

October 2024

TENANT NEWS

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**CELEBRATING THIS
YEAR'S GARDEN
COMPETITION
WINNERS**

**HELPING THE
VICTIMS OF
DOMESTIC ABUSE**

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**GIVE US YOUR
VIEWS**





We want to hear what you think

As a tenant or leaseholder, we want to know what you think about the service we run and how we can get better. We realise people have very busy lives so may not always have the time, they might be shy about having their say or think it is a waste of time because they won't be listened to.

To overcome these barriers and get as many people from as many different backgrounds as possible to get involved in a way that suits them, we have come up with lots of different ways you can work with us.

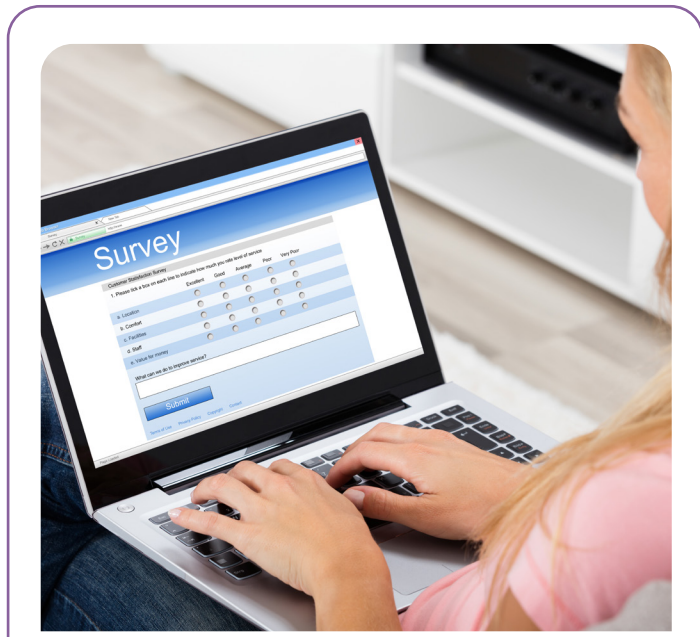
We want to hear if these are the right ways to tackle this issue. If you have different ideas that we may have missed or if you think we should do things differently, then please let us know.

Since we first set up our tenant engagement framework in 2021, we've developed various ways for you to get involved, including:

- **Resident Engagement Panel (REP):** your voice in shaping policies and decisions
- **Independent Living Forum (ILF):** focused on the needs of tenants living independently and in sheltered housing
- **Disability Forum:** dedicated to ensuring accessibility and inclusivity for all
- **Community Champions:** helping to lead community projects and initiatives
- **Armchair Advisors:** sharing your feedback from the comfort of your home
- **Community events and estate inspections:** joining us in improving our neighbourhoods
- **Annual garden competition:** an opportunity to show off your green fingers, celebrate your creativity, and win prizes!



Views from the Resident Engagement Panel



Time for a review

Please take a few minutes to complete our survey either via the QR code below or by via our website at canterbury.gov.uk/tenantengagementreview. This helps us to help you participate and have your say on what matters.



You could win a £50 Amazon voucher if you complete this short survey before the deadline of 06 January 2025.

If you need a paper copy of the survey, or if you have a need or disability that means you need the document (or aspects of it) in a different format, please contact consultations@canterbury.gov.uk

Sheila King, Chair



The past six months have been a busy period ensuring our commitment to monitor the performance of the council. The Resident Engagement Panel has been working in collaboration with the team to scrutinise and update several policies including:

Complaints procedures - to be more transparent and have a clearer understanding of how long it should take for any complaint to be resolved.

Anti-Social Behaviour Policy – the forthcoming update in policy has come from learnings of recent cases in the district and how this integrates with various agencies including the police. We have worked with the council to ensure an improvement of procedures is implemented to ensure we all live in a safe community.

Reactive Repairs and Voids

We've been in discussions with Cardo, the new repairs contractor, to understand the change in repairs responsibility for tenants and the potential impact. Cardo also supported five community events we hosted in the heart of some of our estate areas to listen to what important changes you wanted in your district.

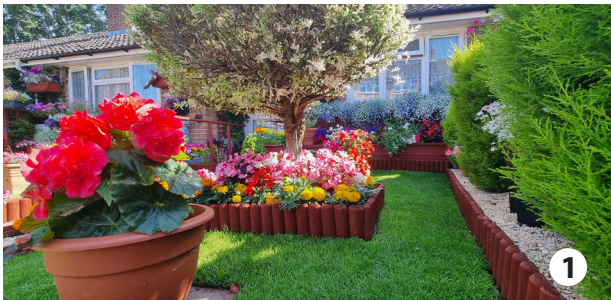
Mike Francis, Vice Chair



"As Sheila has outlined, we're working to help improve the complaints systems. Our intention is to make it simpler and more effective, although there are many other areas we are also looking at. We'll be continuing to seek and support positive change as best we can, but we'd love to hear what issues affect you and look forward to continuing to represent you where we can."

If you want to be part of any of the tenant/leaseholder participation and engagement activities, please email getinvolved@canterbury.gov.uk or call Ali Donnelly on 07597 528 428.

Celebrating this year's garden competition winners



Thank you to the Resident Engagement Panel for organising another wonderful garden competition. It's great to see our tenants enter in all four categories. We loved visiting your gardens!

The awards ceremony took place on Tuesday 6 August at Age UK in Herne Bay.

The ceremony was attended by the prize winners, Resident Engagement Panel members, the Lord Mayor Cllr Jean Butcher and Lady Mayoress of Canterbury Di Baldock, along with several Canterbury City Council councillors and staff, plus representatives from our contractors Cardo, Canterbury Garden Centre, Swale Heating, and Town & Country Cleaners.

Huge congratulations to:

Front garden:

- 1. **Winner:** Martin Ashdown (Chartham)
- 5. **Highly commended:** Doreen Terrell (Whitstable)

Back garden:

- 2. **Winner:** Dawn Brazier (Canterbury)
- 6. **Highly commended:** Perveer Kaur (Hoath)

Communal gardens:

- 3. **Winner:** Shalmsford Court (Chartham)
- 7. **Highly commended:** Windsor House (Whitstable)

Containers, pots and baskets:

- 4. **Winner:** Lydia Luckhurst (Chartham)
- 8. **Runner up:** Philip Bunce (Canterbury)

All winners received, gift vouchers, seed and plants.

A big thank you to our sponsors for making these prizes possible: **Canterbury Environment Company (Canenco), Swale Heating, Grovewell Garden Centre (Canterbury), Badgers Hill Farm, Cardo and Town & Country Cleaners.**



New consumer standards

New standards for housing and housing services came into effect on 1 April this year.

These standards have been set by the Regulator of Social Housing and are there to ensure landlords provide an expected level of service to their tenants.

There are four main standards, covering a variety of key areas:

- **Safety and Quality Standard** – stock quality, decent homes, health and safety, repairs, adaptations
- **Transparency, Influence, and Accountability Standard** – fairness and respect, considering diverse needs, engagement with tenants, information and communications about landlord services, performance information, complaints handling, self-referral
- **Neighbourhood and Community Standard** – safety of shared spaces, local cooperation, anti-social behaviour and hate incidents, domestic abuse
- **Tenancy Standard** – allocations and lettings, tenancy sustainment and evictions, tenure, support and supply of mutual exchange.

We will be holding ourselves to these standards and will be audited by the regulator to check how we are performing against them.

For more information about the new standards, please visit [gov.uk/government/collections/regulatory-standards-for-landlords](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/regulatory-standards-for-landlords).

What is Rechargeable work?

Rechargeable work is work that needs to be carried out in a council home that will be charged back to the tenant.

An example of this is where there has been damage to the property that is outside of general wear and tear, or alterations have been made to the property without permission that need to be put right.

These repairs will then be charged back to the tenant and the council will recover the money owed. If you are unsure of what property alterations you need permissions for, please contact your Housing Officer.



Spotlight on damp and mould

Please contact us as soon as possible about any damp or mould concerns in your home. We will investigate and look to provide advice and find ways to combat this. If the damp is caused by an underlying repair issue, we will arrange repairs to be carried out.

To reduce the potential for damp and mould, please ventilate by opening windows following activities that generate condensation such as bathing or cooking and keeping your home warm where possible.

You can find our Damp and Mould Policy by visiting [canterbury.gov.uk/dampandmould](https://www.canterbury.gov.uk/dampandmould)

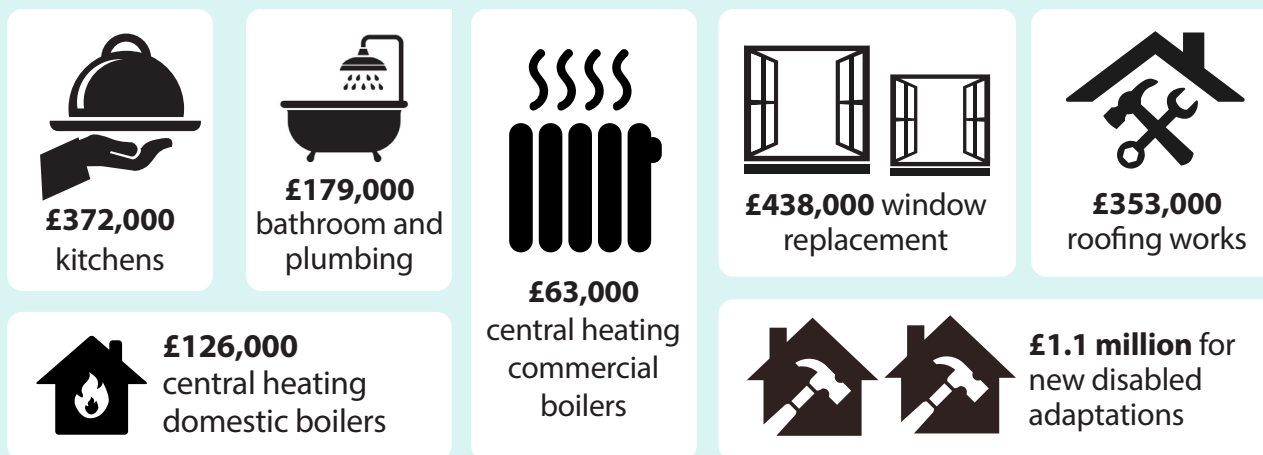
OUR ANNUAL REPORT

This is a summary of our performance over the last year.





REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

The Regulator of Social Housing's **Safety and Quality Standard** says it expects us to provide you with a good quality home, ensure your health and safety and provide an effective, efficient, and timely repairs and maintenance service.

This year, we have spent £5.3 million on work to improve your homes, including replacing:



HOW WE ARE DOING

	OUR TARGET	OUR RESULT
Routine day-to-day repairs completed on time	98%	97.67% 
Day-to-day repair appointments kept	96%	99.15% 
Routine heating repairs completed on time	98%	96.08% 
Heating repair appointments kept	98%	98.27% 

WHAT WE NEED TO IMPROVE

The repairs and voids contract has been retendered and we have a new contractor in place – Cardo – from 1 April this year. The previous contract had been in place for 10 years and this was an opportunity for us to enhance the requirements resulting in better service and quality control for our tenants and leaseholders.

We have introduced a new pricing list across the contract and have clearly defined what is included, excluded and the escalation channels, improved key performance indicators, clearer repair instructions from the outset with a focus on a 'proper fix' and new timelines for repairs and vacant properties and new appointment times.

The new contractor boasts a longstanding reputation in the housing sector across various UK regions and is keen to improve services. Recently we've changed the contractor for gas and heating which has resulted in an improvement to the service we provide.



TENANCY

The Regulator of Social Housing's **Tenancy Standard** says it expects us to let our homes fairly and transparently, and support residents to maintain their tenancy.

This year:

- 423 homes have been re-let during year 2023/24



HOW WE ARE DOING

	OUR TARGET	OUR RESULT	
Average days to re-let empty homes	42 days	33.85 days	✓
Rent arrears as a % of total rent debt raised	4.55%	3.54%	✓
Current tenant rent arrears	£1,250,822	£973,948	✓

WHAT SUPPORT CAN WE OFFER?

We provide money and benefit advice from our team of dedicated advisors to support any council tenants who find themselves concerned about any rent payments. Please do contact us as early as possible as it is essential that your rent is paid, and we can discuss options available to you. We are committed to working with tenants to prevent any evictions. **Please contact our dedicated advisors on 01227 862142.**

NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY

The Regulator of Social Housing's **Neighbourhood and Community Standard** says it expects us to ensure communal areas are kept safe, and to work with partners to promote wellbeing and tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) on estates that the council manages.

This year:

- 114 ASB cases closed 2022/2023 vs 68 cases closed 2023/2024
- 128 ASB cases opened 2022/2023 vs 81 cases opened 2023/2024
- 40 Warnings, 13 notices served, six evictions

We try to put in place as many checks as we can to prevent anti-social behaviour (ASB) from taking place. But when it does, tackling it promptly is a priority for us. We work with a wide array of organisations to resolve ASB issues including Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, Kent County Council and our legal and community safety teams.

This year we've already started to review our ASB policy. Our Resident Engagement Panel is part of the development of this and continues to review our approach to ensure it meets the needs of tenants. We will also be rolling out training for staff, so all officers know how to respond to reports of ASB.

Here's a story from our ASB Team, that recently improved the safety of some of our tenants:

In June 2023, the police advised that a tenant had been arrested following an arson incident whereby the tenant had set a fire in the letterbox of their neighbour. The tenant was charged and remanded in custody. The Tenancy Enforcement Officer spoke with the neighbours about the incident and built a legal case to exclude the tenant from the area in case they were released from police custody. This was to ensure the safety of all residents. A court injunction was then successfully obtained which meant should the tenant be released, they would not be able to return to their property or the area. This came with a power of arrest should it have been breached. The tenant was subsequently convicted of the arson offence and received a prison sentence. The council planned to serve a Notice of Seeking Possession on Mandatory Grounds which was prepared and ready to serve on the tenant in prison. Following this, the tenant decided to terminate their tenancy. The residents are therefore safe and this tenant will not return to the area.

TENANT INVOLVEMENT AND COMPLAINTS

GETTING YOU INVOLVED IN YOUR HOUSING SERVICE

The Regulator of Social Housing's **Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard** says it expects us to take your views into account in our decision-making, ensure you understand what you can expect from us, allow tenants to hold us to account and deal with complaints fairly and promptly.

This year, we've:



Held **seven meetings** with our involved tenants on the Resident Engagement Panel (REP)



Held **four meetings** with our Independent Living Forum (ILF)



Sent out **two newsletters** to bring our tenants up to date on what we're doing



Held **four meetings** with our newly established Disability Forum



Held **five community** events across the district



Worked with the REP to organise and carry out the **annual garden competition**

HOW ARE WE DOING

	2023	2022
Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them	47.1%	42.3%
Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them	63.7%	64.2%

WHAT WE NEED TO IMPROVE



We don't have a target for satisfaction but were aiming to improve on feedback received from our 2023/24 Tenant Survey. We are pleased to report a 4.8% increase on tenants reporting that we listen to and act on your views. However, we recognise there is still some way to go in ensuring you feel informed about the things that matter to you.

Going forward our annual Tenant Survey will enable us to keep a closer eye on how the housing service is performing. It will also give you more opportunity to tell us when things go wrong and when things are going well.

The setting up of our Disability Forum has met four times and is making great strides to influencing the way their housing service is run. Our tenant engagement review is also now underway so you can expect to see some changes that reflect your wants and needs over the coming year.



COMPLAINTS

In June, with the help of REP, we submitted a self-assessment as it is now a yearly requirement by the Housing Ombudsman’s updated complaint handling code. This led us to identify areas and pull together a service improvement plan. This sets out how these changes are planned to June 2025 when we will self-assess again. We have updated our housing complaints policy to reflect the new code and improve our procedures.

We recognise we don’t always get things right. Your insights and experiences help us identify areas for improvement and ensure we continue to improve the service and work to prevent the issues from happening again.

We’d really like to help with those issues that may not have been reported. Please give our new system a go.



This year:

- Received **204** Stage 1 complaints and completed **172** of them
- Received **24** Stage 2 complaints of which **20** have been completed.

SERVICE AREA

NUMBER OF CASES RECEIVED

Repairs and Maintenance	62
Supported Housing	11
Tenancy Management	20
Enforcement and Regulation	14
Rent and Service Charges	5
Compliance	4
Other	10

We responded to stage 1 complaints on time in 40.11% of instances with a target of 90%. It took us on average 37.6 days to respond to a stage 1 complaint with a target of 10 working days.

We responded to stage 2 complaints on time in 50% of instances with a target of 90%. It took us on average 67.6 days to respond to a stage 2 complaint with a target of 20 working days.

MONEY MATTERS

Where our money comes from...

Our total income in 2023/24 was £29.1 million

- £26.3 million from tenant rents
- £1.8 million from tenant service charges
- £587,000 from other property types such as garages
- £366,000 from leaseholder service charges

Our total income in 2024/25 is expected to be £30.3 million

- £27.7 million from tenant rents
- £1.6 million from tenant service charges
- £669,000 rent from other property types such as garages
- £300,000 from leaseholder service charges



...and how we spend it.

2023/24 (last year's breakdown)

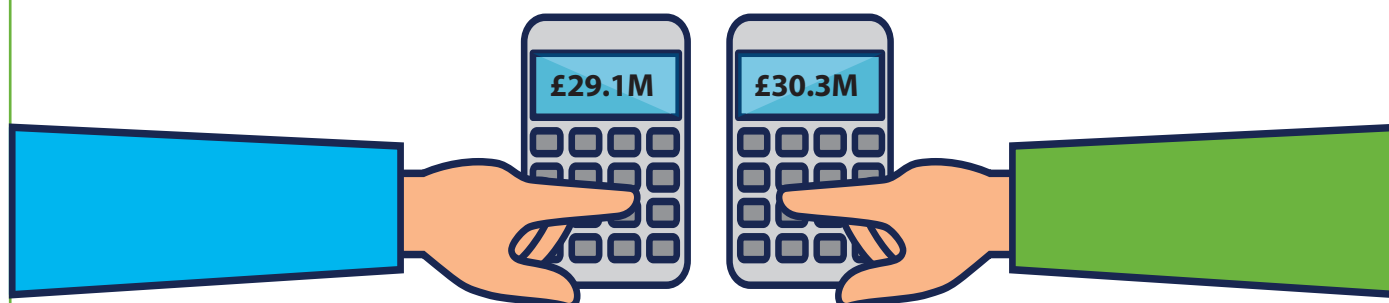
2023/24 spend per pound

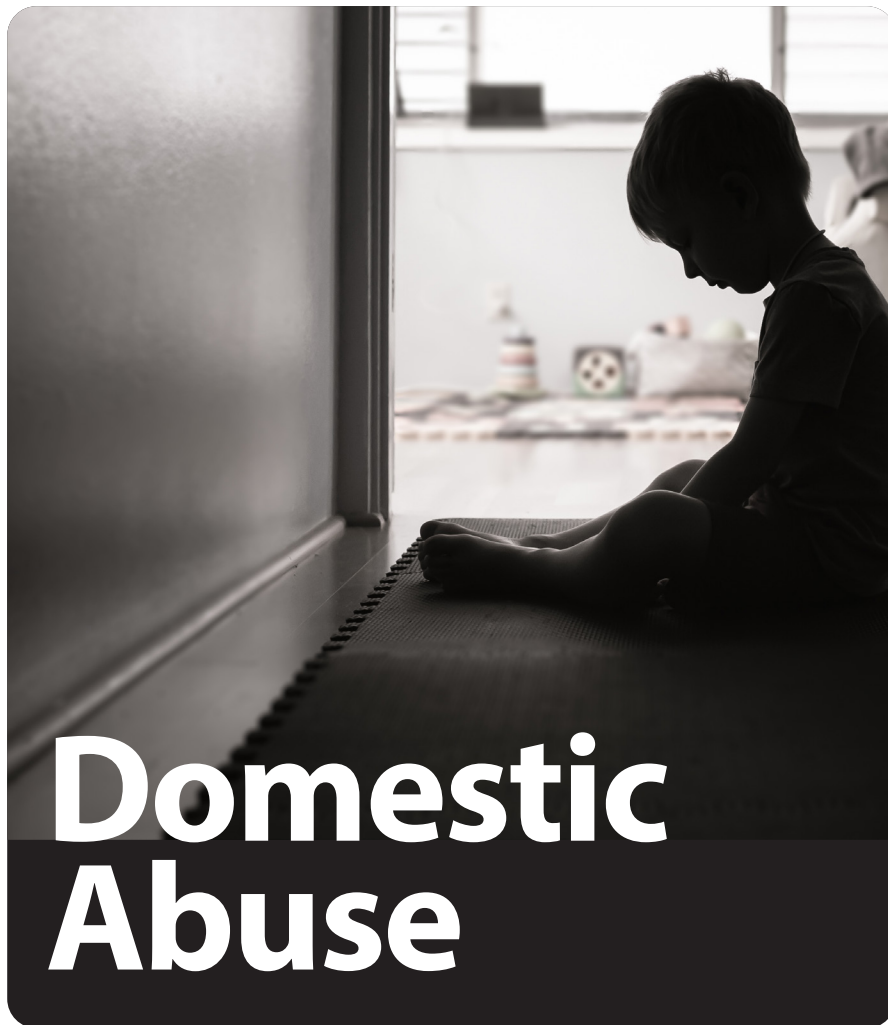
• Repairs and maintenance	31p
• Mortgage repayment to the government	22p
• Tenancy and estate management, including staffing -	18p
• Cost of borrowing money	17p
• Services specifically for residents in independent living schemes	9p
• Other expenses	3p

2024/25 (this year's breakdown)

2024/25 spend per pound

• Repairs and maintenance	26p
• Mortgage repayment to the government	21p
• Tenancy and estate management, including staffing -	20p
• Cost of borrowing money	21p
• Services specifically for residents in independent living schemes	9p
• Other expenses	3p





Domestic Abuse

#YouAreNotAlone

#NoticingIsNotNosiness

#SayNoToDomesticAbuse

#UKSaysNoMore

#KnowSeeSpeakOut

Canterbury City Council is committed to protecting victims of domestic abuse, including their children, so they can live without fear of harm, intimidation or abuse, and to support perpetrators who seek to change their behaviour.

We are raising awareness and taking a stand to end all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG). We believe that nobody should live in fear of abuse and violence. Domestic abuse is a hidden crime that can affect anyone.

For the full list of domestic abuse support services for Kent, visit **domesticabuseservices.org.uk**

We can all play a part in ending all forms of domestic abuse and sexual violence

It can include the following types of abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners, or between family members / relations regardless of age, gender, or sexuality:

sexual / physical

economic / financial

psychological / emotional

threatening behaviour

harassment and stalking

digital / online abuse

controlling & coercive behaviour

Female genital mutilation, modern day slavery, forced marriage, honour-based violence and abuse

Support for victim/survivors of domestic abuse:

Rising Sun Domestic Abuse Service:

risingsunkent.com

01227 452852

Women's Aid:

Womensaid.org.uk

02825 632136

LGBT+:

galop.org.uk

0800 999 5428

SignHealth:

signhealth.org.uk/with-deaf-people/domestic-abuse

07800 003421

Karma Nirvana (Forced Marriage/

HBVA): karmanirvana.org.uk

0800 5999 247

RISE (Minoritised Communities):

riseuk.org.uk/get-help/about-domestic-abuse

01273 622 822

Refuge:

nationaldahelpline.org.uk

0808 2000 247

NSPCC worried about a child?

0808 8005000

Male Domestic Abuse Advice Service

lookahead.org.uk

0333 010 4660

Reporting repairs and maintenance

We work with different types of contractors to do jobs on our behalf:

Household repairs

If you have a general repair within your flat, such as a broken window or door, please contact **Cardo** by calling **01227 202 321**.

Gas, hot water or heating repairs

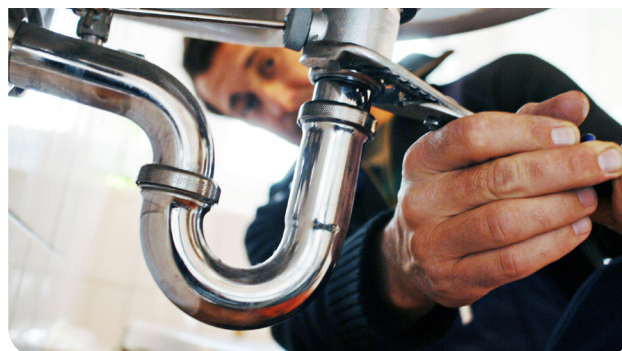
If you have a problem with your heating or plumbing:

If your home has its own boiler, please contact **Gas Call** by calling freephone **0800 012 9958**

If you live in a block with a communal boiler, please contact **Pumps and Motors** by calling **0208 507 2288**

Grounds maintenance and waste

If you need to report any issues with grass cutting or general grounds maintenance, please contact **Canenco** on **01227 947 860**.



CANTERBURY COUNCIL OFFICES OPENING TIMES

Our new city centre offices are now open at
14 Rose Lane,
Canterbury, CT1 2UR,
Monday to Friday from
10am until 2pm.

Have your say on council consultations

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

All the consultations we run are available at canterbury.gov.uk/consultations while they are active. You can also sign up for email notifications at news.canterbury.gov.uk.

If you need a paper copy of the survey, or if you have a need or disability that means you require the document (or aspects of it) in a different format, please contact us at consultations@canterbury.gov.uk.

We will set our Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2025/26 early next. The HRA records the expenditure and income on running a council's own housing stock and close related services or facilities. We will consult on this in November so keep an eye out and tell us what you think.