



HOUSING MATTERS

Your home, your news, your views

Hello

Welcome to the latest edition of Housing Matters, a newsletter for tenants and leaseholders of Ashford Borough Council, helping to keep you informed about your Housing Service.



If you would prefer a larger text version of this newsletter please contact Lucy in Tenant Engagement on **01233 330573** or email **tenant.contact@ashford.gov.uk** to send you a copy.

Did you know?

For up-to-date housing news any time please visit our webpage:

www.ashford.gov.uk/housing-news

We regularly add articles to keep you informed about all things housing, from consultations you can take part in that help shape the service, to upcoming projects in your area. You can also sign up there for a version of this newsletter to be sent to your inbox every quarter, helping to save the environment, and save hassle by clicking directly through on featured weblinks.

Competition time

Our competition question in this edition is 'How many repairs were carried out in our Newtown Estate Inspection on 31 March 2025?' The correct answer can be found in this newsletter. Answers can be emailed along with your name, address and telephone number to **tenant.contact@ashford.gov.uk**. They can also be posted to Tenant Engagement at Ashford Borough Council, TN23 1HU. One lucky tenant or leaseholder, drawn at random from the correct entries, will win a £25 Love2shop voucher.

Closing date for entries is Thursday, 31 July 2025. Full competition terms and conditions: **www.ashford.gov.uk/housing-news**

Important news & notices

We are recruiting for our Tenant Scrutiny Panel and a Tenants Voice Panel, read more on page 10.

We have published our Tenant Satisfaction Survey results and resulting action plan, read more on pages 8 & 9.

Two closure orders issued to stamp out Anti-social Behaviour, read more on Page 4.

Monypenny independent living scheme to be redeveloped, read more on page 11.

Find out what we found on our estate walkabouts, read more on page 4.

Housing Surgeries have been introduced, read more on page 5.

VE Day Celebrations at Gerlach House

Residents at our independent living scheme, Gerlach House enjoyed VE day celebrations this year with live music and an afternoon tea.



Cheeselands planters - have your say

Repairing and rejuvenating the three planters on the pedestrian footways on Cheeselands, Biddenden, has been proposed by Biddenden Parish Council (BPC). Before the work goes ahead, they would like to know what you think!

It is suggested that the flower bed brickwork could be raised by a few courses, so that the areas are easier to access for planting and weeding as well as incorporating some simple seating.

Working with the Parish Council, a new community group, Biddenden in Bloom (BiB), will be consulting in the neighbourhood by knocking on doors, using a Facebook poll and using a suggestion box in the village corner shop.

BPC and BiB are keen for Cheeselands residents to help with the planting and long-term care and are thrilled to confirm the beautiful mature crab apple tree in the triangular bed will remain.

Ashford Borough Council (ABC) and BPC are working together to raise additional funds for the work. BPC will be contributing funds from a successful bid for the project.

For more information, please contact clerk@biddenden.gov.uk or biddendeninbloom@gmail.com or leave a message in the suggestion box in the corner shop.



You
said

We
did



You said that you wanted to meet us face-to-face more often to discuss your housing concerns.

- ✓ We have introduced Housing Surgeries, run by our housing officers. Find out more on page 5.

You reported serious antisocial behaviour concerns in Newtown.

- ✓ We applied to the magistrates court and were granted closure orders on two properties. Find out more on the next page.

You said that you wanted to hear more about local charities and support services in the area.

- ✓ We have introduced a permanent section of this newsletter for information about local charities and support services. Find out more on page 6.



A compliment from a tenant to our repairs team

"I would like to express my gratitude to everyone at the repairs team... How willing to help everyone has been. There's been a massive improvement I believe with repairs... Really lovely team there, the workmanship is impeccable. The respect for my home with tidying up after is something so small but it doesn't go unnoticed and yet something I really greatly appreciate... I really appreciate everything everyone has been doing in my home and I couldn't be happier with the improvements... I honestly can't say enough for how grateful I am lately for what's been done and the great team that's been formed with the repairs team."

We have been working hard to improve our services and we value all your feedback, whether it is positive or negative. If you would like to comment on an experience you've had but can't see an opportunity to do so, please email tenant.contact@ashford.gov.uk or call us on 01233 331111.

Neighbourhood concerns

What we found on our recent neighbourhood walkabouts:

6 Jan 2025: Bybrook and Bockhanger Repairs: 33 Fly tipping: 10 Other: 24	22 Jan 2025: Rothbrook and Kennington Repairs: 6 Fly tipping: 8 Other: 10	3 Feb 2025: Willesborough Repairs: 13 Fly tipping: 12 Other: 10
17 Feb 2025: Hackfield, Hillbrow and Clockhouse Repairs: 11 Fly tipping: 11 Other: 10	3 March 2025: Brookfield A Repairs: 5 Fly tipping: 8 Other: 1	17 March 2025: Brookfield B Repairs: 13 Fly tipping: 16 Other: 13
31 March 2025: Newtown Repairs: 25 Fly tipping: 12 Other: 23	14 April 2025: St Michaels Repairs: 6 Fly tipping: 6 Other: 2	If you would like to join in with our future estate walkabouts, visit our website for details and to book in your attendance: www.ashford.gov.uk/tenant-engagement

Two homes at the centre of serious anti-social behaviour complaints closed after court approves Ashford Borough Council applications

Two homes in Newtown Green which have been at the centre of serious anti-social behaviour complaints have been closed and the tenants of each removed after Folkestone Magistrates Court granted closure order applications by Ashford Borough Council.

Both properties are now closed for a three month period. The court order granted on 29 May prohibits anyone from entering, with the exception of council staff and police officers. The two tenants have been removed from the homes and their keys confiscated.

The court heard that the council's housing team received numerous complaints from neighbours about anti-social behaviour at both properties, which are located close to each other in Newtown Green. These properties have been the root of persistent problems and nuisance to neighbours, with people visiting at all hours, drug dealing, and causing noise and intimidation and Kent Police had been called to the properties on several occasions.

Ashford Borough Council secured the court order under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, and brought the proceedings supported by Kent Police. The order means anyone who is found by the police to be in the properties who are not authorised are committing a criminal offence, and if found guilty are liable to imprisonment for up to 51 weeks or a fine.

These issues make people's lives a misery and we hope the outcome of this case will reassure our communities that we do not tolerate it and we will respond with appropriate action.

If you are affected by the illegal activities of another resident resulting in anti-social behaviour, then don't suffer in silence. You can use our Report It service on our website, speak to your housing officer or report your concerns to the police. With your help we can take action against the offenders.

Meet the team and discuss your ideas or concerns

Essential information and reporting services are available on our website. You can also contact your housing officer by phone or email. To find out who your housing officer is, or how to contact them, visit our webpage at www.ashford.gov.uk/housing-officer. If you would ever rather speak to a member of our team face-to-face, take a look at the opportunities below!

EAT WELL, SPEND LESS & WELLBEING ROADSHOW

We will be attending the upcoming Eat Well, Spend Less and Wellbeing Roadshows. At the event you'll find a huge range of charities and organisations including representatives from our housing team. You'll get expert advice on looking after yourself (and your bank balance), guidance on additional support services that may be available to you and free recipe bags with ingredients for you to take home and try. Find us at upcoming events:

♥ Wednesday, 30 July 2025 from 10am until 2pm at the Harpers Hub at Victoria Park, TN23 4QD

♥ Wednesday, 10 August 2025 from 10:30am until 3:30pm outside the Pheonix School, TN24 9LS.

Estate Walkabouts

Our Neighbourhood Housing Officers and other members of our housing team go on estate walkabouts to neighbourhoods all over the borough in the areas with houses and flats we manage. Every two weeks our officers walk a different route and go into communal areas to monitor, report, escalate or manage a wide range of issues we find. Tenants can get involved by meeting us at the designated meeting point at 9:30am, or can request that we knock on your door as we're on our route.

Where we'll be in the next few months:

Monday, 7 July 2025: Rural South West

Great Chart, Singleton, Smarden, High Halden, Bethersden, Biddenden, Rolvenden, Newenden, Wittersham.

Meeting outside the Swan and Dog in Great Chart at 9:30am.

Monday, 21 July 2025: Bybrook and Bockhanger.

Meeting outside the Dhanda Store, 2 Bockhanger Lane at 9:30am.

Monday, 4 August 2025: Rothbrook and Spearpoint.

Meeting outside Premier 1a Tiln Kiln Road at 9:30am.

Monday, 18 August 2025:

Willesborough and South Willesborough.

Meeting outside the Co-op, 83 Hunter Avenue at 9:30am.

Monday, 1 September 2025: Hackfield, Hillbrow and Clockhouse.

Meeting at the corner of Hillbrow Road at 9:30am.

Monday, 15 September 2025: Brookfield A (Beaver Lane, Cross Stile, Pollards Close, Gorse Mead, Maypits, Watercress Lane, Crownfield, Cleves Way).

Meeting outside the Co-op on Brookfield court.

To see the full schedule for 2025, and to book in to attend one of our inspections, visit our website at: www.ashford.gov.uk/tenant-engagement

Housing Surgeries

Housing Surgeries run by our housing officers on the first Wednesday of every month at our office in International House. We will be holding these surgeries more regularly, and in different parts of the borough later in the year.

Come along to one of our sessions if you'd like to chat to one of our neighbourhood housing officers.

When

From 9:30 until 11:30am on:

Wednesday, 2 July 2025

Wednesday, 6 August 2025

Wednesday, 3 September 2025

Where

Ashford Borough Council, International House, Dover Place, Ashford TN23 1HU



How did we do?

Find out what we did in January, February and March across the complaints, housing repairs and maintenance services.

January

Our repairs team made 489 appointments, 97% of urgent appointments were attended to within urgent timescales and 73% of routine appointments were attended to within routine timescales.

We received 51 complaints, 73% were responded to within set timescales.

February

Our repairs team made 974 appointments, 100% of urgent appointments were attended to within urgent timescales and 73% of routine appointments were attended to within routine timescales.

We received 59 housing complaints, 81% were responded to within set timescales.

March

Our repairs team made 926 appointments, 100% of urgent appointments were attended to within urgent timescales and 75% of routine appointments were attended to within routine timescales.

We received 73 housing complaints, 74% were responded to within set timescales.

Find out more about our housing performance on our website: www.ashford.gov.uk/Housing-Performance.

Local Charities & Support Services

Ashford Mediation Service

Ashford Mediation Service provides free confidential and impartial mediation services to residents of Ashford who are experiencing conflict with others. They offer a range of services:

Conflict Training

Conflict coaching is used when the other party cannot be persuaded to participate in formal mediation.

Community Disputes

Where two neighbours within the community disagree about something, that then becomes a source of distress.

Family Disputes

A non-adversarial way of resolving arguments and conflicts that arise in family disputes without involving authorities.

To find out more about these services and how you can get involved, visit their website:

www.ashfordmediation.co.uk

Phone: 07845 914 838

Email: info@ashfordmediation.co.uk

Pneuma Church

Pneuma Church is located in the Cobbswood Industrial Estate and offers a range of support for the local community. You can find out more on their website: <https://www.pneumachurch.uk/>

Renew

Members of Renew get access to food and other provisions for their family at a vastly reduced cost.

Open Monday to Friday 9:30am – 12pm, at the Warehouse.

Cobbswood Industrial Estate, Brunswick Road, Ashford Kent TN23 1EH

Beehive

Beehive is a women's charity shop and cafe, clothes provided to referred women are given at no cost.

Find us on North St, Ashford TN24 8JN open from 10am until 5pm Monday through to Thursday and from 10am until 2pm on Friday and Saturday.

If you know of a local charity you think should be featured in our newsletter, let us know by emailing tenant.contact@ashford.gov.uk



Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund update

Over 600 energy saving measures have been installed so far across Ashford. The measures range from ventilation, loft insulation, cavity wall insulation and solar panels.

Ground source heat pumps (GSHP) are being fitted to 74 homes in Appledore and Charing.

Ground source heat pumps are an effective, highly efficient low-carbon heating system that harnesses natural, freely available heat stored in the ground. The heat pump collects this low-grade heat and boosts it to a higher temperature to provide the home with lowcost heating and hot water whenever the resident needs it. For this project, multiple boreholes are being drilled deep underground and fitted with a network of pipes. A mixture of water and antifreeze circulates within these pipes, absorbing the natural heat from the earth. This mix is then passed through the heat pump, which compresses and enhances this energy so it can heat the water used in the home's radiators and hot water systems.

The Kensa Shoebox heat pumps being installed are compact enough to fit inside each property and provide the home with heat via radiators as part of a traditional central heating system.



Kensa teams are drilling multiple boreholes to a depth of 100 metres in the quiet Appledore cul-de-sac of Heathside as part of a £2.2m investment in ground source heat pump technology in the very heart of rural Kent.



Ashford borough councillors and senior Kensa staff meet some of the residents of Heathside in Appledore who are looking forward to having ground source heat pump technology installed in their homes as part of a £2.2m investment by Ashford Borough Council.

Our residents in Heathside in Appledore said...

"I think this is a great idea. Our electric storage heaters are expensive to run and I'm looking forward to saving the pennies and have a warmer, more comfortable home."

"I had no hesitation in signing up for it. My house is due to be done in June and I can't wait."

"Storage heaters are costing me a fortune so this is a very good idea. My daughter is jealous that I'm getting ground source heat pumps fitted."

If you have questions or concerns about upcoming social housing decarbonisation works, contact us by emailing SHDFtenantcontact@ashford.gov.uk

To find ongoing updates about this project, visit www.ashford.gov.uk/shdf/

Ashford Borough Council Tenant Satisfaction Survey Results 2024/2025



62% are satisfied with repairs



53% are satisfied with the time taken to complete their most recent repair



61% are satisfied that their homes are well maintained



69% satisfied with how safe their home is



49% are satisfied that we listened and acted upon their views



60% are satisfied with how informed they are about the things that matter to them



60% feel treated fairly and with respect



25% are satisfied with our approach to handling complaints



56% are satisfied their communal areas are kept clean



50% are satisfied that we make a positive neighbourhood contribution



48% are satisfied with how we deal with antisocial behaviour

Find out how our results compare to last year by visiting our website at:
www.ashford.gov.uk/housing-performance



59%

satisfied with the overall service provided by Ashford Borough Council

Actions identified from your feedback to improve our services

Actions completed and ongoing

- ✓ **Promote our Estate Walkabouts and make sure tenants know how they can get involved or report local neighbourhood concerns.**
If you would like to attend an upcoming inspection, let us know by completing our booking form, details of the upcoming inspections and how to book are available online at www.ashford.gov.uk/tenant-engagement
- ✓ **Introduce customer satisfaction surveys following the completion of a repair job.**
If you have had a repair job completed in the last month you will have been asked for your feedback. If you receive a request for feedback following a repair request, please let us know how your experience was throughout the process so we can use your feedback to monitor improvements and identify concerns.
- ✓ **Introduce more opportunities for tenants to meet their housing officers face to face.**
We have started running 'Housing Surgeries' on the first Wednesday of every month at our offices at International House from 9:30am - 11:30pm. If these are successful, we will be rolling them out to other locations across the borough.

Actions in progress

- ⇒ **Introduce more opportunities for tenants to have a say in how we run our housing service.**
Tenants can get more involved by registering your interest in our Tenant Scrutiny Panel and Tenants Voice Group.
See more information about current opportunities on Page 10.
- ⇒ **Improve customer service levels and availability of staff for tenants to get in touch with the repairs team.**
Recruitment has taken place and availability, call waiting times and call dropping data is being monitored for further improvements where opportunities are identified.
- ⇒ **Introduce audits to monitor the quality of work following repairs and the quality work done to get a property ready for a new tenant.**
Introduce a programme of resident service days to bring our service to our tenants. There will be more information about this in our next newsletter.

Actions taking place in the future

- ⇒ **We will conduct mystery shopping across our housing service to make sure our teams are contactable, identify any weaknesses and rectify any concerns identified.**
- ⇒ **The results of the stock condition survey and the resulting planned works programme will be published so you kept up to date and can plan for upcoming refurbishments to your home and communal areas.**
- ⇒ **We will produce and publicise a 'Rent and Service Charge Setting Policy' so you can see how we set our rent and approach service charge adjustments.**
- ⇒ **Update our tenants and our leaseholders handbook.**

We'll be running the next Tenant Satisfaction Survey this summer, please give us your feedback and let us know what we can do to make our services easy and efficient for you.

Tenant Scrutiny Panel

We are working hard to ensure that tenants have more meaningful input into the development, amending and monitoring of our housing policies, procedures and practices. This is why we are setting up a Tenant Scrutiny Panel.

Our Tenant Scrutiny Panel will work as a group to investigate specific policies, processes and services, and make recommendations to our Housing Service.”.

For more information, visit our website where you can find our Terms of Reference and Frequently Asked Questions:

www.ashford.gov.uk/tenant-engagement

To register your interest; scan the QR code, email

tenant.contact@ashford.gov.uk,

call 01233 330573 or complete the online form using the address below.

<https://forms.office.com/e/97hjc2xKGi>



Tenant Voice Group

Members of the Tenant Voice Group provide feedback on proposed changes or specific topics in their own time. The information collected from the Tenant Voice Group will be used by our officers and scrutiny panel to inform and tailor our services to all the diverse needs of our tenants.

For more information, visit our website where you can find our Frequently Asked Questions:

www.ashford.gov.uk/tenant-engagement

To register your interest; scan the QR code, email

tenant.contact@ashford.gov.uk,

call 01233 330573 or

complete the online form using the address below.

<https://forms.office.com/e/R94Hu0YAmU>



Redevelopment of Monypenny and the vicarage, Rolvenden

In May, we consulted with residents of Rolvenden including those living in Monypenny, the independent living scheme and our proposal to redevelop the scheme, in conjunction with a parcel of land next door, currently containing a vicarage.

The housing needs of Rolvenden have changed and there is now a need for more family accommodation in a village where there is a real shortage of developable land. By acquiring land at The Vicarage, adjacent to our Monypenny scheme, we are helping to address this changing need.

As at 1 March 2025, we had 1,856 applicants on Ashford Borough Council's housing waiting list. Of these, 21 applicants have a local connection to Rolvenden, looking for a mix of one, two and three-bed homes.

Currently we have 34 homes at Monypenny, comprising 25 sheltered flats and eight sheltered bungalows, plus the former vicarage. Monypenny is more than 50 years old and is an outdated housing scheme. Some of the flats there are very small by today's space standards. Our proposal is for 41 units of affordable accommodation, comprising 23 one and two-bed independent living apartments for older people, plus 12 one-bed apartments and six two-bed terraced houses for general needs – local people on our waiting list desperate for a home they can call their own.

To enable the redevelopment to commence, all residents would need to move from the existing scheme and we're exploring options to keep the disruption to a minimum. Our team has experience of assisting older and vulnerable residents in these circumstances – we successfully did this at other housing schemes we have redeveloped in recent years, such as at Farrow Court in Ashford and Danemore in Tenterden.

Residents at Monypenny were told on 7 May that in time we would speak to each of them to understand their needs in terms of future accommodation, as well as the support they will require through the redevelopment process. Residents will have the option to move back into the new-look Monypenny. On previous independent living redevelopments, a number of residents chose to return once they saw the improvement in the accommodation.

The new homes at Rolvenden will be built to an 'accessible and adaptable' standard, suitable for a wide range of occupants, including older people, those with reduced mobility and wheelchair users – there will be four fully accessible wheelchair-user apartments. The spacious new homes will meet current national space standards for housing, featuring dual aspect apartments with good natural ventilation, daylight and views. Also included are low energy lighting and renewable technologies such as air or ground source heat pumps and photovoltaic (PV) panels. Underfloor heating will also be a feature of the new homes. All in all, great news for the current residents and the community of Rolvenden.



Expected timeline

Subject to change depending on planning and procurement

Submit Planning Application
Summer 2025



Planning permission granted
Winter 2025



Contractor appointed
Spring 2026



Work starts on site
Autumn 2026



Project completed
Spring 2028



A message from our Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator

If you, or a friend or relative, is suffering from domestic abuse, it's important to tell someone. Domestic abuse can include any of the below:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Harassment or threats
- Financial control
- Shouting at you (including in front of children)
- Stalking you
- Inappropriate sexual behaviour

The Housing Team takes all reports of domestic violence seriously. We are currently working to achieve Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation. We will update you on this in upcoming newsletters.

The following local services offer advice and support:

Ashford Domestic Abuse One Stop Shop held every Tuesday. For more information:

☎ 07827 308231

✉ Domestic.AbuseCoordinator@ashford.gov.uk

Victim Support: ☎ 0808 168 9276

✉ kent.da@victimsupport.cjsm.net

Rising Sun Domestic Violence & Abuse Service:

☎ 01227 452852 ✉ referrals@risingsunkent.com

Clarion Domestic Abuse Support Line:

☎ 07376 637069 ✉ centrakent@centragroup.org.uk

National Domestic Violence Helpline: ☎ 0808 200 0247

Prize draw

One lucky tenant or leaseholder, drawn at random from those who complete the newsletter feedback survey in the next six months, will win a £50 Love2shop voucher.

Closing date for entries is midnight on Sunday, 31 August 2025

Full competition terms and conditions:

www.ashford.gov.uk/housing-matters-comp

£50 GIFT CARD



Scan the QR code to provide feedback about this newsletter

Useful contacts

Report repairs or damp/mould: www.ashford.gov.uk/report-a-repair or call 01233 330366

Raise a complaint: www.ashford.gov.uk/complaints or call 01233 331111

Your Neighbourhood Housing Officer: www.ashford.gov.uk/housing-officer or call 01233 330688

Housing help and advice: www.ashford.gov.uk/housing-help

Welfare Intervention Team: www.ashford.gov.uk/welfare-reform or call 01233 331111

Tenant Engagement Team: www.ashford.gov.uk/tenant-engagement or call 01233 330573