

Regeneration, Culture and Environment

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

20 January 2026

Attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness

Portfolio Holder: Councillor L Prenter, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness

Summary

This annual report provides an account of the role of the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness. It details their ambitions for their areas of responsibility, how they have, and how they will undertake political challenge and leadership and what their priorities and ambitions are for the year ahead.

1. Recommendation

1.1. The Committee is asked to note the report.

2. Budget and policy framework

2.1. The areas within the Terms of Referenced of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and covered by the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness, as set out in the Council's Constitution are:

- All Housing Services, including the Housing Revenue Account (HRA)
- Homelessness and Housing Options
- Medway Development Company (MDC)
- Private Sector Housing
- Travellers

2.2. One Medway Council Plan, Housing Strategy to 2030, Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy to 2030 are key documents underlying all of our activity. We also work closely with colleagues in the Place and People directorates to ensure our work underpins the Marmot Place ambitions and the Medway Health & Wellbeing Strategy.

3. Background

3.1. As the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness I would like to start by expressing my thanks to staff, partners and contractors who, day to day, run

council services with exceptional commitment, enthusiasm, dedication and care for our tenants and residents in Medway.

- 3.2. I would also like to say a special thank you to the Tenants Panel who have worked tirelessly with myself, staff and contractors to hold us to account and ensure the voice of the tenant is heard.
- 3.3. It is clear that staff understand the financial situation that the Council currently faces but also the importance of delivering high quality statutory services, while seeking positive outcomes for residents of Medway.
- 3.4. The Housing sector, both nationally and locally, remains challenging. Rising costs for renters, owners and landlords has led to a position whereby the market is inaccessible for an increasing number of people.
- 3.5. The condition of accommodation in both the private and social sectors continues to be important. I know that through my work in both my ward and beyond, there are still challenges with the standard of accommodation in the private sector.
- 3.6. Our tenants and residents are also feeling the ongoing challenges of the economic climate within the housing sector. I am pleased to see a continuing focus on support and advice to those that need the Council's help the most. This has been achieved through a number of support programmes, initiatives and guidance which are highlighted in this report.
- 3.7. Landlord Services have continued to have positive engagement with the Regulator of Social Housing since our C2 Judgement in November 2024.

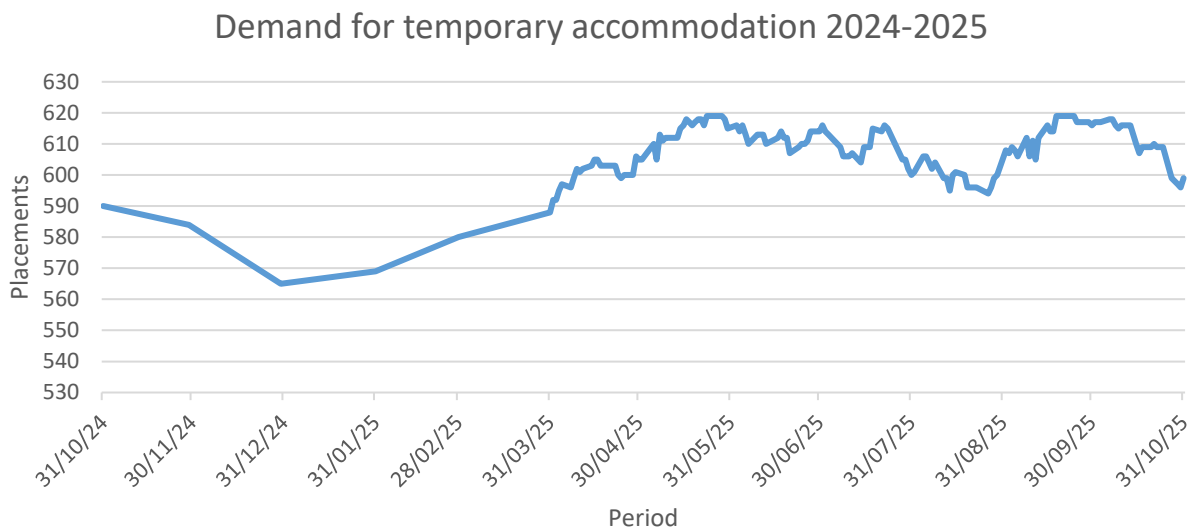
4. Housing Needs

Homelessness, Housing Options and Rough Sleepers

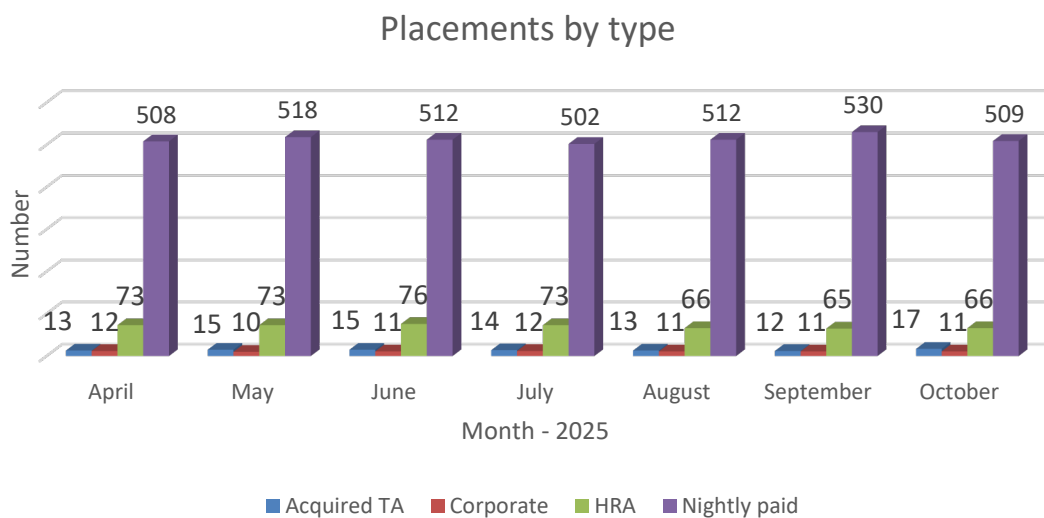
- 4.1. Like other parts of the country, homelessness remains high in Medway. In the 12 months between November 2024 and October 2025, 3920 households approached the Housing Options Service for assistance. Fifty-nine percent (2309) of these households were either homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- 4.2. The highest reasons for loss of accommodation were friends and family no longer willing to accommodate the households (33%) and the end of private rented accommodation (29%). The Renters Right Act, which received Royal Assent on 27 October 2025, which contribute significantly towards reducing evictions by private sector landlords, especially where the tenant has done nothing wrong.
- 4.3. 1,025 households were successfully prevented from homelessness or assisted to find alternative accommodation between the period, with 527 households placed into temporary accommodation. Other assistance offered include information and advice to help households find their own accommodation where a statutory duty is not owed by Medway Council,

referrals to other local authorities where a household has a local connection where they had no connection with Medway, Advice and assistance often include Rent deposit and rent in advance to rent in the private rented sector.

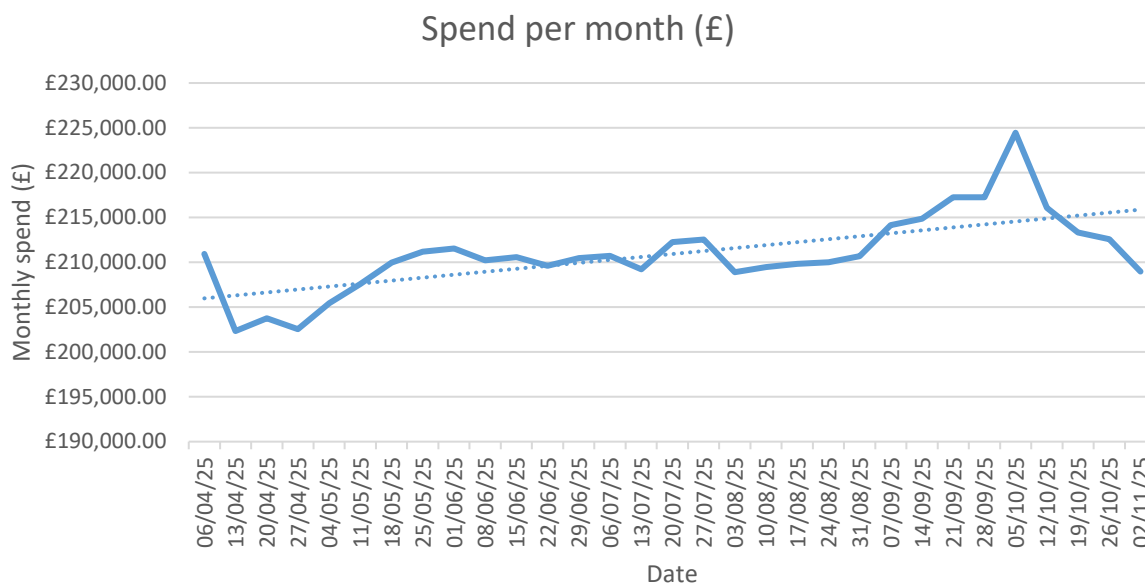
- 4.4. Domestic abuse remains a significant issue 9% of households who were homeless or at risk of homelessness resulted from domestic abuse. In addition to assistance with their housing situation, these residents also receive specialist assistance from Domestic Abuse Officers embedded within the Housing Options Service.
- 4.5. Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse altered the DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) accreditation framework to which Housing was working towards, this has led to a number of positive changes as they continue to strive for accreditation. The focus is to update existing domestic abuse policies and procedure and create policies and procedure where there isn't any currently existing.
- 4.6. The team have extensively updated the Workplace Domestic Abuse Policy, which will improve the understanding of support for survivors within Medway Council and hold perpetrators to account.
- 4.7. Over the past year 34 Domestic Abuse Champions have been recruited and trained, who listen to survivors and signpost to services. They are from a broad range of teams in Medway Council, including Housing, Adult Social Care, HR and Children's Social Care. The DA Champions will be promoted on the DA Wellbeing website on MedSpace. The information for the pages has been gathered by the Operational Board and housing over the year; it will be a resource for Medway Council staff who are survivors or for managers who are supporting survivors. Additionally, the board have worked with Learning and Development to create a plan of how to deliver role appropriate DA training.
- 4.8. The front door at Kingsley House was reopened to the public in May 2025. This has improved accessibility to the service. The service continues to work with the Customer and Business Support (CABS) service to improve residents experience when using the front door at Kingsley House.
- 4.9. The One Medway Lettings Scheme (OML) assist residents to rent affordable homes privately. As of 31 October 2025, directly manages 27 private rented properties. In addition, in the last 12 months, OML has assisted 165 households to rent privately either by introducing them to suitable landlords or reaching an agreement with the landlord and offering the property directly to a household at risk of homeless or in temporary accommodation. OML has successfully assisted large families of 6, 7 and 11 member households to move into affordable homes in the private rented sector.
- 4.10. Demand for temporary accommodation remains high, like the national trend. This is directly related to the high number of households at risk of homelessness. High temporary accommodation demand is resulting in increased pressure on the budget for temporary accommodation.



4.11. The information in the graph below shows the breakdown of the Council's current temporary accommodation portfolio. A considerable proportion of the Council's current TA stock is nightly paid properties through the private sector, which is the costliest form of temporary accommodation.



4.12. The information in the graph below shows the weekly spend on TA between 06 April 2025 and 02 November 2025. The average weekly spend on nightly paid temporary accommodation within the period was £210,928.22.

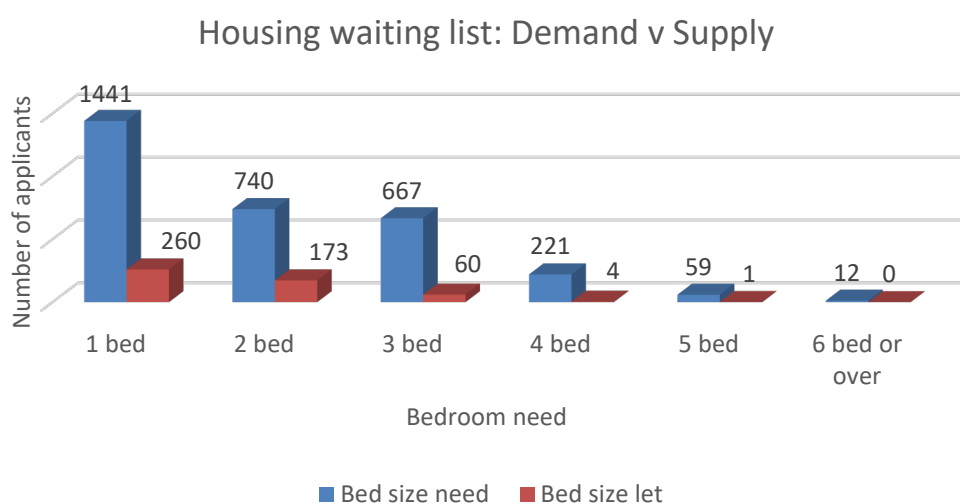


- 4.13. To reduce the dependence on costly nightly paid accommodation the Council has introduced a number of initiatives, including using about 70 properties from its social housing stock (HRA) and some corporate residential properties. The Council has embarked on a property acquisition programme specifically for temporary accommodation (See section 4.29 – 4.32 for information on the TA acquisitions programme). The aim of the programme is to reduce the reliance on the private sector.
- 4.14. The Rough Sleepers Initiative continues to work across Medway providing outreach from 4.30am (street based) and navigator services (ongoing placement support) while working in partnership to support homelessness provision with the voluntary sector and providers of supported housing for vulnerable homeless people.
- 4.15. From April 2025-Sept 2025 the team's average caseload has been 76 clients. Average referrals for the same period have been 81. Monthly verifications of rough sleepers have been on average 35 per month, with October's verifications at 39 and referrals at 97.
- 4.16. The Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) is in place, and the forecast is monitored daily, for the winter period (and throughout the year when there are warning of severe/hot weather). There will be a winter shelter running from 01 January up until 31 March 2026, this has been funded by a Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) grant with contributions from Public Health and the Household Support Fund.

Homechoice and allocations

- 4.17. Demand for affordable social housing remains high. Between April 2025 and October 2025, the Council received 1,995 applications to join the housing register.

- 4.18. As of November 2025, there were 3,140 households on the Council's housing register bidding for social housing. Between April 2025 and November 2025, the Council successful let 498 social homes through the housing register.



- 4.19. Information in the graph above shows that there is significant demand for 1-, 2- and 3-bedroom properties. While demand for high bedroom properties such as 4-, 5- and 6-bedroom properties are much lower, there is no supply of this property size.

Housing Strategy

- 4.20. The Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy has now been launched with an action plan which will be reviewed each quarter and fully updated annually. This includes activities around learning more about who is approaching for homelessness through various sources of data such as the Low-Income Family Tracker [LIFT], the delivery of training to ensure non-housing professionals have a better understanding of housing and homelessness and creating more robust pathways into secure housing.
- 4.21. Medway Housing's safeguarding good practice has resulted in a positive audit from the Kent and Medway Safeguarding Adult Board (KMSAB). There has been significant additional work this year with the team providing input to KMSAB safeguarding adult reviews and a new working group on vulnerable homeless individuals with other Kent districts. This builds on a successful Children's safeguarding audit in 2024 and action plans are included as part of the service's continuous improvement work.
- 4.22. The new Sunrise Foyer for homeless 18–25-year-olds has received over 135 referrals from Medway, and the scheme has been running at full capacity. Some young people entered the scheme after spending time in Medway's winter shelter last year, others because of joint working between the Housing Options Team and Medway's Transitions team who support children who are transitioning from Children's social care to adult's social care. All new residents were owed a homeless duty by Medway Council. The enhanced number of support officers mean that the scheme can work with young people who are often considered 'too high needs' for other general needs supported

housing in Medway. Medway's Transitions team also work closely with Sunrise Foyer to provide additional support where needed.

- 4.23. Housing Strategy and Partnership staff have been rolling out training to other teams across the council to improve understanding of how to act quickly to prevent homelessness, including rough sleeping. The team also hosted a wider partner event for World Homeless Day, with 34 separate agencies attending to hear more about the work done in Medway around homelessness and the role that our stakeholders can play. The conversations held at the event have enabled the start of further joint working between Medway and wider partners. HSP and Housing Options delivered a session during the Medway Staff Road Show to educate staff about spotting the signs of homelessness early and what to do about it.

Private Sector Housing – housing standards

- 4.24. The Council operates a predominantly reactive service that responds to complaints from private sector tenants who are concerned about the safety of their home. The Private Sector Housing Team acts to improve the conditions of homes by working with landlords and tenants by offering support and guidance on their legal obligations.
- 4.25. Private sector tenants are able to raise disrepair requests, and are then visited by an officer to assess against the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System ([HHSRS](#)), used to identify specific hazards, depending on the outcome of an assessment and a number of actions can be taken including enforcement.

Housing Standards	Number	Additional Comments
Disrepair request	499	
Category 1 Hazards (HHSRS) - identified	187	
Category 2 Hazards (HHSRS) - identified	509	
Category 1 Hazards (HHSRS) - resolved	37	
Category 2 Hazards (HHSRS)-resolved	256	
Enforcement notices	342	Nov 24 - March 25 - 51 notices served equating to £38,199 April 25 to Oct 25 58 notices served equating to £43,442.
Financial penalties	22	Nov 24 - March 25 6 final FPNs served equating to £49,500. April 25 to Oct 25 16 Final FPNs served equating to £111,000. 3 still to be served which will be an additional £34,000.
Warrants	8	
Notice of entries	712	
Schedules of works	45	
Partnership working - KFRS	18	
HMO licenses - issued	63	
HMO licenses - renewed	26	
HMO - enforcement	5	5 Enforcement Notices, 11 FPNS included in FPN figure above
Other enforcement letters	506	
Properties improved by informal approach	52	
Informal advice/mediation	76	

- 4.26. The team have completed a feasibility study this year to support the recommendations presented to Cabinet in October 2025, this month the team have also selected the winning tender to commence the formal consultation required under the Housing Act 2004 to enable the implementation of Medway Council's first additional and selective licensing.

Private Sector Housing – disabled facility grants (DFGs) and adaptations

- 4.27. DFGs and adaptations allow Medway residents and tenants to remain independent in their homes.
- 4.28. Between November 2024 – October 2025, the team has assisted 170 households at a cost of £2,05m to remain in their homes with the support of DFGs. This includes owner-occupiers, private sector rental tenants and housing association tenants.
- 4.29. Between November 2024-October 2025, the team have assisted 66 households remain in their council homes at a cost of £119k, this budget forms part of the HRA annual capital projects budget.

- 4.30. A new complex case coordinator to support medical discharges across Medway goes to advert in January 2026 and will provide a coordinated approach across the medical facilities, social care and housing.

Temporary Accommodation Acquisition Programme

- 4.31. Following agreement from Cabinet in January 2024 to support a capital borrowing programme of £42million to acquire 150 properties for the use as temporary accommodation by March 2026, I am pleased to confirm the following acquisitions as of December 2025:
- 118 properties have been purchased to date including a block of 73 flats in Chatham (exchanged and completed)
 - 64 properties were exchanged with completion due in January 2026 – a block of 64 flats in Rochester
 - A further 4 properties were with Legal and completion due by March 2026
 - Total by end of March 2026: 186
- 4.32. It is important to note that all acquisitions viability assessed which includes red book valuations, condition surveys, cash flow modelling, and full property and legal searches.
- 4.33. Monitoring of acquisitions is undertaken as part of my monthly portfolio holder meetings.
- 4.34. While the acquisition programme has been challenging, the team have learnt and adapted to ensure that the properties purchased meet all due diligence and compliance requirements.

5. Housing Revenue Account (Landlord Services) – Tenant Services

Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

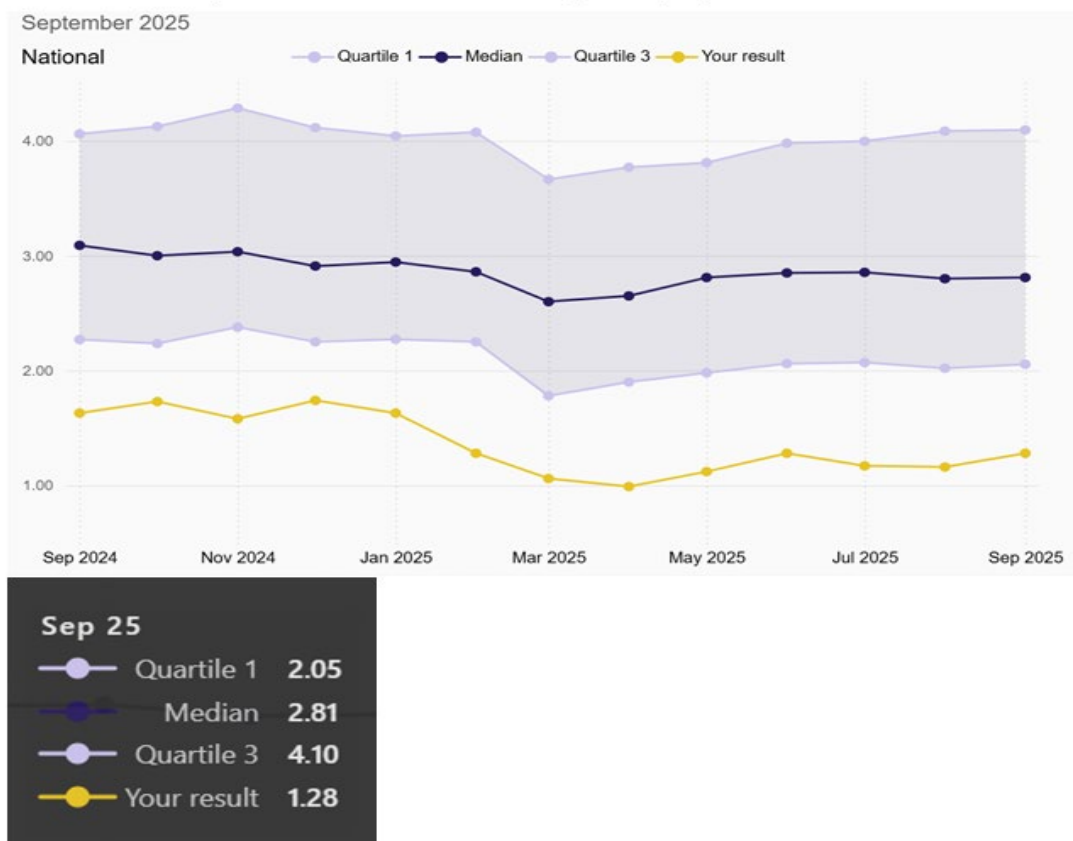
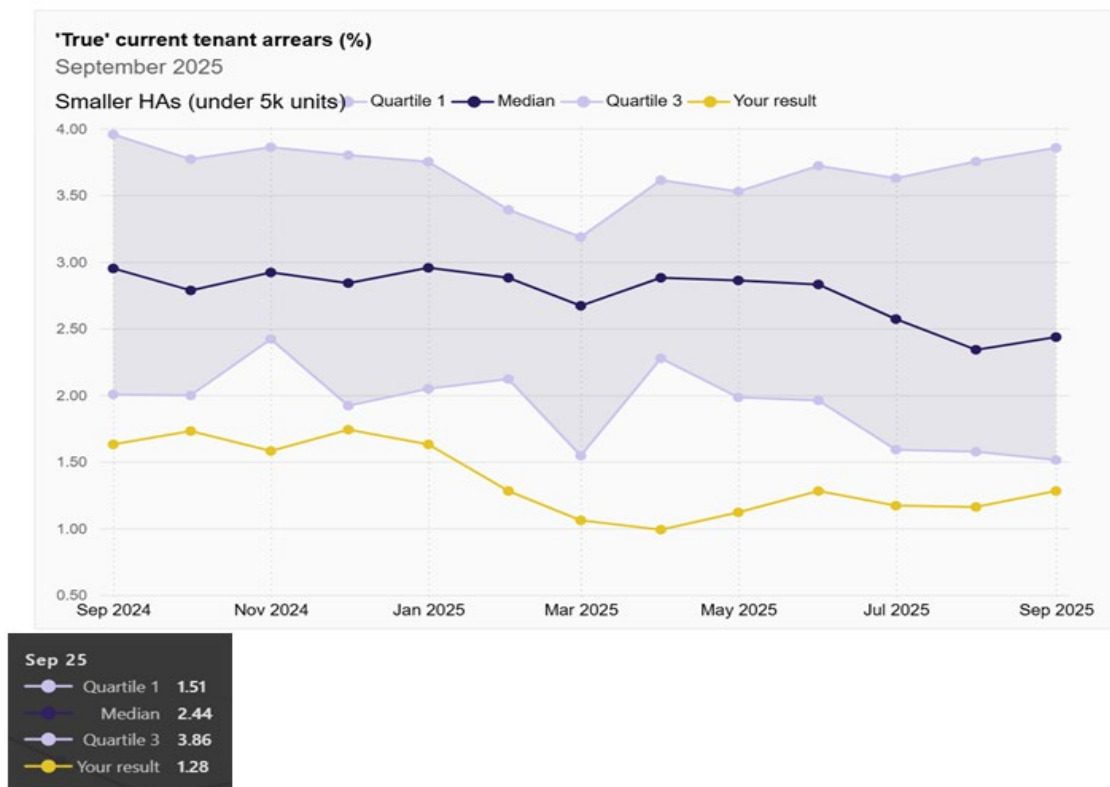
- 5.1. Since April 2023, social housing landlords must report on 22 TSMs across 5 themes. Ten are measured by the landlord directly (technical requirements) and 12 are measured by the landlord through perception surveys.
- 5.2. Our first survey in October 2023 highlighted improvements needed in complaint handling and ASB case management.
- 5.3. The draft outcomes for the TSMs for 2025/26 are highlighted below, with the comparison to the outcomes from 2024/25. A full report will go to the Tenants Panel and HRA Governance Group in February 2026, with a summary published in March.
- 5.4. Improvement plans aligned with Consumer Standards have driven progress, reflected in improved results in the 2025 surveys. A full report will go to the Tenants Panel and HRA Governance Group in February 2026, with a summary published in March 2026.

Question		Score	Change from 24/25
TP01	Overall satisfaction	75.2%	+4.5%
TP02	Satisfaction with repairs	76.2%	+1.5%
TP03	Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair	76.6%	+3.5%
TP04	Satisfaction that the home is well maintained	73.2%	0.0%
TP05	Satisfaction that the home is safe	74.8%	-1.4%
TP06	Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them	62.9%	-1.6%
TP07	Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them	75.1%	+0.9%
TP08	Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect	77.1%	+2.7%
TP09	Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to complaints handling	25.9%	-7.0%
TP10	Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained	67.2%	+0.3%
TP11	Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods	60.5%	0.0%
TP12	Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling anti-social behaviour	53.6%	+1.7%

- 5.5. The technical measures [\[TSM Guidance\]](#) are collected at the end of the financial year and will be published on our website followed by formal publication by the Regulator of Social Housing in November 2026.

Income and arrears management & tenancy sustainment

- 5.6. Universal Credit claimants have risen by 9%, now representing 52% of tenancies (1,580 households) The numbers will continue to increase as further migration of legacy benefits on to UC between now and 2026.
- 5.7. Rent arrears at Quarter 2 were £238,173 (1.28% of annual rent debit), outperforming our 1.65% target and national benchmarks. The graphs below show the team's performance against organisations of a similar size and nationally, with our performance being significantly better than both. [Source is Monthly Pulse from Housemark].



5.8. Tenancy sustainment (financial support) services have secured £48,431 in additional tenant income through access to grants, discretionary housing

payments and backdated benefits. £24,474 has also been secured in successful Household Support Grant applications.

Tenancy and estate management

- 5.9. The ASB improvement plan actions are now almost complete, with many positive changes to the service. These include a suite of bespoke training packages delivered to frontline staff, the recruitment of a new ASB officer and apprentice, 5 members of the team now mediation trained and a new ASB case management system about to go live.
- 5.10. Monthly quality inspections are undertaken to ensure cleaning standards in communal areas are maintained. The current contract has been extended until April 2026, whilst a full tender process is fulfilled. The HRA will be taking back the management of communal area cleaning in our Homes For Independent Living schemes, from facilities management when their contract ends in April 2026.

Tenant and resident engagement

- 5.11. The Tenants Panel continues to develop, with the Chair and Vice Chair appointed in July 2024 still in place. The panel has grown its membership over the last year and provide an important function within our landlord services. They continue to review policies and strategies and have recently completed a scrutiny exercise on our aids and adaptations process and procedure. The associated report was shared with governance group in November 2025.
- 5.12. The Big Door Knocks introduced in October 2022 to support the introduction of the new TSMs has continued to adapt and change to support the delivery of landlord services. The service carries out 11 events per year.
- 5.13. Between November 2024 and September 2025, the HRA team has knocked on 1,211 doors, with 462 tenants spoken to and 208 surveys completed. This programme is engaging, providing tenants the opportunity to talk to the team while providing visibility across our neighbourhoods.
- 5.14. Tenant Services have attended many cross-service events between this year, including regeneration community events, development engagement events, a mutual exchange drop in and the newly created Medway Roadshows, aimed and providing a one-stop-shop for tenants requiring support.
- 5.15. Tenant Panel members were invited to attend the parliamentary launch of the Stop Social Stigma Campaign following their involvement as one of eleven "Pioneer Travellers" to support the development and refinement of the Journey Planner.
- 5.16. The team have also completed 100 tenancy audits per month since April, as part of our Regulatory improvement plan to know our tenants. Similarly, we have increased the amount of vulnerability and accessibility data we hold for

our tenants. Since April, we have increased the number of households we hold this data for by 267 (representing 8% of all households).

- 5.17. The communication preferences data captured has informed targeted engagement campaigns to reach more tenants. In some cases, this has improved resident surgery attendance by up to 500%.

6. **Housing Revenue Account (Landlord) Property and Development Service**

- 6.1. The HRA Property Services team covers asset management and surveying, energy, compliance and building safety, dis-repair, planned works, voids, and repairs to our council homes. The team is also responsible for HRA Housing development, acquisitions, and enabling (supporting the delivery of affordable housing within in Medway).

New repairs and compliance contracts

- 6.2. The HRA procured several new repairs and maintenance contracts, all of which went live on 1 September 2024. This procurement activity proceeded in collaboration with HRA residents, with Cabinet and Procurement Board approval.

- 6.3. The service procured specialists contractors as bulleted below

Repairs, Planned, Voids & Energy	-	Mears
Gas services	-	Sureserve Compliance South (SCS)
Electrical service	-	RGE Services
Fire Risk Assessments (FRA)	-	STG
FRA Remedial Works	-	Bell
FRA Servicing	-	RGE Services
Asbestos Surveying	-	Acorn
Asbestos Remedials	-	Rhodar
Water Management	-	Envirocure

- 6.4. The service also has a contract in place with Phoenix Compliancy Management (PCM) who assist the HRA with monitoring statutory compliance responsibility for water, gas, lifts and electrical.
- 6.5. The new contracts came with a new suite of KPIs that officers will use to monitor contractors' performance. MLAPs (minimal levels of acceptable performance), financial penalties for at fault complaints and dis-repair cases, as well as at fault void rent loss, were also embedded into the new contracts. Since the contracts started, the service has claimed back circa £10k from Mears thanks to this new addition.
- 6.6. Each contract has been reviewed after being in place for over a year, and a summary report has been drafted which outlines what has gone well, what has been challenging, and what improvements and changes will be made for the second year of each of the contracts and beyond.

- 6.7. Strategic meetings have taken place with Mears, Swale Heating and RGE and will continue to do so quarterly going forward. Officers review each contract's mobilisation plan; key promises document and KPIs during these meetings to ensure successful contract delivery. Monthly operational meetings are also held with each contractor to discuss day to day operational activity and contract performance.

Repairs, planned work and voids

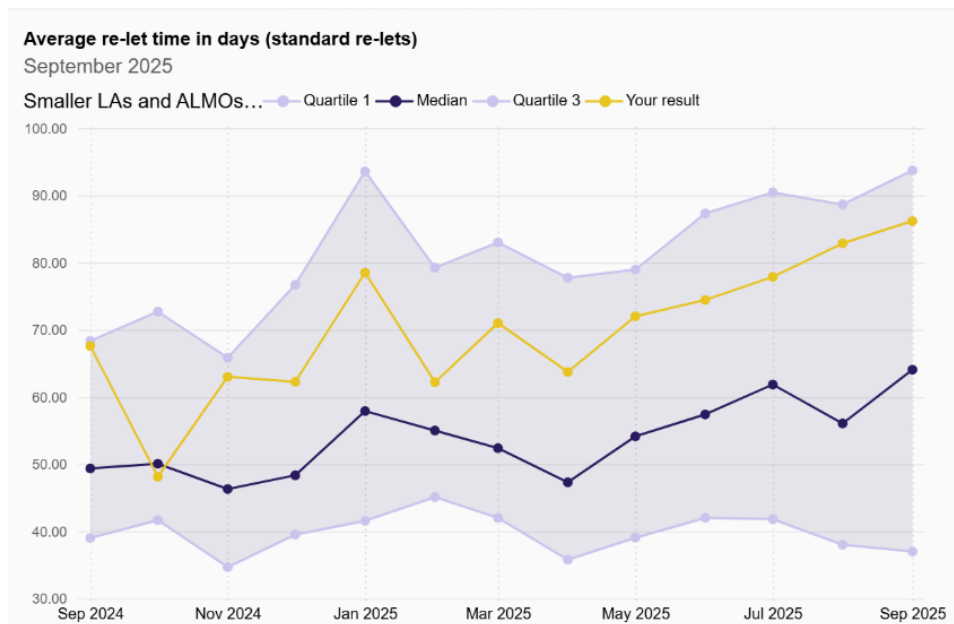
- 6.8. Repairs performance has been good throughout the year. Out of hours, emergency, urgent and routine repairs completed on time are consistently sitting between 90-100%.

KPI	Target	Performance 2024/25	Performance April to September 2025
% Customers satisfied with the overall repairs service	85%	89.40%	87.8%
Average days start- end time for responsive repairs - Emergency	1 day	1 day	1.4 days
Average days start- end time for responsive repairs - urgent	5 days	4 days	5.9 days
Average days start-end time for responsive repairs - routine	20 days	13 days	22.4 days
Gas compliancy record	100%	99.39%	99.75%
Emergency repairs completed on time	100%	99.4%	99.72%
Urgent repairs completed on time	100%	97.34%	97.01%
Routine repairs completed on time	99%	93.31%	93.66%
Repairs appointments kept	99.50%	93.94%	89.62%
Responsive repair recalls	<=1%	0.01%	0.14%

- 6.9. The percentage of customers satisfied with the overall repairs service and the service provided by Mears is also on average above the target of 85%.
- 6.10. The average start to end time for responsive repairs has increased in comparison to the previous year whilst the percentage of calls being answered is comparable with the previous year at around 98%.
- 6.11. The average call waiting time for Mears on responsive repairs is 17 seconds which is low when benchmarked against other housing providers of a similar size.
- 6.12. The service has put measures in place to manage Damp and Mould in accordance with Awwab's Law. The service has been working with Mears to create a D&M module as part of Mears's MCM contractor management system and the HRA has created a tracking sheet to ensure key milestones are being achieved.

- 6.13. The service also continues to proactively contact tenants on an annual basis to ask if they have any damp or mould, any health and safety concerns, or any repairs they would like to raise.
- 6.14. The current void turn around (time to relet a vacant council home) was 73 days for standard voids and 41 days for long term voids at the end of October 2025. The standard voids over the last 12 months have fluctuated with a peak in September 2025 (86.18 days). The team has been working closely with Mears to support the reduction in days; this has included the use of Mears Task Force, a multi-trade team that support areas that need to improve performance. Mears have also increased the number of directly employed void operatives working on the Medway contract and are approaching local sub-contractors to provide additional support as and when required.
- 6.15. The service also identified that delays in receiving property nominations and the re-letting part of the process was also significantly contributing to these delays. The service is reviewing its processes with a view to improving these areas as well.
- 6.16. The service is also looking to move void reporting onto its housing management system (NEC) to make it easier to see where void blockages are occurring. The service will be looking to report on how long voids are with Mears for, how long they're with Housing Allocations for, and how long they are with Housing Tenancy for once the transition to NEC is completed.
- 6.17. Void performance remains in keeping with the rest of the sector when benchmarked. The service is undertaking some analysis to establish what the causes for voids are and will be looking at what interventions can be made to reduce the number of voids and improve the condition they are being handed back in. [Benchmark data via Housemark's monthly pulse – Medway Council.] Void performance remains aligned with sector benchmarks.

The chart below, taken from the monthly pulse benchmarking, illustrates that performance has followed a similar trend throughout the year. It consistently sits above the median while remaining within the third quartile range.



- 6.18. The amount of works that are in progress is steadily reducing after spiking at the beginning of the year. This was mainly due to some severe weather coinciding with Mears experiencing resourcing issues and the service adopting a more proactive approach to repairs identification by way of Big Door Knocks and proactive contacts.
- 6.19. The service undertook a no access process review to combat hard to access properties and understand why some tenants are refusing to have planned works undertaken to their properties. A tenant testimony video has been created, and a property communication plan has also been developed and sent out to all tenants advising when their key planned works components are due to be replaced.
- 6.20. Mears, RGE and Sureserve (SCS) continue to make good progress on their respective planned works programmes. SCS and completed more boilers than the services have managed to achieve before. RGE are making good progress on their smoke detector and AICO gateway installations. Mears are making steady progress on their kitchen and bathroom programmes; however, we are experiencing a lot of no access and waivers. Improvements are needed on Mears's roofing programme, and this has been addressed with Mears.
- 6.21. The service is making good progress on the St Albans refurbishment project with a planning application being submitted. Consultation has been undertaken with residents, and the service is aiming to start on site around April 2026 subject to planning approval being received.

Compliance and building safety

- 6.22. The service continues to perform exceptionally well when it comes to compliance and building safety. The HRA Compliance Project Manager's sole purpose is to ensure that the service remains compliant with its statutory obligations.

- 6.23. The service also utilises the services of a specialist compliance consultant (PCM) who audits, provides advice and training, and informs the service of any changes in regulation or legislation.
- 6.24. The service has a compliance tracker which monitors compliance across 47 different compliance workstreams, states what is in and out of compliance and prompts what is due to come out of compliance in the next 30 days.
- 6.25. The service is in the process of transitioning away for the current compliance tracker and over to True Compliance, which is a cloud based, compliance management piece of software that was recommended by the Regulator of Social Housing during their visit. The service is on track to have this mobilised by 31st December 2025.
- 6.26. The service is looking to grow the team that manages building safety and compliance, with an additional post being created. This HRA Compliance Officer post will support the HRA Compliance Project Manager in ensuring that building safety and compliance remains good whilst providing and additional layer of business continuity.
- 6.27. Compliance statistics are provided to me on a monthly and reviewed and scrutinised by the Tenants Panel and then the HRA Governance Group. Officers also hold regular compliance progress meetings, ensuring that non-compliant works or works due to fall out of compliance are in hand and being actioned.
- 6.28. The service has also created a Property Safety Board in conjunction with the Corporate Property Team. The Board will meet twice a year to scrutinise both areas property management stats and process and provide the council with reassurance that its assets are being maintained in accordance with the necessary regulations and standards.

The table below shows the total compliance summary as of 31/10/25

	Number of compliance units	Compliant	Non-Compliant	
TOTAL	16442	16333	109	368
	99.34%	0.66%	2.24%	

The table below shows the detailed 'Big 6' compliance at end of October 2025

Category	Workstream	Frequency	Num of units	Compliant	Non-Compliant	Due in 30 Days	Compliance HRA %
Lifts	Domestic Lifts - Service	1 Year	77	76	1	12	98.70%
Electrical	PIR - Domestic - 5 Year	5 Years	3041	2966	75	9	97.53%

Gas	Landlord Gas Safety Record - Domestic	1 Year	2770	2763	7	34	99.75%
Electrical	PIR - Domestic - 10 Year	10 Years	3041	3040	1	3	99.97%
Asbestos	Asbestos Management Survey	1 Year	208	208	0	3	100.00%
Water	Water Risk Assessment Review	1 Year	16	16	0	4	100.00%
Lifts	Passenger Lifts - Service	Monthly	8	8	0	8	100.00%
Electrical	PIR - Communal - 5 Year	5 Years	197	197	0	0	100.00%
Electrical	PIR - Communal - 10 Year	10 Years	197	197	0	0	100.00%
Fire	Fire Risk Assessment - Survey	2 Years	196	196	0	4	100.00%

Assets and energy

- 6.29. The service undertakes a variety of surveys to both residential and communal buildings, including full stock condition surveys, Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) surveys, decency surveys and HHSRS assessments.
- 6.30. The service has stock condition data for 99.57% of the housing stock with the remaining properties having cloned asset data. The Service is working towards achieving 100% 5-year valid stock condition surveys by the end of 2025. The service also has 100% valid 5-year stock condition surveys (SCS) for all blocks and communal areas.
- 6.31. The service recently appointed a second in house Stock Condition Surveyor to accelerate the number of surveys being completed. The two HRA Stock Condition Surveyors are working alongside an external consultant to complete a large proportion of surveys between now and the end of the financial year.

SCS - Domestic Properties	Current Position	
Description	Number	% of Stock
Properties with a SCS completed	3032	99.67%
Properties with cloned data	10	0.33%
Valid SCS within last 5 years	1967	64.66%
Properties without Valid SCS but had a Decency Survey in last 5 years	612	20.12%
Properties without Valid SCS and no Decency Survey but has been void in last 5 years	96	3.16%
Sub Total: Properties Visited in last 5 Years	2675	87.94%
On Programme to have full SCS in 2025/26	1077	35.40%
Sub Total: Properties to be Visited in 2025/26	1077	35.40%
Total Stock	3042	

- 6.32. The service recently reviewed and published the HRA's Asset Management strategy which outlines the approach the HRA will take when it comes to managing, investing in and maintaining HRA housing assets. All associated policies and procedures have also been reviewed and updated since the implementation of the new contracts.
- 6.33. The service has made good progress on obtaining valid Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) data on the HRA housing stock, with 149 EPC surveys completed, equating to 5% of the stock having a new EPC completed in the last 12 months.
- 6.34. The HRA's housing stock is performing well from an EPC and Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) standing point, with 75.41% of properties already achieving an EPC C or above. [See the table below].

EPC Rating	Number	% - Total Stock	% of Stock with EPC
A	0	0.00%	0.00%
B	151	4.96%	4.99%
C	2143	70.45%	70.75%
D	720	23.67%	23.77%
E	12	0.39%	0.40%
F	2	0.07%	0.07%
G	1	0.03%	0.03%
Total EPC	3029	99.57%	100.00%
Valid EPC	2863	94.12%	
Non Valid EPC	166	5.46%	
No EPC	13	0.43%	
Properties	3042		

- 6.35. The HRA obtained £1m of funding through a successful SHDF Wave 2 bid which was match funded by the service. The bid was made in conjunction with Mears and will focus on improving the fabric to 108 of the HRA's worst

performing properties (poor EPC ratings). Works are due to complete February 2026.

- 6.36. Works are underway to the 108 properties, with 80 of properties completed as at the November 2025.

Development and enabling

- 6.37. The HRA Development Strategy was published in 2020 and sets out our aim to increase the HRA housing stock by 1% year on year to help meet Medway's housing needs and provide high quality, sustainable Affordable Housing.
- 6.38. To maximise opportunities for increasing the housing stock, several development options are considered:
- Land led schemes where land is acquired, planning permission secured and the build contract put out for tender.
 - Obtaining planning permission and building on existing HRA/Council owned land.
 - Turnkey acquisitions where we purchase a new build development direct from a Developer.
 - Open market purchases.
 - Buy back of former HRA/Council owned homes.
 - Section 106 Affordable Housing acquisitions (where there is no take up by Registered Providers).
- 6.39. Comprehensive cash flow modelling is carried out prior to all development/acquisition opportunities to ensure value for money and financial viability in line with the HRA Business Plan.
- 6.40. Wherever possible, the HRA Development Team explores funding opportunities to assist with the financial viability of developments/acquisitions and has already secured just over £770k of funding through the Brownfield Land Release Fund. A grant of £2,280,000 has also been secured through the Homes England Affordable Homes Programme for one site in our Phase 5 development to deliver all of the homes at Social Rent, helping to improve affordability for future tenants. A further grant application is being submitted for the second site in Phase 5.
- 6.41. Since March 2023 the Council has participated in the Local Authority Housing Fund Rounds 2 and 3, with the HRA Development Team delivering eight homes for households on the Afghan Resettlement schemes and 12 properties for Temporary Accommodation as part of Round 2 (funding of £2,576,362 was allocated to Medway). Round 3 started in August 2024 and covers 2024/25 and 2025/26 with a delivery target of 5 homes for resettlement households and 22 properties for Temporary Accommodation (funding of £4,104,714 was allocated to Medway). In January 2025 we successfully bid for further funding

that became available, increasing our allocation to £5,290,794, and our target to 28 properties for Temporary Accommodation and 7 for resettlement. As of December 2025, we have met our Temporary Accommodation target, have delivered 3 for resettlement with the remaining 4 due for completion by March 2026.

6.42. Since the HRA Development Strategy was published, 107 council homes have been delivered by HRA developments or acquisitions.

6.43. The following developments and acquisitions are currently underway:

- Phase 5: we entered contract in August 2024 for the build of 37 new Affordable Homes across two sites. This includes 19 houses at Lennox Wood in Twydall and 18 flats at Aburound House in Gillingham. Lennox Wood is due for completion in May 2026 with all the homes being delivered at Social Rent. Aburound House is due for completion in July 2026 with the rent level to be confirmed subject to our application to the Affordable Homes Programme.
- Phase 6: the build of a new block of 44 flats at Britton Farm, Gillingham (known as 'Truro Manor') for Affordable Rent. This is being delivered by Medway Development Company as their off-site affordable housing contribution for Chatham Waterfront, with the HRA acquiring the block. These homes are due for completion in January 2026.
- The acquisition of 30 affordable homes via a Section 106 development has been approved and is with Legal for contract finalisation. This is a site where there was no take up Registered Providers due to reductions in their development programmes and the relatively small number of homes. These homes are anticipated for completion in 2027/28.

6.44. For information, Affordable Housing includes homes for rent or sale and is for people whose needs are not met by the private market. Tenures can include social rent, affordable rent, intermediate rent, shared ownership, First Homes, discounted market sale homes, rent to buy and other low-cost homes for sale.

6.45. The HRA Development Team works closely with Registered Providers, Developers and Planning colleagues to ensure that the right type of Affordable Housing is delivered to meet the needs of Medway residents in terms of property type, size, number of bedrooms, location, tenure and specialist housing such as homes for older persons and wheelchair user/adaptable properties.

6.46. The Affordable Housing is secured via a Section 106 legal agreement, and in the case of rented homes, Nomination Agreements are set up to secure 100% nomination rights from the Medway Housing Register on the first let.

- 6.47. The forecasted number of affordable homes due to be completed in 2025/26 is around 269. Circa a further 507 affordable homes are currently forecasted for completion during 2026/27 and 2027/28.

One Medway Social Value

- 6.48. The service also created the 'One Medway Social Value Initiative' as part of this procurement activity. The social value initiative aims to improve the lives and neighbourhoods across the HRA's housing stock. It is used to improve social cohesion, reduce social isolation, and provide tenants with the skills and facilities to have a positive impact on their lives.
- 6.49. Each contractor will make an annual financial contribution for each year of the contract in addition to the £40k that the HRA provides towards environmental improvements across the stock. This budget has increased to an average of £165k per annum because of this procurement activity.
- 6.50. One Medway Social Value partnership meetings take place twice a year with representation from our new contractors, council officers and the chair and deputy chair of the Tenants Panel. This group discusses how projects will be considered, reviewed (Tenants Panel) and agreed (HRA Governance Group).
- 6.51. This new approach to social value has been recognised and is being adopted by other authorities and housing providers across the sector.
- 6.52. Over the past 12 months the service has completed projects which include but are not limited to:
- Installation of communal washing lines and water butts
 - Providing tenants with window vacs to assist with managing condensation
 - Provided garden furniture to our HFIL schemes
 - Installed benches to several communal garden areas
 - Provided winter warmer packs to tenants
 - Songs and hot cross buns get together with Music Man at St Matthews Community Centre and The Salvation Army
 - Garden Tools Loan Project for residents to make use of a lawnmower, grass trimmer, hoe and hand tools to manage their gardens
 - Chair exercises at 3 Homes for Independent Living designed to assist in falls prevention. Delivered by Medway Sport x20 sessions
 - 104 Pantomime tickets issued to residents to attend a Panto at Central Theatre 17th December to help to reduce social isolation, strengthen community bonds, and create a positive shared experience during the Christmas period
- 6.53. Since the creation of the One Medway Social Value initiative, nearly 400 HRA residents have benefitted from it. Many more will benefit from the fund going forward, and at resident engagement events we capture ideas using The Social Value Fund Wishing Tree.

- 6.54. The service continues to work with residents in delivering meaningful social value initiatives and projects which will have a positive impact on our tenants lives and the neighbourhoods they live in.

7. Medway Development Company (MDC)

- 7.1. The Cabinet Sub-Committee for Medway Development Company (MDC) was set up in January 2024 and meets quarterly, and I current hold the chair position. Through this Committee so far key outcomes include but are not limited to, the approval of a new 2035 Business Plan which to date has seen the delivery of 375 homes and 734 homes approved by the Planning Department. The next phase of projects includes Mountbatten House, Strood Civic and Upper Mount sites, that will deliver a further 380 homes.
- 7.2. 2025 has seen continued progress with MDC residential schemes and the Chatham Waterfront scheme is now completed and will provide a mix of private sale and rented homes.
- 7.3. MDC is coordinating improvements that will transform this area to create and augment places where people can relax and enjoy such as the Paddock, but also new public realms that will be delivered adjacent to the new Mountbatten House scheme. The overall approach is to integrate the delivery of new homes alongside wider public realm improvements to enhance the appeal of the area.
- 7.4. The Britton Farm residential scheme is also within its completion phase and will provide 44 high quality, affordable homes.

8. Travellers

- 8.1. Unauthorised encampments (UEs) are defined by the Government as "encampments of caravans and/or other vehicles on land without the landowner or occupier's consent and constituting trespass". Unauthorised camping is not a criminal offence, it is a civil offence (trespass), giving landowners the right to repossess their property using the due process of law. The prevention of trespass is the responsibility of the landowner.
- 8.2. The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to treat someone less favourably than others because of their protected characteristic, including race (which includes a person's ethnic or national origins and nationality). The Public Sector Equality Duty, under s149 of the Equality Act 2010, applies to the police (as a public authority) and places a duty on the police to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons of different racial groups.
- 8.3. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 gives Local Authorities in England and Wales powers to make directions to leave land being used by itinerant groups (section 77). It is offence to fail to comply with such a direction. If a direction to leave is not complied with, a Local Authority can apply to the Magistrates Court for an order requiring the removal of vehicles and any occupants from the land (section 78).

- 8.4. Medway Council Community Safety Team seek to immediately attend a site to carry out a welfare check and risk assessment. They will then serve verbal and written notice for the encampment to vacate, subject to a satisfactory welfare assessment.
- 8.5. In 2025 the Community Safety Team has received and investigated 23 reports of unauthorised encampments, resulting in 14 x Section 77 notices: 9 requiring an escalation to a Section 78 notice. All encampments vacated following the issue of a Section 78 Court Order and therefore bailiff costs have not been incurred during this reporting period.
- 8.6. In certain circumstances a senior Police Officer has the discretion to order the travellers to leave and remove any vehicles and other property they may have with them (sections 61 and 62 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 and Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003). No encampment has required Kent Police to utilise section 61 powers.
- 8.7. Officers continue to review, and target harden sites.

Former Park and ride site, Maidstone Road, Wigmore

- 8.8. Responses have been received from the County Court and Planning Inspectorate, and options are being considered.

9. Providing political leadership and challenge

- 9.1. My portfolio impacts significantly on all residents of Medway, from our own provision of council homes, to providing support and advice for residents who experience homelessness, despair or require adaptations to their homes.
- 9.2. I meet monthly with the Assistant Director, Chief Housing Officer and the Heads of Service to discuss progress against service and council plan objectives, as well as setting the direction for initiatives that will increase the prevention of homelessness, improving standards in the private sector and ensuring council homes are safe and well maintained.
- 9.3. I chair the HRA Governance Group, including members, tenants and officers to ensure that the HRA is meeting its strategic objectives. The Group oversees the progress of the planned works programme, arrangements for ensuring housing stock is compliant and safe, including remedial works and works in progress, complaints and the revised continuous improvement plan following the RSH inspection.

10. Championing the Interests of Medway residents

- 10.1. In delivering a range of statutory services, the interests of the residents must be central to the way services operate. Through a range of mechanisms, I am able to receive feedback regarding the way in which the Council operates and work with the senior leadership team to improve outcomes.
- 10.2. Holding our Landlord Services to account via the HRA Governance Group supported by the Tenants Panel ensures senior and collaborative scrutiny, ensuring that the service is delivering against Priority 5 of our One Medway Council Plan while ensuring our tenants have the voices heard.

11. Support for key service areas

- 11.1. Medway Council has a core statutory duty to provide housing advice and assistance. I have instructed officers to keep me abreast of any developments that will have a positive or negative impact on our service delivery and financial burden from temporary accommodation.
- 11.2. Going forward, there is an increased inflationary pressure on projects due to both national and international events outside of the Council's control. Counterfactors have been considered to deal with issues the best way we can. Contractors continue to cite resource issues with labour and the ability to source materials. We are identifying issues on our dashboard risk registers and will continue to look at monitoring and mitigation. The Council is now aware of inflationary pressures of market estimate prices from the updated RICS BCIS indices.

12. Conclusion

- 12.1. The services within my Portfolio play an integral part in making Medway a safe, secure and affordable place to live. While recognising and seeking to address the current financial challenges, there are significant opportunities to provide long-term benefits for Medway which I am committed to supporting the service to continue to achieve these.

Lead officer contact

Becs Wilcox, Chief Housing Officer, Housing Services, 07970346119
rebecca.wilcox@medway.gov.uk

Appendices

None

Background papers

None