



News

£250m investment in council's housing stock

This week (12 Feb), Cabinet Members reviewed plans to invest more than £250m in raising the standard of council housing for local families.

The plans are detailed in a new housing Asset Management Strategy, which outlines how the Council will work to make sure that current and future tenants and residents benefit from homes that are healthy, safe and secure.

The funding will result in work being carried out based on a prioritised list of council homes most in need of investment. These homes will be considered for work that includes refreshing bathrooms, central heating systems, kitchens, roofs, windows, doors and other important maintenance activity.

To fund this investment, the Council plans to borrow up to an additional £152m between 2025 and 2030. The remainder of the funding required for this investment will be met through the Housing Revenue Account, which is a ring-fenced budget where rent from tenants is held. The rent money collected by the council can only be spent on the management and maintenance of tenants' homes.

Tenants should continue to request housing repairs through [the Council website](#).

Read more about the plans [on our website](#).

Self-referral to the Regulator of Social Housing update

As part of our commitment to improve our housing services and support to tenants and leaseholders, we referred ourselves to the Regulator of Social Housing in September 2024 to seek advice on how we are performing against new regulatory standards.

The decision to self-refer reflected our commitment to transparency, accountability and continuous improvement. Since then, the Council has had regular contact with the Regulator which confirmed at the end of November 2024 that it would begin the first of its planned programme of four-yearly landlord inspections.

Following a further period of evidence gathering, the Regulator of Social Housing have now completed their on-site inspection of the Council's housing services.

This included observing a Tenant Scrutiny Panel meeting and separately talking to a group of tenants about the experience of living in a Council-owned home.

To find out more about the process, please visit our dedicated [FAQs page](#).

Rent and Service Charges for 2025/2026

From April, rents may increase by a maximum of 2.7%, subject to Council approval.

The Government uses the baseline figure suggested by the September Consumer Price Index (CPI) of 1.7%, plus 1% to fix rent rises. This is enforced by the [Government 2020 Rent Standard](#).

This is a cap, so it is the maximum amount that we can increase rents, although rents could be set at rates below this level. Practically this means a property currently paying £90.22 per week would pay £92.66 per week from April.

Tenants will receive a letter in March 2025, showing the increase to the rent and any service charge they pay.

Service charges, associated with housing functions, such as multi-storey services, neighbourhood wardens' services and sheltered housing services are calculated by dividing the annual cost of the service by the number of properties receiving the service divided by the number of weeks.

Garage and parking space rents will increase by 5%.

If you have any comments on the proposed rent increase please e-mail them to getinvolved@swindon.gov.uk.

There are some frequently asked questions on the proposed rent increase [here](#).

Updates from the Tenant Scrutiny Panel

Over the last year the Tenant Scrutiny Panel has been very busy reviewing 25 new and revised policies, to make sure that they are written in a way that

makes sense to our customers.

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel works alongside the Council's Housing Services team to review how the service is delivered. They gather evidence, investigate and make recommendations for improvements.

If you are keen to make a difference or would like to find out more about the Tenant Scrutiny Panel, contact the Tenant Engagement team via getinvolved@swindon.gov.uk.

Tenant Academy

New course: Building DIY confidence and skills

Are you looking to develop your DIY skills?

The Tenant Academy has courses running this year covering a range of topics to help you with home improvements.

The DIY course has six sessions:

- Woodwork – making a picture frame
- Wall preparation prior to paint and papering walls
- How to wallpaper
- Hanging picture frames, shelves, curtain rails and repairing cupboard doors and hinges
- Stripping wall paper, repairing the wall and changing toilet seats
- Plumbing – looking at causes of a leaky tap, how to unblock your sink, general household plumbing e.g. unblocking the U bend

Employability courses

They are also running employability courses for those looking to get into work. These courses will cover:

- CV / Cover Letter support
- Interview support (preparation skills, mock interviews)
- Identifying skills and discussing different career paths
- Upskilling through signposting to courses and training opportunities
- General advice on next steps including training and apprenticeships

If you are interested in attending any of these courses, please follow the link to complete [our application form](#).

You can also like and follow the Tenant Academy Facebook page which will have updates on what we are up to, and information on courses: [Tenant Academy | Swindon | Facebook](#)

Quarterly Steering Group meeting

The Tenant Academy holds a quarterly Steering Group meeting, giving tenants opportunity to see what projects they are working on and to discuss any new ideas.

The meetings are held at the Meadowcroft Community Centre in Stratton. If you are interested in attending please contact the Tenant Academy at TenantAcademy@swindon.gov.uk.

We can help with transport if you have difficulty getting to the venue. Meetings are held quarterly and the next one is on Friday, 4 April from 12.00pm until 1.30pm.

Complaints

Know your rights, know how to complain



Everyone deserves a home that is safe, secure, and well maintained.

If you live in social housing, your landlord is responsible for fixing issues including damp and mould, leaks, broken locks or changes you need to your home if you're disabled. They can also help with anti-social behaviour, like noisy neighbours.

Know the steps to get an issue fixed.

Step 1. **Report** it to your landlord.

Step 2. If it is not fixed, **complain** through your landlord's complaint process.

Step 3. Where necessary, **escalate** your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman.

The Housing Ombudsman is impartial, will investigate fairly and can order your landlord to act. Once the Housing Ombudsman has ruled against a landlord, they must show they are taking action within 6 to 8 weeks.

To report a repair please use [My Housing Tenancy](#).

Learning from complaints

We know how important it is that we learn from the complaints that tenants make. Our Complaints Quality and Learning group meets monthly and recently reviewed two complaints to better understand how our team should reply appropriately to complaints.

We heard feedback from tenants that they would expect to see more information in the response back to the complainant about the investigation of the complaint.

The group considered how managers review evidence as part of the investigation. This includes considering whether a review of file notes was undertaken or if a telephone recording is used. By sharing in the response the type of evidence that is used, tenants will be reassured that their complaint has been appropriately handled.

As a result of the conversation, our team will be reminded of the importance of considering all evidence available to them and describing in the complaint response what they have used as evidence.

To find out how to make a complaint to SBC Housing please [use this link](#).

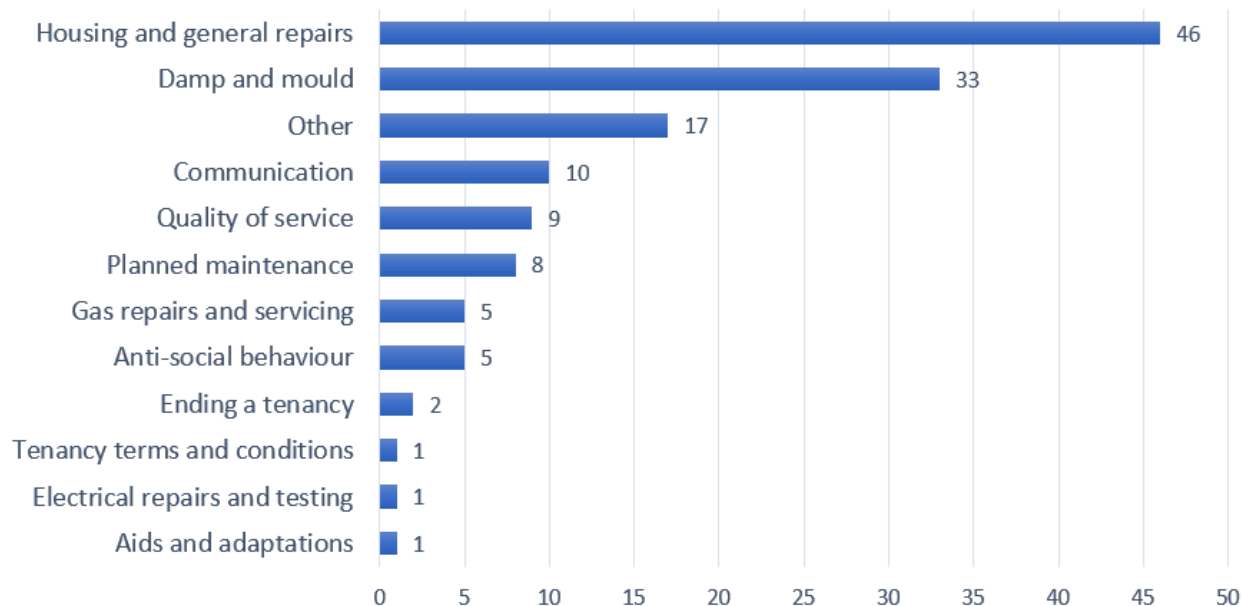
Quarter three complaints numbers

Latest Complaint information October to December 2024:

Stage 1 complaints received October – December 2024:

Stage One	Number of complaints
Closed within 10-day target	126
Not closed within 10-day target	12
Total Stage One	138

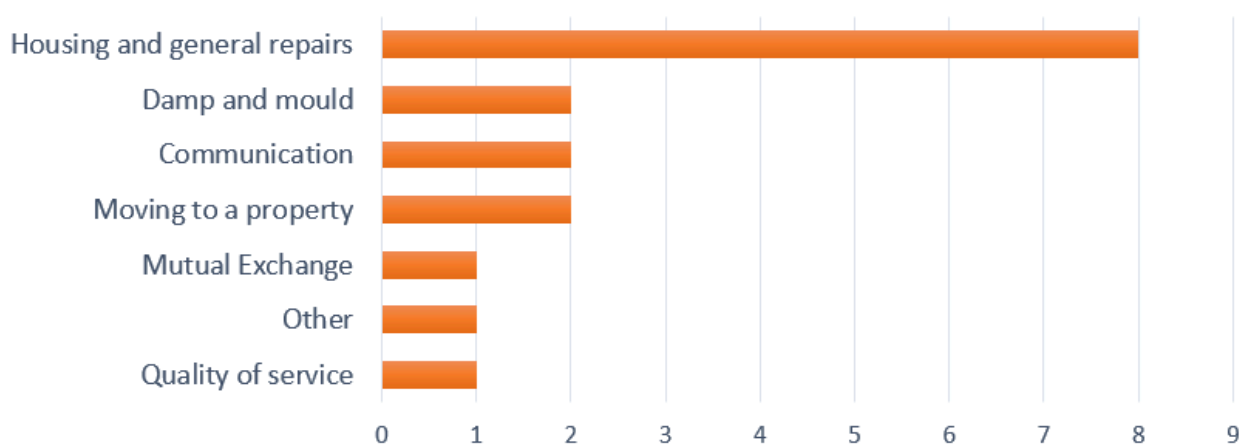
Stage One complaints received by theme



Stage 2 complaints received October – December 2024

Stage Two	Number of complaints
Closed within 20-day target	16
Not closed within 20-day target	1
Total Stage Two	17

Stage Two complaints received by theme



Good News Stories

Behind Every Door



As part of an approach called 'Behind Every Door', Housing Officers have visited more than 180 council tenants to ensure they are receiving the support they need.

The visits, which began in November 2024, offer an opportunity for the Council to support and resolve many complex issues that tenants may face.

The scheme sees Housing Officers knock on the doors of tenants across the Borough to ask about their living conditions and their welfare needs.

In one instance, a Council employee established that the tenant needed some additional support and was able to discuss a referral to the Warm and Safe team, help for the tenant to clear congested bedrooms so that they could be used as intended and advice on contacting Citizens Advice Swindon for a benefits check. The team will speak with the tenant on a quarterly basis.

[Read more](#) on our website.

Repairs to Hannington Close

When Michael Sloan, our Cyclical Planned Maintenance Officer, visited Penhill, the poor condition of the buildings in Hannington Close was noticed. Michael then arranged the cleaning of the gutters at the shops and flats. See before and after pictures below.



Advice for Tenants

Your safety: lithium-ion battery devices

We have seen an increase in the number of lithium-ion battery linked fires across the UK in recent years, with some of these fires sadly leading to people losing their lives.

Following a request from Wiltshire Police we will be introducing a Standard Additional Tenancy Clause for new tenants stating that they are no longer allowed to charge lithium-ion battery devices indoors for the safety of all residents.

For more safety information on e-devices, [follow the link here.](#)

Quick links

- [Contact your Housing Officer](#)
- You can [reschedule repairs using My Housing Tenancy](#) or ring [01793 445500](#)
- If you're not satisfied with the way a housing service has been delivered, find out [how to make a complaint](#)
- [Annual Report to tenants](#)
- Join over 2,200 other tenants on our dedicated [Facebook page](#)

Contribute and help us improve this newsletter

Would you like to write an article for Tenant Focus about something happening where you live or to promote something that you feel passionate about?
Please let us know by [emailing us](#).

What do you think of this newsletter?



Very
unsatisfied



Unsatisfied



Neutral



Satisfied



Very
satisfied



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