

How we did between
1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023

Annual Report for Tenants 2022-23

A message from our Chair

“Feedback from tenants is essential. Only by hearing what our customers want can we know where we need to make improvements.”



Since joining Hastoe in May 2022 I've made it my priority to get out and about to meet residents and visit homes in different parts of the country. More than anything else, I have wanted to dig deep and hear from residents about their experiences. I've heard some good things but also about areas in which we clearly need to improve.

Most tenants have told us they think their homes are safe, good quality, and they like their neighbourhood. However, I have also heard we need to make considerable improvements to our repairs service and provide more regular updates to tenants about progress on repairs.

We have already implemented some changes and you can read what we have started to do in the pages of this report.

We are determined to get this right which is why Hastoe and Board Members are keen to keep talking to our customers and why we have spent a lot of time developing Hastoe's Business Strategy for 2023-26. This sets out those areas we are going to prioritise over the next 3 years. At the top of our list is to deliver good-quality services that meet the needs of tenants. This means providing a good repairs service but also investing further in planned maintenance to ensure our homes remain safe and energy efficient. You can see the full strategy at www.hastoe.com/business-strategy.

The Board and I, together with Hastoe staff, will continue to meet with tenants, to listen and learn, so that together we can work to identify the issues and find solutions.

—
Lindy Morgan, Chair of the Board



Lindy Morgan meeting residents in Yeovil



The year in review from our Chief Executive

“The past year has continued to present challenges for all of us, but at Hastoe we have remained focussed on delivering and developing our core services.”

We recognise that many tenants have faced considerable financial pressure due to rising inflation and energy costs and we have tried to provide support where we can. To assist, we recruited an additional Benefit and Welfare Advisor and, in 2022-23, our 3 Advisors helped residents to claim well over £280,000 in benefit income. I'm very pleased to say this means many tenants have been able to sustain their tenancies and avoided going into debt.

As a social housing landlord we have also experienced costs rising at the highest levels seen for years. A challenging labour market has resulted in both us, and our contractors, having a high staff turnover. All this has made it harder to deliver our services. Some things are taking longer than we want, but we have been adapting quickly.

Listening to your feedback, and despite the challenges, we have increased the number of Customer Service Advisors in our call centre and introduced a callback facility to reduce call waiting times. To improve our repairs service, we have appointed new and more local contractors in a number of regions with more to come. We have also made improvements to MyHastoe so it's easier to report a repair online and customers can now upload photos to show what work is needed.

When you make a report, you will get a text message with an estimated completion date and the name and number of the contractor so you can call them about appointments. If you are unhappy with the repair for any reason, we have set up a dedicated team to follow-up on your behalf. We have been working through reports of damp and mould to make sure these are resolved and we have also made improvements to how we manage complaints.

In addition to carrying out over 11,000 repairs, we completed more than 700 home improvements and we will continue to do this.

The Executive Team and I are committed to making further improvements and, to help resolve any issues or frustrations you may be experiencing, we will invite residents to talk to us directly at least twice a year. This is in addition to the face-to-face meetings that Board Members hold with residents.

Your feedback is always welcome and extremely useful to us.

— **Andrew Potter, Chief Executive**



Hastoe's 8 new homes in Bridport, Dorset.

Customer service and satisfaction



Our Customer Service Team

At the beginning of 2022, we relocated our Customer Service Centre (CSC) from London. Due to the tight employment market, we had difficulty recruiting and training a whole new team of Customer Service Advisors and so our ability to receive calls was affected until early in 2023.

However, once the CSC was fully established and operational, the percentage of answered calls was 86% in February 2023 and 88.4% in March 2023. Now recruitment and training is complete, we are hopeful we will be able to maintain these improvements.

Calls to Customer Service	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Number of phone calls we answered	15,449	11,741	16,068
% of calls answered	81.5%	80%	66.3%

MyHastoe: online self-service portal

We are continuing to develop MyHastoe to become more of a one-stop shop so more services can be reported and accessed online. Tenants who use MyHastoe can:

- Report and follow up a repair
- Upload photos
- Check their rent account
- Make a payment
- Set up a direct debit
- Update their details
- Apply to keep a pet
- Report antisocial behaviour
- Register a complaint/compliment
- Request contact from a housing officer.

We were pleased to see more residents with a MyHastoe online account during 2022-23, with 72.4% of all customer transactions taking place online. MyHastoe enables more tenants to self-serve 24/7 and helps free up our Customer Service Advisors to provide support to those tenants who have more complex queries or issues.

Registrations and transactions	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Number of customers registered	2,472 (23.5%)	2,914 (27.7%)	3,506 (33.3%)
% of all customer transactions that took place on MyHastoe	41%	38%	72.4%



How to set up a MyHastoe online account

To set up a MyHastoe account, go to www.myhastoe.com. You will need to have your email address, date of birth and customer reference number (found on any correspondence from us). If you have difficulty, our Customer Service Team is on hand to help. Just call 0300 123 2250 during office hours.

Tenant Satisfaction

It's extremely important to us that tenants are satisfied with the services we provide. We use a number of ways to find out how we are performing. In addition to the daily contact our employees have with tenants, we receive feedback from our Resident Champions, and we organise activities throughout the year so that tenants can speak directly to our Board Members and Executive Team. In 2022-23 we held 3 phone-in days with our Chief Executive and Executive Team, as well as 2 face-to-face meetings with Hastoe Board Members. This provided us with several opportunities to listen to tenants' experiences and to learn how we can make improvements.

In 2023-24 we will organise another 3 phone-in days and 2 face-to-face meetings with Hastoe's senior team. In addition to this, we intend to recruit more Resident Champions and set up a number of listening panels on specific matters that we know are important to tenants. These include building safety, damp and mould, complaints management and provision of services for tenants with disabilities.



Tenants meeting Board Members in Bridport

Resident Champions

Resident Champions support Hastoe by acting as our eyes and ears on the ground and monitoring the effectiveness of service contracts, such as cleaning and repairs.

"I became a resident champion in 2015/16 because I have a background in land management and an interest in the environment. I want to use that for the benefit of everyone as well as trying to promote sustainability."

"What I like about the role is that it affords me an opportunity to talk to my neighbours, so I enjoy the sociable aspect. The role is light touch but other residents know there is a voice to Hastoe if they need it. I like to be a support to them. I am also able to influence on areas I am interested in. For example, I've liaised with the grounds and hedge-cutting contractor so now the communal garden is mown more appropriately for supporting nature and not like a back garden lawn."



Marie McLeish, Resident Champion

We also seek feedback through a Tenant Satisfaction Survey. Previously, we have conducted a survey every two years to monitor how tenants feel about their Hastoe experience. We will now carry out a survey every year.

By taking all the above steps, we can know whether we are delivering good-quality services that meet the needs of our tenants.

Our last satisfaction survey was carried out in September and October 2022. Tenants rated us from 1 to 10 where 1 was the lowest score and 10 was the highest.

■ 1-4 ■ 5-6 ■ 7-10

Hastoe providing a home that is safe and secure



Overall quality of the home



Hastoe being easy to deal with



Overall repairs service provided the last time repairs were carried out



Service provided by Hastoe



What we have learned and what action we are taking

Repairs service: We have heard and share tenants' concerns that the standard of service of repairs is below the standard we all expect. We also know this is the main reason why overall satisfaction is low. A shortage of skills and labour has been partly responsible for the poor performance of some of our repairs' contractors. We have appointed a number of long and short-term contractors to cover parts of Sussex, London, Essex, Herts, Cambs, Suffolk and Norfolk. We are also taking steps to recruit even more locally-based contractors hoping this will improve performance. We will be managing these contracts tightly.

Customer communication: Tenants have also told us they want more regular updates about progress on their repairs. To improve our service, we have enabled tracking of repairs on MyHastoe and also established a dedicated team to assist tenants if they experience delays or problems. When customers report a repair via MyHastoe they now receive a text message that gives them the name and phone number of the contractor. This information is also recorded on MyHastoe together with a date when the repair is expected to be completed. This enables customers to contact the contractor directly and if, for any reason, they are unhappy with the service they are provided they can fill in a form on MyHastoe and our dedicated team will follow up on their behalf.

Repairs completed	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Number of responsive repairs in total	7,150	10,087	11,848
Percentage of emergency repairs completed within 24 hours	87%	85%	86%
Percentage of all repairs completed on time	75%	73%	79%
Residents who replied to our text survey	8% (761)	7% (765)	10% (1,230)
Percentage of residents who replied to our text survey to say they were satisfied with their repair	77%	67%	57%

In 2022-23, more repairs were carried out than in either of the previous 2 years because we had been limited to only carrying out emergency repairs during the Covid pandemic. However, levels of satisfaction with our repairs decreased overall and our Executive and Board will continue to monitor and review whether the changes we have made to our repairs service are creating a real difference.



Please help us know that repairs are being carried out properly by replying to the text message we send to you after each repair job is completed.

Complaints handling

We received 437 complaints throughout the year. Most of these were related to repairs and maintenance and 75% of the total number of complaints were received during the autumn and winter months. Most were related to repairs not being carried out on time.

The extended cold winter of 2022-23 saw an increase in breakdowns in hot water and heating systems, water leaks and issues of mould. Some of our contractors were not able to respond in time, turned up late or not at all. In order to better prepare in future, we are developing a Winter Plan to manage a surge in breakdowns and we are reprocurring some of our heating contractors.

Types of complaints	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Repairs and maintenance issues	77	78	391
Managing Hastoe homes	29	28	46

While we aim to put things right if they have gone wrong, the focus of our complaints process is not just about making things right for one resident but to learn lessons so we can improve services for all tenants. While we never want there to be cause for complaint, complaints provide us with a really valuable way of identifying where we can improve our services.

The key findings from complaints we have received over the past year include the need for:

- Tighter management of contractors to ensure repairs are completed within agreed timeframes
- Improved communications and customer updates especially where delays are anticipated in repairs
- Further training in operational systems, and clarity of roles and responsibilities for Hastoe employees
- An improved programme of planned home improvements
- Improved response from Hastoe's contracted out-of-hours service.

We have been able to use these findings to develop actions for improvement in our Business Strategy 2023-26: www.hastoe.com/business-strategy.

Our Executive Team and Board will maintain an oversight of customer complaints to ensure learn lessons will continue to be learnt and improvements are made.

We have undertaken a self-assessment of our complaints' service against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code to ensure we comply. The full self-assessment can be read at www.hastoe.com/complaints-self-assessment.

Managing your homes

Tenants have told us they think their homes are safe, of good quality, and they like their neighbourhood. However, we are not complacent and we will continue to make improvements and pay particular attention to issues such as damp and mould.

What we did to maintain and invest in our existing homes

Home improvements: In the past year, we completed more than twice the number of home improvements than in either of the previous 2 years. This coming year, we have put aside £6 million to make improvements to over 800 more homes.

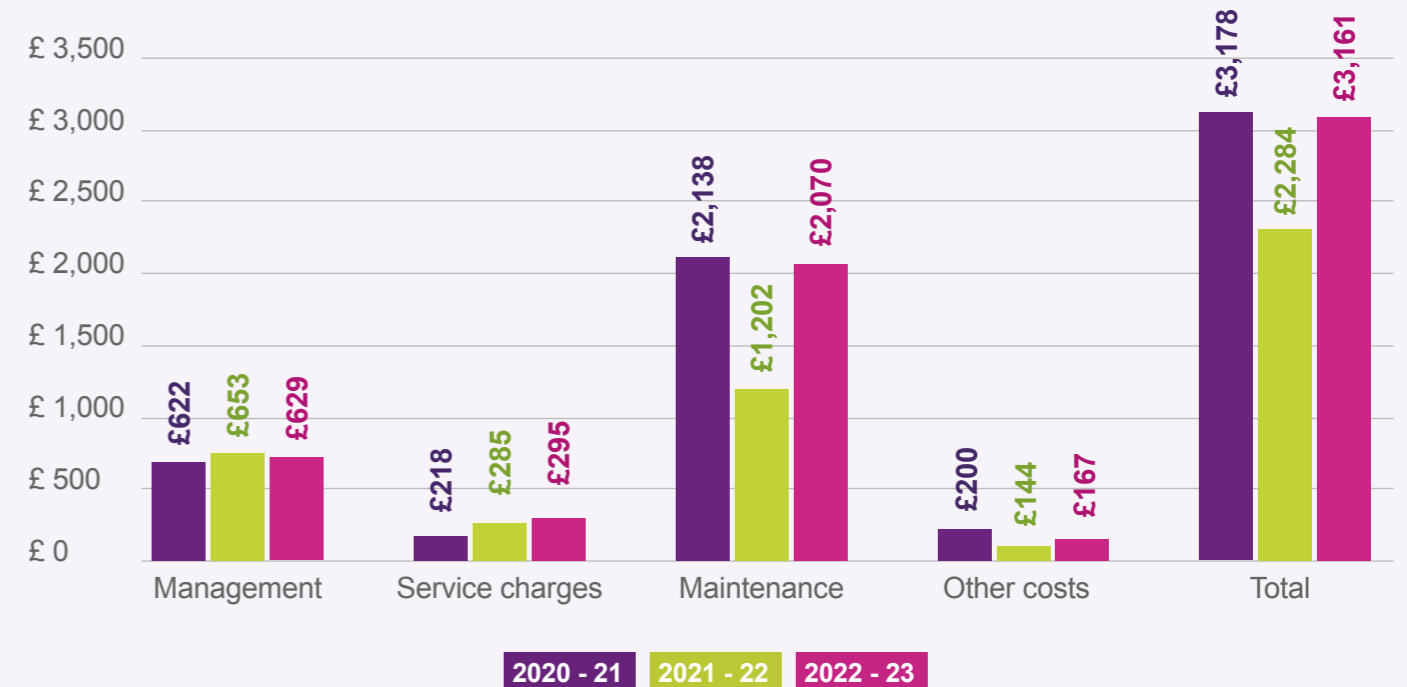
Planned home improvements	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Number of bathrooms fitted	3	8	14
Number of kitchens fitted	14	54	133
Number of households with new windows fitted	0	2	252
Number of households with replacement heating system fitted	119	224	206
Number of households/buildings where external decorations have taken place	189	70	137
Total	325	358	742

Safety: Tenant safety remains our top priority and we continue to invest in fire safety and building safety works. In 2022-23 we spent £2.6m on safety works for our existing homes.

Safety compliance	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Residential buildings meeting Decent Homes Standard	100%	100%	100%
% of Fire Risk Assessments reviewed within our timescales	100%	100%	94.7%
Properties with communal water facilities with valid risk assessment	100%	94%	83.3%
Annual safety inspection of passenger lifts	100%	100%	86.2%
Residential buildings with valid gas certificates	100%	100%	99.96%
Residential blocks with valid asbestos management survey	100%	100%	100%
Residential buildings with current electrical certificate	93%	97%	98.5%

Carbon reduction: In 2022-23, we undertook to update our asset strategy to set out our approach to reducing our carbon footprint and achieving an energy-efficiency rating for our homes of EPC 'C' by 2030. We are making good progress with over 75% of our homes currently at EPC 'C' or above which means most of our homes are efficient to heat.

Cost for us to maintain a home



- Maintenance costs were unusually low in 2021-22 due to the liability for fire safety costs being moved to contractors and insurers.
- Maintenance costs increased in 2022-23 due to additional home improvement works being completed.

Managing re-lets and new lets: When a home becomes vacant, we arrange for corrective works to be done as soon as possible so that we can provide a home for new tenants. In 2022-23, we aimed to achieve a turn-around time of 20 days. However, the average time to re-let one of our vacant homes, excluding those needing major works, was 28.6 days compared to 29 days the year before. We aim to improve on this.

Re-lets and new lets	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Number of vacant homes re-let	159	142	120
Number of new lets resulting from building new social or affordable rent homes	17	31	21

Managing rent collection: Achieving a quick turn-around of homes that become vacant means Hastoe doesn't lose rental income that can be used to invest in other tenants' homes. Income from rentals is our main source of income for carrying out repairs and maintenance.

Rent collection	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Amount collected in social/affordable rent and service charges from tenants	£24.5m	£25.4m	£26.4m
Amount owed by tenants in rent arrears (percentage of total rent owed)	£615,000 (2.5%)	£616,000 (2.4%)	£684,424 (2.58%)
Rental occupation. This represents the maximum percentage of rent that we would be able to collect in any one year. It means that in 2022-23 we missed out on 0.44% of rent, due to homes being vacant.	99.24%	99.56%	99.56%
Tenants evicted due to rent debt	1	2 (+ 1 due to ASB)	3

Supporting Tenants

Benefit and welfare advice: In 2022-23, we recruited an additional Benefit & Welfare Advisor to join the existing team of two. We offered money advice to 562 residents and, of these, 382 took up our offer. Over the course of the year Lisane Warwick, Mark Adkins and Sarah Allen, helped residents claim a combined total of £280,395 in benefit income. This service is available free to all Hastoe residents and details can be found at www.hastoe.com/moneyadvice.



“One of the most pleasing parts of my job is when I can help find a claim that a resident is missing out on. It may only be a small amount but it makes such a difference to people’s lives.”

Mark Adkins, Benefit & Welfare Advisor

Case study: how we helped a tenant keep her home

One of our tenants was struggling with the stress of being in debt and trying to juggle her finances so she could afford the rent plus her essential living costs. She was a single parent with 3 children and, although she had returned to work part-time after a period of unemployment, she had fallen into arrears with her rent and was not getting any benefit to help with rent payments. Her eldest son had also left home which meant she was no longer receiving a rent contribution from him and was under-occupying her property by one room.

Lisane organised a delivery from a local foodbank and suggested to the tenant she should apply for Universal Credit (UC). Lisane then supported the tenant to make a UC application and helped with her appointments.

However, when the first UC payment was received, it was not enough to cover the full rent. The tenant’s arrears were over £2,000 and increasing which meant she was at risk of defaulting on her tenancy agreement and being evicted. However, Lisane had completed a benefit entitlement check so she knew the payment was wrong.

Lisane contacted the tenant and persuaded her to contact Universal Credit again. With Lisane’s support, and involving the tenant’s Jobcentre work coach and Citizens Advice Bureau, they established the tenant’s claim did not include her daughter so they were able to raise the case with Universal Credit. The case took months to be looked into. During this time Lisane continued to support the tenant with referrals to the foodbank and liaised with colleagues at Hastoe to avoid a court application for eviction. Eventually it was established the tenant had been underpaid. Universal Credit issued a rebate for £4,700 which meant she was able to clear her arrears in full.

Without Lisane’s intervention and help, this tenant’s situation would have gone unnoticed and the tenant could have lost her home.



Lisane Warwick



Sarah Allen

Sponsored webinars: Hastoe sponsored the Plunkett Foundation to produce a series of webinars for community leaders and Hastoe’s Resident Champions who are supporting vulnerable residents in rural communities. Three separate 1-hour webinars were produced to: a) signpost mental health services in rural communities, b) how to increase the social impact of rural community businesses, c) how to support local communities during the cost of living crisis.

Community Grant: Our Community Grant fund offers up to £250 to help deliver community-based projects that will benefit Hastoe residents and their local communities. We particularly welcome applications from projects that support Hastoe’s commitment to sustainability and the environment, such as those that help protect wildlife, preserve green spaces or encourage young people to learn more about the environment.

In 2022-23 we contributed funding towards 12 projects.



Hands of Hope, Kent

Hands of Hope was awarded £250 to help fund a small community scheme ‘Get Growing Buddies’ as an extension of the charity’s larger project ‘Get Growing’. The fund went to provide lone residents, families and schools with equipment, seeds, plug plants, and ongoing support to grow fruit and vegetables. Participants were encouraged to share the resources with their neighbours to help tackle rural isolation and loneliness.

The organisers said, *“We aim to provide a safe space for those dealing with mental health issues. Additionally, we hope to offer training and guidance enabling Growing Buddies to go out into the community and help others.”*

Adventure Equipment, Wimbish, Essex

The 1st Thaxted-Carver Scouts were awarded £250 towards outdoor adventure equipment such as archery equipment, bicycles and climbing gear. The 133 members, based in North Essex, are spread over two locations in Thaxted and Carver Barracks. When the scouts received their equipment, 65% of the children’s parents were servicemen and women stationed at Carver Barracks in Wimbish.

The organisers said, *“A key purpose of our group is to enable army children to join up with local children to participate in adventures and overcome any barriers that may exist between army and civilian life.”*



For information on how to apply for a grant, see www.hastoe.com/communitygrant or email Helen Russell at hmrussell@hastoe.com.

Building energy-efficient homes

While Hastoe is committed to maintaining its existing homes to a Decent Standard we also believe it is equally important for us to continue to build high-quality, energy-efficient rural homes for affordable rent or shared ownership. These new homes are desperately needed by people who have been priced out of their local area and who otherwise have to choose to live in overcrowded conditions or move away.

In 2022-23, we were able to start 46 new homes. This is lower than the 217 we had hoped to start building and was due to challenging market conditions such as increased borrowing costs, difficulties in obtaining materials, shortage of skilled labour, etc. This led to Hastoe deciding to slow the pace of development in order to reduce our exposure to financial risk.

We had hoped to complete 92 homes but, again, this was affected by difficulties with supply chains, a shortage of skilled labour and inflationary costs. However, we did complete 34 homes in East Sussex, Suffolk and Essex. This included 4 homes in the village of High Easter which were built to Hastoe's New-Build Standard.

We aim to start building 100 new homes in 2023-24 and a further 101 homes in 2024-25.

New homes (for social/affordable rent and shared ownership)	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
New homes started on site	61	31	46
New homes completed	20	60	34

High Easter, Essex

Finalist in the 'Best Sustainability Innovation' category of the Digital Housing Innovation Awards 2023
www.hastoe.com/higheaster



"Knowing I was going to be moving into a new home with my son and daughter was the light at the end of the tunnel. It's been a very difficult few years and now we've moved in I feel we can start living again."

Keith Chapman, Tenant

Four new homes for social rent were completed in the village of High Easter in April 2022. They are the first to be built to Hastoe's New-Build Standard which was developed in 2021. The new sustainable standard adopts a 'fabric-first' approach which reduces carbon emissions and saves residents money on their heating bills. The design of the homes is based on other houses found locally. They all have air-source heat pumps and are built to have minimal impact on the environment and use water efficiently.

Special care was taken to keep the mature hedging and trees to the front of the site and to soften the transition to rural farmland. Bat and bird boxes were incorporated with external lighting designed to be 'friendly' to bats and other wildlife present in the area.

Mounsdon Lodges



Icklesham, East Sussex

www.hastoe.com/icklesham



"Where we lived before there were 7 of us in a small 3-bedroom house and we were living on top of each other. Then me and my partner moved here and our son was born a few weeks later. It's made a massive difference to our lives, having our own home, having lots of space and a garden. I love it."

Libby and George, Tenants

Fifteen new homes were completed in the village of Icklesham in August 2022; 12 were built for social rent and 3 for shared ownership. The homes have been prioritised for people with a local connection such as those working in the village, those with close family in the area, or those who have previously lived there but have been forced to move out because of a lack of affordable housing. The Icklesham Parish Community Land Trust played a key role in the development along with Icklesham Parish Council and the Sussex Community Housing Hub.



Providing Value for money

In order to meet the needs of tenants and manage your homes effectively, we will always aim to use our assets and resources wisely. This is how we allocated each pound of the rent you paid in 2022-23.

14p – Housing management costs

This is what we spent on managing tenancies, including collecting rent, dealing with antisocial behaviour and carrying out safety checks (plus service charges).

16p – Routine repairs

This is what we spent on carrying out repairs to your homes.

13p – Reinvested

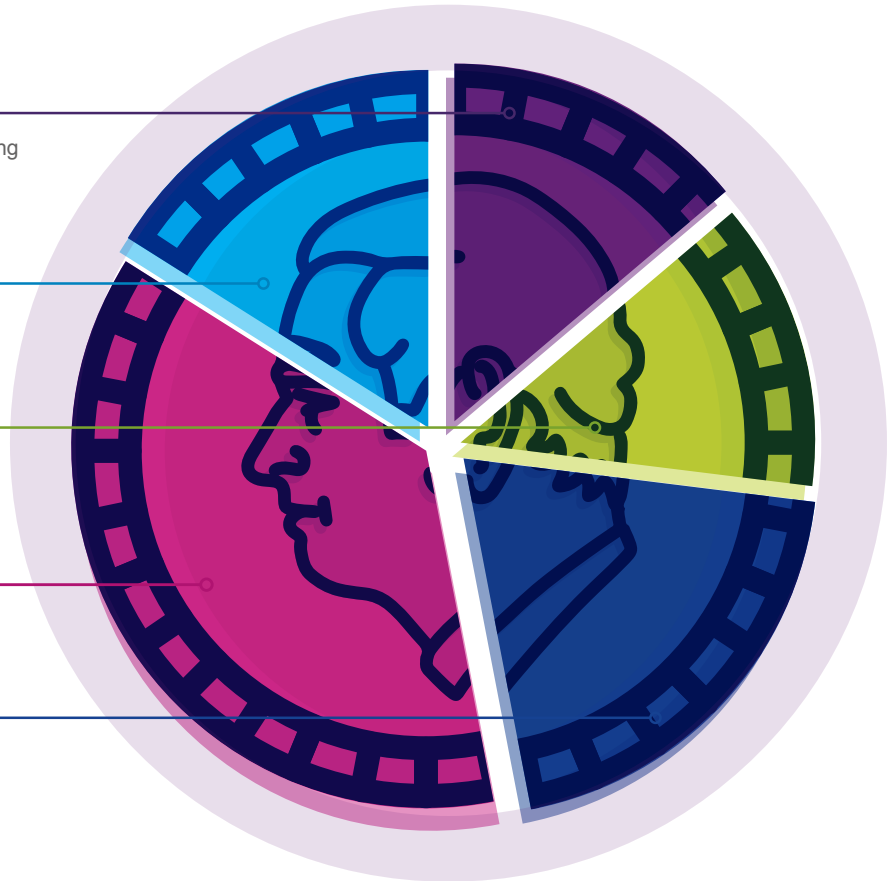
This is the money we reinvested back into our homes, the services we offer and building more new homes.

37p – Financing costs

This is what we spent on repaying the loans we use to finance the building of new homes.

20p – Planned maintenance

This is what we spent on improvements to your homes, such as a new roofs, windows or kitchens.



To compare our spending with last year, go to www.hastoe.com/annualreport.

Contact the Customer Service Centre

🌐 www.myhastoe.com

☎ 0300 123 2250 (during office hours)

☎ 0345 266 2567 (emergency number out of hours)

🕒 See the Hastoe website for opening hours

If you would like to receive this document in an accessible format, please contact communications@hastoe.com or call the Customer Service Team. We also welcome your feedback on the format, design and content of this Annual Report.

Hastoe

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Other ways to stay in touch

🏠 hastoe.com

🐦 twitter.com/hastoehousing