



2024 Annual Report

2025 Investing in homes | Investing in People



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“ I am pleased to introduce this year’s Annual Report for Cottsway. I’m Vanda, I live in a Cottsway home, and I am Chair of the customer Scrutiny Group.

We’re a group of customers who use our experiences to scrutinise and improve Cottsway’s services. We work independently, but also closely with staff and Board Members to make sure changes benefit customers.

As a group, we’ve focused more this year on reviewing Cottsway’s performance each quarter and we’ve joined Customer Insight Group meetings with staff from across the organisation to get a broader view.

You’ll see in this report that Cottsway’s annual tenant satisfaction and performance results are strong once again for 2024-25. This is based on feedback from customers like you and is very positive to see. You’ll also find updates on repairs and maintenance, customer involvement, complaints and feedback, new homes, sustainability, equality, diversity and inclusion.

This year, the Scrutiny Group have completed a review of estate inspections and made 19 recommendations, mainly around improvements on consistency and communication. Cottsway is now acting on these. We’ve also revisited past reviews, including one on Anti-Social Behaviour. Of the 20 recommendations we made, 15 have been fully implemented and five are in progress.

We now alternate between new reviews and checking progress on previous ones, and we get involved in other areas of feedback to help represent customer views. Every Cottsway customer deserves to have a voice - being part of this group, we see that your feedback makes a difference and, reassuringly, that action is taken to make things better.

We’ve welcomed two new members this year, bringing new ideas and energy. We also run ‘Scrutiny Assist’ to give customers like you the opportunity to share your views. If you’ve signed up, we really appreciate your involvement! ”



For more about our Scrutiny Group, and to get involved in Scrutiny Assist, see: www.cottsway.co.uk/scrutinygroup



Year in summary

85%
overall customer
satisfaction
compared to 70% nationally*



87%
satisfaction with
repairs
compared to 75% nationally*



129
new affordable homes
completed



£19.1m

invested in maintaining and repairing
existing homes



100%
of homes
meet
Decent Homes
Standard



100%
safety
checks
completed



100%
of emergency
repairs done
within
24 hours



88%

agree we treat you fairly and with
respect



*According to the independent 2024 National Tenant Survey by the Regulator of Social Housing published in November 2024. To read the report, see www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-tenant-survey-findings-report

About us

Cottsway provides affordable housing for people in need, and we work in West Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Worcestershire. We're the largest social housing provider in the district of West Oxfordshire.

At the end of 2024-25, we owned and managed 5,790 homes ranging from flats and bungalows to family homes, for rent and low-cost home ownership. We have over 13,000 customers.

More than three quarters of our rented homes are for social rent, which is around half the cost (50-60%) of renting on the open market - a big saving for our customers. The rest are at affordable rent, which is still about 20% cheaper than private rents.



See our Corporate Plan and full audited financial statements:

www.cottsway.co.uk/publications

Details of our Board and Executive at:

www.cottsway.co.uk/board

What drives us

We're driven by our purpose:

“Together we are turning houses into homes, growing and building stronger communities and making a positive difference to people's lives.”

We're here for both customers who already have a place with us and to provide more safe, affordable homes for those who need them - because everyone deserves a place to call home.

We've now completed year two of our five-year Corporate Plan 2023-2028 and we're on track to deliver on the goals set out, focussing on our key areas of:

- **People**
- **Homes**
- **Business Strength**

Our values and priorities guide us - and our customers are always at the heart of everything we do.

We're regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing (Regulator), and they have given us G1 and V1 ratings for Governance and Viability. These are the highest possible ratings, demonstrating strong compliance with regulatory standards for the way we're run, accountability to our customers and our financial capacity to handle challenging situations.

Helping Elizabeth settle into her new home

Elizabeth has learning support needs and after she sadly lost her mother, we were there to help. We supported her in registering with Homeseeker Plus, finding and visiting suitable properties, and signing the tenancy for a 1-bed flat.

To make her move easier, we arranged a skip so she could clear out unwanted items. We also helped her set up Universal Credit, council tax support, and direct debits for her utility bills - making sure she was able to adapt to a new way of life.



“I can't thank Cottsway enough for their support to help me get back on my feet after the loss of my mum. It's easy to manage my own finances now my bills are paid for by direct debit and I've found a new job closer to home with less hours, so I feel much more in control of my anxiety. I love my new flat and feel very settled here.**”**

Elizabeth

Consumer standards - what do they mean for you?

Consumer Standards have been introduced by the Regulator to raise standards in the social housing sector and ensure housing providers, like us, provide you with the services and support you want and need.

Housing associations with over 1,000 homes will be assessed by the Regulator at least once every four years against the new standards under a new Consumer rating. We are yet to have our first inspection.

Maintaining your home to a high standard

The Safety and Quality Homes Standard is in place to ensure your homes are kept in good repair and to a high quality. It focuses on repairs and maintenance, health and safety, and housing adaptations.

Being open and honest

The Transparency, Influence & Accountability Standard means we must be open and honest with you and give you clear ways to hold us to account. It also includes the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) – you'll find our annual results in this report.

Supporting safe, well-maintained neighbourhoods

The Neighbourhood & Community Standard ensures that we work closely with local authorities and other organisations so you can live safely and comfortably at home. It includes tackling anti-social behaviour, hate crimes and domestic abuse.

Managing your homes

The Tenancy Standard makes sure we allocate homes fairly and ensures tenancies are managed in partnership with you, with advice and assistance.

We:

- Always meet the legal and regulatory requirements set by social housing bodies like the Regulator and the Housing Ombudsman.
- Regularly review our performance against the Consumer Standards and the Complaint Handling Code.
- Are members of the National Housing Federation (NHF), allowing us to share best practice with other housing providers. We follow their Code of Governance and conduct guidelines.



Together with Tenants

This Annual Report sets out some of our work we've done this year, referring to our Corporate Plan priorities and values throughout, as well as the Together with Tenants Charter. The Charter is a code of practice from the National Housing Federation that most housing associations follow, and we've built it into everything we do.

The following results are for our **rented homes**.

TSMs include an overall satisfaction score and are grouped into five themes by the Regulator. They reflect both how tenants feel (perception) and how well services are delivered (performance).

1. Keeping properties in good repair
2. Maintaining building safety
3. Respectful and helpful engagement
4. Effective handling of complaints
5. Responsible neighbourhood management

We work with an independent research agency called Acuity to carry out quarterly phone surveys to understand what our customers think. This year, 1,040 tenants took part.

We compare our results with other housing associations to see how we're doing and where we can improve. We use data from HouseMark, a UK housing sector insight company, to do this.

Our performance is reviewed quarterly and compared against other housing associations using quartiles. Over the year, we met or exceeded nearly all of our targets. In most areas, we ranked in either the median quartile (outperforming at least half of our peers) or the upper quartile (outperforming at least three-quarters), demonstrating consistently strong performance.



“ We set high standards because we want to give our customers the best possible service. It's great to see that we've not only met most of our targets this year, but that satisfaction levels remain high - in fact, our satisfaction rates are among the best in the sector.

We're really pleased to hear so much positive feedback about how we treat our customers. As you'd expect from a responsible landlord, all our homes meet the Decent Homes Standard and we're fully compliant with health and safety requirements.

That said, we know we're not perfect and we don't always get things right first time. There are areas where we need to do better, and we're already working on them.

We're committed to listening closely to your feedback, reviewing how we work, and making changes where they're needed. Every comment you share helps us focus on what matters most - making sure you feel safe, supported, and happy in your home. ”

Sue Lakin, Deputy Chief Executive and lead for operations

| Tenant Satisfaction Measure | Target set by Cottsway | Actual performance (and increase / decrease on 2023-24) | Cottsway quartile position |
|---|------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| Overall satisfaction | 78% | 85% (-2%) | Upper |
| Keeping properties in good repair | | | |
| Satisfaction with repairs in past 12 months | 80.0% | 87% (0) | Upper |
| Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair | 75.6% | 85% (+1%) | Upper |
| Satisfaction that the home is well- maintained | 77.8% | 86% (+1%) | Upper |
| Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard | 0.5% | 0% (+0.1%) | Upper |
| Repairs completed within target timescale - non-emergency Urgent: 5 working days Routine: 20 working days Non-routine: 90 calendar days (64 working days) | 81.3% | 69.9% (+5.1% increase) | Lower |
| Repairs completed within target timescale - emergency (Within 24 hours) | 94.8% | 100% (+0.01%) | Upper |
| Maintaining building safety | | | |
| Satisfaction that the home is safe | 82.1% | 89% (0) | Upper |
| Gas safety checks | 100% | 100% (0) | Upper |
| Fire safety checks | 100% | 100% (0) | Upper |
| Asbestos safety checks | 100% | 100% (0) | Upper |
| Water safety checks | 100% | 100% (0) | Upper |
| Lift safety checks | 100% | 100% (0) | Upper |

| Tenant Satisfaction Measure | Target set by Cottsway | Actual performance (and increase / decrease on 2023-24) | Cottsway quartile position |
|---|--|--|----------------------------|
| Respectful and helpful engagement | | | |
| Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them | 67.3% | 74% (-5%) | Upper |
| Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them | 76.6% | 85% (+1%) | Upper |
| Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect | 83.3% | 88% (-2%) | Upper |
| Effective complaints handling | | | |
| Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling of complaints | 40% | 42% (-10.9%) | Median |
| Complaints relative to size of landlord (per 1,000 homes) | No target (monitored across the year) | 54.5 (Stage 1) (+46.4%) | Lower |
| | | 5.6 (Stage 2) (+3.9) | Lower |
| Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales | 96.8% (Stage 1) | 100% (Stage 1) (+2%) | Upper |
| | 97% (Stage 2) | 100% (Stage 2) (0) | Upper |
| Number of formal complaints (to Housing Ombudsman) | No target set (monitored across the year) | 5 (0) | N/A |
| Responsible neighbourhood management | | | |
| Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well- maintained | 72% | 68% (-7%) | Median |
| Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods | 71.1% | 77% (-1%) | Upper |
| Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling anti-social behaviour | 64% | 69% (-5%) | Median |
| Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord (opened per 1,000 homes) | 49.9 | 13.8 (72 cases) (-33.1%) | Upper |
| Number of cases that involve hate incidents (per 1,000 homes) | No target (monitored across the year) | 0.4 (2 cases) (-0.5) | N/A |

What we're doing to address issues

In the areas where we were below target:

Repairs completed within target timescale – non-emergency:

We completed all emergency repairs and 81% of urgent repairs on time, but we fell short of our target for non-emergency repairs overall. These types of repairs have varying timescales for completion - from urgent (5 working days) and routine (20 working days) through to non-routine (90 calendar days / 64 working days).

Over the past year, we've worked hard to not only keep repair costs under control but also to make sure non-emergency repairs are completed more quickly. We're pleased to share that things are moving in the right direction - in April 2024, 59% of repairs were completed within our target timescales, and by March 2025 that had risen to 73%.

For the year as a whole, 70% were carried out within the target timescale, with an average of 20 days to complete non-emergency repairs. We're working to improve this further, while controlling costs.

Complaints relative to landlord size:

We actively encourage customer feedback and take complaints seriously. In line with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, we changed our complaints process this year. We removed the 'informal stage' and this led to an increase in the number of formal complaints recorded. However, the number of complaints reaching the second stage of our process is low, especially compared to similar landlords. We responded to all complaints within the timescales set out in the Ombudsman's Code.

Satisfaction with communal areas:

Our full-year results were slightly below target, and we've worked with contractors throughout the year to address underperformance and continue to monitor service quality. We also engage with customers to understand their concerns and work with service providers to resolve issues, whether related to cleaning frequency, repairs, grounds maintenance or other matters.



Why Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) cases have decreased since last year

We've made some changes this year to how we record and respond to reports of ASB. One of the key improvements is making it clearer what counts as ASB, and what falls under general tenancy or neighbourhood issues. This helps us to be open and honest about what we can and can't deal with as your landlord, so you know what to expect when you contact us.

We're also developing a new Good Neighbourhood Management Policy. This will cover lower-level or seasonal issues that don't meet the threshold for ASB but can still affect everyday life. The aim is to support safe, welcoming communities where everyone - our customers and visitors alike - plays their part by showing respect, tolerance, and consideration for their neighbours.



Our values say:

We see Cottsway as a partnership between customers and staff and key stakeholders.

Our Corporate Plan says:

People are central to our success whether they are customers, staff, or stakeholders - without their support and satisfaction we will not succeed. Providing efficient and effective routes for our customers to interact with us will help underpin delivery of services in a constantly changing world. Our aim is to continue our digital journey and to make more services and information available for our customers, and to enable our staff to work as flexibly and effectively as possible.

The Together with Tenants Charter says:

Housing associations will treat all residents with respect in all of their interactions. Relationships between residents and housing associations will be based on openness, honesty and transparency.

Residents will receive clear, accessible and timely information from their housing association on the issues that matter to them, including important information about their homes and local community, how the organisation is working to address problems, how the organisation is run, and information about performance on key issues.



Staying connected with you

Over the past year, our Customer Services team handled almost 100,000 enquiries - including calls, emails, web chats, and social media messages.



66,017
calls answered



Average time to answer calls:
105 seconds



27,337 emails received



3,800 online forms received



1,878 web chats



611 letters received

Some of the things we've done to keep you updated:

- Shared quarterly performance and complaints updates on our website, including what we've learned and improved.
- Sent out our 'Homepage' e-zine twice a year with service updates and support information.
- Published regular community e-zines and important updates, like how to register for our customer portal and take part in feedback surveys.
- Sent letters with key information about your home, such as rent reviews and service charges.
- Posted 382 updates across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn.
- Kept our website clear and up to date, and published satisfaction and performance information.
- Run online workshops to support new customers moving into their homes.



88% agree we treat you fairly and with respect

4.7% above target
-2% on 2023-24
and upper quartile compared to peers

Access to services online

73% of our customers use online services - and 87% are happy with what we offer.

Since launching our My Cottsway customer portal in May 2023, over 2,100 customers have signed up - with a 67% increase during the past year. The portal lets you check your rent balance, make payments, request repairs, and update your details. Over 1,000 people use it every month.

Our website was refreshed in August 2023 and had over 95,000 visits last year, with popular pages including 'I want to buy', 'Find a property', and 'Contact us'.

We know not everyone is online, so we still send letters when needed and offer printed info on request. Our phone lines are open weekdays, with emergency support available out of hours.



85% satisfied we keep you informed about things that matter to you

over 8% above target
+1 on 2023-24
and upper quartile compared to peers



The Together with Tenants Charter says:

Views from residents will be sought and valued and this information will be used to inform decisions. Every individual resident will feel listened to by their housing association on the issues that matter to them and can speak without fear.

Collectively, residents will work in partnership with their housing association to independently scrutinise and hold their housing association to account for the decisions that affect the quality of their homes and services.

Your voice matters

We regularly ask for feedback through surveys and consultations to help us improve - and we share updates on what's changed as a result.

As Vanda explained in her introduction, our Scrutiny Group (above) works closely with us to make sure customer views are heard. We also have dedicated groups and committees involving staff, Board Members and Scrutiny Group members that monitor customer-related areas like safety compliance, satisfaction, feedback and complaints - helping us stay focused on what matters most to you.

Thousands of you have been part of surveys and consultations we've held this year:

- Over 1,000 for TSM phone surveys to tell us what you think of us.
- Another 1,000+ of you for 'transactional' surveys after you received a service from us - for example, when you've requested a repair, made a complaint, or reported ASB, to tell us how we'd done.
- Almost 3,500 responses to surveys about services provided, policy reviews and consultations.
- Nearly 200 votes via the closed Facebook group to tell us who you'd like Community Fund grants to go to.



74% agree we listen to your views and act upon them

6.7% above target
-5% on 2023-24

and upper quartile compared to peers

Complaints, feedback and service improvements

We fully support the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code, which became law in April 2024. We review our performance against it and regularly ask for your feedback to help us improve.

While we aim to get things right first time, we know that sometimes we fall short. We actively encourage feedback, and you can share your views or make a complaint through our website, by phone, email, social media, letter, or in person.

We listen to and act on every piece of feedback or complaint we receive. This information is shared widely across our organisation - from Board to staff level - to support learning and improvement. When changes are needed, we make them.

Changes to the complaints process this year

In line with the Complaint Handling Code, we’ve removed the ‘informal resolution’ stage from our complaints process. As a result of changes made, formal complaints rose by 29% compared to 2023–24.

Of the 313 formal complaints investigated, 91% were resolved at Stage 1, with 9% moving to Stage 2 – details of what these stages mean are included in the table below.

| Our complaints process | 2024-25 |
|---|---------|
| Feedback/service request Logged and shared with the relevant service manager as soon as a customer gets in touch. If unresolved, it becomes a Stage 1 complaint. | 285 |
| Stage 1 Customer informed who has taken on their case and we aim to resolve the issue within 10 working days. If new concerns are raised during this time, we try to look at these as part of the same review. Where this causes unreasonable delays, we log these as new complaints. If a customer is not satisfied, they can request an escalation within 5 days. | 284 |
| Stage 2 A senior manager reviews the case and responds within 20 working days with a detailed outcome. | 29 |



The Together with Tenants Charter says:

Residents will have simple and accessible routes for raising issues, making complaints and seeking redress. Residents will receive timely advice and support when things go wrong.



99.25% of our complaints responded to within target timescales

Most complaints were answered on time. In a few Stage 1 cases, we agreed longer timeframes and kept customers updated.

What happens if we can't resolve a complaint

If we can't sort out a problem together, we make sure you know you can take it to the Housing Ombudsman. This year, they looked at five of our cases and in four, they agreed we'd acted fairly (no maladministration).

In one case, they found we'd got it wrong (maladministration). This was raised in 2023 and the customer had complained about damp and mould, and felt we hadn't escalated the complaint and responded quickly enough. We stayed in contact with this customer throughout their appeal, arranged specialist repairs, apologised for the delay, and paid £725 in compensation for any inconvenience.

We're continuing to monitor our complaints process with the aim of improving customer satisfaction.

We publish quarterly updates on what we've learned from customer feedback. Our team also shares insights from calls to help improve services and support a culture of continuous learning.

Just a few examples of improvements made this year following customer feedback:

- **Missed callbacks:** We now run regular reports to flag to service managers to follow up on missed calls.
- **End-of-tenancy recharges:** We've added more detail to tenancy packs and letters about what we expect to be removed from a home.
- **Assisted gardening scheme applications:** We now ask customers if gardens are accessible so contractors can carry out work, even if they're not home.
- **Repair texts:** Messages now include the repair type (e.g. plumbing repair, heating repair etc) so customers know what we're coming to fix.
- **Paint packs:** Customers can now choose to have paint packs delivered directly to their home, instead of having to pick up from collection points.
- **Rent statements:** We've amended the wording on our rent statements so it's clearer if a customer's account is in credit or arrears.



42% satisfied with our approach to handling complaints

2% above target
-10.9% on 2023-24
and median quartile compared to peers



Supporting you

We have teams providing welfare and tenancy support, money and benefits advice and we help customers to access training, coaching and education.



400+ given tenancy support to help you continue living in your homes.



73 received pre-tenancy support preparing you for successful tenancies before you moved in.



£64,000 provided to Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire for a free, independent debt and welfare advice service open to all of you.



60 received training, education or help back into employment.

Promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion



The Together with Tenants Charter says:

Housing associations will be inclusive organisations which seek views from all groups. Approaches to resident involvement will be inclusive by engaging with residents from a range of backgrounds and experiences. Consultations with residents will include outreach to under-represented communities, including through targeted communications.

We're committed to making our services fair and accessible for everyone. This year, we've:

- Offered multiple ways to access services, including language translation and an emergency service out of office hours.
- Started work to make our key documents more accessible.
- Tracked customer satisfaction across different demographic groups - including age, disability status, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation - to ensure that no group experiences lower satisfaction levels than others. This helps us identify and address any disparities, promoting fairness and inclusivity in our services.
- Monitored the diversity of our staff and Board to reflect our communities.
- Listened to your views through regular surveys and consultations.
- Supported vulnerable customers with services like assisted decorating, welfare advice, and an 'Easy Move' scheme.
- Funded community grants for inclusive projects in education, skills, and local improvements.

We've also developed a new EDI policy to ensure:

- Our services are easy to access and meet the needs of all communities.
- Fair treatment for staff and job applicants.
- Contractors and partners share our commitment to inclusion.



See our full EDI report for 2024-25:
www.cottsway.co.uk/EDI

Supporting your communities



Our values say:

We are part of, and value, the communities in which we work.

Our dedicated Communities Team helps create opportunities, offers welfare support, and works to make a real difference.

This year, we've:

- Continued to offer free space at our Witney office for West Oxfordshire Citizens Advice, helping people access confidential support on issues like debt, housing, benefits, and employment. This is in addition to funding a debt and welfare advice service available to all customers.
- Provided rent-free space for the Witney and West Oxfordshire Foodbank and made 357 referrals to support those in need.
- Supported younger people living in our homes by partnering with Travis Perkins Managed Services (one of our suppliers) and Oxfordshire Youth to help them gain leadership skills. We've also worked with a local law firm to provide the opportunity for young people interested in studying law to gain work experience.
- Provided free coaching to 8 customers facing work changes and 10 free spaces on a Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England training course.
- Worked with West Oxfordshire District Council and Aspire charity on the 'Our house' project to provide 3 shared homes and support for 7 younger people in housing need.
- Held 11 community clear-up days with free skips and staff volunteers.
- Helped 40 households through our furniture re-use scheme - saving customers over £16,400, diverting more than five tonnes of items from landfill and reducing emissions. The scheme won a 'Better Together' award from Travis Perkins Managed Services (TPMS) in March 2025.
- Boosted biodiversity with wildflower planting and bird/bat boxes on communal land.



Helping with mental health support in communities

Karen completed the MHFA England training course, funded by our partners TPMS, after seeing it advertised in one of our customer ezines.

“ I now feel I can spot the signs and signals in regard to mental health conditions, listen non-judgementally and encourage someone to seek further help should they need it. I also have a much better knowledge of what wording to use within certain situations - and the impact words can have - and am more confident within myself and more willing to open up and accept help when needed. I can't thank Cottsway enough for the opportunity to take part, it was absolutely fantastic! ”

Grants support

We've offered £30,000 via our Cottsway Community Fund to projects, groups and events that benefit wider communities, and to support our customers with training and education. Funding went to 14 projects and four people, including:

- **APCAM (Assisting Parents with Children with Mental Health):** £2,160 for new equipment for their 'WeGame Group' which offers a supervised, no-pressure environment where young people can feel secure and confident.
- **Cassington Parish Council:** £2,500 towards reinstating and upgrading the Cassington play area.
- **Leafield Pre-school:** £1,390 towards a more secure entry gate.
- **Leafield Primary School:** £1,140 to help build a designated, inclusive and accessible gardening and outdoor learning area for the children.
- **North Leigh Football Club:** £2,420 to support their under 11s team by providing new football kit, equipment and the opportunity to play in an away tournament.
- **The Wychwoods Day Centre:** £1,905 towards running their day care group which offers elderly people the chance to meet and socialise over a home cooked lunch and activities.
- **Carterton Community College:** £863 towards running a summer holiday activities club for children eligible for free school meals, in care or refugees in Carterton and the surrounding area.
- **Changing Life:** £2,500 towards a programme run by the community interest company to support women who are unemployed or on a low income and have experienced trauma.
- **Home-Start Oxford:** £2,500 to support wellbeing parent and toddler groups in Witney, connecting parents and children through free sessions which help reduce isolation and encourage interaction.
- **Oxfordshire Play Association:** £2,500 to help provide a series of free play and activity days for children and their families at multiple venues across West Oxfordshire held over the summer.
- **The Northmoor Community Trust:** £2,500 towards regenerating a former play area and land near the village hall into somewhere for the whole community to gather.
- **Thomas Gifford Trust:** £2,345 to help fund a dedicated youth worker to organise a weekly youth club in Charlbury and enable young people to have their voices heard.
- **Yellow Submarine:** £2,420 to support an evening club at their café in West Oxfordshire for adults with learning difficulties to help them develop independent living and social skills.



Our impact

We use the HACT social value insight tool to track the impact of our work to see how much value we're adding to the community. This year, we delivered just over £1.5m in social value – from community clean-ups and pre-tenancy support to tackling homelessness and funding free debt advice through Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire.



77% satisfied that we make a positive contribution to neighbourhoods

5.9% above target
-1% on 2023-24

and upper quartile compared to peers

Our colleagues have gone the extra mile

Our volunteer staff Charity Committee fundraise for a different chosen charity each year and APCAM was the chosen charity for this year.

The committee raised £8,000 for APCAM with events such as raffles, quiz nights and cake sales, supported by Cottsway colleagues who dug deep to donate.

Lauren Ridley, Chair of Trustees and volunteer parent support worker at APCAM, which is based in Carterton, West Oxfordshire, explained that the charity has plugged a gap to provide a safe space for children who have mental health struggles, as well as their parents. She told us:

“Without the support of local organisations, individuals and grants, we wouldn’t be able to continue running. The £8,000 raised by Cottsway staff will enable us to run 200 one-to-one sessions, equivalent to supporting eight more young people for a whole year - this is fantastic, and we are extremely grateful to everyone at Cottsway.”





Our values say:

We will do all we can to provide our customers with decent homes from which they can enhance their lives.

Our Corporate Plan says:

The properties we build and maintain are key to the wellbeing of our customers and their families. Energy efficiency and safety are at the forefront of our plans to ensure we support our customers as much as possible in this difficult economic climate. We will continue to work with our local authority partners to ensure we deliver the right properties to meet the needs of their areas.

The Together with Tenants Charter says:

Residents can expect their homes to be good quality, well maintained, safe and well managed.



86% satisfied that home is well maintained

8.2% above target
+1% on 2023-24
and upper quartile compared to peers



89% satisfied that home is safe

6.9% above target
no change on 2023-24
and upper quartile compared to peers



Safe, quality homes for you

We have a wide range of homes - some dating back to the 18th century - including houses, flats and bungalows. We work hard to ensure they are safe, well-maintained, and up to standard, and we have an in-house team of skilled tradespeople as well as trusted contractors to help us do this.

More than three quarters of our rented homes are for social rent, which is around half the cost (50-60%) of renting on the open market - a big saving for our customers. The rest are at affordable rent, which is still about 20% cheaper than private rents.

This year, we've:

- Invested £19.1m to repair and maintain your homes. This is £6m more than the previous year, with more money spent on energy efficiency improvements and a major window replacement project, as well as dealing with more requests for repairs.
- Carried out essential checks for gas, electricity, fire safety, lifts, water, and asbestos - all our homes meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard.
- Responded to all emergency repairs within our target timescale of 24 hours.
- Continued with a planned programme of works to replace older kitchens, bathrooms and boilers, with energy efficient alternatives wherever possible.
- Invested over £354,000 on home adaptations, in addition to over £492,000 of Disabled Facilities Grant funding from West Oxfordshire District Council, to support more customers to live independently.
- Sped up responsive repairs, reducing the average response time from 24 to 20 days, even as demand has grown.



Helping Dianne to live more independently

Dianne has extended disabilities and was supported in moving to a bungalow in Witney - but while her new home was more suitable for her needs, it still had some challenges.

Standard bathroom facilities were not accessible for her, and as a mobility wheelchair user, different ground levels made it difficult getting out of her home.

With over £9,500 from the council's DFG scheme and nearly £2,000 from us, we installed an accessible shower and created a level-access route to her garden. Dianne told us:

“I'm now able to get out of and into my home using my wheelchair and being able to sit down and shower means so much to me. I know most people take it for granted, but these little things are big for me and my family. It has made life so much easier for me, it allows me to maintain my independence and also means my home is future-proofed. I am so happy.”



Repairs and maintenance: Where the money's been spent

Responsive repairs (emergency and non-emergency) and void

£4.8m

Day-to-day repairs requested by customers and repairs to empty properties between tenancies.


Planned, component replacement and cyclical maintenance

£14.3m


Planned upgrades to ensure homes are kept in good condition - including new kitchens and bathrooms, energy-saving improvements, and a major window replacement project this year.

**Total:
£19.1m**







 **85%** satisfied with the time taken to complete their most recent repair

9.4% above target +1% on 2023-24 and upper quartile compared to peers




 **87%** satisfied with repairs carried out in the last 12 months

7% above target no change on 2023-24 and upper quartile compared to peers






Repairs summary

| | 2024-25 | 2023-24 |
|---|----------------|----------------|
|  Number of responsive repairs | 17,586 | 13,102 |
|  Average time taken for responsive repairs | 20 days | 24 days |
|  Number of emergency repairs | 2,270 | 2,067 |
|  Emergency repairs carried out on time (within 24 hours) | 100% | 99.9% |

Planned maintenance summary

| | 2024-25 | 2023-24 |
|--|------------|------------|
|  Kitchens fitted | 252 | 251 |
|  Bathrooms fitted | 63 | 68 |
|  Empty homes repaired ready for people to move in | 238 | 380 |

Home safety checks (TSMs)

| | 2024-25 | 2023-24 |
|--|-------------|-------------|
|  Gas services | 100% | 100% |
|  Electrical safety checks | 100% | 100% |
|  Asbestos safety checks | 100% | 100% |
|  Water safety checks | 100% | 100% |
|  Lift safety checks | 100% | 100% |

Cutting carbon, reducing energy costs

We're committed to cutting carbon emissions and improving energy efficiency across our homes. It's a key goal in our Corporate Plan and supports the UK's net zero target.

We're making homes greener by:

- Upgrading older homes and building new ones to high energy standards.
- Installing energy-efficient kitchens, bathrooms, and boilers.
- Adding renewable energy where possible.

As well as reducing environmental impact, we hope this helps our customers save on energy bills.

Energy performance progress

Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) rate homes from A (most efficient) to G. Nationally, most homes are rated D or E - while 79.8% of our homes are already rated A-C. All new homes built this year were at least C-rated.

Our goal is for 95% of homes to be rated C or above by March 2028.

| EPC rating | 2024-25 | |
|---------------------------------------|----------|-------|
| Existing homes | EPC A-B: | 37% |
| | EPC C: | 42.8% |
| | EPC D-G: | 20.2% |
| New homes handed over during the year | EPC A-B: | 14.7% |
| | EPC B: | 62.8% |
| | EPC C: | 22.5% |



100% low-carbon home development completes

We've welcomed customers to 15 new affordable low-carbon homes in Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire.

All of the new homes, in Davies Road and Mosedale, are for social rent, which is significantly lower than market rent and the lowest type of rent we can charge. With sustainable features including air-source heating, solar roof panels, electric vehicle charging points and enhanced insulation, all of the homes have an EPC A rating.

The development was built on our behalf by Helix Partnership Homes. It was made possible with the support of £1.275m grant funding from Homes England, £580,500 developer funding secured in Section 106 contributions from Cotswold District Council, and a loan arrangement as part of a finance agreement between the Council and ourselves. Helix Group also provided construction finance to ensure the homes were completed quickly.

Improvements complete, more on the way

We completed work this year funded by a government grant, coupled with our own investment, to improve 148 of our least energy efficient homes.

We installed measures like solar panels, better insulation, air source heating, and improved ventilation. These steps have brought all of these homes up to EPC C rating.

Thanks to over £2m in new government funding that we've secured from the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund, plus our own investment, we'll be improving more than 200 additional homes by 2028 - making them warmer, greener, and more cost-efficient.

This year:

- New windows installed at 216 homes.
- Solar panels fitted at 89 more existing homes – over 1,300 homes now have these.
- 12 oil heating systems decommissioned and replaced with clean heating systems - leaving us with 41 to go.

Damp and mould - preparing for Awaab's Law

Awaab's Law is set to come into effect in October 2025, setting rules and timeframes for how landlords must deal with issues like damp and mould. This follows the tragic death of two-year-old Awaab Ishak, caused by prolonged exposure to damp and mould in his home in Rochdale.

This sad case has rightly drawn national attention to damp and mould, and we have continued to receive increasing reports this year.

Since the 2022 inquest, we've shared advice with customers and reviewed our procedures to meet required standards, assessing ourselves against Housing Ombudsman recommendations. We're now working to make sure we fully meet the requirements of Awaab's Law.



More affordable homes delivered, more to come

With over 25,000 people on waiting lists in the areas we serve, we're committed to working with partner agencies to build more affordable homes. This year, we've delivered 129 new homes (one above target) bringing us to nearly 5,800 homes in total. We're on track to reach our goal of 6,000+ homes in 2026.

We:

- Completed homes in Swindon and Witney, as well as in Moreton-in-Marsh.
- Continued building in East Carterton and Swindon.
- Started working with partners on more new homes in Chipping Norton, Woodstock, Brockworth, Leckhampton, Malmesbury and Swindon.



£33.9m invested in providing more new affordable homes

Built **129**
new homes



49 for affordable rent
47 for social rent
33 for low-cost home ownership



Completed
40 low-cost home ownership sales (nearly 50% above our target of 27)

New homes for Swindon

We took handover this year of the first of 53 new homes at Avon Rise, Malmesbury, Swindon. Being built for us by Bloor Homes South West, there will be 32 homes for affordable rent and 21 for shared ownership when work completes in 2027.





88% of new low-cost home ownership movers satisfied with the quality of their home



81% satisfied with developer performance

up from 57% in 2023-24 following work with partner agencies to try to improve this

Modern homes replacing outdated schemes

We've continued work to transform older independent living schemes in West Oxfordshire into modern, energy-efficient homes for rent. St Marys Court in Witney was completed in September 2024, offering 30 new apartments for people aged 55 and over. Work is also under way at other schemes in Woodstock and Chipping Norton.

“We are delighted to have worked with Cottsway once again to deliver another sustainable affordable housing project. We are proud to work with housing associations like Cottsway to build affordable housing and I wish all the new residents the very best in their new homes.”

Dominic Capaldi, Contracts Manager for EG Carter & Co Ltd



Find out more about the latest new affordable homes we've provided, information on development expenditure and who our Development Team are:
www.cottsway.co.uk/developinghomes



Our values say:

We are open and transparent about how we do business.
We are here for the long term.

Our Corporate Plan says:

Making sure we are financially strong and delivering value for money is critical to us being able to serve our customers and maintain our homes properly. To ensure this happens we will set ourselves targets to support long-term growth, alongside delivery of efficient and effective day-to-day operations.

Our G1 for Governance and V1 for Viability ratings from the Regulator of Social Housing show that we're well run and financially sound. We're yet to have our first Consumer regulation inspection and will let you know the outcome once this has happened.

Most of our income comes from rent, which helps us manage, maintain, and improve homes. Like all housing associations, we review rents each year and follow government guidelines. We:

- Reinvest any surplus we make into maintaining homes, improving services, and building more affordable housing.
- Operate within a manageable and cost-effective distance of our offices in Witney, West Oxfordshire, to provide efficient services and deliver the best value for money.

We've increased our income (turnover) this year by delivering more homes and adjusting rents in line with Government guidance. At the same time, we've faced rising costs due to inflation, higher demand for repairs, and maintaining high service standards.

Our focus remains clear: delivering great services and building more affordable homes for people who need them.



Where the money goes in summary

| | 2024-25 | 2023-24 | 2022-23 |
|--------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Turnover | £48.95m | £45.53m | £39.46m |
| Annual expenditure | £30.84m | £29.06m | £25.99m |

Turnover Most of our income comes from rent.
We collected 99.73% of rent from rented properties.

Our total income from lettings (tenanted and shared ownership properties) was £42.2m. Other income comes from service charges and proceeds from the sale of shared ownership properties.

Expenditure Our income paid for:

- **£19.1m** of repairs and maintenance to your homes.
- **£9.71m** for all management and service charge costs.

At the end of this year we had 184 staff, including a repairs team of 54 trades operatives.

Surplus After-interest, we had a **cash surplus of £9.71m to reinvest**

We used this alongside other available funds (loans and grants) to build more affordable homes.

Investments **£33.9m** invested in providing more new affordable homes.

Directors' remuneration and management costs

The following three measures are set by the Regulator and these tell you about the money we pay to directors in return for their work (remuneration), and what our management costs are compared to the number of homes we have.

'Management costs' covers everything we do, from service charges and repairs and maintenance through to investing in new homes and community and neighbourhood services, and more.

| Measure | Annual 2024-25 |
|--|--------------------|
| Remuneration payable to the highest paid director, relative to the size of the landlord | £30.60 per home |
| Aggregate amount of remuneration paid to the directors, relative to the size of the landlord | £101.40 per home |
| Management costs relative to the size for the landlord | £1,550.70 per home |

In the future, we'll also compare our costs to those of similar-sized housing providers when there is information available for us to do this.

Find our full audited accounts at:
www.cottsway.co.uk/publications

Looking to the future

We'll carefully manage our budgets and finances to ensure value for money so that we can maintain and - wherever possible - improve services and support available to you, while building more homes for those who need them.

We know the cost of living is still making things tough for you. Keeping a roof over your head is an absolute priority for us all and that's why we will continue to focus on supporting you to do this, however we can.

We'll also carry on investing in our existing homes to make sure they're to a high standard. Our future homes will be built close to where we already work, helping us to be efficient and effective when something needs to be fixed, maintained or checked for safety.

We'll keep a close eye on how we're doing - both in our day-to-day operations and financially - using Tenant Satisfaction Measures and other key indicators. We'll continue to compare ourselves to similar-sized organisations, aiming to meet or exceed sector averages for satisfaction benchmarks. If we don't meet a target, we'll take action to improve.

However, we know that real improvement comes from listening to you. That's why we'll continue to seek your views and make changes where needed. We'll keep working closely with our customer Scrutiny Group and act on their recommendations to make sure your voice shapes the way we work.

We're ready for future changes in law or regulations - always making sure we stay compliant and focused on delivering safe, high-quality homes.



View our Corporate Plan and full list of aims from 2023-28:
www.cottsway.co.uk/publications

Our ambitions for the coming years

During the lifetime of our Corporate Plan, which runs to March 2028, some of our aims include:

Digital improvements



Working to make 80% of everyday transactions digital, including further improvements to our My Cottsway portal so you can access more services online.

Supporting communities



Supporting local communities and groups with our grant packages by investing up to £150,000 between 2023-2028.

Continuing support of Citizens Advice debt advisory services and Witney and West Oxfordshire Foodbank by providing facilities for their operations.

Improving homes and energy efficiency



Focusing on energy efficiency and ensure that 95% of our properties are at least EPC C-rated by 2028, to help with customers' energy costs.

Investing £63m in maintaining homes including delivering 1,076 new kitchens and 417 new bathrooms by 2028.

When installing or replacing parts of a home, going beyond building regulations to improve energy efficiency and keep costs down for customers.

Replacing all our remaining oil-fired heating systems with more sustainable solutions by March 2028.

Investing in homes



Investing around £63 million in existing homes by 2028 to keep them safe, energy-efficient, and up to Government standards.

Investing over £150 million to deliver 833 new homes by 2028, working with existing and new partners to make this happen.



Get in touch

If you're a customer who would like to get involved or you have any ideas about how Cottsway can improve, or you're a business interested in working with us, we would love to hear from you!

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Have you signed up to My Cottsway?

You can use our customer portal to pay and check your rent online, request some routine repairs and check details of repairs you have previously asked for, update your details and more. Manage your tenancy conveniently, at a time that suits you. Register for My Cottsway and download the app at www.cottsway.co.uk/mycottsway

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