

2021

PERFORMANCE REPORT TO RESIDENTS



WEALD *Living*

by Saxon Weald



If you received your copy of this report in the post, please consider doing your bit for the environment and go digital. If we have your email address, we will automatically send it to you electronically.

If you've changed your email address recently, please let us know or log in to mywealdliving.com

Thank you.

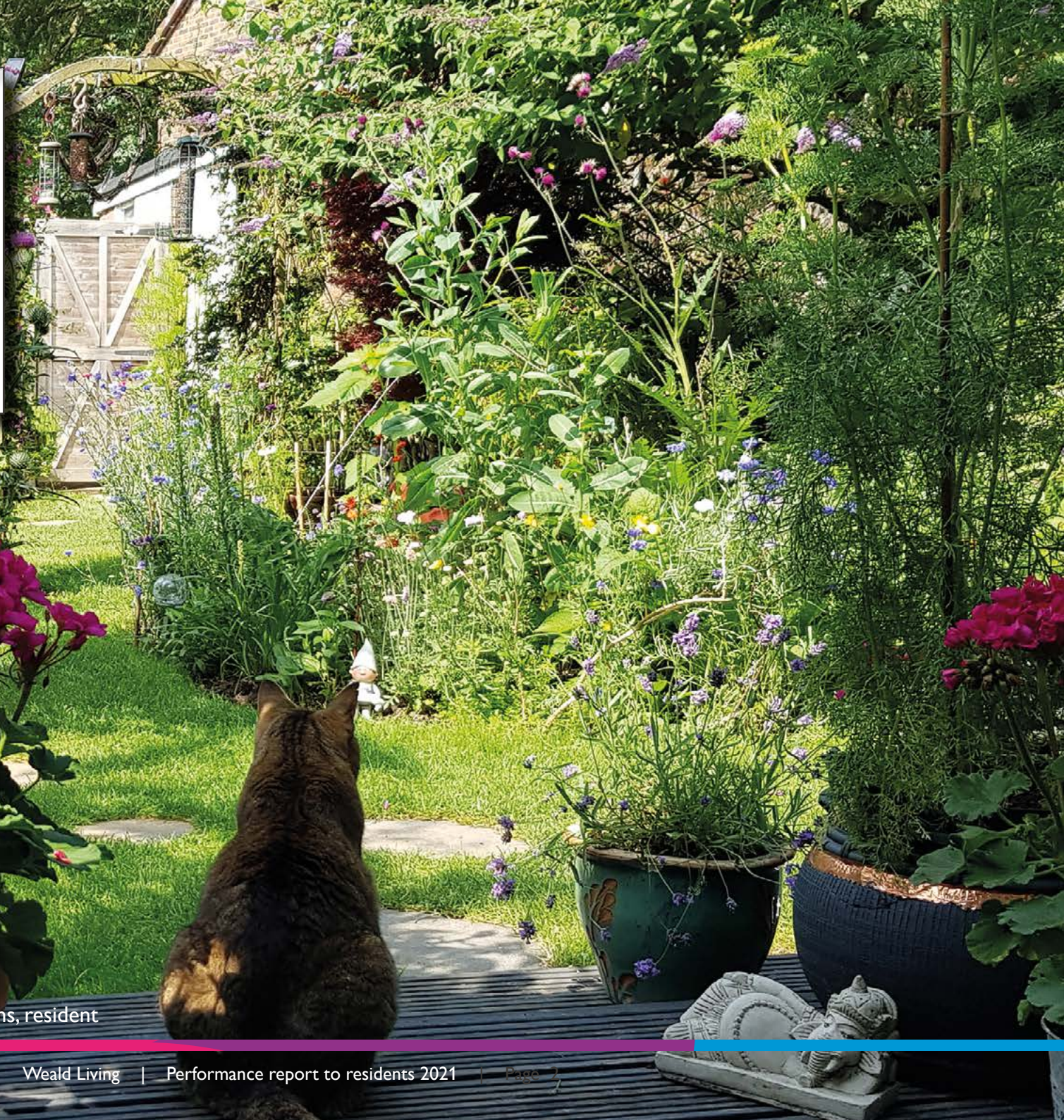


Image: Treacle admiring the garden. From Mrs Johns, resident

Hello and welcome

I'm delighted to present Weald Living's performance report to residents, looking back over the year beginning in April 2020. And what a year it has been!

I'm sure that none of us could have imagined the extended measures needed to combat the Coronavirus back in April 2020, despite being in lockdown at the time. Throughout all this turmoil and uncertainty, we have all focussed on what is important – our families, friends and neighbours. A safe, warm and affordable home has never been more important.

It has been a real challenge to keep the services we provide running and my thanks goes to our great team, who have often gone the extra mile to help. I'd like to extend my thanks to you, our customers, for your patience and understanding while we have been dealing with a period of significant disruption.

In this report you will see how the pandemic has affected what we do. You are less satisfied with the service we've provided this year – no surprise really. We've had to postpone repairs jobs, cancel some planned major repairs and stop neighbourhood visits. For part of the year we were unable to move people into our empty homes. We are working really hard to get back to normal, although there is quite a backlog to get through.

In March, 1,375 of you responded to an important survey designed to help us shape what we do in future. We have considered your feedback in detail and have come up with a new three-year plan designed to focus on our customers and invest in our homes. We'll be spending more money to improve the services we deliver and will engage with you to find out how we are getting on.

I hope that you enjoy reading this report. If you have any feedback about it please email us at info@wealdliving.com.

With best wishes,

Steven Dennis,

Chief Executive






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Key

In some sections of this report we show how we have performed against our targets.

The colours indicate:

-  We achieved our target
-  We were close to achieving our target
-  We did not achieve our target

Feedback

61% of you said that you find our annual performance report easy to read. However, 30% admitted that they hadn't read it. Of those that had, most people felt that it contained the right level of information.

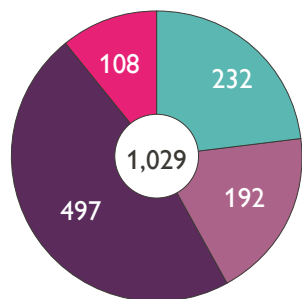
In terms of how often we publish performance information, over half would like to see it more than once a year. We've listened and been using our Spotlight newsletter to give you more regular updates.

Please note throughout this report, that unless otherwise stated figures are taken from the period 1 April 2020 - 31 March 2021.





The year at a glance

NUMBER OF WEALD LIVING HOMES

Saxon Weald manages 6,721 properties overall. Of these, 1,029 (just over 15%) come under our Weald Living brand. This includes:







Total number of homes: 1,029

-  232 Shared ownership homes
-  192 Leasehold homes for older people
-  497 Leasehold homes
-  108 Market rent homes

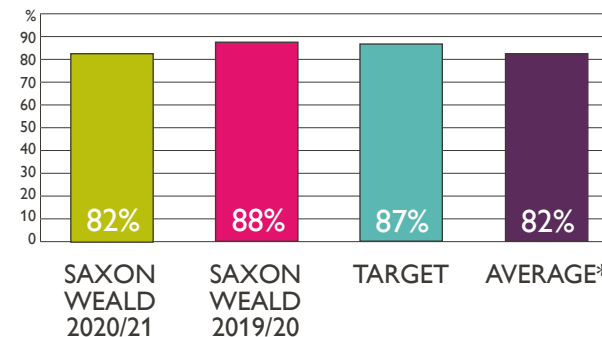
MOVING IN AND MOVING UP



Three households moved from being Saxon Weald tenants to becoming homeowners last year, having bought their properties under the Right to Buy or Right to Acquire legislation.

-  **18** Households moved into new shared ownership homes.
-  **16** Shared owners moved. Five were retirement living and 11 were general needs.
-  **10** Properties in extra care schemes have been resold. Of these, eight were shared equity apartments and two were outright leaseholders.
-  **4** Shared owners have staircased (bought additional shares in their home). Three of these staircased to 100% ownership.

OVERALL SATISFACTION



This result is below our target, but in line with the average and is largely due to the restrictions we had to put in place due to COVID-19.

CUSTOMER SUPPORT



31,854 phone calls and 6,673 voicemails answered - this number is lower than usual, which is partly due to our call monitoring system being unable to log calls received while staff were working from home during the COVID pandemic.



32,854 emails answered, which is an increase of 45% on last year.








12,768 contacts via web message and 333 via social media, up 15% from the previous year.



24,399 repairs logged by the team.

OUR STAFF

	Number of staff	Percentage of staff
 Office and management	129	52.2 %
 Housing support and care	33	13.4 %
 Maintenance	77	31.2 %
 Board members	8	3.2 %
 TOTAL	247	100 %



Your voice in Weald living

YOUR
voice

We know it's important that we listen to what you think of our services and learn what we are doing well or need to improve.

Last year we launched a new section on our website dedicated to your voice. You can find it here: www.wealdliving.com/your-voice. You can also let us know how we're doing by: web message, using your [My WealdLiving](#) account, on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#), by email or by phone.

SURVEYS

Email and text surveys:



In March this year, we carried out a survey to get your opinion on what matters most and where we should focus improvement. The results from the 1,375 responses have helped shape our new corporate plan, setting out our priorities for the next three years.

We deliver regular surveys through an email and text system and have seen encouraging response rates. The system includes alerts which enable us to act and respond to feedback as it is received.

Institute of Customer Service survey - September 2020

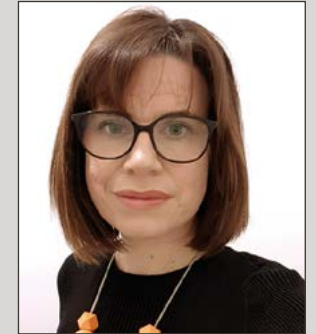
We had a good response with 573 customers taking the time to give us their opinions. Results showed an improvement on the previous year's scores, with more customers feeling they can trust Saxon Weald and believing we are open and transparent.

Feedback from the results of the previous Institute of Customer Service survey in 2019 have fed into a complaint process review, with a new policy being introduced in October 2020.

Homeowners Survey

We launched a new Homeowners Survey, which goes out once a year on the anniversary of your original purchase. This goes to every leaseholder, including shared ownership and shared equity customers. We will soon be able to start evaluating your feedback and responding to the results from this.

Resident on board



I have been a shared ownership tenant with Saxon Weald for seven years and I joined the board as a resident member in November last year. It's been incredibly interesting so far, and also very reassuring to know that my landlord is taking engaging with customers seriously. Listening to customers and being led by those views is one of the board's biggest priorities over the next three years and I'm really proud to have been a part of making that happen.

Since I joined, I've been pleasantly surprised by how welcoming everyone has been. The board is a team, with people having different specialisms and skills. What I really like is that all those skills are equally respected, and I know my perspective as a customer is really valued.

It can be challenging at times, but it's been really rewarding. I've had the chance to get involved in so much more than I thought. I feel like I'm able to build and develop my own skills while also contributing to Saxon Weald and the community. I'd definitely recommend getting involved and helping to make sure customers' voices matter.

Hannah Eaton,
Resident Board Member

TOGETHER WITH TENANTS CHARTER

Saxon Weald has signed up to this charter to show our commitment to working together with our residents. It focuses on six key areas: relationships, communication, voice and influence, accountability, quality and when things go wrong.

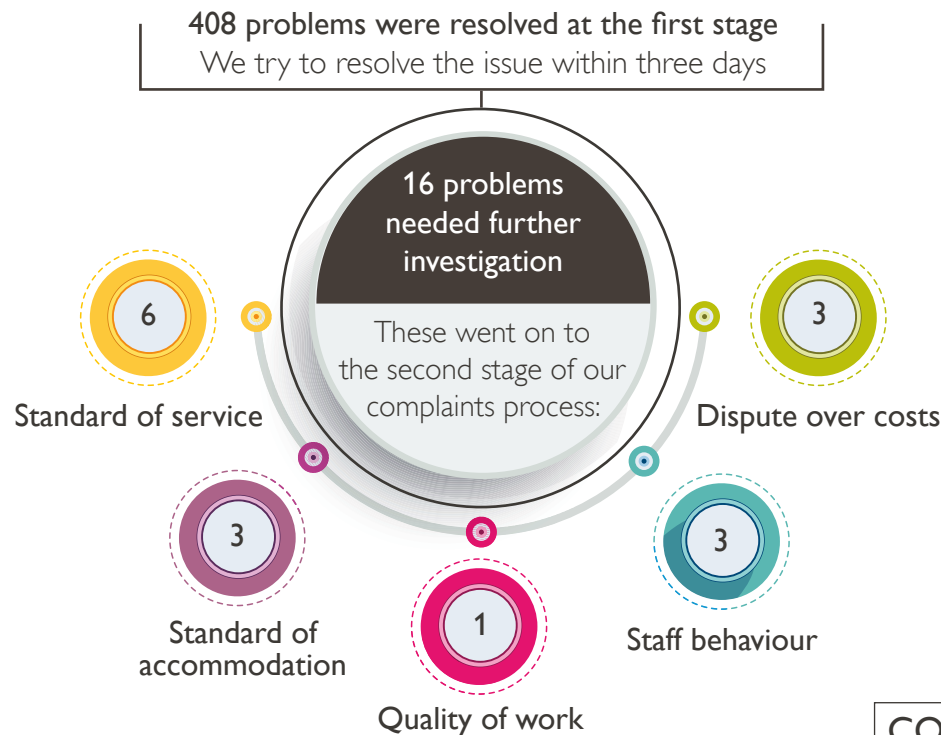
For more information go to: www.saxonweald.com/your-voice.



COMPLAINTS

We take pride in delivering great customer service to our residents. However, occasionally, things can go wrong. We need to know when this happens so we can put things right and learn from any mistakes.

Our complaints process is simple, quick and easy to access. Just contact us with details of the problem in whichever way you choose and we'll take it from there. Full details of the process can be found [here](#).



Two complaints were referred to the Housing Ombudsman. One was dismissed but the other, where we had recognised we made a mistake, advised we needed to pay additional compensation to the customer.

HOW YOUR VOICE HAS INFLUENCED WHAT WE DO

- ✓ We had a formal review of our complaints process taking into account our customer feedback. We have now created an easier to follow, two stage process.
- ✓ We have introduced 'fast-tracking' of repairs that relate to some complaints, by sourcing extra contractors.
- ✓ CCTV surveys will be carried out for all communal drainage repairs so we can identify issues quicker and reduce time scales for repairs. This also reduces costs for Saxon Weald and service charge payers.
- ✓ Where properties are to be disposed, we will notify our residents in the surrounding area to keep them better informed.
- ✓ We are now photographing gifted items (the items that are included when you take on a property), so we can record the condition that they have been handed over in.
- ✓ We are reviewing the process we follow for starter tenancy extensions as we recognise there needs to be more consistency.

COMPLIMENTS

We were also glad to receive 76 compliments. If you're happy with something we've done, let us know. It makes our day!



Customer experience

GETTING IN TOUCH

Our customer support team is made up of 15 colleagues. They had a very busy year responding to our customers' enquiries.

We are incredibly proud of how they managed to adapt their service during the lockdown periods when they had to work from home. Between them, during this time, they responded to **6,673 voicemails** from you.

Overall they handled over **96,879 enquiries** during the financial year. That's nearly **6,500 each!**



What does great customer experience look like? Here's what some of us think..



KEEPING YOU INFORMED

We work hard to keep our website wealdliving.com up-to-date with a wealth of useful information and any important service updates. Last year we had over 18,000 visits!

Likewise, our Facebook and Twitter pages provide handy tips, news and information, and offer an opportunity for you to ask questions or add comments on our posts. Last year between them we received roughly 1,800 views. Go to Facebook.com/saxonweald or Twitter.com/saxonweald.



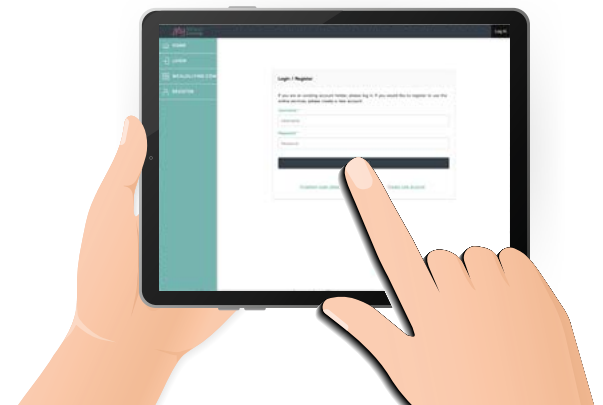
By 31 March 2021, 188 households had signed up to use [MyWealdLiving](https://mywealdliving.com), our 24-hour digital service. That's 35% of our Weald Living households and an increase of 7% since the previous year.

Registered users can report repairs, view upcoming appointments, send us a secure message, view statements, update their personal details and more, at any time of day.

We've recently made improvements to the system, including to our repairs section, with more repair options available to choose from.

In the last financial year there were 871 logins to MyWealdLiving, which equates to about eight logins per customer over the year.

Go to mywealdliving.com and give it a go!



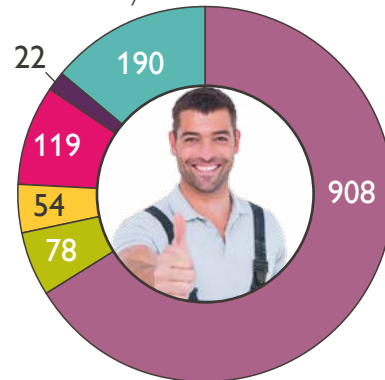
Your homes

LOOKING AFTER YOUR NEIGHBOURHOODS

Despite the lockdown in the earlier part of the financial year, our estate improvement team soon caught up. They took on 1,371 jobs to help make sure our neighbourhoods are kept clean and tidy.

This year they carried out:

- 908 Estate inspections
- 78 Garage block inspections
- 54 Garage lock changes
- 119 Garage checks
- 22 Garden tidying in empty homes
- 190 Empty homes clearances



NEW HOMES

In the financial year 2020/2021 we completed 23 new homes, which is below our annual target of 100.

- 8 Flats in Angmering for shared ownership
- 4 Houses in Hassocks for shared ownership
- 8 Flats in Hassocks for affordable rent
- 3 Houses in Shermanbury for shared ownership

Our programme was delayed, but we are almost back on track with 96 properties scheduled to complete in the present financial year.



Image: Adam and Abby, new owners in Angmering

ISO 45001 HEALTH AND SAFETY



We have made a commitment to achieve the ISO 45001 accreditation by March 2023. This is an internationally recognised standard for health and safety management. It aims to help staff work more safely and efficiently, identifying risks and in turn it helps protect them and our residents.

The effort we have been putting into staff training has already seen a huge impact. Since April our staff have raised an additional 93 jobs where they spotted something needing attention, which could be a risk to a resident.

DOMESTIC ABUSE

At Saxon Weald, we believe everyone has the right to feel safe in their home. Abuse can be categorised in lots of ways, including emotional, physical and sexual, with the most common type of domestic abuse occurring in relationships. However, domestic abuse also covers abuse and violence between family members, such as adolescents to parents.



We have a dedicated section on our Saxon Weald website with information and support services you can access. Just go to: www.saxonweald.com/da for more information.

Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA)

To demonstrate our commitment, we've signed up to the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation scheme. Their mission is to improve the housing sector's response to domestic abuse through the introduction and adoption of an established set of standards.

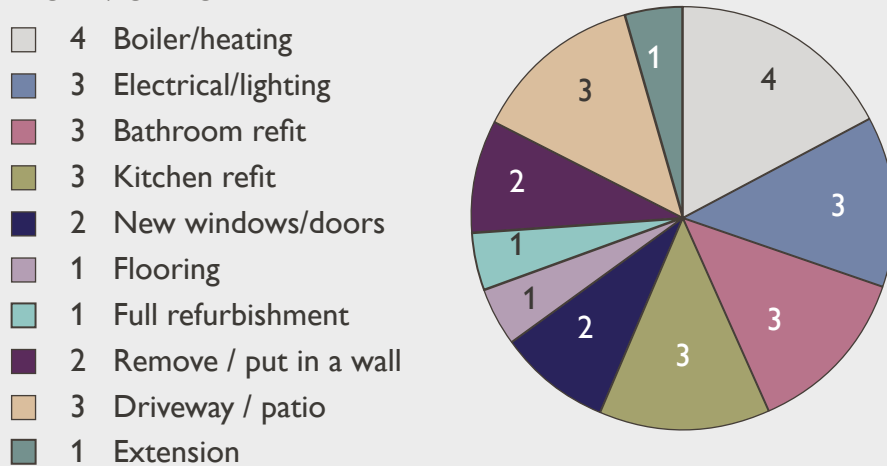


Making changes to your home and your lease

MAKING CHANGES TO YOUR HOME

Last year 61 leaseholders applied for permission to make changes to their homes. Many of these included applications to make multiple changes. 17 permissions were granted for residents to alter their home.

Of these, five applications were made retrospectively before the homes could be sold and cost the leaseholder a lot more than if they had applied when originally getting the works done.



If you're planning some home improvements, you'll need our written permission for any structural alterations or changes to the fixtures and fittings of your property. **You may also need to get planning permission and/or building notice from your local authority.**

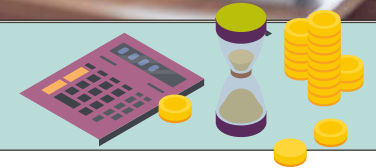
If you make changes without permission and wish to sell your property in the future, you will have to apply for the permissions retrospectively. This will cost you more and, if declined, you may need to put things right.

There's more information on our website: www.wealdliving.com.

EXTENDING YOUR LEASE



During the last financial year, 12 customers extended their lease.



Should I extend my lease?

If your lease has less than 85 years remaining, it may be harder to sell on your property and affect its value. It can become harder to get a mortgage or remortgage against the property. It also becomes more expensive to extend your lease, as it decreases further and further, year on year.

There are two types of lease extensions, statutory and voluntary. For more information on which would be the right option for you please visit our website: www.wealdliving.com/home-owner-services/extending-your-lease/

You can also get free independent advice about leases, including how to extend them on the **Leasehold Advisory Service** website www.lease-advice.org or email info@lease-advice.org.

Service charges

SERVICE CHARGE REVIEW

Two years ago, we started a service charge review. Service charges can be complex, calculating the costs of running the buildings and estates where our residents live and delivering detailed breakdowns of the charges. As part of the review, we identified the separate teams and processes that are involved, to see where we could streamline or improve communications.

Our first improvement has been to form a dedicated service charge team to respond to customer enquiries, which I lead. I have thirty-two years of experience in the property industry, working in the private sector before joining Saxon Weald six years ago. I'm also an Associate of the Institute of Residential Property Management, which helps me to keep-to-date with any changes to legislation and best practice.

We aim to provide prompt, transparent and accurate information about service charges to our residents.

Service charge enquiries can cover multiple areas including cleaning, grounds maintenance and repairs. In order to respond fully it requires coordination with lots of teams to gather information into one response. Previously no one team was responsible for this, which caused delays or incomplete replies. My new team is the central point to investigate, gather information, consider any disputes and deliver the answers.

We work closely with the finance team and this collaboration has improved information gathering and financial accuracy.

If you raise a service charge query, we now handle it through our complaints process. This ensures that your concerns are taken seriously and are thoroughly investigated. We aim to respond in 10 working days and most queries are resolved at this point. In the event you are still unhappy, we will refer your query to our customer experience team, who will review the decision. We can't promise to remove or reduce every charge that you query, but we do make changes where they are justified.

We are also collecting feedback through surveys, including our new Homeowner Survey. Please take the time to complete the survey when you receive it. Let us know if you think there are areas where we need to do better, as well as the things we do well. Your opinion helps us work on the areas that concern you most.

We hope you all see an improvement to the service we provide and look forward to hearing from you.

Victoria Barrett

Weald Living & Service Charge Manager



SERVICE CHARGE DEBT



We always try to put reasonable arrangements in place to help people pay their service charges, particularly if there has been a substantial charge for maintenance or improvement work.

Please talk to us if you are having problems with paying your service charge. In cases of hardship, we would rather be flexible over payment instead of putting your home at risk because of non-payment.

However, there are occasions where people try to avoid paying what they owe. In these circumstances, we are obliged to contact their mortgage provider in the first instance for assistance. Unfortunately, last year we had to take court action on two leaseholders and contact the mortgage companies of five others. Through these actions, we were able to recover £13,677 in total.

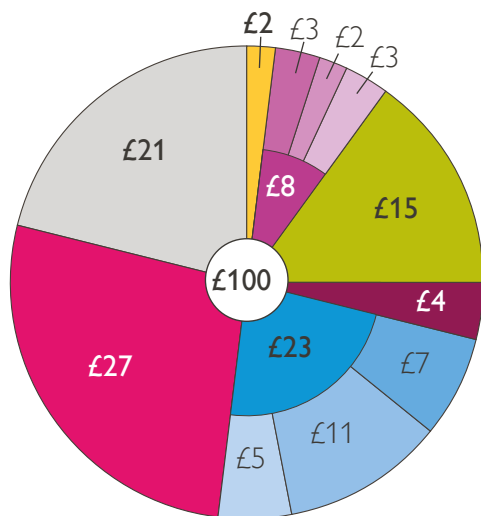
Last year 53 people challenged their service charge costs. This resulted in us making 13 amendments.

All about money

HOW WE SPEND OUR MONEY

For every £100 we spend

Housing management	£2
Service charge costs	£8
Cleaning and grounds maintenance	£3
Utilities	£2
All other services	£3
Staff costs	£15
Overheads	£4
Repairs and maintenance	£23
Day-to-day repairs	£7
Property improvements	£11
Regular servicing and maintenance	£5
Interest payments	£27
Investment in new homes	£21



CONSULTATIONS FOR WORKS

As a leaseholder, you pay towards the cost of any works to the building of your home as part of your service charge. As the freeholder, we must consult you on the work required.

Last year, due to the impact of COVID-19 on staffing and internal works, we had to suspend our cyclical painting and decorating programme. This meant the number of consultations was much lower than normal. We carried out just 7 consultations, which affected 17 leaseholders.

- 1 External fabric works
- 2 Roof
- 4 Door and window replacements

A common misconception is that leaseholders in some way subsidise works that tenants benefit from. This is simply not true. Tenants pay for their share of the works through their rent.

CONSULTING WITH YOU ON NEW CONTRACTS

In the coming year we will be consulting on the renewal of contracts for servicing of door entry intercom, alarms and lift maintenance. This will only affect the blocks with these facilities in them.

A great place to work

We think it's important that Saxon Weald is a great place to work, so we can recruit and retain the best people possible. After all, without the right staff, we can't deliver great services. We employ 247 people, almost half of whom were based in our head office in Horsham. Since the start of the pandemic, most of our office staff have been working from home.

We have taken advantage of having an empty office to refurbish Saxon Weald House, replacing worn out facilities and creating a new workspace more fit for the future. Environmental considerations have been very important to us and we are aiming to achieve a SKA Gold award for the renovation project. This means achieving the highest levels against a number of sustainability targets set by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors.

We're looking forward to the work being completed and hope to move back in January.



HEAD OFFICE

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EMAIL: info@wealdliving.com

WEB: www.wealdliving.com

Saxon Weald is a housing association, established in 2000, managing approximately 6,750 homes across Sussex and Hampshire. We provide affordable rented and shared ownership homes for individuals and families, as well as properties exclusively for the over 55s. We also provide homes for market rent and shared ownership sale through our Weald Living brand.

We are a charitable community benefit society, with the money we make from rents being re-invested in the management, maintenance and building of homes. We are regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing.

