

Tenant & Leaseholder Annual Report for 2019 / 2020

Your Annual Report

Dear Tenants and Leaseholders,

The pandemic has revealed how vital many roles in society are to our wellbeing. It has also brought out a community spirit as people across South Cambridgeshire have come together to help their neighbours.

Like our residents, the Council and the housing services also had to adapt quickly so we could continue to provide vital services. We are very proud of how the housing team worked to help our tenants, particularly those that were vulnerable or isolated.

During the first few weeks of lock-down, the Council contacted over 3,000 tenants to make sure they were ok and had access to food and other essential services.

Our priority is to ensure that our tenants feel confident and secure in their homes, even during these uncertain times.

We are committed to delivering a housing service that provides you with a good home and that offers value for money. We must also look to the future and continue improving our homes to be more environmentally responsible as well as investing in more council and affordable homes.

This annual report for 2019 / 2020 explains to you, our tenants, and leaseholders how we delivered on those commitments. It also shows how we compare to the previous year.

This year will be challenging but we will continue to adapt and deliver your housing service.

Best wishes,

Councillor Hazel Smith, Lead Member for Housing & Peter Campbell, Head of Housing



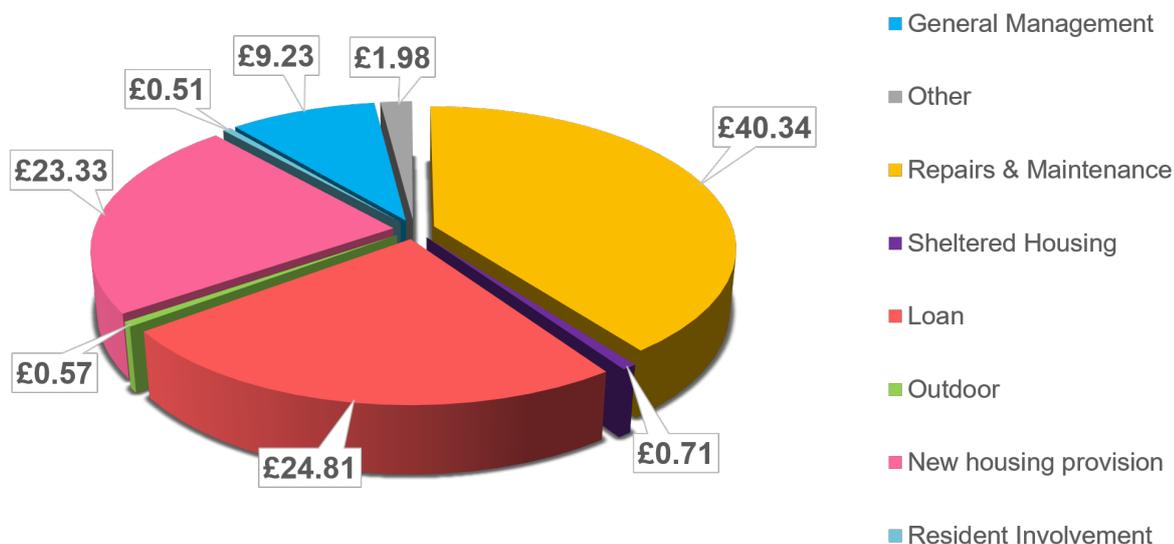
Cllr Hazel Smith



Peter Campbell

Your Rent

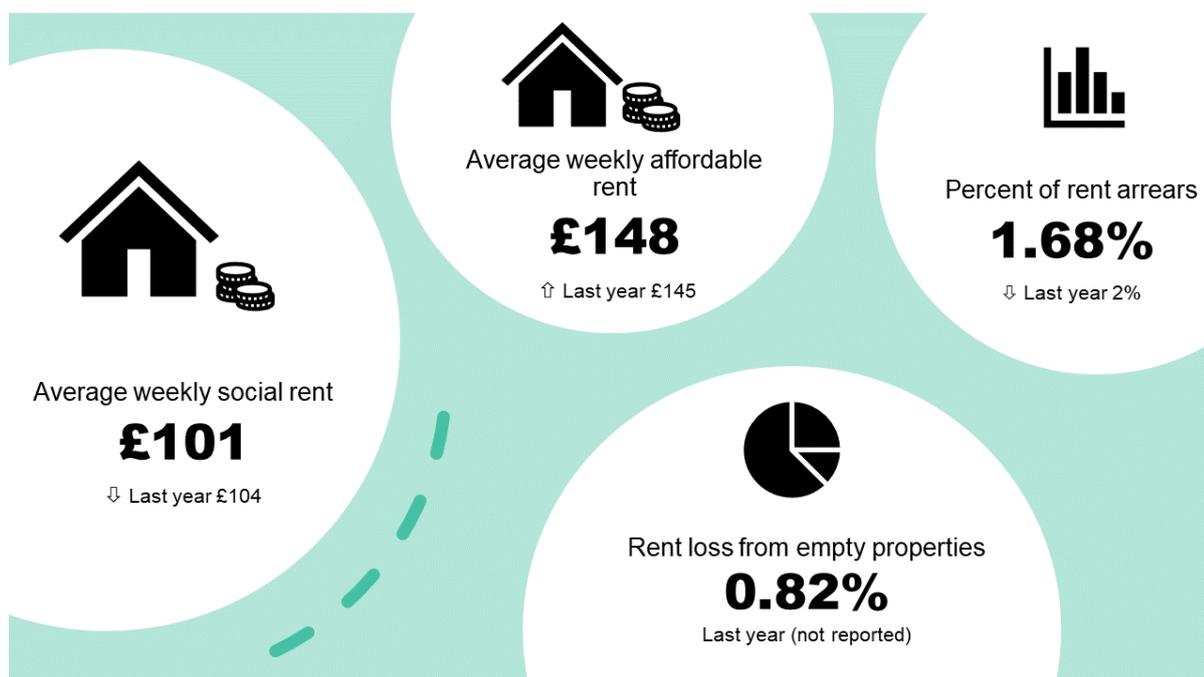
Have you ever wondered how the rent you pay is split between our services? This graph shows how an average weekly rent of £101.48 is spent.



[The Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016](#) required all providers of social housing in England to reduce their social housing rents by 1% a year for 4 years. This explains why the average social rent for this year is lower than last year. 2019 / 2020 is the last year the rent reduction will be applied.

Social rents are set using a government formula. This creates a 'formula rent' for each property, which is calculated based on the relative value of the property, the size of the property and relative local income levels.

Affordable rent is no more than 80 per cent of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable).



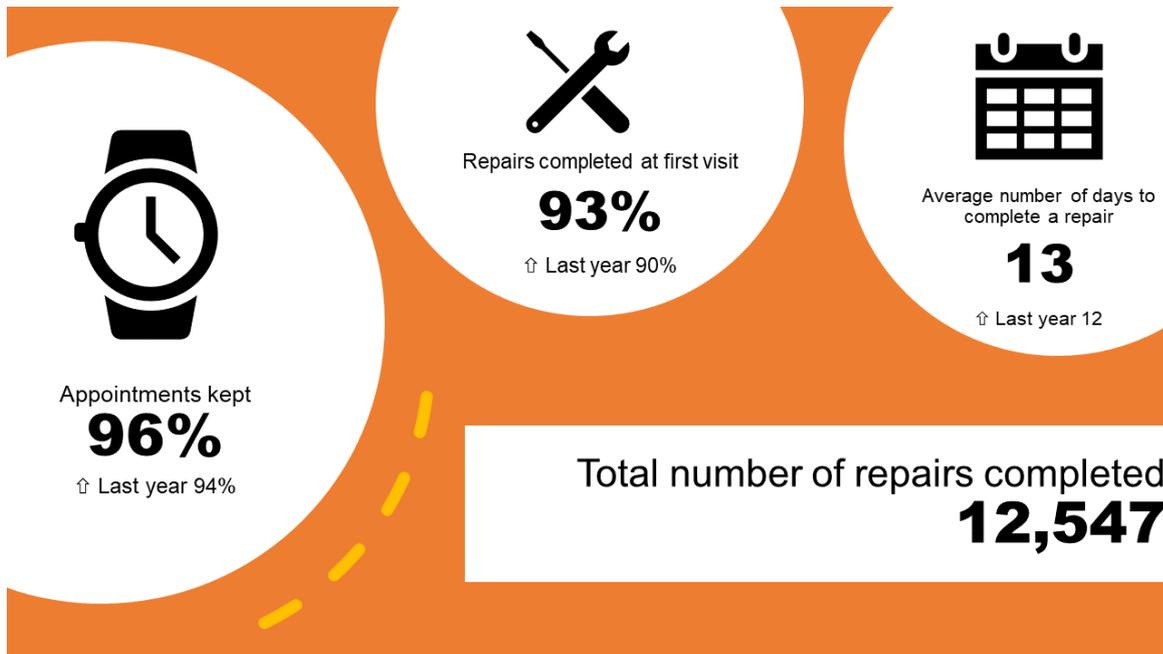
Repairs

Our repairs service is carried out in partnership with our contractor Mears.

We have a landlord's duty to carry out certain repairs and maintenance works in order to keep our properties in a safe condition and good working order.

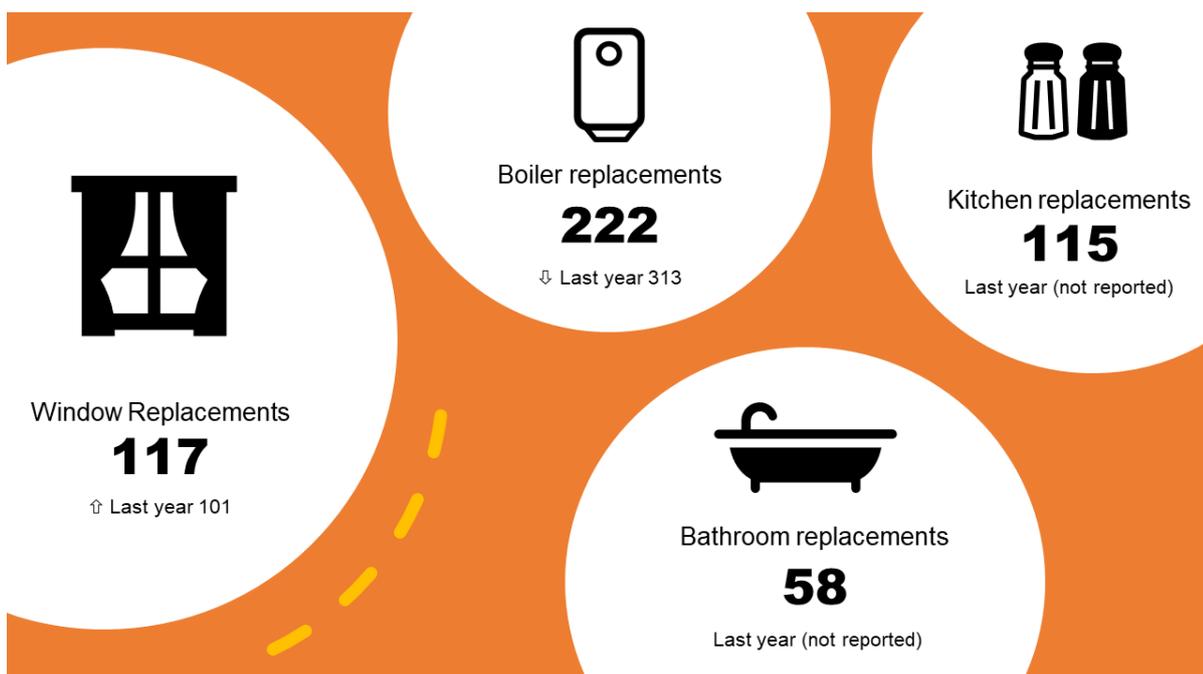
Need to report a repair?

Call our free repairs hotline on 0800 085 1313.



Maintenance

We also want to maintain our properties to a good condition and improve them in line with tenants' expectations.



New Housing Provision

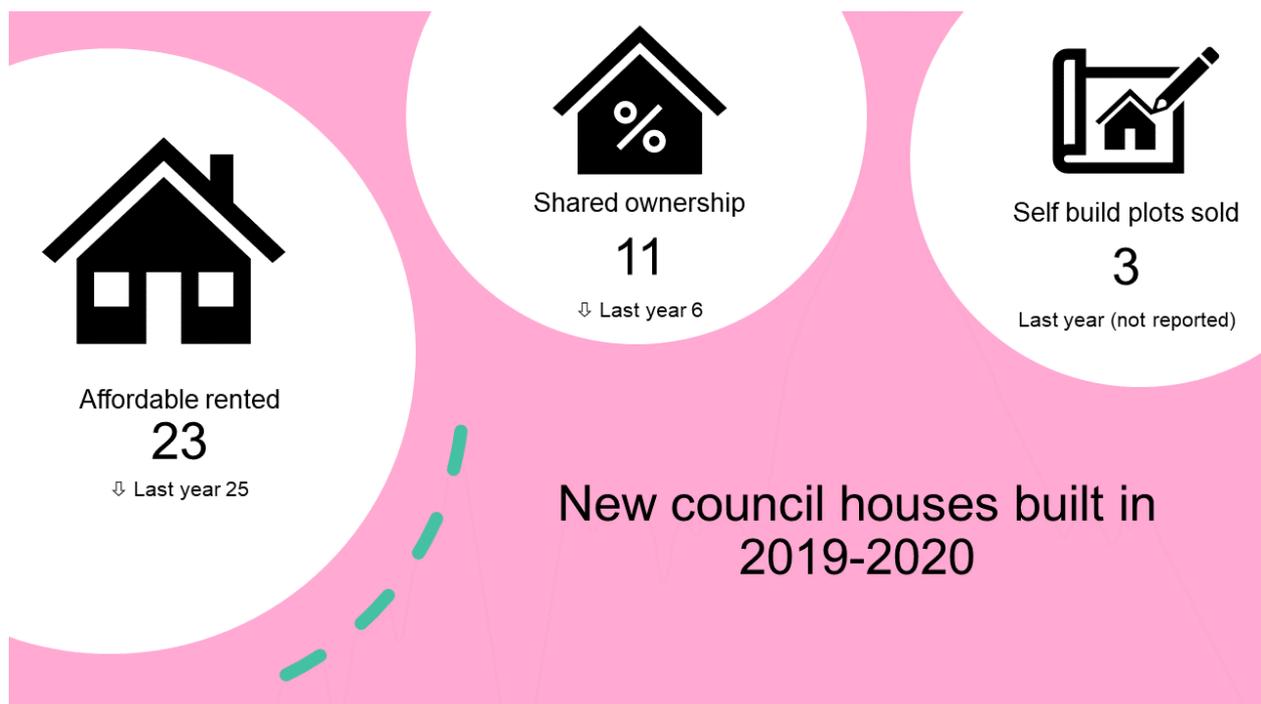
Since 2018 a total of 209 new Council homes have started on site, with a further 81 homes at Northstowe due to start on site in 2020 – 2021. These are a mixture of affordable rent and shared ownership and are helping address the great need in South Cambridgeshire for more affordable housing.

Below are two of the new housing schemes we have built in the last year.

Gibson Close, Waterbeach



Paddock Close, Balsham



Anti-Social Behaviour

Unfortunately, there is a possibility that residents could experience anti-social behaviour (ASB) within their neighbourhood. Our team of Housing Enforcement Officers work closely with the local police and other partners to deal with issues in a number of ways. Below are a couple of examples of how we have dealt with cases:

A Civil injunction was successfully obtained in court in order to resolve a high risk anti-social behaviour case. The case had caused alarm and distress to some tenants who were beginning to live in fear due to ongoing threats of violence and nuisance. The injunction was successfully served in partnership with the Police. The perpetrator received a 2 year order excluding them from a specific area. The injunction included conditions to prevent ASB with the powers of arrest attached.

We continue to work with the victims to ensure they feel safe at home and we are pleased to report that the perpetrator has detached themselves from the situation which has resulted in less reports of anti-social behaviour.

Working with the Police, the team secured two closure orders following long term anti-social behaviour, drug use, criminal damage, verbal abuse, noise and intimidation linked to people visiting two properties in the district. The Closure Orders closed the premises for three months to anyone except the tenant and people authorised by the Council and emergency services. A breach of the order was an arrestable offence.

We are pleased to say that no further reports of anti-social behaviour have been reported and the matter has been resolved resulting in the community feeling safer.



Tenant Involvement

Tenant involvement is changing. After a review and public consultation, we have changed the structure of tenant involvement and added more ways of communicating with you, our tenants. You can read our new resident involvement strategy or visit our website to find out more about the ways you can be involved in your housing service.

Housing Engagement Board (HEB)

There will be a new Housing Engagement board set up in May 2021. It will be made up of 5 Tenants, 1 Leaseholder, 3 Councillors and the Head of Housing.

This new board will review, discuss, and make recommendations about how the housing service is managed so it is fair for all tenants. Together they will discuss, scrutinise, and recommend how the service is managed. They will also continually review how well it performs for tenants and leaseholders.



5 Tenants &
1 Leaseholder



Head of
Housing

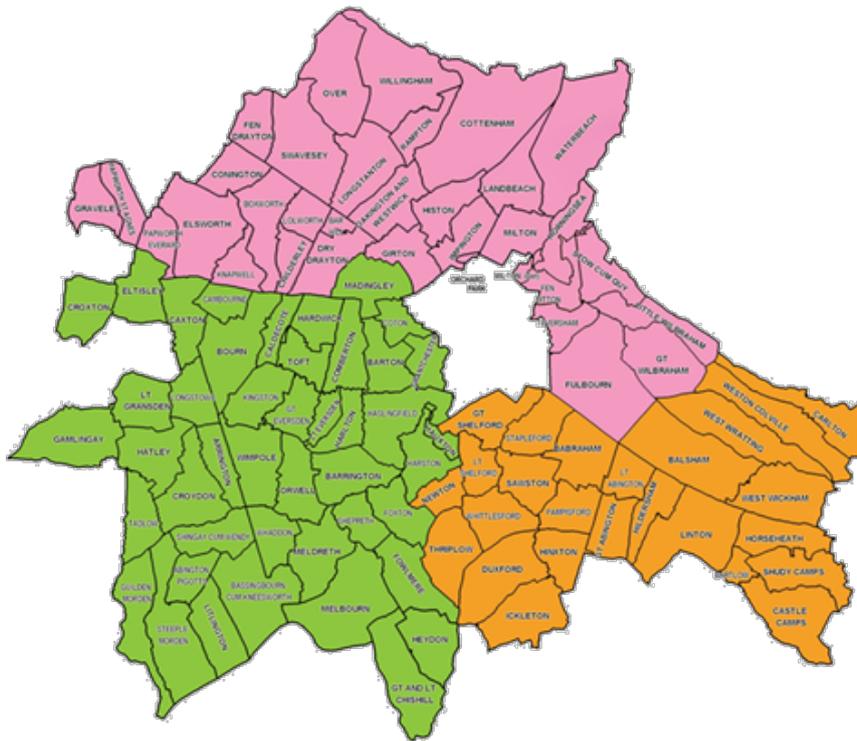


3
Councillors

Performance Panel

The Performance Panel will be made up of Tenants, the Head of Housing and the Lead Member for Housing. They will meet quarterly to review how well we and our contractors perform. This includes issues such as repairs, landscaping, anti-social behaviour, and rent arrears. It will investigate, review performance and make evidence based recommendations for improvements to the housing service.

Area Housing Forums



In Spring 2021, we are having three Area Housing Forums, in the north, east and west of the district. These may be an in-person meeting or only online depending on the current circumstances.

Housing representatives that sit on the Housing Engagement Board would chair the quarterly meeting in their local area. The Housing Engagement Board would set the topics of discussion to make sure the most important issues were raised, and tenants are asked their opinions. The meetings will inform tenants about new proposals, policy, or service updates.

Tenants will also be able to ask questions either about the housing service in general or discuss their own housing issue.

Communication

We send out a printed tenant magazine twice a year. It provides an annual report and other information about your housing service. These will still be delivered to you.

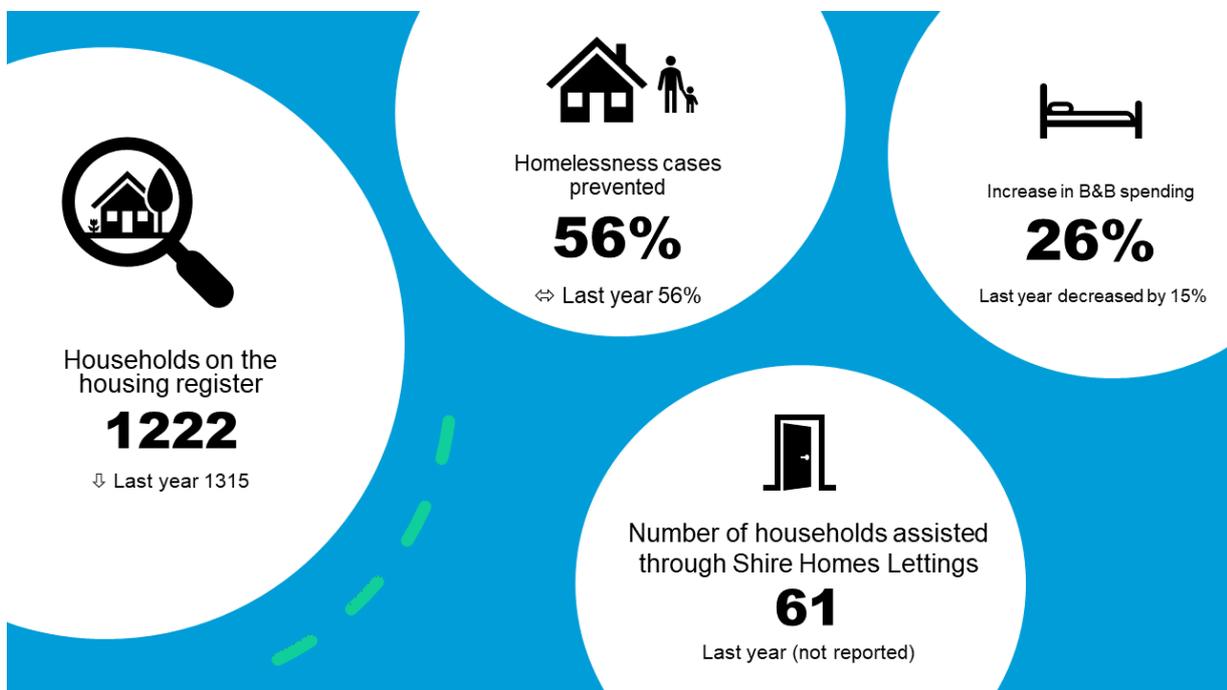
Additionally, the new framework includes some new ways to communicate with you, such as:

- [Email](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Our website](#)
- [My South Cambs](#) customer portal

Homelessness

Our Housing Advice and Options team provide free housing advice to everyone in the district – home-owners and renters. If you feel you are at risk of becoming homeless, speak to us at the earliest opportunity so we can look at ways to either help prevent the situation or look at the options available to you.

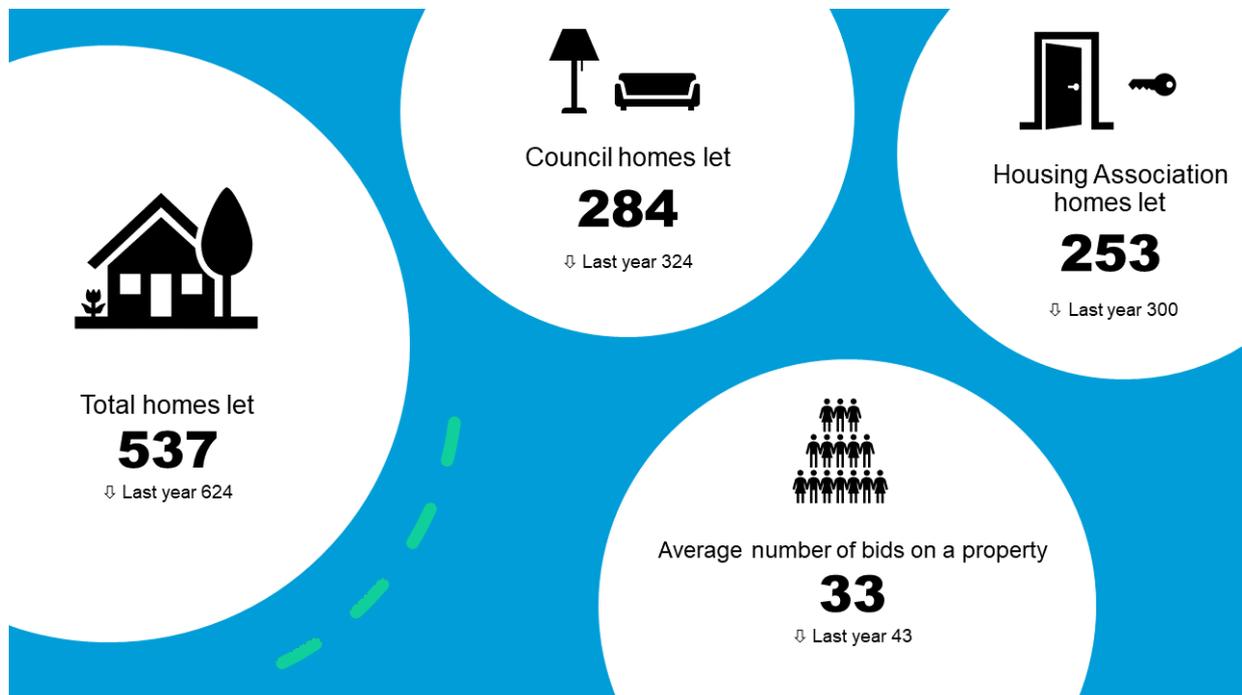
Shire Homes Lettings is our private sector leasing scheme that lets out properties on behalf of the home-owner. They manage 43 properties, including 2 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) that have 7 bed spaces in total. These properties are used as temporary accommodation and although the amount of spending on B&B accommodation has risen this year, it would be a lot higher without the use of these properties.



Lettings and Nominations

You can apply for a council or housing association home by visiting [Homelink](#) and registering. We work in partnership with a number of Housing Associations across the district to offer affordable housing in the district.

Our [Help to buy](#) agents also offer low cost home ownership options, such as shared ownership.



Our performance

Whilst we always try our best to deliver great customer service, we recognise that sometimes we may not perform as well as we could. We are always happy to hear about when we do something well and you are pleased with our service or where we can make improvements.

Please feel free to contact us to provide your feedback and help us improve our service.

Visit our [website](#) or call 03450 450 051



Our year in numbers



5265

Council Homes
↑ Last year 5251



93%

Repairs completed at
first visit
↑ Last year 90%



35

Mutual Exchanges
↑ Last year 26



8

Evictions
↑ Last year 7



33

New build homes
↓ Last year 36



19

Right to buy sales
↓ Last year 20



284

Council homes let
↓ Last year 324



73

Complaints received
↓ Last year 81

How to contact us



03450 450 051



www.scams.gov.uk



www.facebook.com/InSouthCambs