

Cherwell District Council – Tenants Charter

The purpose and aims of the Charter

We believe that it is important that all landlords, social and private, respond to issues that occur or are raised by their tenants proactively.

The Council, within this Charter, is therefore seeking to outline its aims, working together with tenants, to improve services and maintain quality and safe housing.

The Charter's main themes, which were consulted on with our tenants, are a series of aspirations that shape and drive the services that we will provide. Some of the themes reflect what we are currently carrying out, and some outline the service that we are going to provide in the future.

We are committed to listening and working with our tenants to manage and maintain our homes and neighbourhoods.

We want to deliver ever improving services by listening to what our residents tell us, acting on their priorities and engaging with them in the services we deliver.

Our Commitments

To best achieve our aims, the new Tenants Charter focusses on the following 3 main commitments to our tenants.

1. To ensure that residents are safe and secure in a quality home.
2. To ensure that residents can access support when they need it, building stronger communities.
3. To ensure effective communication, where residents are engaged and hold us to account.

Commitment 1 - To ensure that residents are safe and secure in a quality home.

Safety for residents within our properties should be our top priority.

Following on from the tragic cases of Grenfell Tower and the case of Awaab Ishak, the government has brought forward new legislation within the Social Housing Regulation Bill, which has prioritised the safety of residents.

The Council is responding proactively to its new responsibilities within the legislation and focuses on ensuring properties are compliant with the relevant frameworks. The Council has also implemented the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures, initiated by the regulator, to ensure that key targets in this area are achieved. These satisfaction measures include targets around our performance in areas such as gas compliance.

As part of this commitment, we will

- Comply with all aspects of domestic property safety legislation and regulations, including building, gas, electric and fire safety. including
 - Maintaining 100% gas safety certification
 - Completing annual fire risk assessments in multi occupancy properties
 - Maintaining robust legionella procedures and monitoring
- Work proactively with our residents to ensure we are delivering safe homes, including working with you to ensure we access your property to carry out the checks we need to, such as boiler services.
- To manage our properties proactively to ensure that we are meeting new safety requirements for properties ahead of time where possible.
- Report on our performance on compliance with fire, gas, water, electric and asbestos on a monthly basis, publishing our performance annually to tenants
- Publish our timescales for carrying out property repairs and publish our performance.
- Work proactively to reduce damp and mould within properties, providing residents with advice and support about heating and ventilating their home, as well as taking proactive and reactive steps to tackle the issue.
- Ensure that stock condition is understood and the required investment is made where needed.
- Take a proactive approach and leadership role within the District to reduce the carbon footprint of housing stock.

Commitment 2 - To ensure that residents can access support when they need it, building stronger communities.

When there is a problem within your home and community, we want our services to be accessible to residents so they can easily and promptly discuss their issue and hopefully reach resolution.

The majority of tenants are self-sufficient and require limited further support from the Council or another agency. They are content to live independently or be supported by their family and friends. However, we understand that no two tenants are the same and from time to time some tenants may need additional support. Some tenants have periods of poor physical and mental health, but others may have longer term support needs. We therefore want to understand and respond to these needs when they arise to ensure that tenants are supported to stay in their homes or be assisted to find more suitable accommodation, should this be required.

Tackling crime and anti-social behaviour is always important to residents and therefore to us. Whilst the Council has low rates within of anti-social behaviour within its properties, we understand that when it does occur, it undermines the quality of life for individuals, their families as well as the wider community.

In the management of your tenancy, we want to ensure that tenants are aware of their responsibilities and understand what they can expect from us and their neighbours in turn.

As part of this commitment, we will

- Ensure that our services are accessible and flexible to tenants needs, ensuring that tenants can promptly have their query responded to
- Adopt a sustainment approach to tenancy management, where appropriate agencies or professionals will be engaged early and in a proactive way to prevent evictions and repeat homelessness.
- Better understand the needs of tenants by enhancing our processes, including at sign up of tenancy and as part of an annual visit programme.
- Proactively engage and involve support agencies when support needs are identified that need the engagement of a partner agency.
- Ensure that where crime or anti-social behaviour occur in our neighbourhoods, we work proactively with partners, such as the Police and Community Safety Team, to intervene early and reduce the impact.
- Review our tenancy agreements and tenancy types to ensure they are able to respond to the needs of tenants and out neighbourhoods.

- Provide the necessary support to ensure that tenants that have care and support needs are able to remain in their homes or are supported and enabled to find alternative accommodation options that may be more suitable to their needs.

Commitment 3 - To ensure effective communication, where residents are engaged and hold us to account.

This commitment is key to the rationale of the Tenants Charter. It's important to us that we have effective dialogue with our tenants, who all live different lives, in a way that can suit them. Timely, appropriate and straightforward communication are key to making and building better relationships. The Council has a variety of different communication channels that enable us to communicate with residents within the District, and we want to ensure that we use these different channels to reach people through their preferred method, moving away from telephone and letters where possible and appropriate.

It is important that tenants know how we are performing and know what they can expect from us. It's also important to us that we have a meaningful and informative dialogue where services or arrangements are likely to change, such as rent and service charge increases.

Delivering high levels of quality and customer service is important to us, and having service reviews based on feedback from residents as opportunities to learn and improve will be implemented to ensure customer requirements are met. When things do go wrong and residents are unhappy with the services that they have received, it is important that complaints are dealt with promptly and resolutions clearly communicated. We will also publish any learning or service change from complaints where appropriate and possible.

We will publish performance information annually, including the new Tenants Satisfaction measures, so residents know how the Council is performing.

As part of this commitment, we will

- Publicise performance information and learning from tenant feedback in the form of "You Said, We Did" messaging.
- Encourage more feedback and involvement from residents in decision making, starting with the formulation of this Charter.
- Ensure tenants know how to raise a complaint and ensure that complaints are dealt with promptly and proactively using the corporate complaints procedure, informed by the Housing and Local Government Ombudsman. Outcomes and learning published.



- Empower staff to find solutions, so complaints can be resolved at the point of contact.
- Ensure an open and transparent review of rent and service charges and ensure that these are proactively communicated with residents, reflect local factors appropriately and that residents are able to have their say.
- Review and launch a new set of service standards for responding to housing management issues, so customers know what they can expect from us.

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Consultation

As part of developing the Charter, we asked our tenants for their views. On the Three Key Commitments, tenants gave us the following feedback.

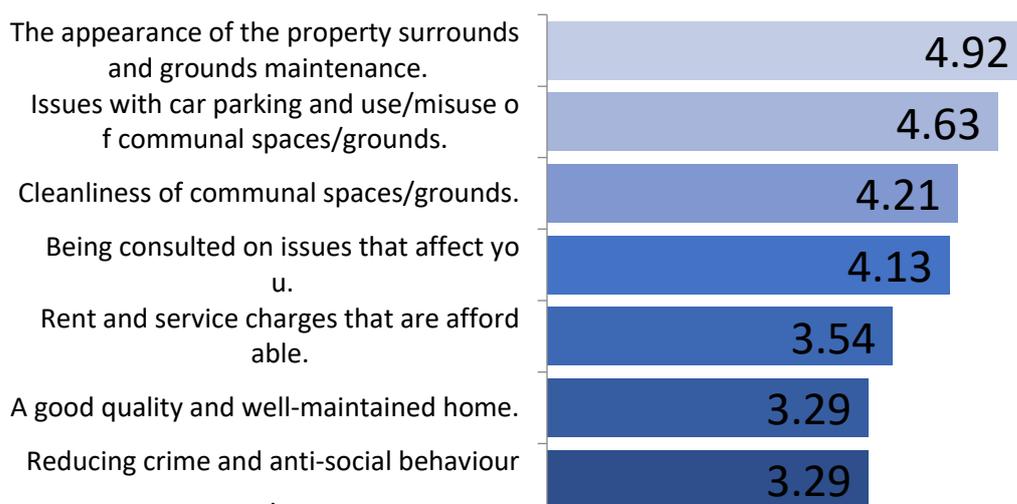
Key Commitment	Total Agreed it was important to them
To ensure that residents are safe and secure in a quality home	100%
To ensure that residents can access support when they need it, building stronger communities	96%
To ensure effective communication, where residents are engaged and hold us to account.	100%

Comments from our tenants included

“Yes, the three Key Commitments cover everything that matters”

“There is always more that can be done but I like that 3 possible objectives are being focused on for the charter”

Our tenants were asked to score out of 7, what was important to them. The table shows the average responses. There was a variety of answers from tenants, and no clear correlations can be drawn. The Charter has sought to address all of these priorities within the actions of each commitment.



Overall, 87% of our tenants who responded believed that having a Tenants Charter was a positive step.