and was able to provide support when they applied for further benefits that they had not claimed. Then together we worked out a payment plan that the customer could afford.

What can you do to check you have all the benefits you are entitled too?

You can check via the benefit entitlement checker at www.gov.uk/benefits-calculator.

This will help you find out if you are getting all the benefits, you are entitled too. Some benefits may entitle you to discounts on your energy bills or help with home energy efficiency improvements.



Domestic abuse

Melton Borough Council are working with the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) to improve our response to domestic abuse.

Home is often the most dangerous place for victims and survivors of domestic abuse. Housing continues to be the primary barrier to women leaving their abuse and the leading cause of homelessness amongst women.

Yet, these outcomes are preventable, when housing providers and local authorities are equipped to spot domestic abuse early and provide an effective response to both survivors and perpetrators, as a part of a wider Coordinated Community Response to domestic abuse.

Melton Borough Council are working with community partners to offer a safe, consistent, and effective response to domestic abuse for tenants and residents. Further information about the services we offer and the partners we work with can be found on the council's website.

If you feel you are experiencing domestic abuse or know someone who might be then advice and support can be obtained by contacting FREEVA 0808 802 0028.

If you need an urgent response, then please call the police on 999.

Additional support is available on the Melton Borough Council Website at: www.melton.gov.uk/domesticviolence



Getting Involved – Tenant and Leaseholder Digital Platform

January 2022 saw the formation of the Tenant and Leaseholder Choice (TLC) platform. It invited tenants and leaseholders to come along to sessions to scrutinise and discuss policies, toolkits and look at different aspects of the landlord services that we provide.

A small group of tenants and leaseholders have formed a Your Choice panel, which meets with officers regularly and they are looking for more people to join them. It is an open forum for discussion and their thoughts and comments are taken into account and acted upon. We would like to invite you to come along and join the Your Choice forums and be an important integral part of how the council provides its landlord services to you.

One tenant, a Mr Stephen Johnson, who works with us in the Your Choice sessions to help us improve said:

“On being asked to join in with the Your Choice Panel I initially felt reluctant to agree due to feelings of negativity concerning the substance of the work and what part I might play in the process. Eventually, I did agree and discovered that my misgivings were wrong.

“The work has been informative and enlightening as the Council have set out to re assess the procedures and relationships in this area. The input by individuals is listened to and acted upon making the time spent worthwhile and of value to all.

“I whole heartedly recommend others to join in with this scheme bringing understanding of issues which need addressing by Councils work, may be resolving something close to your location, and the knowledge of making a contribution on your part.”

Calling all Melton Borough Council Tenants and Leaseholders!

Currently we offer Your Choice sessions at Parkside and via Zoom if you're unable to attend in person.

However, we want to start sending out more newsletters by email, that will include tenancy updates, planned maintenance and repairs updates. Alongside this, we want to offer online surveys to understand how you believe we are performing.

If you would like to get more involved please contact Customer Services on 01664 502502 and ask for our Tenant Engagement and Service Improvement Lead or email Housingconsultation@melton.gov.uk with your contact details and we'll be in touch.



Gretton Court refurb



We are committed to updating the kitchens, bathrooms and windows at Gretton Court this year.

Members of the tenant group 'Your Choice' recently asked to visit Gretton Court to see the modernisation work being carried out to kitchens and bathrooms.

This project was started as a result of a resident consultation event with the existing tenants, who felt that Gretton Court would be a more desirable place to live if the residents had their own bathing facilities and that flats were modernised.

Members of our "Your Choice" group gave very positive feedback about the new kitchen and bathroom facilities and were pleased to see that we are proactively investing in tenants homes, and delivering against pledges made in the HRA Asset Management Plan.

The work to upgrade kitchen and bathroom facilities is progressing well, with 9 upgraded so far. The work is expected to complete around March 2024.



Home contents insurance

As a landlord we are responsible for insuring the structure of your home but this doesn't include what's inside, such as your furniture and personal possessions.

Home contents insurance covers your possessions against things like fire, theft and other risks, such as accidental damage. As a tenant, you are responsible for your possessions and choosing to take out home contents insurance to cover them.

Aviva

As our tenant you are eligible for a home contents insurance scheme, created just for Melton Borough Council, starting from just £1.33 a month for £4,000 standard cover. There's no long-term commitment, it can be cancelled at any time and there's no excess to pay if you need to make a claim.

If you are wanting to use Aviva to cover your contents, you can contact them on 01962 892086.



Having home contents insurance can't prevent floods, thefts or fires from happening, but it can help you get back on your feet

Call: 01962 892086

www.melton.gov.uk/contentsinsurance

Connect: with your local housing officer



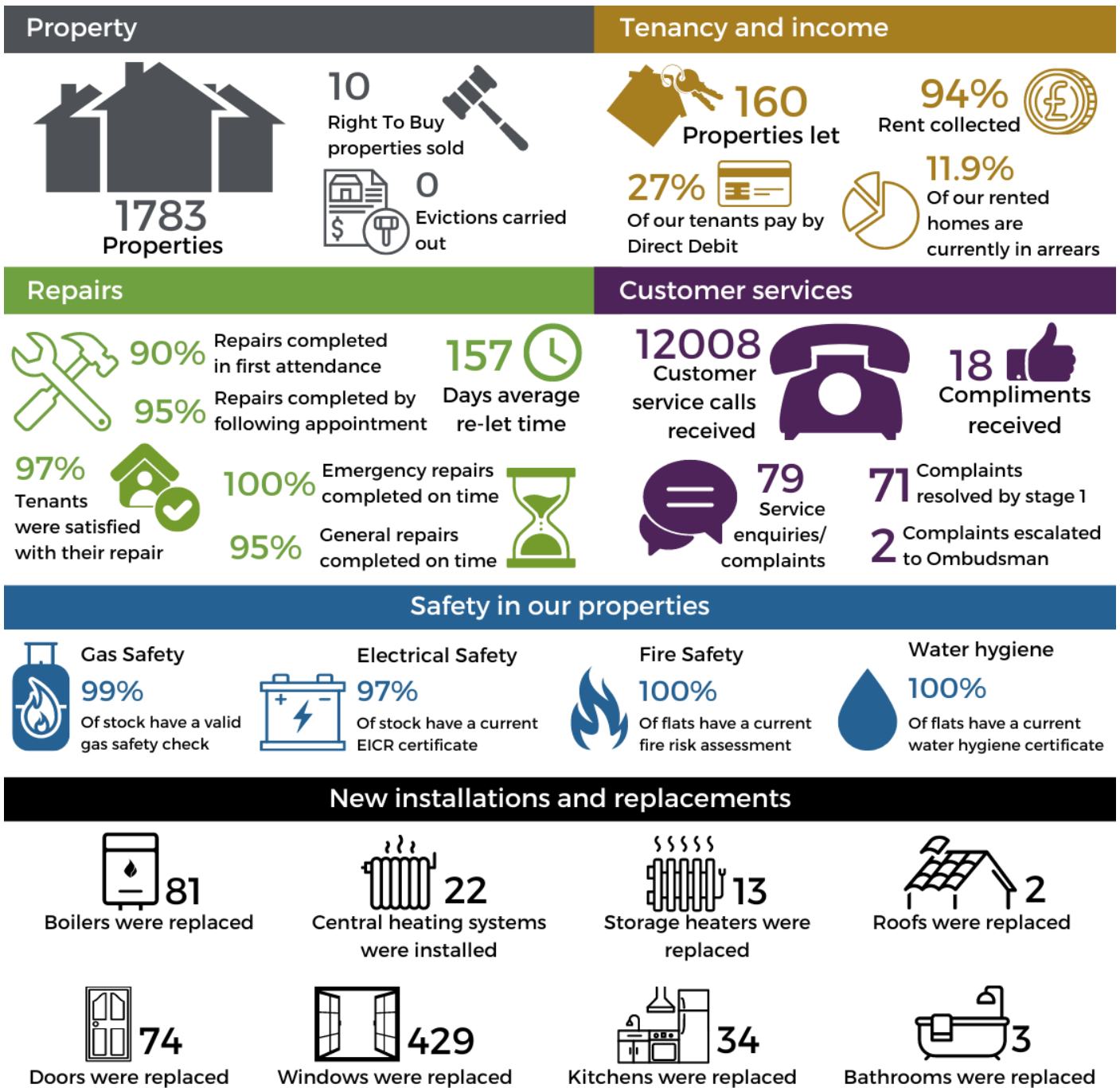
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Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey

A sample survey of our tenants is being completed in late September/early October 2023 as part of our preparations for the new Housing Regulation arrangements being introduced by the Government in April 2024. The survey is being completed with support from Housemark, the nationally recognised housing service benchmarking and consultancy provider, so they will be able to help us interpret the results and set our proposed agenda for responding to what you, our tenants, tell us. Most of the questions are pre set by regulations so our results can be compared with other social landlords, who must also complete the survey if they have more than 1000 properties. The results together with our proposed action plan will be shared with you as soon as they are ready, so we can work together to produce a plan for the future that reflects the your priorities. For more information, please contact Doug Stother, the Tenancy Services Manager, on 01664 502502.

Performance stats for 2022/23



Looking to the future - Preparing for new Housing Regulations

As part of ongoing journey of improvement being completed in the Housing Service we are preparing for the introduction of the Governments new social housing regulation arrangements in April 2024. The current system is based on self-regulation, relying on Landlords to report themselves if they are in breach of the required Standards. Under the new arrangements, we will have to routinely supply data to the regulator about our performance as a landlord and complete an annual Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) survey using set questions. There will also be a formal inspection of the service at some point over the next 4 years, with a grading assessment afterwards. Preparations are going well and we will continue to keep tenants involved in our preparations through regular newsletter updates and other tenant engagement forums and meetings. If you would like any further details please contact Lesley Armstrong, Customer Engagement and Service Improvement Lead, on 01664 502502.



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