

WestKent

Places to live. Space to grow.

Residents' Report 2019



Introduction



Welcome to our annual report to residents. We consulted residents on the content and their suggested changes have been included.

In 2018, West Kent let 539 homes, built 103 new homes and has another 400 under construction across Kent. We completed the major redevelopment of our Swanley older-persons housing, culminating in the opening of Woodlands Court.

Rent arrears reduced further – to 1.6% of rent due - thank you as always to the many of you who pay promptly. This is important, West Kent is an independent social business and we use all our income to provide homes and services to our current and future residents.

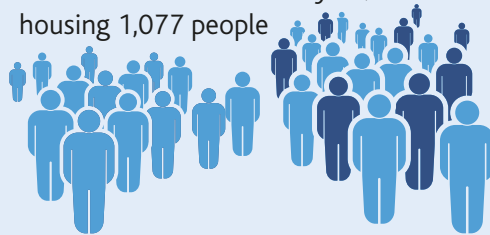
We understand the problems that the implementation of Universal Credit is having on some of our residents and the West Kent team is working hard to help people understand the system.

Letting our homes

It took us, on average, 31 days to let our homes in 2018.



We let 539 homes in the year, housing 1,077 people



West Kent's work was recognised in several ways in 2018: after an inspection by the Social Housing Regulator we were given a top grading (called G1/V1), we retained our Investors in People accreditation at the Gold level and our brilliant work in communities was reflected in Cheryl Banks' award by UK Youth as the Youth Worker of the Year.

I thank our tenant Board Members Joanne Frawley and Angela George for their sterling contribution to the board throughout last year and we were also pleased to welcome two new tenant Board Members, Megan Morvan and Ben Cooper. We also welcomed Heather Brightwell as Communities Director.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the involvement of many of you in your local communities – your contribution is central to making West Kent an exceptional community housing provider.

As always, if you have any comments to improve this residents' annual report please tell us.

Colin Wilby
Chair - Board of Management

Resident involvement

How you have influenced what we do

- 23 residents came to a workshop in Swanley where they gave valuable feedback on the government's Green Paper on social housing and some useful feedback about our contractors. We fed their views back to the government.
- Our Small is Beautiful scheme, that offers incentives to those willing to downsize was changed to include residents under 50 years old in special circumstances as a result of feedback from tenants.
- Customer services training for our contractors was carried out in response to feedback from residents that our services fell short in this area.
- We engaged with our residents regarding our emerald schemes and barriers to interacting digitally, our pets policy, aspirations for future housing need in Edenbridge and our housing plus service.
- We completed six targeted reviews which included engaging with customers on the small is beautiful review, property checks, home standard, your home your responsibility, Kent Excellent Homes For All (KEHFA) and maintaining your home.
- We revised the way we asked customers for feedback on the repairs service to make it simpler to respond



860

RESIDENTS GAVE THEIR
VIEWS ON OUR SERVICES



Resident involvement

We held a workshop in Swanley in September. 23 residents attended and their feedback included the points listed here and what we have done about it.



You said	What we have done as a result
You would like to see Neighbourhood News produced more often	Neighbourhood News will be distributed three times this year rather than twice.
You want to see more performance information, not just on the website	Neighbourhood News now has performance information similar to that provided already on the website.
There isn't enough information about contents insurance	Information is on the website and we have promoted more about the need for home insurance through leaflets, Neighbourhood News, ads, social media and the website.
West Kent do not feedback on complaints	We now keep tenants informed throughout, even if progress is slower than expected.
Improved resident involvement	A more extensive programme of resident involvement activity is planned for 2019 that will include a greater role for tenants' scrutiny at West Kent.
It's confusing and frustrating when Tenancy Services Officers change and it isn't communicated with us	Our customer services team should be the first point of contact for all queries and they will ensure that your calls are directed to the right person.
The complaints procedure is confusing, can one person take ownership of a complaint?	We advise the complainant of a named point of contact that will be dealing with the complaint.

Youth services

Youth Services

The HOUSE project is a youth centre in Edenbridge for 11-19 year olds, it operates three open access youth sessions a week and hosts the Edenbridge Youth Forum, a smaller group works with West Kent to design the services provided to young people in the area. The youth forum members share their views and aspirations with a range of organisations, statutory and voluntary providers.

In 2018 the HOUSE project ran 150 sessions with 1,848 attendances at the open access sessions.



National Award for our Cheryl

Cheryl Banks, Leader in Charge at our popular HOUSE project in Edenbridge, and a West Kent tenant, won the UK Youth's prestigious 'Youth Worker of the Year' award, for years of hard work and dedication to young people.

One young person Cheryl has worked with said: **"Without Cheryl's support I might have been homeless, or worse. She has supported me with my mental health during a trying time, and in finding housing when I had nowhere to go. She is always there and knows so much about the support available to young people."**

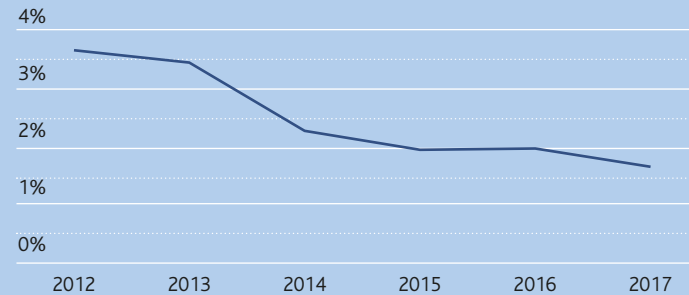
Social Impact Report

We do lots of work with communities, for more details have a look at the Social Impact Report on our website. This highlights the work we have done

Link: https://www.westkent.org/media/2322/e6931_wk_social-impact_report_2019_p7-final-for-website.pdf

Your home Your responsibility

Paying your rent on time – this money enables us to provide a range of excellent services. The table here shows how we have reduced the percentage of rent owed to us by current tenants over the past five years, the percentage figure is the total outstanding at the end of each year.



Community safety – a positive result

Hoarding isn't always something we'd think of as community safety but it creates problems for the person that is the hoarder and those that live nearby.

We worked with a 78 year old tenant, who we discovered was a hoarder when we visited to fit a new boiler but couldn't because of the volume of items in the property preventing access. The boiler was condemned and the gas capped. She was living in very unsanitary conditions – she had no heating, her hot water was only available from the immersion, her toilet and bathroom sink were broken and she was using a bucket to go to toilet.

The extent of the works required to bring her flat up to a habitable condition were such that the only way for us to do this was to move her out temporarily but at first she felt worried about this

and refused. Our continued efforts to help her failed and we reluctantly served her with a notice to repossess her home.

Hoarding is recognised as a mental health condition, and at the time Sevenoaks District Council funded West Kent Mind to provide a hoarding initiative called 'new beginnings' to help those that were affected. Our tenant agreed to work with them and was assigned a caseworker.

With the caseworker's help, our tenant met us to discuss the next steps. We wanted her to remain in her home, so rather than seek an outright possession order, we asked for possession to be adjourned on the condition that she took positive steps to make changes to the property.

Despite her initial reservations our persistence to persuade her to engage with us paid off and she

agreed to move to one of our schemes while her home was improved.

This outcome has kept her and other residents in the block safe and allowed West Kent to ensure her home meets the decent homes standard.

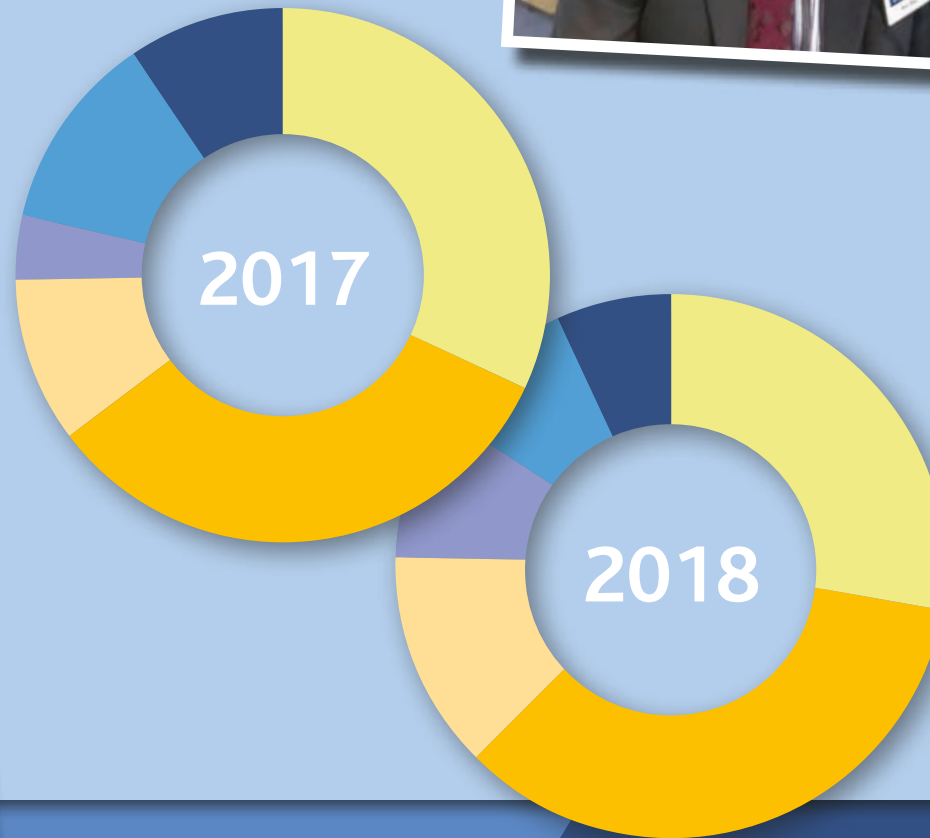


Your home Your responsibility

Anti social behaviour reports

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total Reported Incidents	430	470	331	323	471	355

Category	2017	2018
Noise	113	91
Harassment / Threatening Behaviour / Intimidation	93	113
Drugs	44	41
Litter	28	29
Pets / Animal Nuisance	31	29
Domestic Abuse	27	22



Customer service – complaints

Number of complaints

We received the following numbers of complaints in 2018:



584

MAKING IT RIGHT

First stage where we try to resolve an issue as soon as we can. This was down from last year.

46 (we agreed with 17 of these)

COMPLAINT REVIEWS

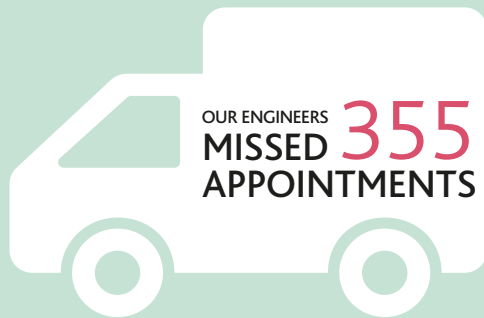
The next stage of our complaints process if a customer is not happy with our making it right response or outcome



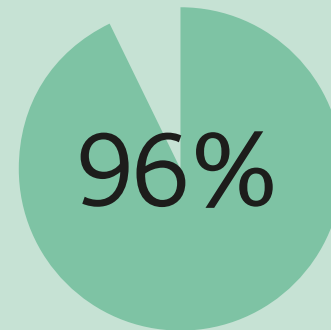
6 (we agreed with 1 of these)

COMPLAINT APPEALS

The final stage of our complaints process



This was 2.2% of repairs completed in 2018



of all our repairs were **COMPLETED ON TIME**

Customer service – complaints

The majority of our complaints continue to be about our repairs service. The most common reasons for complaints are:

- time taken to complete repairs, particularly where follow-up work is needed
- charges for repairs caused by tenants' actions or where a tenant is not in for an appointment
- not keeping tenants informed about what is happening with their repair or where we have to change or move their repair appointment

We appreciate that these issues are frustrating and we are working hard to try and improve our service

We will:

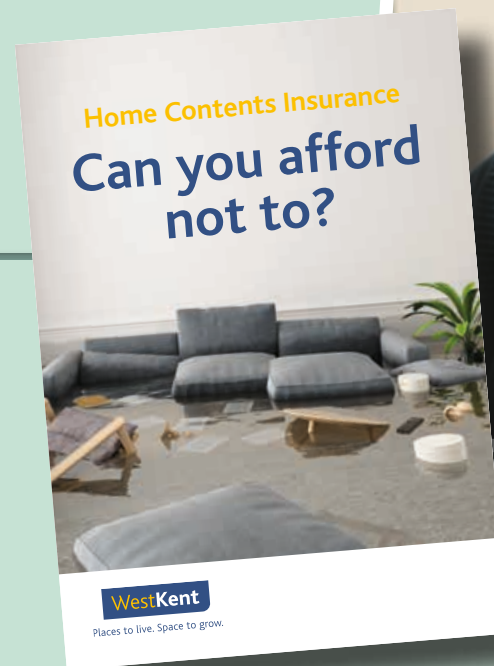
- continue to make it easier for you to book and rebook appointments, we are launching a new repairs logging portal on our website.
- try to reduce the number of follow on jobs we have by reviewing the reasons for these.

Ombudsman Complaint

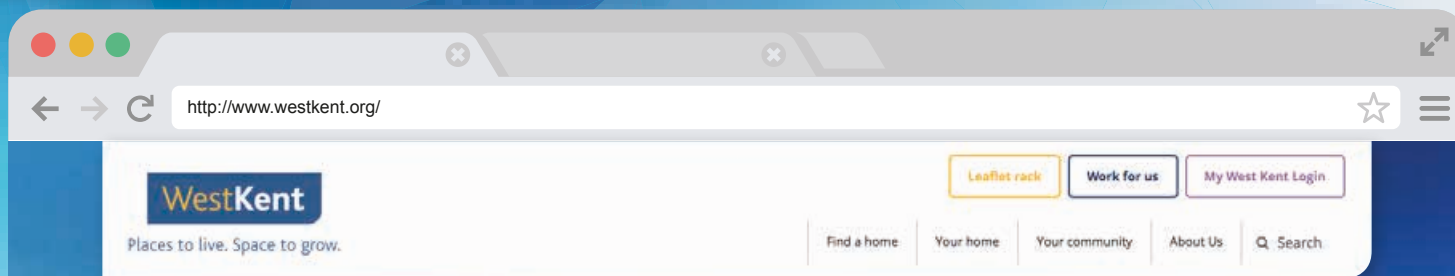
We've had three Ombudsman complaints closed by the Ombudsman in 2018, with no maladministration found on our part. All were due to damage to goods in homes where the customers did not have their own contents insurance.

We closed the year with four complaints still outstanding with them.

We strongly recommend that you take out home contents insurance.



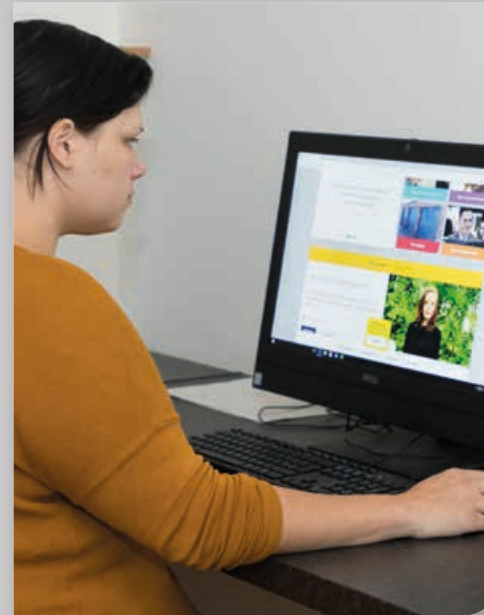
Fit for the future



West Kent aims to become a 'digital first' organisation, with digital technology at the heart of how we work and how we engage with our customers.

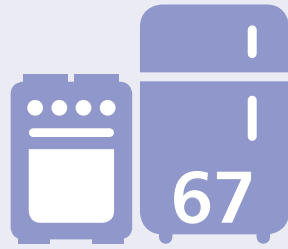
We will:

- respond to you faster on our digital contact channels, we respond to the LiveChat on our website in three minutes on average.
- launch a new customer portal, making it easier for you to report repairs at any time of the day. You'll also be able to reschedule any existing appointments.
- improve the information on our website so that you can find answers to your most commonly asked questions
- support you to gain IT skills - contact our customer services team



Maintaining your home

During 2018 we fitted:



new kitchens



new bathrooms



new doors




new boilers



new roofs



The average cost of
a new kitchen was
£7,962



The average cost of
a new bathroom was
£4,676



On average
we spent
£2,257
on repairs and
maintenance
in each home
in 2018

Keeping you safe

Here's what we do to ensure your home is as safe as it can be:

Fire

- We carry out regular checks of communal parts of our blocks of flats called fire risk assessments. If you want to see the one for your block contact customer services
- We have fitted your home with smoke detectors, which you should test once a week
- We ensure our electrics are safe and check them regularly
- Our cleaners help to keep corridors clear of clutter and report if fire doors are damaged

Gas

- We meet our legal requirements under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 by carrying out regular inspections and installing carbon monoxide where we have gas or solid fuel appliances

Asbestos

- We know which of our homes have asbestos in them and let residents know if it is in their home when they sign-up
- Our contractors are trained in asbestos awareness
- We regularly check the condition of the known asbestos containing materials and will remove them if they become a risk

Legionella

- We have carried out risk assessments for all of the water services in our homes. External specialist consultants carry out an annual inspection where there is a high risk
- For low risk sites we carry out a random sample of inspections

Supported housing

Woodlands Court

We celebrated the opening of Woodlands Court, creating the latest addition to the Swanley Emerald Community. Sixteen homes were demolished, creating 31 new warm, affordable and desirable homes for over 55s.

Woodlands replaced four blocks of four homes at Northview with almost twice as many comfortable, modern homes at Woodlands Court, to provide 'quality homes where people can age well'.

Woodlands Court residents can use the facilities at nearby White Oak Court, which has a 24-hour care team on site as well as offering a restaurant and lounge, hairdresser, library, games room and laundry room. Residents maintain their independence but have the use of communal areas to help tackle loneliness.

White Oak Court

Residents enjoyed afternoon tea with representatives from West Kent, Sevenoaks District Council and MP Sir Michael Fallon to mark Starts at Home Day, a national celebration to raise awareness of the importance of supported housing.

Edenbridge

Residents in Edenbridge were asked for their views about our future plans for older people's accommodation in and around the town. We are looking at the current accommodation we provide in Edenbridge and discussing what it could look like in the future. We want to ensure there is suitable accommodation for all ages and family types. We currently have over 600 homes in the Edenbridge area but only 10% that are designed for people over 55.

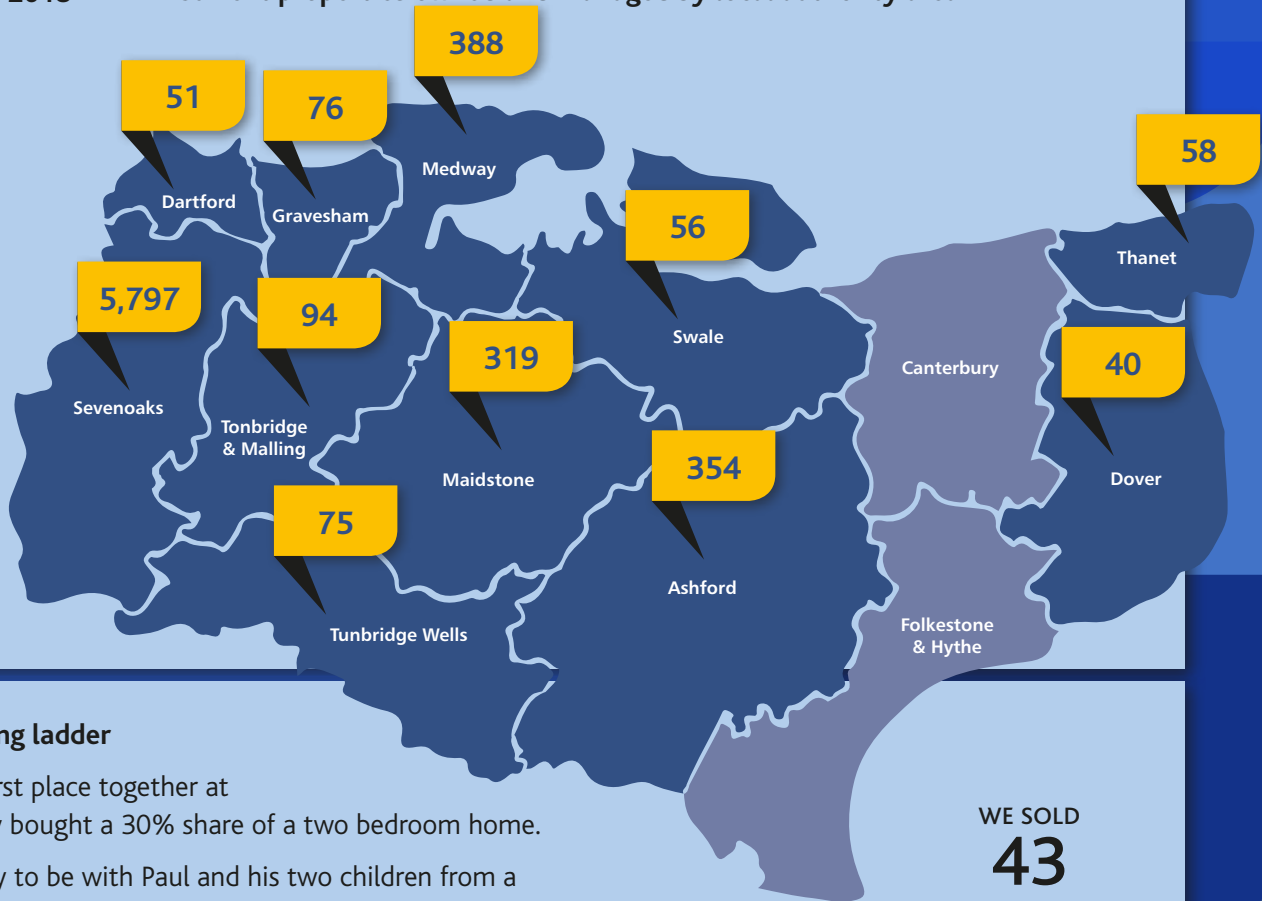


New homes

Current number of properties owned and managed – 2018

Rented	5,504
Rented – older people	1,119
Low cost home ownership	507
Homes managed by others	3
Leaseholders	175
TOTAL HOMES OWNED AND MANAGED	7,308
Homes under construction	425

Current properties owned and managed by local authority area



A helping hand up the housing ladder

Aylisha & Paul bought their first place together at Goldsel Road in Swanley, they bought a 30% share of a two bedroom home.

Aylisha is moving from Surrey to be with Paul and his two children from a previous relationship, his family live in Hextable. They work in the city and are close to the station, this influenced their decision to buy in Swanley - Aylisha will save £5,000 in fares getting to work.

WE SOLD
43
SHARED
OWNERSHIP
HOMES.

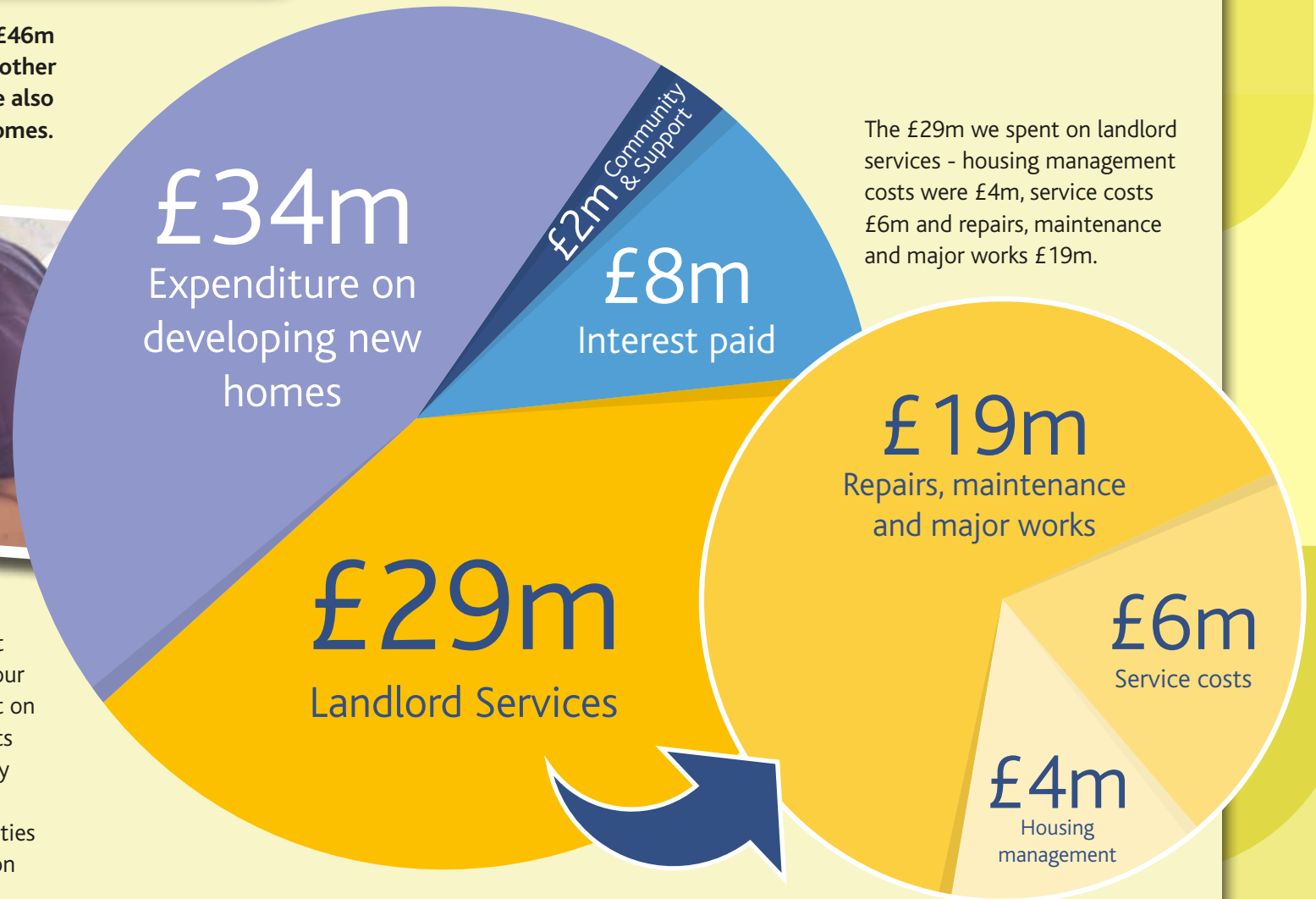


Where the money goes

In 2018 we received income of £46m from rents, service charges and other income, and £9m from sales. We also borrowed £34m to build new homes.



We spent £74m in 2018 (this includes salaries). £29m was spent on providing landlord services to our current residents, £34m was spent on new homes for our future residents and £2m was spent on community activities. These costs include the salary costs related to these activities of £10.5m. We also paid interest on the loans we borrowed.



The £29m we spent on landlord services - housing management costs were £4m, service costs £6m and repairs, maintenance and major works £19m.

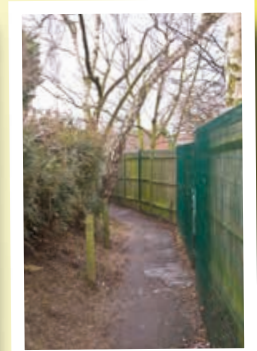
Where the money goes

Explanation on significant expenditure:

- Housing management includes building insurance (not contents), legal costs, staff.
- Service costs includes utilities, cleaning and grounds maintenance in communal parts of our neighbourhoods, we charge these costs through service charges.
- Repairs, maintenance and major works includes the responsive maintenance service, cyclical programmes, such as painting, major works such as replacing kitchens as shown on page 10.



For further details about West Kent's finances and accounts, see our full Annual Report and Financial statements for 2018 on our website at westkent.org

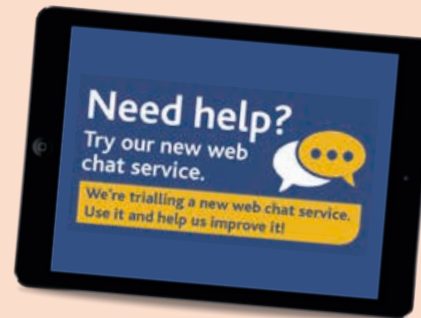


Coming up in 2019

We're building more homes for shared ownership sale than ever before in Canterbury, Hawkhurst, Tenterden, Sittingbourne, Chatham, Edenbridge and Swanley. Details will be on our website as they become available to buy.





We're introducing Property Checks where we'll visit your home every two years and check your heating system, bathroom, kitchen and windows and ensure that there are no safety risks. This should reduce the amount of repairs you need.





We're reselecting the contractor that provides our building and electrical services - currently provided by Brenwards.

To stay up to date:

 Watch the website

 follow us on twitter
[@west_kent](https://twitter.com/west_kent)

 or like us on Facebook
WestKentHA

 or follow us on Instagram
WestKentHousingAssociation



WestKent

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