

HATTON HOUSING TRUST LIMITED

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

What is this report about?

The Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) requires us to issue an annual report to tenants every year. This annual report must give tenants information on how Hatton Housing Trust is meeting the regulatory standards:

Economic standards

1. Governance and financial viability
2. Value for money
3. Rent

Consumer standards

4. Safety and Quality Standard
5. Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard
6. Neighbourhood and Community Standard
7. Tenancy Standard

How well are we doing?

1. Governance and financial viability

The Management Committee of the Trust have clear roles, responsibility and accountability to ensure that the Trust is effectively governed and controlled. At the Management Committee meetings the financial viability and liquidity of the Trust is regularly monitored. There is regular inspection of the properties in general to ensure that they are properly maintained and each individual property is inspected by two members of the Management Committee at least every three years. This year all the sixteen flats at our new site at Lady Vane Close were inspected after most of the fire safety requirements had been addressed. This was carried out in August 2024 by Debs Manley and Viv Packer together with our new Property Manager, Jess Stevens.

2. Value for money

2.1 What we do

Property Manager: The Property Manager receives all notifications of minor day-to-day repairs and maintenance works that need to be carried out.

Prioritisation: At every Management Committee meeting, the programme of maintenance and repair works prepared by the Property Manager is reviewed. The Property Manager is then instructed to prioritise these. The Management Committee are mindful of the need not to lose revenue and, therefore, to speed up any works necessary to prepare any vacant properties for a new tenancy agreement to start. However, the Property Manager is also requested to attend promptly to minor repairs that can become a continual irritation to tenants if not attended to.

Value: A Management Committee member is responsible for each site, in order to ensure that any maintenance or repair work, has been properly attended to. At every Management Committee meeting,

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the Committee members review the detailed listing of all expenditure incurred in order to ensure value for money in the cost incurred.

This pie chart shows how your money was spent in 2023:



2.2 Our policies

The Trust reviews all its policies annually.

At every site there is an appointed Trust Representative who reports to the Management Committee on any matters relevant to their site.

For any works likely to cost more than £5,000 we normally obtain a minimum of two quotes. As most of our daily maintenance is carried out by one contractor, all the itemised bills are scrutinised by the Management Committee at their meetings to ensure that value for money is obtained from this one contractor in particular but looking at all expenses generally.

2.3 Our commitment

The Trust is committed to provide quality homes to meet our tenants' needs and to upgrade these as necessary.

The Trust is committed to providing all maintenance and repair works to a standard acceptable to our tenants at a cost that is not excessive and ensures that the Trust is able to make payments within its means for all its annual expenses.

The Trust is committed to providing communal services, such as security, lighting and garden maintenance for the benefit of all tenants at value for money.

3. **Rent**

3.1 What we do

Rent level: Our rents, and costs, are deliberately kept as low as practicable, in all cases well below market rents.

Cost allocation: The vast majority of the rental income is used in the upkeep and maintenance of the properties.

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Support: We are willing and keen to welcome those tenants that qualify for housing benefit.

3.2 Our policies

We have a number of policies and practices that support our activities.

A full and formal review of rents and all associated costs is carried out once a year.

Our major items of cost are identified and, where practical, tenders from alternate suppliers are sought to ensure best value for money.

Increases in rents are limited to those necessary to operate Hatton Housing Trust in a prudent manner, so that it may meet its likely future costs and liabilities.

Tenants that do fall behind in their rent are offered a reasonable time to redress their debts. However, tenants that consistently fail to pay their rent will have action taken to evict them.

3.3 Our commitments

In the future we aim to deliver the following:

To continue to operate on a low cost basis and to limit our rent rises to those needed to operate the business in an efficient and cost effective manner.

To support the Government's cap on social rent increases: this year the government has announced a cap on social rents of 7.7%. The Trust will continue to aim to keep rent increases below government rent standards.

To provide a broad understanding of how the rental income is allocated to our costs.

To provide information and support to help tenants seek housing benefit and other financial support where appropriate.

4. **Safety and Quality Standard**

4.1 What we do

Stock Quality:

We provide 116 properties in seven locations, six in Tunbridge Wells and one in Shipbourne. Five of the sites have purpose built blocks of flats, one of these having six semi-detached bungalows.

Decency:

The properties have one or two bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen and a bathroom. The living room, though not large, provides a comfortable space. Some bedrooms can only accommodate a single bed. The kitchens are compact but meet the standards required having cupboards and space for a fridge, cooker and in some cases a washing machine. The bathrooms have a bath or shower, toilet and hand basin.

The flats have night storage heaters or electric panel heating, double glazing and insulation, both wall and loft.

Health and Safety:

Each flat is fitted with a smoke alarm and heat detector, and in most cases these are linked to a fire alarm panel in the communal area of the block. Individual properties without a communal area have a

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mains wired smoke and heat alarm. Fire Risk Assessments have been completed for all blocks of flats with communal areas which are kept under review. There is periodic testing of fire safety equipment. The Trust seeks to minimise the risks associated with electrical safety and carries out a periodic programme of testing and upgrading of our electrical installations, an electrical survey inspection carried out on each change of tenancy, and regular inspection of supply intake cupboards.

Legionella risk assessments are carried out each time a new tenant moves into a property.

Regular inspection of communal areas.

The Trust maintains an Asbestos Management Plan.

A variety of methods are used to identify areas of concerns regarding mould in the properties and once identified prompt action is taken to remediate the issue.

The Trust carries out regular inspection of trees on all its sites with a tree surgeon to assess the condition of trees and carries out recommended work.

The Trust maintains a comprehensive Risk Assessment Plan which is reviewed annually or following a significant change, accident or violent incident.

Repairs, maintenance and planned improvements:

The respective responsibilities of the Trust and the tenant for external and internal repair and maintenance are set out on the assured tenancy agreement. The Trust appoints a Property Manager to oversee the day to day maintenance and repair works and to regularly monitor the properties to keep them in the best possible order. We also implement a long term plan for preventative maintenance and refurbishment of properties in between tenancies which may include the installation of sound proofing. All work is carried out with the safety and comfort of our tenants as a priority.

Adaptations:

The Trust is committed to working alongside relevant organisations to provide an adaptations service that meets our tenants' needs.

4.2 Our Policies

The sites and individual properties are inspected by members of the Trust's Management Committee every 2-3 years. A full report is made on each flat and site which is reviewed by the Management Committee and required action agreed. Each site is the particular responsibility of a member of the Management Committee and regular visits are made to ensure that no glaringly obvious problem goes unreported. Each site also has a Trust Representative who passes on any problems to the Trust and action is taken where appropriate.

The Trust has a Policy on Anti-Social Behaviour which is reviewed annually.

The Trust has a Health and Safety Policy which is reviewed annually.

The Trust has a Policy and Procedures Summary which includes a section on repairs and maintenance and this is reviewed annually.

A full property management report is given at each Management Committee which provides details of all work undertaken since the previous meeting. A stock condition survey on all the Trust properties is used to plan preventative repairs such as re-roofing and re-pointing as well as upgrades to dated bathrooms and kitchens.

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4.3 Our Commitment

We want our flats to be comfortable, secure and safe homes for our tenants.

We are committed to ensuring that anti-social behaviour does not occur but if instances should develop we are committed to act within our powers to ensure that tenants and those who visit our properties do not feel threatened in any way.

We are committed to a high level of safety. The Trust's Risk Assessment identifies and monitors hazards at the properties.

We are committed to working alongside relevant organisations to provide an adaptations service that meets our tenants needs.

We undertake major improvements when called for. Examples of these are re-roofing, replacing drainage systems and re-pointing.

We are committed to thermal efficiency.

We endeavour to plan ahead to avoid unexpected major expense.

5. **Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard**

The Trust aims to take the wishes and views of its tenants into account in all matters. There are a number of ways tenants can communicate their views to the Trust and these are set out on page 23 of the newsletter. We as landlords will let you know how your views have been considered. Our response to the TSMs, set out on page 7-10 of the newsletter is one illustration of how we try to do this.

The Trust has a Complaints Policy which is available from Claire Mitchell. A complaint is defined as dissatisfaction with us as Landlords. If tenants are not satisfied with the Trust's response to requests for repairs or assistance, they can raise a formal complaint so the Committee can look into the matter and try to resolve it.

6. **Neighbourhood and Community Standard**

6.1 What we do

Neighbourhood management: All communal areas are kept clean and safe. The surrounding gardens, trees and hedges, where applicable, are maintained by contractors. Salt/sand bins are provided for the tenants to use as required.

Local area co-operation: Our aims and objectives are notified to relevant local bodies. Wherever possible, we co-operate with any Local Authority initiative.

Anti-social behaviour: Our tenancies are such that anti-social behaviour has not generally been a problem. A member of the Management Committee will provide support to tenants to try and deal with any examples of anti-social behaviour. Whenever a tenancy dispute arises, it is dealt with immediately, by a member of the Management Committee, or in extreme cases the services of a mediator may be sought.

6.2 Our policies

The gardening maintenance contract is reviewed annually.

The Trust has a complaints procedure, whereby any notification of anti-social behaviour has to be in writing to the Secretary and referred to the Management Committee for resolution.

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At the Annual Tenants' Meeting, tenants are made aware of the Trust's expectations in relation to good neighbourly behaviour. In 2024 the Annual Tenants Meeting took place on the 4th October.

6.3 Our commitment

The Trust will continue to maintain safe and clean communal areas, in order that the properties are pleasant to live in.

The Trust will co-operate with any future relevant Local Authority initiatives.

The Trust will continue to monitor any reports of anti-social behaviour.

7. **Tenancy**

7.1 What we do

Allocations and Lettings:

The Trust lets its properties in a fair and transparent way, taking into account the particular needs and circumstances of tenants and prospective tenants. The Trust will carry out "Right to Rent" checks under the Immigration Act 2014 to ensure all new tenants are legally entitled to live in the UK. The Trust take up landlord references for all new tenants and Warners carry out a credit check.

The Trust provides unsupported housing and is unable to offer the support network required for a person needing specialised help with independent living.

The Trust submits a Statistical data annual return to the Regulator of Social Housing which includes a record of all vacant general needs social rental stock.

Tenancy sustainment and evictions:

The Trust will support tenants to maintain their tenancy and where a breach of the tenancy has occurred it will adopt the Trust's Policies and Procedures which include informing the tenant of independent advice offered by the local borough councils.

Tenure:

The Trust offers a National Housing Federation model tenancy agreement that offers fair and reasonable terms to our tenants. In some cases tenants will be issued with a 6 month Starter Tenancy prior to the grant of an assured tenancy.

Transfer:

Tenants may apply to exchange or transfer from one unit of Trust accommodation to another unit of Trust accommodation or to accommodation not under the control of the Trust and vice versa subject to obtaining the written consent of the Trust. Full details of the Trust's transfer policy are found with the Policies and Procedures. It is the Trust's standard procedure that if a tenant transfers to another Trust property the tenant requesting the transfer is responsible for paying the redecoration costs in respect of their current property.

7.2 Our Policies

We have a number of policies and practices that support our activities:

A standardised selection process: each prospective tenant is required to complete an application form and be interviewed by a member of the Management Committee which may include a home visit report. During the application process the selection procedure, conditions of the tenancy agreement and tenant

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checks are all explained to the prospective tenant.

The Trust has an Equality and Diversity Policy which is reviewed annually.

The Trust has Policies and Procedures relating to the Selection of applicants for Trust accommodation, Allocation of accommodation, Transfer or exchange of accommodation and Form of Tenancy Agreement used by the Trust. These procedures are reviewed annually.

If a prospective tenant does not wish to accept a flat offered, they can remain on the waiting list for an alternative property and will not be penalised. The Trust seeks to ensure prospective tenants are happy with the property they are offered.

The Trust will offer a Starter Tenancy at its discretion where there are concerns as to the suitability of a prospective tenant.

7.3 Our commitments

The Trust is committed to:

- Ensuring its procedures for selection, allocation and transfer process are kept under regular review such that our target group, namely individuals over the age of 55 with limited incomes are best served;
- Minimising the time properties are left empty by reviewing at each Management Committee meeting all such empty properties, to agree an action plan for refurbishment for such properties and then to allocate prospective tenants for all such properties and to oversee that all actions are progressed promptly.

November 2024