

Tenant Annual Report

2022-2023



A message from our Chief Executive, Stephen Hills



Last year, I had the pleasure and privilege of being appointed Chief Executive of CHS Group after joining the organisation in 2018.

2022/23 proved a difficult year due to the cost of living and energy crisis but despite these economic pressures, we continued to invest in your homes and services, spending £4.8m on maintaining your homes including £3m on installing new bathrooms, WCs, heating systems and windows and doors.

We were acutely aware of the pressures many of our tenants were facing due to these global issues and so a priority for us was ensuring that our Money Matters team supported as many of you as possible and help you all achieve a better quality of life. You can read more about this on page 10 of our Annual Report, but I am so proud of the income that we have been able to secure thanks to our team's hard work and dedication.

Throughout these projects, and at the heart of everything we do at CHS Group, is a focus on listening to our tenants to understand your needs. So, as always, we are keen to hear your feedback on our various initiatives, plans and projects outlined in this report. I therefore invite you to share your ideas and thoughts with me or your housing or support officer to ensure we continuously improve our services. Simply put, your voice matters, and we are here to listen to you.

I hope you enjoy reading our Annual Report.

Stephen Hills, Chief Executive - CHS Group

Our year in numbers

Throughout the year, we've helped thousands of you across Cambridgeshire by providing high quality, good value homes and services with easy access to support. Here are a few of our highlights, further details can be found within the report.

Lettings



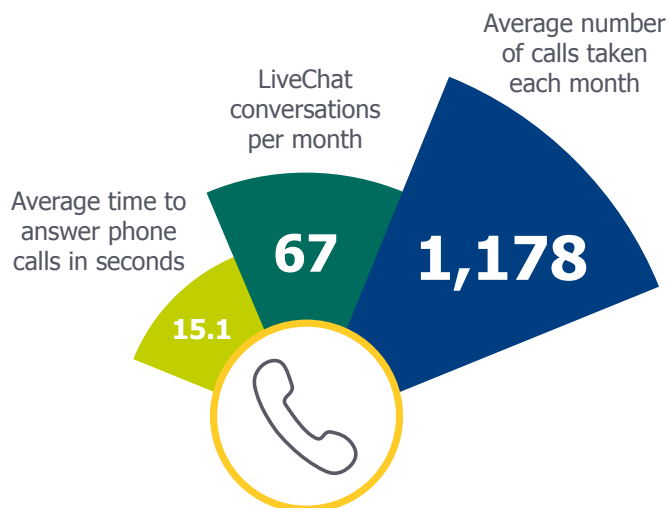
153
lettings

21

mutual exchanges



Customer services



Repairs & maintenance

£1.8M

spent on maintaining
your homes

5,371

repairs completed

£3M

home improvements

474

homes fitted with new kitchens,
bathrooms, heating systems,
windows and doors

Support



Nearly £400,000 additional income
delivered to CHS households thanks to
our Housing and Money Matters teams

149 people helped through our
Supported Housing services



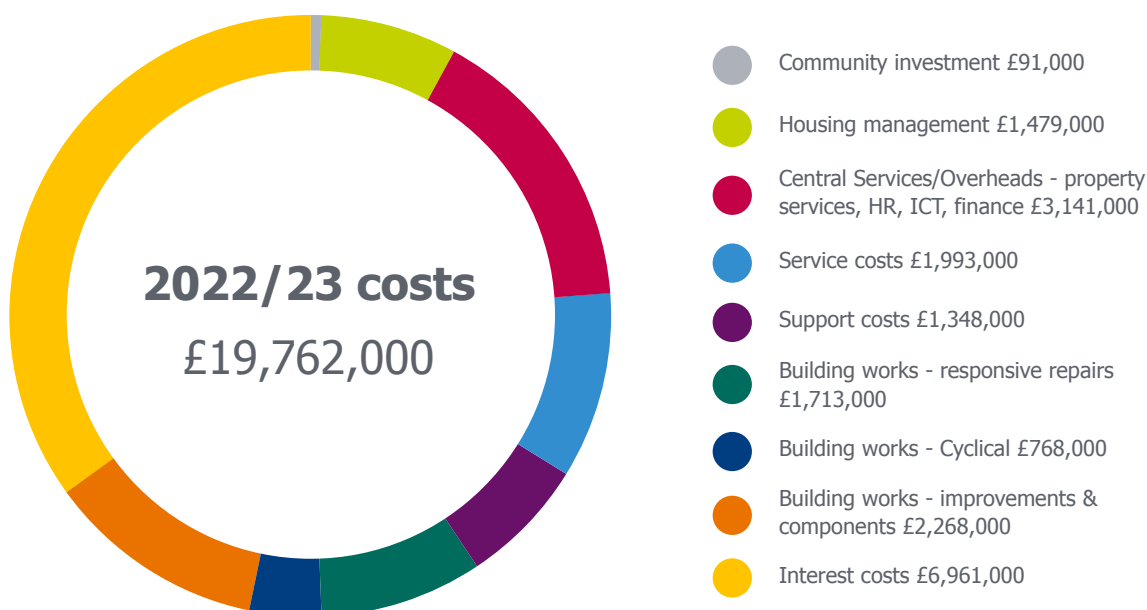
1 in 6



tenants receiving support from our
money advice team

Investing in your home and services

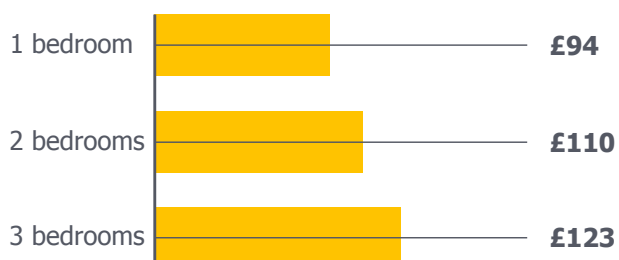
In 2022/2023, we significantly invested in our homes and services to create better opportunities for you, our tenants, and to achieve our future plans.



Rents

Our general needs homes are mainly made up of social rented homes, but we are now seeing an increase in Affordable rent homes. As many of you may know, our general needs homes provide housing for individuals and families who can't afford to privately rent or buy in the current market. All general needs rents are set in accordance with the rent calculation in the Government's Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing. Social rents are normally significantly lower than Affordable rents as Affordable rents are determined in line with the current market.

Average weekly social rent



Average weekly Affordable rent



The Regulator of Social Housing's view of how well CHS is meeting regulatory standards

Like all housing associations, CHS is regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing. A strong regulatory rating gives assurance to you, lenders and business partners. The regulator sets standards that we are expected to meet and annually carries out rigorous assessments of how we are managing our business. This includes checking our levels of financial risk, our rent setting and how we are delivering value for money. On 29 June 2022, the Regulator published the results of its in-depth assessment, confirming that CHS continued to hold the highest grade possible, G1, for our governance and V2 for financial viability, which reflected our continued ambition to deliver a diverse range of support services for vulnerable people. The full text of the RSH Narrative Regulatory Judgement for CHS is [available here](#).

Housing and Customer Services

Our Housing and Customer Services team manages over 2,200 general needs and sheltered homes for low-cost rent, and 450 shared ownership homes. We cover seven local authority areas across Cambridgeshire, West Suffolk and North Essex, and provide a wide range of homes for families, single people and couples. Here is the year in numbers:

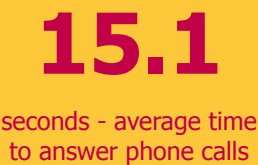
Case management



Lettings

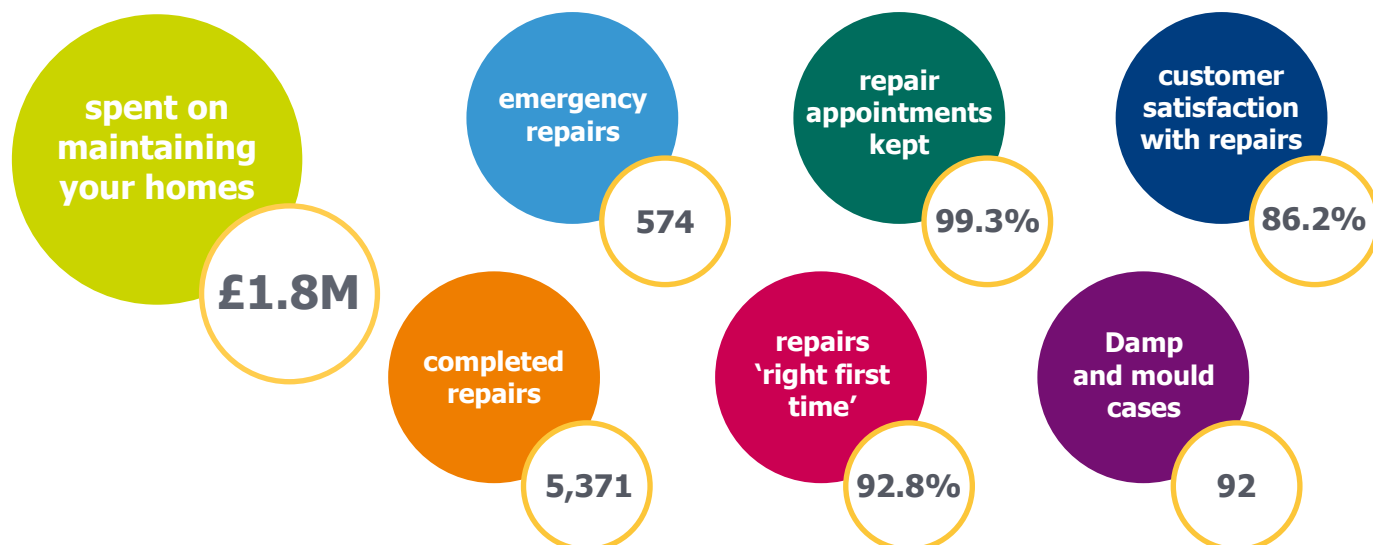


Customer services



Your home

Throughout 22/23, we undertook extensive repairs and upgrades across your homes to ensure we deliver the high-quality services that you want and expect.



Home improvements



60
new heating systems

137
new kitchens

110
new window and doors

167
new bathrooms and WCs

Compliance



95%
electrical safety checks completed

93%
fire risk assessments due were completed

98%
asbestos surveys due were completed

100%
legionella tests due were completed



Case study

Through a proactive drive to identify issues with damp and mould, our Property Services team contacted tenants in January 2023 to ask if they needed our help with the issue. One customer who responded had a surveyor visit their home and a problem with mould was identified in the bathroom, kitchen and the back bedroom where the customer's two sons slept.

Orders were raised immediately, and new humidistat extractor fans were installed in the bathroom and kitchen. In addition, a window overhaul was carried out in the bedroom, and mould treatment was applied to the affected areas. After the work was completed, the customer contacted us to highlight an improvement, saying:

"The new fans have made a huge difference in the bathroom, and I no longer have problems in there. I feel much more confident that I won't have the same issues as before. Fosters attended quickly and I was pleased with their work and CHS' response. I feel much more prepared for winter and happier at home. The newsletter from CHS also clearly explained how we can tackle condensation issues which I have been doing."



Domestic Abuse – Jo’s Story

We were so pleased to have been the first housing provider in East Anglia to have been recredited by Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) in 2023. The most important outcome is that some of you may feel you can approach us in the knowledge that we can support you to regain control of your lives. To highlight our commitment to tackling domestic abuse, we wanted to share a story from one of our tenants called Jo.

One of our Housing Officers received an anxious call from Jo who told her that the police had attended her home about domestic abuse. The Housing Officer offered a lock change at the property, although Jo said she did not require it as she intended to move.

Our Housing Officer continued to engage with Jo and provided her with contact details of Women’s Aid. Over time, it became clear that Jo wasn’t ready to discuss her housing options or what had happened. Our Housing Officer then received a call from Jo asking if she was available to visit. The Housing Officer saw Jo the same day, who was visibly upset and struggling with her mental health. She said the flat was extremely triggering for her and she didn’t know who to talk to, but that she needed help.

Our Housing Officer identified that the abuse was physical, sexual, emotional and verbal. The Housing Officer then completed a Homelink application form with Jo and encouraged her to contact her GP, which Jo did whilst she was there. Jo was also put on the waiting list for free counselling through her GP.

Jo confirmed that she was struggling financially as the perpetrator had taken out a business loan in her name so a Money Matters referral was also made to support Jo with debts. Following the conversation, Jo was offered a new home through CHS, and after moving into her new property, she told us it was a massive weight off her shoulders.

This case demonstrates the length of time sometimes needed before someone is ready to seek help and that we need to remind them that we’re here for them whenever they’re ready. It also highlights the ongoing impact of trauma caused by domestic abuse, which we can also support when the abuse itself is no longer the main risk.

Your views

We take a proactive approach to listening to our tenants and wider network, and are proud to use this feedback to continually improve our services.



STAR (Survey of Tenants and Residents)

Our STAR Surveys are a way to measure the satisfaction of our customers and every tenant is asked to complete the survey every two years. This year, we received 351 replies and the response rate was 25%. Thank you to all of you for taking part.



Your views (continued)

We were disappointed to learn that the overall satisfaction of tenants has decreased by 3.9% compared to the previous year. The main reasons you gave for this reduced satisfaction were:



- Quality of kitchens, bathrooms, doors and windows
- The quality of repairs services and work paid for through service charges
- Issues not being taken into account and it taking too long to resolve them
- Complaints not being resolved
- Having to chase CHS for information

We prioritise listening to our tenants to understand your needs and offering services which meet those needs. The following actions are underway or included in our plans;

- ✓ Set clear priorities for maintaining homes, in particular doors, windows, bathrooms, kitchens.
- ✓ Review our meetings with Foster to actively and promptly manage complaints and challenge poor performance.
- ✓ Ensure our Housing Officers return to the pre-pandemic level of home visits.
- ✓ Use the results of the review of customer engagement and the CHS communications strategy to improve our overall communication with tenants and shared owners.
- ✓ Review how we follow up on any individual issues raised by you so that they always have a quick response.
- ✓ Provide a new specialised officer to help improve our communication and service delivery with shared owners.

Complaints

We received 24 formal complaints during 2022 to 2023 – 11 about housing management and 13 about maintenance issues. The following learning points included:

- Development of a new anti-social behaviour case management checklist so that our Housing Team has a consistent approach when managing cases.
- Ensuring that new developments have been handed over to a management company and the service is being provided, before management company service charges are levied.
- Online repairs reporting has been introduced to support our contractors with accurately raising customer jobs.

Your community

317

CHS tenants and 719 people in the Cambridgeshire community engaged providing them with supermarket vouchers, recycled furniture, new white goods and income maximisation as part of the Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme (CLAS).

65%

engagement rate from households we proactively approached with support and advice with cost of living pressures.

30%

increase in the number of you receiving money advice from us, 1 in 6 tenants being supported.

Nearly

£400,000

additional income delivered to CHS households thanks to our Housing and Money Matters teams.

Community investment is an important part of how we develop and deliver sustainable services for you and the wider community. CLAS supports people facing unexpected financial difficulties and CHS leads a partnership of local charitable organisations to manage CLAS. The scheme provides information, advice and assistance and enables people to improve their finances, better support themselves and succeed in the long term. This could include:

- Low cost re-used and refurbished household items
- Clothing
- Food vouchers

There has been a significant decline in income protection for tenants as disability benefits were not reassessed to their usual frequency during the pandemic, but they started to pick up again in 22/23 (+£50k from 21/22).

	Extra £ in pockets	Those in training or work through our advice	Those now online through our advice
Tenants	£391,507	92	44
Community	£5,515,082	102	12

CLAS Performance Data

	Number of clients/ difference on previous year	Referrals to support services/ difference on previous year	Uplift in well-being/ difference on previous year	Number of orgs engaged with us/ difference on previous year	Value added/ difference on previous year
2022-23	1,086 ↓ 4.5%	274 ↑ 136%	£8,090 ↑ 3%	275 ↑ 5.8%	£34,000 ↑ 30.8%

New Horizons

The 'New Horizons' project, funded by the National Lottery 'Building Better Opportunities' grant, closed at the end of March 2023 when the funding came to an end. In its six and a half years of operation, it interacted with more than 820 people across Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and West Norfolk. The aims of the project were to help people make sense of their money, get online, and get closer to the job market, via up to 20 hours of one-to-one support from a personal coach. Overall, the project helped 154 participants into education or learning, 93 started job searching, and 65 people gained a job. It stayed in place throughout Covid (adapting the coaching to be by telephone when meeting face-to-face wasn't possible).

A crucial element of the coaching was its help in reducing stress (often financial or debt related) and to help raise people's self-confidence to plan for the future and the possibilities of work. In the words of one project participant: *"I had a lot of debts and had recently had to stop working. I had no income, was not in a good place mentally, felt lost and was scared for the future. My coach helped me deal with debtors and coached me step by step to get benefits reinstated. He helped me learn skills needed to budget and manage my money. With everything else under control and my confidence high, I was able to push myself to find employment. I got a paid job working two days a week. The project has helped me get my life back."*

Investing in support services

Funding grants received

The Young Parent Project and Corona House were granted funding through the Cambridge City Council Homelessness Prevention Fund and Community Fund to support work with young parents and homeless women. CHS provides housing and support for eight young parents and their babies at the Young Parent Project and for six homeless women at Corona House, as well as 30 women in the wider community.

Evelyn Trust has provided funds for a part-time Support Worker for three years to deliver the

Corona Community activity and support programme. This includes consulting on, planning, promoting, delivering and evaluating group activities to the Corona Community women. The programme contains a diverse mixture of creative, outdoor, indoor, health-related, social, leisure and cultural activity.

Cambridgeshire County Council funded therapeutic arts activities for young people and leaving packs, which include basic household utensils, towels, and bedding, when they move on from Wheatsheaf Close, our Ely Young People's housing project.

CHS has been involved in the Young Futures Partnership (YFP) since January 2023 and it houses and provides support to six young people who are at risk of homelessness.

For example, J has received support from YFP with the following:

- Budgeting for rent and other living expenses
- Applying for housing benefit
- Engaging with his work coach and considering employment possibilities
- Attending regular key worker sessions
- Moving house and ordering furniture
- Applying for his birth certificate, a provisional driving licence and a National Insurance number
- Opening a bank account
- Managing relationships with housemates and staff

As a result of the support given, J has built trust with staff and has shown great insight into his own behaviours and motivations. He is starting to see that moving forward at his pace is valuable. J is starting to think about moving on from supported accommodation and has started his Homelink application.

Supported housing services

149

people helped through Supported Housing services enabling 50 people to move on into their own homes and 45 people to start a job or training course.

At CHS, we use a methodology developed by the Housing Association Charitable Trust (HACT) to better understand the social value delivered across our support services.

By capturing the uplifts in wellbeing, we are able to identify, measure and place a financial value on all the outcomes achieved by our tenants and customers e.g. getting a job or finding a new home.

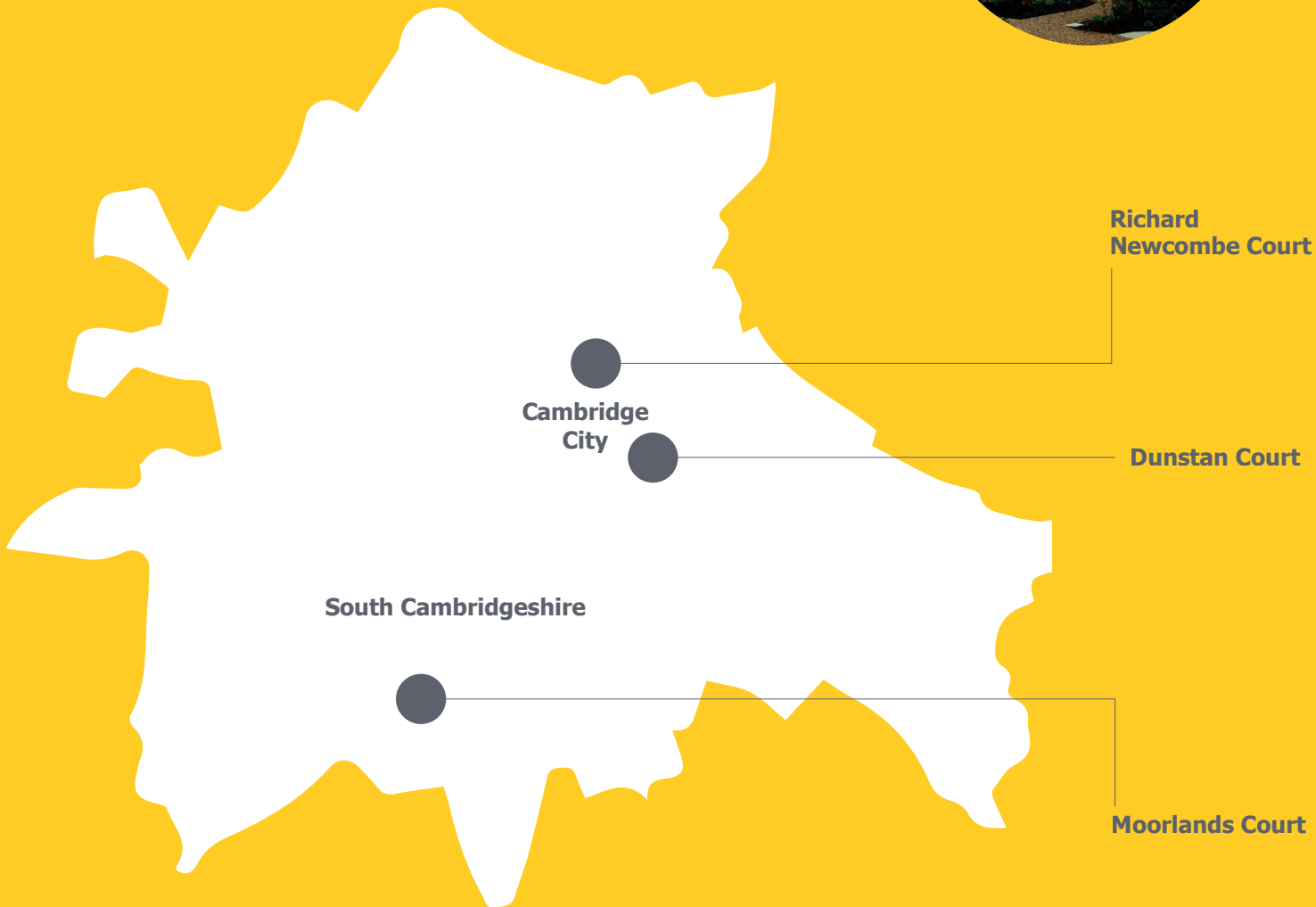
During 22/23, £1.3m social value was generated in the seven CHS Supported Housing services. The top five outcomes across all services were:

- Residents moving in from 'rough sleeping' or 'temporary accommodation' are now back to pre-pandemic levels.
- Improvement in 'not worried about crime'.
- Relief from depression – slight increase on last year as people are more aware and have confidence in talking about their mental health.
- Improvement in 'overall good health'.
- Increased participation in tenant groups and meetings.



Extra Care services

During the year, we learnt that Cambridgeshire County Council had awarded care contracts at Dunstan Court, Moorlands Court and Richard Newcombe Court to another provider, called Radis Community Care. This provided choice to those tenants, whose care is funded by the local authority, about who provides their care during the day. We have worked hard to build good working relations with Radis to ensure continuity of care for those tenants who chose them and we continue to deliver care to those tenants who have chosen to remain with CHS.



The Tenant Voice

We value the involvement of our voluntary tenants who sit on our Tenant Committee and Panels and play an important role in sharing the tenant voice about our services. If you would like to have your say and help shape the way CHS runs its services, we have lots of different ways you can get involved including online and phone surveys as well as online and in person meetings.



For more information, **please contact** Laura Papanikolaou, Customer Involvement Officer, on lpap@chsgroup.org.uk or **07540 122624**.

Here is a review of each committee's achievements in 2022/23 written by its members.

Tenant Committee

2022 proved to be a difficult year for everyone: Covid was still around and the cost of living crisis dominated the news. The Money Matters team was amazing and helped many people. July saw Jackie Taylor step down as Chair after she was appointed to the CHS Board as Tenant Board member. An extra meeting was held in August to elect the new Chair which saw Jane Bird return to the role. October saw us thank Debbie Whitfield, Head of Property Services, for all her help over many years as she left CHS in December. In January 2023, we welcomed Tina Warren as the new Head of Property Services. It was agreed that that Tenant Committee would participate in a TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) Smart Review to evaluate our customer engagement offer.

By Jackie Taylor and Jane Bird, Chairs of the Tenant Committee



Customer Complaints Panel

The Complaints Panel updated the Complaints Policy and completed a second self-assessment for the Housing Ombudsman. We reviewed three very different complaints including one Starter Tenancy appeal, one Gasway complaint and one long standing gardening complaint. Two complaints were upheld with the complainants receiving compensation and the third is currently with the Housing Ombudsman. Lessons are learnt during the complaints process and by having tenants involved throughout, CHS can make improvements to its services and procedures.

By The Customer Complaints Panel



Tenant Scrutiny Panel

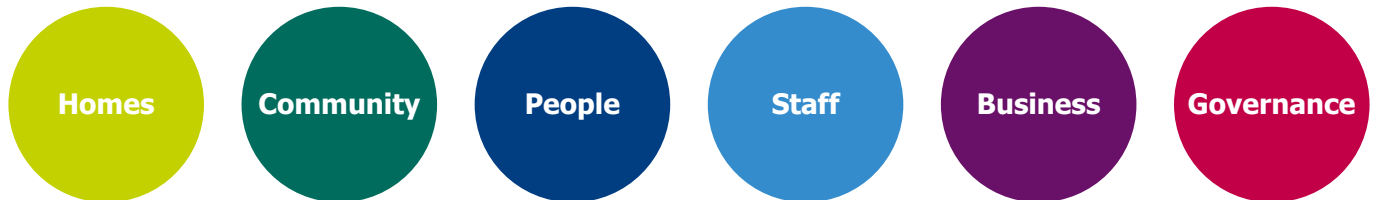
The Scrutiny Panel looked at the Gasway responsive repairs service. Some panel members talked to tenants who were extremely helpful in answering questions which formed the basis of the report. Tenants were unhappy if they weren't communicated with or if their repair took too long. The full report can be found on the website. Scrutiny Panel members Jane Bird and Trish Laver went to an informative TPAS conference for two days in Leicester. Laura Papanikolaou, Customer Involvement Officer at CHS, and Trish also attended a Scrutiny Conference day in Nottingham. Following a report by the Housing Ombudsman on damp and mould in 2021, CHS asked the panel to look at the damp and mould procedures they have and the project began in January 2023.

By Trish Laver, Chair of the Scrutiny Panel

Our priorities for 2024

Our emerging Corporate Plan has six themes and our objectives for the year ahead are the following, some of which are carried forward from 22/23. We are investing in these new ideas and perspectives so that we can ultimately deliver better services for you, now and in the future.

Corporate Plan



Homes

- Drive value for money in our repairs and turnaround of empty properties, whilst managing the impact of damp and mould, and fire safety.
- Procure the gas servicing contract (2024) and repairs and maintenance service (2025), ensuring we maintain high levels of customer service.
- Complete next steps to achieve Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating C by 2028 to ensure that all our homes have a good standard of energy efficiency, and share our plans with you, adding to the planned and cyclical work that we do.
- Engage you in communicating building safety and ensuring processes, people and contracts are in place to deliver high levels of compliance.
- Complete the review of the Asset Management Strategy, providing a longer-term plan for how we invest in our homes in the future.

Community

- Cost of living pressures – continue targeted support through additional part-time post, wider communication, bid to Big Lottery.
- Standardise Community Support Services lease contracts with Partners.
- Develop a structured approach to outreach to support a wide range of delivery for CHS and the community.
- Develop funding partnerships to help sustain some of our Community Support Services.
- Deliver transition phase for Fenland Young Peoples Service.

People

- Establish new staff role to strengthen leasehold management services.
- Follow up from TPAS smart review – update the Customer Engagement Strategy.
- Embed the new Customer Feedback Panel.
- Review resources for customer engagement.
- Maintain momentum on domestic abuse good practice, working with partners.

Staff

- Maintain front line staff levels while making overhead savings.

Business

- Conclude sale of residential care homes. (This has now been completed)
- Extra Care: follow through on development of new business to regrow business over next five years. Initial review in year two.
- Monitor regulatory guidance on rent levels after September inflation rates published.
- Strengthen communication with customers in the communications strategy.

Governance

- Ensure the Tenant Voice is effectively represented in the decision-making process of the organisation.
- Embedding of excellent governance practices to ensure good quality decision making and strong management of risk.



Head Office

CHS Group, Endurance House, Chivers Way Histon, Cambridge CB24 9ZR



General Enquiries

0300 111 3555



Minicom

01223 713784



Email

info@chsgroup.org.uk



Web

www.chsgroup.org.uk



Repairs

0300 111 3555
(24 hours for
emergency repairs)



Email

repairs@chsgroup.org.uk