

Leaseink

Crawley Homes' newsletter for leaseholders – Issue 44

New Town Hall

We've moved into our new offices, but our address is still the same.

Construction of the new Town Hall started in the spring of 2020 and was completed last autumn. Since we got the keys, we have been busy fitting it out, moving desks from the old offices and getting ready to move.

Staff have been gradually moving in since the end of January, and on 8 March the doors to the old Town Hall closed to the public as we opened the doors to the new one. It's now business as usual from the new building.

The old building will now be demolished to make way for more new homes.

More on this development can be found on the [Invest Crawley website](#).



Find out more

Update your contact details for our new computer system

Crawley Homes' new computer database and system has gone live for housing management and repairs.

In the next few months we will be moving all our leasehold records to the new system, and we want to make sure that we have the right contact information for you.

If you have moved, changed your mobile number in the last few months or you have a new email address, please let us know. Email leasehold.services@crawley.gov.uk to update your details.

If you rent out your flat and do not live locally, we would also like contact details for your tenant or someone who could give us access in case of an emergency, such as a water leak.

Keep us up to date





Cost of living crisis

Rising energy prices, rising food prices and inflation at 10.1 per cent (Consumer Price Index for January 2023) is affecting everyone.

Individuals, businesses and the council are all having to pay more for goods and services.

Your service charges are amounts payable for services, repairs, maintenance, improvements, insurance and the landlord's costs of management, providing the costs have been reasonably incurred.

Your lease allows the council to bill for charges in advance, these are estimated and are payable in two halves. Your April invoice is half of the estimated amount for the year ahead. Your October invoice is half of the estimated amount, but with an adjustment for any over or under payment in respect to the actual costs in the previous financial year.

This year our estimates will reflect the rising costs we are facing, although we are trying our hardest to keep these as low as possible.

Help with money worries

The council has produced a guide for residents on its website to help show people where support is available.

This provides guidance on managing your income, budgeting and debts, loans and savings, employment and housing financial support. The page also includes guidance on support with household bills, energy bills as well as food and food bills.

Visit **Winter Warmers | Crawley GOV.**

I can't afford my invoice

Let us know, but you need to pay the invoice, so you need to consider how you can raise the money or spread the cost.

Things to think about include:

- Paying by Direct Debit to spread the payments
- If you still have a mortgage, talk to your lender, you may be able to take a further advance on it
- If you are considering a loan, please get some independent advice and explore all options to make sure you get the best deal for you
- If you're struggling, the bank of mum and dad, your friends or other family members may be able to help you out
- You may have the right to a loan from the council in respect of service charges for repairs, but it will nearly always be cheaper for you to get a loan from another source.

In extraordinarily exceptional circumstances, a senior manager may agree to extend the payment terms for you. For this to happen we would expect you to have explored all other options to raise the funds to pay the invoice. Any extension to payment terms is a unique, one-off agreement. It does not let you off the next bill or give you extended time for future bills.

If you get certain income-based benefits you may be entitled to support towards your housing costs. An amount of money may be included in your award to help with interest payments on mortgages and certain other loans, and it could help with other housing costs such as ground rent and service charges. Find out more by getting in touch with the appropriate agency. If you receive Pension Credit (Guarantee Credit) call the Pension Credit helpline on **0800 99 1234**.

If you receive Income Support (IS), Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance (IR - ESA) or Income-Based Jobseekers Allowance (IB-JSA) contact Jobcentre Plus, existing benefit claims, on **0800 169 0310**.

For Universal Credit (UC) call the helpline on **0800 328 5644** or use your online journal.

If you can't afford to pay, don't ignore it, get in touch with us and let us know. This is a priority debt and you could lose your home if you don't deal with it.

Service charges

Help with the cost of living

The rising cost of living is impacting on household incomes.

A wide variety of help and support is available from several organisations if you are finding it difficult to manage your money.

Visit crawley.gov.uk/moneyworries for information on:

- Help with energy bills
- Housing financial support
- Managing your income
- Budgeting and debts
- Loans and savings
- Food and food bills
- Other household bills
- Employment advice
- Health and wellbeing.

crawley.gov.uk/moneyworries



Talk to us

Estate Inspections

Getting out into the neighbourhoods and estates where you live is important to us, and as part of this we are inviting residents to join us on our estate inspections. We are aiming to complete at least one per month (weather dependent) and one in each neighbourhood per year.

Our planned programme can be found on the council's [website](#).

We spend about an hour at the start of each inspection talking to residents to find out what they think are the issues in their area.

What we look for

At an inspection we look at things like:

- Repairs in communal areas that have not already been reported
- Litter, bin stores and fly-tipping
- Grass cutting, landscaping and other estate services
- Communal areas being kept clear.

You can help

How residents can help

You can help us to manage our estates by telling us about problems in the area. Use myCrawley to tell us about [repairs to communal areas](#) or to [report a local problem](#).

Together we can help create a great place to live.



Healthy Homes tips

Condensation, damp and mould are in the news now and we want to give you a few useful tips to help keep your property healthy.

Rising damp, penetrating damp and defective plumbing can all create damp in a property, but it is often caused by condensation.

Take a look at National Energy Actions leaflet on **Dealing with Damp and condensation** for tips on spotting rising or penetrating damp.

If you think that damp in your property may be caused by a structural problem, get in touch with [Crawley Repairs Team](#).

However, water on windows and patches of black mould are likely to be caused by condensation and you can help to reduce this.

These are just some of the steps that may help:

Top tips

Heating

Keeping your home warm reduces cold surfaces where condensation can form.

- Keep living area temperatures around 18°C
- Draw curtains to keep warmth in.

Ventilation

How air moves around the property is very important in the prevention of condensation, as it allows moisture-filled air to escape to the outside.

- Use extractor fans if fitted
- Keep trickle vents open
- Give room for air to move
- Keep a space between furniture and outside walls
- Don't block air bricks.

Reduce the moisture

Condensation occurs when there is too much moisture in the air so reducing moisture helps to reduce condensation.

- Wipe condensation away regularly
- Close bathroom doors when bathing or showering
- Dry clothes on a dryer in a ventilated room
- Put lids on pans when cooking.

To treat black mould in your home wipe down walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash, one that carries a Health and Safety Executive approved number.



Building Safety Act 2022

The building safety reforms are designed to help ensure that your home is safe and that you feel safe. The reforms will apply to high-rise buildings in England. They'll help to protect you from fire and structural problems in your home.

Crawley Borough Council need to make sure that your building is safe. But you'll have a part to play.

As a resident, you must not:

Do anything that creates a significant risk to your building's structural safety.

Do anything that creates a significant risk of causing or spreading fire in your building.

Damage or remove any of your building's fire safety measures, such as smoke detectors, fire alarms, fire doors, and fire extinguishers.

We will also need to keep you informed about your building. In some situations, we'll need to ask for your views.

Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022

These regulations implement many of the recommendations made by the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry that relate to building owners' and managers' responsibilities.

Some of the regulations apply to all multi-occupied residential buildings,

where residents would use a communal area to evacuate the building in the event of a fire. Some are specific to high rise buildings (18m and over).

As part of the regulations, new requirements for the inspection and maintenance of fire doors have been introduced. For buildings 11m and over in height, flat entrance fire doors need checking at least every 12 months, with checks of any fire doors in communal areas at least every three months.

In addition, residents of any multi-occupied residential building, regardless of its height, must be given relevant fire safety instructions and information about the importance of fire doors.

Residents need to be given instructions on:

How to report a fire.

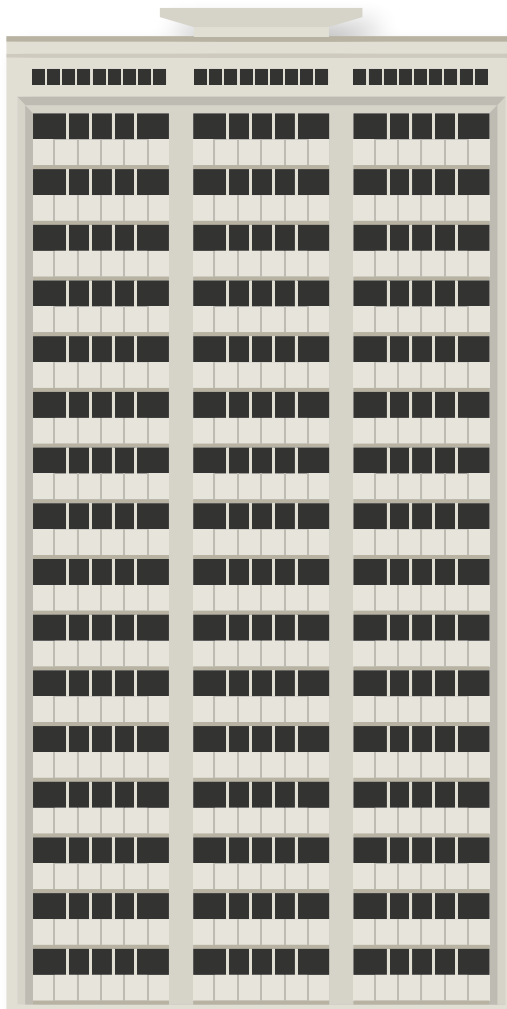
A reminder of what the evacuation strategy is for that building.

Any other instruction that tells residents what they must do once a fire has occurred, based on the building's evacuation strategy.

These instructions should be clearly displayed in the building's communal areas (such as the building's lobby or any conspicuous part of the building) and shared directly with residents when they move into the building.

If you have sub-tenants, you will need to make sure they are given this information when they move in.

Fire safety



New requirements

Complaint or dispute?

Unhappy with the work or service?

We define a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction about a council service, whether it is provided by us or a partner or contractor.

Complaints are usually about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the council and examples could include:

- There has been a delay in providing a service or we have failed to provide a service to an acceptable standard
- Our staff or contractors have behaved in an unfair, discourteous or discriminatory manner.

Our complaints process has two stages and if you are still unhappy following the completion of these the complaint can be taken to the Housing Ombudsman.

More on the council's complaints policy and our approach to complaints can be found on our [complaints webpage](#).

Leasehold management charge disagreements and disputes are dealt with outside the complaints process as there is a formal legal route for leaseholders to follow.

Disputing a charge

If you disagree with a charge, we may be able to resolve the issue without the need for you to take it further. This could save you time and money.

We'll explain your bill and try to answer any questions. If you are still not happy with the response you receive from us, we will suggest you get some independent advice.

LEASE (The Leasehold Advisory Service) is an independent organisation that can provide free advice to leaseholders, or you may wish to contact **Citizens Advice** on **0808 278 7969** or speak to a solicitor.

You also have the right to apply to The First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber). The Tribunal is an independent body that offers a fair way of settling disputes without having to go to court. Find out more on the [GOV.UK leasehold disputes web page](#).

Even if you dispute the charges, under the terms of your lease, you still need to pay the full invoice without any deductions, whilst the tribunal is making its decision.



Contacting us

Payments

Card payments over the phone:
01293 438000

24-hour automated payments line:
01293 438312

Card payments online:
[crawley.gov.uk/payments](https://www.crawley.gov.uk/payments)

Leasehold Services

01293 438392
leasehold.services@crawley.gov.uk

Queries on the calculation, billing and collection of management charges. Enquiries in connection as with sales and assignments.

Repairs

01293 438111
housing.repairs@crawley.gov.uk

Nuisance and anti-social behaviour

01293 438438
asb@crawley.gov.uk

Crawley Borough Council

For other council enquiries:
Town Hall, The Boulevard, Crawley RH10 1UZ
01293 438000
comments@crawley.gov.uk

Other useful web links

Permissions for improvement
[crawley.gov.uk/permissions](https://www.crawley.gov.uk/permissions)

Housing Officers' contact details
[crawley.gov.uk/housingofficers](https://www.crawley.gov.uk/housingofficers)

Information on Leasehold Services
[crawley.gov.uk/leasehold](https://www.crawley.gov.uk/leasehold)

Report a problem
[crawley.gov.uk/reportaproblem](https://www.crawley.gov.uk/reportaproblem)

myCrawley
[my.crawley.gov.uk](https://www.my.crawley.gov.uk)