



HOUSING MATTERS

Your home, your news, your views

Hello

Welcome to this 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 - How can you get involved with estate walkabouts?

Our competition question in this edition is 'How can you get involved with estate walkabouts?' The two correct answers 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 1UH. One lucky tenant or leaseholder, drawn at random from the correct entries, will win a £25 Love2shop voucher. Closing date for entries is Monday, 28 April 2025.

Congratulations to our previous winner, who won our voucher in the Autumn edition. Full competition terms and conditions: **www.ashford.gov.uk/housing-matters-comp**

Important news and notices

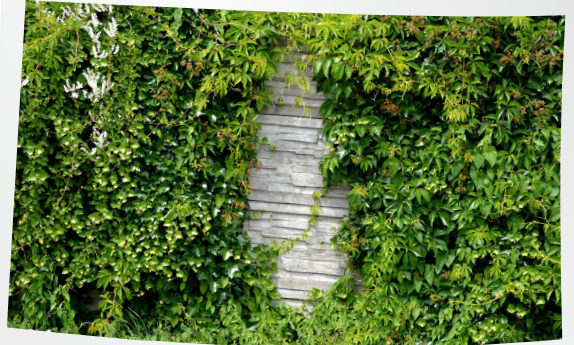
Communal outside spaces

Are there some communal areas of outside space that needs a bit more love?

Report these issues using our website, by email or by telephone:

www.ashford.gov.uk/grounds-maintenance

Email: aspire@ashford.gov.uk Telephone: **01233 331 111**



Swale transfer to Sureserve Compliance South

Swale Heating Ltd are our service partner for annual gas servicing, breakdowns and upgrades for all residential properties. From Monday 3rd March 2025, Swale Heating Ltd will be known as Sureserve Compliance South.



Although, the name and branding of this contractor will be changing, we would like to assure you that the services that they provide to you as an Ashford Borough Council Housing resident will remain the same. As the company transition to their new brand, you may still see some Swale logos on vehicles and uniforms, however, these will be updated over the coming months.

We urge residents to continue to allow access for your annual gas service to be completed, however if you have any questions or concerns regarding this change then please call us on **01233 330366**.

You will still be able to contact Sureserve Compliance South in the same way by calling **01795 477098** or, **0800 2061371** for priority or emergency requests. You can also contact them by emailing callcentre@sureserve.co.uk or by contacting them on WhatsApp using telephone number **07816 125363**.

Tenants Satisfaction Survey results

We will be publishing our latest Tenant Satisfaction Survey results in the next edition of our newsletter and on our website within the next three months. Keep an eye on our website using the following link: www.ashford.gov.uk/tenant-satisfaction-survey

The big data update

In the last edition of our newsletter, we told you that the data we hold about our tenants is not complete or not up to date. There is some information we must know about our tenants such as contact details, disability or medical and other vulnerabilities which may be present in your household, to manage our services and your tenancy. Over the next few months we may contact you to update your details via the following methods:

- A direct telephone call or visit from us, to you
- Asking you for details when you phone us
- Prompting you to update your details via the tenant portal
- Asking you to complete a survey online

Please remember to contact us to let us know if there is a change in your household that could impact your housing.

Allowing us access to your home for essential inspections

Our staff members and approved contractors may need to inspect your home to make sure that your home remains safe for you and your household. We carry out a high number of gas safety checks and electrical safety inspections across all our houses. These checks are required by law and must be carried out either every year, or every five years. Please work with us to allow these essential safety inspections and checks to be carried out in your home. If you have received an appointment but know you are not going to be in, please contact us or the contractors using the details provided to you with the appointment.



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 April 2025 from 10am until 2pm at the Ashford Cinema, TN23 1AE
- Wednesday, 18 June 2025 from 10am until 2:30pm at the Tenterden Leisure Centre, TN30 6RA
- Wednesday, 30 July 2025 from 10am until 2pm at the Harpers Club, TN23 4QD

Removal of flammable materials from communal areas

Storing items in communal areas poses a serious fire risk to everyone living in the building. Due to the amount of items being stored in communal areas, we needed to take action. If large flammable items have been left in the communal areas, they will be removed to make our buildings safer, they will be kept available for 28 days before they are disposed of.



If an item is suspected to have been abandoned in a communal area and we see this or it is reported, we will arrange to have the item removed as quickly as possible, while placing a notice on the item. Once the item is removed, the notice will be left available in the space the item was removed from. If your items have been removed please contact us to make arrangements to collect or dispose of the item.

Please let us know if there is flammable waste that you believe has been left or abandoned in your communal area so that we can remove the risk as quickly as possible.

You said

We did



You said you were not able to join in with our estate walkabouts as you wouldn't know where to meet us.

- ✓ We have introduced meeting points for our walkabouts and given you the option to arrange 'a knock at the door'.

You said you were not able to make a complaint in person, even though our policy states this is an option.

- ✓ We have already made some changes to resolve this. We are monitoring in person access to making complaints and we will make further changes if necessary.

If you need assistance or have any problems submitting a complaint in person, please contact us by emailing tenant.contact@ashford.gov.uk or by calling **01233 330573**.



Neighbourhood Concerns

Sometimes you'll have concerns in your community or neighbourhood which would not be classed as antisocial behaviour, it does not mean you are alone. There is a wide range of support and advice which can help either yourself, or the people involved, in creating the situation you are concerned about. Some examples of common neighbourhood concerns, and some ideas about how to tackle these have been included below.

Neighbours not using the designated bin store correctly can quickly cause bigger issues if it carries on for some time. While this is not antisocial behaviour it will require some action. If you're comfortable to do so, it may be worth asking if they have a key for the bin store and encouraging them to contact us if they need help with access. If you prefer, you can contact your neighbourhood housing officer so that they can check that your neighbours have the access they need, or to provide other help or support if required.



Problem parking can cause a lot of inconvenience and stress. If someone without a permit is parking in an area with a parking permit requirement, report this problem parking to us by emailing parkingcustomercare@ashford.gov.uk. If someone is parked across your driveway, notify the police using the non-emergency routes which would be to call 101 or submit a report to them online at www.police.uk/pu/contact-us/



We have recently conducted a consultation regarding proposed upcoming changes to housing car parks. We are intending to bring the enforcement of some of our housing car parks inhouse with our Civil Enforcement Officers and Parking Services team. This will replace the existing agreement currently in place and in some locations, the restrictions will be brand new. Locations affected include Zone X , Zone Y and Zone Z. More information and updates following the consultation can be found on our website at www.ashford.gov.uk/parking/general-parking/parking-consultations/housing-car-parks.

Neighbours having parties can be tricky to deal with and will require your judgement when deciding what action to take. If it is a one off party or gathering but it caused inconvenience relating to parking, rubbish or noise it may be worth talking to your neighbour or writing them a note. If you do decide to talk or write to your neighbour, be sure to address your concern in the way you would like it to be brought up to you if the roles were reversed. On the other hand, If the party is dangerous, happening regularly late at night or involves crime it may be time to contact the police or contact us. If you are worried about the immediate safety of anyone involved, you need to call 999 without delay, otherwise you can contact the police on 101. Talk to your housing officer if you have serious concerns.



You may have noticed a neighbour with items building up outside their home or landscaping in their garden which is not being dealt with. Problems like this could cause issues with pests and neighbouring gardens. If you are worried about a neighbour or household please let us know so that we can help provide the right support to the household.



If you're unsure of what action to take please contact us to see if we can help. To find out who your housing officer is, or how to contact them, visit our webpage at www.ashford.gov.uk/housing-officer

How did we do?

Find out what we did in October, November and December across the complaints, housing repairs and maintenance services.

October

Our repairs team made 932 appointments, 88% of urgent appointments were attended to within urgent timescales and 68% of routine appointments were attended to within routine timescales. We received 57 complaints, 77% were responded to within set timescales.

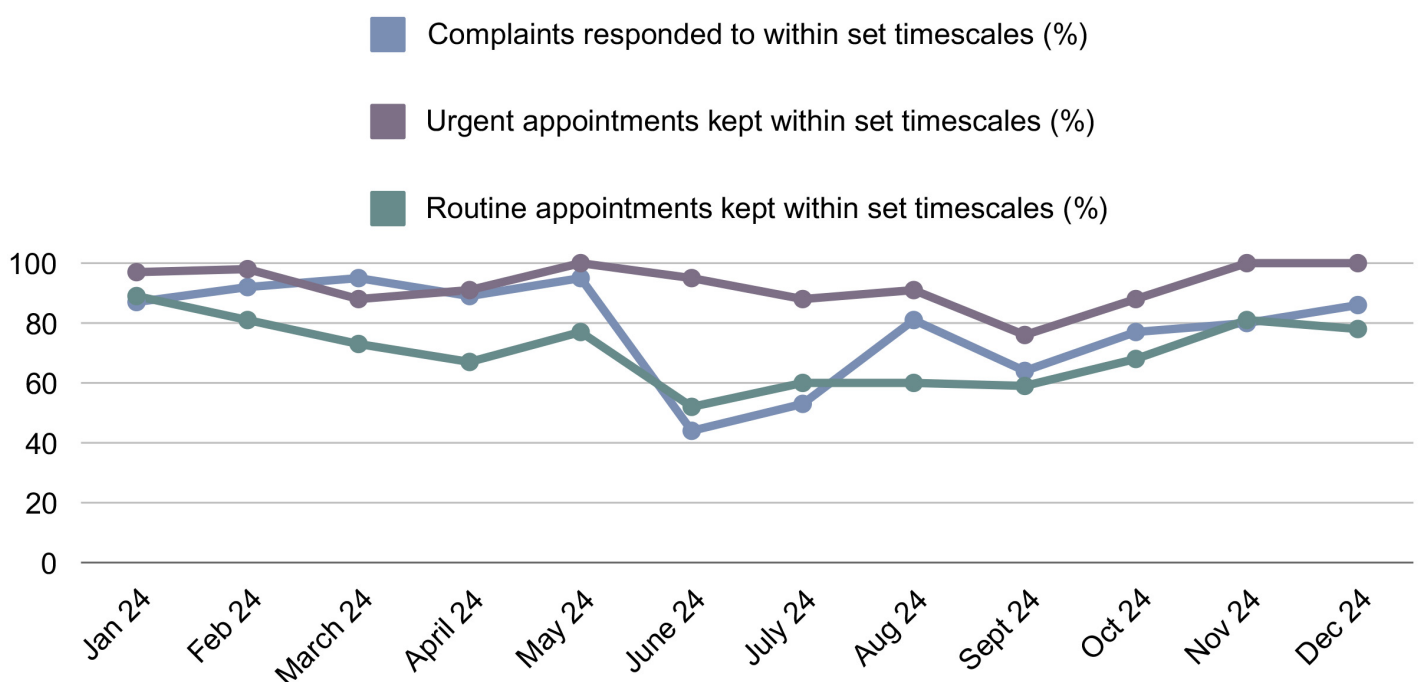
November

Our repairs team made 722 appointments, 100% of urgent appointments were attended to within urgent timescales and 81% of routine appointments were attended to within routine timescales. We received 54 complaints, 80% were responded to within set timescales.

December

Our repairs team made 338 appointments, 100% of urgent appointments were attended to within urgent timescales and 78% of routine appointments were attended to within routine timescales. We received 42 complaints, 86% were responded to within set timescales.

Snapshot of our performance in 2024



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.

External wall insulation

We have now completed external wall insulation on 25 properties and have a further 99 properties in the early stages of planning in the following areas:

Nine Acres

Most of the properties due to have external wall insulation have now had this work completed. Some remaining properties will have this work beginning this month along with canopy replacements.

Goteley Mere

Work has been completed in one block and work has started in the next block. We are removing the old cladding, cleaning, then adding external wall insulation and brick effect plaster. These changes will make the blocks much more energy efficient and cheaper for tenants to run.



The photo above shows the finished results of external wall insulation on houses in our borough

Ground source heat pumps

Works to install ground source heat pumps will be beginning shortly in three sites in the borough, two in Appledore, one in Charing. The work will involve drilling multiple bore holes to depths of over 100 metres outside the properties.

Ground source heat pumps are an effective, highly efficient, low-carbon heating system that harnesses natural, freely available heat which is stored in the ground. The heat pump collects this low-grade heat and boosts it to a high temperature to provide the home with low-cost heating and hot water whenever the resident needs it.

Works to install the ground source heat pumps are due to be completed by the end of the summer.

To find out more about what a ground source heat pump is and how it works, visit www.kensa.co.uk/ground-source-heat-pumps.

Air source heat pumps

There will be a total of 75 properties across the borough which will have air source heat pumps installed. Some have already been installed, with works ongoing to complete the rest.

Air source heat pumps work similarly to the ground source heat pumps by boosting the temperature of the external air to heat the home and provide hot water. This method uses less energy than traditional methods of heating the home or heating water, saving tenants money on their energy bills.

The photo below shows the what an air source heat pump looks like.



To find ongoing updates about this project, visit www.ashford.gov.uk/social-housing-decarbonisation-fund/

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



Get involved in 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.



Monday, 17 March 2025

Covering area Brookfield B and C (Brookfield Road, Lewis Court, Flaxpond Road, Forstal Green, Tournay Close, Arlington, Boxley, Clockhouse, Jemmett Road, Langholme Road, Kither Road, Banks Road, Barn Platt, Bond Road, Musgrove, Noakes Meadow, Allen Field, Barnett Field, Oak Tree Road, Little Knoll, Harper Road, Old Pond Road).

Meeting outside the Co-op on Brookfield Court at 9:30am.



Monday, 31 March 2025

Covering Newtown Green.

Meeting outside the Post Office at 20 Newtown Green at 9:30am.



Monday, 14 April 2025

Covering Tenterden and St Michaels.

Meeting outside Costa on Tenterden High Street at 9:30am



Monday, 28 April 2025

Covering Godfrey Walk and Hampden.

Meeting outside the United Church on Tenterden High Street at 9:30am.



Monday, 12 May 2025

Covering Charing and Charing Heath.

Meeting outside Londis at 47 The High Street at 9:30am.



Tuesday, 27 May 2025

Covering area Rural North East (Chilham, Godmersham, Crundale, Westwell, Challock, Molash, Shott, Eastwell, Bought Aluph, Hastingleigh, Brook).

Meeting outside the Old Wives Lees Village Hall at 9:30am.





Monday, 9 June 2025

Covering area Rural North West (Egerton, Pluckley, Little Chart, Hothfield, Kingsnorth, Shadoxhurst, Woodchurch).

Meeting outside the Hothfield Post Office at 9:30am.



Monday, 23 June 2025

Covering area Rural South East (Aldington, Bilsington, Hamstreet, Ruckinge, Smeeth, Brabourne, Mersham, Sevington, Warehorne, Appledore, Kenardington, Stone, Ebony).

Meeting outside the Walnut Tree on Forge Hill at 9:30am.



Monday, 7 July 2025

Covering area 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

Covering Bybrook and Bockhanger.

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



Monday, 4 August 2025

Covering Rothbrook and Spearpoint.

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



Monday, 18 August 2025

Covering Willesborough and South Willesborough.

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



Monday, 1 September 2025

Covering Hackfield, Hillbrow and Clockhouse.

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

If your area does not have a walkabout in the near future, but you're concerned about a problem, please don't wait, let us know by contacting your neighbourhood housing officer.

To find out who your housing officer is, or how to contact them, visit our website:

www.ashford.gov.uk/housing-officer



Monday, 15 September 2025

Covering area Brookfield A, (Beaver Lane, Cross Stile, Pollards Close, Gorse Mead, Maypits, Watercress Lane, Crownfield, Cleves Way).

Meeting outside the Co-op on Brookfield Court at 9:30am.



Monday, 29 September 2025

Covering area Brookfield B and C, (Brookfield Road, Lewis Court, Flaxpond Road, Forstal Green, Tournay Close, Arlington, Boxley, Clockhouse, Jemmett Road, Langholme Road, Kither Road, Banks Road, Barn Platt, Bond Road, Musgrove, Noakes Meadow, Allen Field, Barnett Field, Oak Tree Road, Little Knoll, Harper Road, Old Pond Road).

Meeting outside the Co-op on Brookfield Court at 9:30am.



Monday, 13 October 2025

Covering Newtown Green

Meeting outside the Post Office at 20 Newtown Green at 9:30am.



Monday, 27 October 2025

Covering Tenterden and St Michaels.

Meeting outside the Costa on Tenterden High Street at 9:30am.



Monday, 10 November 2025

Covering Godfrey Walk and Hampden.

Meeting outside the United Church on 13 Cade Road at 9:30am.



Monday, 24 November 2025

Covering Wye.

Meeting outside the Co-op on Churchfield Way at 9:30am.



Monday, 8 December 2025

Covering Repton Manor, Poets Corner and New Quarter.

Meeting outside Lidl on Victoria Road (Ashford Town Centre) on 13 Cade Road at 9:30am.



Monday, 22 December 2025

Covering Woolreads.

Meeting outside the One Stop on Court Wurtin at 9:30am.

How to get involved...

Join the walkabout

Meet us at the designated meeting point and join us for the walkabout, we will wait at the meeting point for ten minutes, until 9:40am. You can see what we do and how we address any issues we pick up along the way, giving you a chance to highlight anything that you've noticed or are worried about in your local area.

The walkabouts can take anywhere from 2.5 hours up to 4 hours, we highly recommend wearing comfortable shoes and bringing some water.

You are welcome to join for as much or as little of the walkabout as you would like.

Arrange a door knock

Arrange a door knock to let us know any concerns you have about your street or neighbourhood.

Our walkabouts can take from 2.5 to 4 hours and you may prefer to arrange a door knock to point out a specific concern you have in your neighbourhood or community. While we may not be able to resolve in depth individual issues during this type of visit, we will be able to arrange an appointment for any concerns which may take a little longer to investigate or resolve.

Please make sure you complete this form at least four days in advance to ensure your door knock is arranged.



If you want to register your attendance or request a door knock, fill in the form by scanning the QR code, by visiting the website underneath or by contacting us by email or phone.

www.forms.office.com/e/Z43gSV4zt0

Book via email: **Tenant.contact@Ashford.gov.uk**

Please state which walkabout you would like to attend.

Book via phone: **01233 330573**



Please let us know four days in advance. We're asking you to let us know because occasionally, we may need to notify you of a change at short notice (e.g. if there is a weather warning, the inspection will be re-arranged). If this happens, we will use the details in this form to contact you and let you know.

Fire Door Repairs and Installations

A number of improvements are being made across many of our blocks and schemes; this includes replacing the fire doors. Work has already begun and will continue throughout the next financial year. The initial inspections are carried out by our own inspectors who will arrange for our accredited contractor, Harmony Fire, to carry out any required repair or installation. Thank you to those tenants so far who have worked with us during these upgrades. If our inspectors or contractors, Harmony Fire, require access for a routine repair or installation they will write to you with an appointment and details to contact them if the scheduled time does not suit you. Please use the contact details provided in your appointment letter to let them know if you are not going to be home during the appointment.

Congratulations to our Independent Living Officer

We would like to celebrate our Independent Living Officer, Emily who was nominated for the Kent Housing Group Excellence Awards 2024 due to her commitment to enhancing the quality of life for our tenants. Emily is able to help our tenants live independently by looking at how to utilise new technology, supporting her colleagues and trying new approaches to improve the work we all do for our tenants. Emily won in her category and has been awarded "Excellent young professional of the year". We would all like to congratulate Emily on her success.



Where to grab a bite to eat in a pinch!

Bright City Church

The Bright City Church offers a free hot meal every Monday from 11:30am until 12:30pm. Drop by using the back entrance at Centrepiece on Bank Street (TN23 1BA).

The Well Community Cafe

The Well Community Cafe is a pay-as-you-feel cafe open on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturday mornings from 9am until 12 noon offering hot drinks and cake.

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

Are you considering a log burner?

We can accept requests through our website by filling out an application form. It's important that you talk to us before you have one installed. If we can't verify that the log burner has been installed correctly it could cost you upwards of £3,000 to rectify, so please contact us if you are considering having one fitted.

What you'll need to know:

The log burner will need to be installed by a registered business with a Heating Equipment Testing and Approval Scheme (HETAS) qualification.

You will need to give us copies of all documents relating to the installation.

It would be your responsibility to get it serviced annually, and to provide us with the documents relating to the service.

If you already have a log burner it's important to note that only kiln dried logs can be burnt, and they must contain less than 20% moisture to avoid nuisance smoking and incorrect burning.

Your safety and the safety of your neighbours is so important and anyone using or considering a log burner must make sure they follow the requirements. Submit your request online by visiting www.ashford.gov.uk/apply.



£50 GIFT CARD

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



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