



Improving our approach

We're making steps to improve equality, diversity, and inclusion. Find out more inside...



Grounds Maintenance

Introducing our new contractors. Find out which company will be operating in your area.



Damp and mould

The latest on what we're doing to combat damp, mould and condensation in your homes.



A note from our Chair

In my last Spotlight article, I told you about the additional investments we have made both in HomeFix, our in-house repairs and maintenance service, and in responding to reports of damp and mould. These areas of our customer service continue to be a high priority for your board. Although we are pleased the backlog of repairs is beginning to reduce, we know there is still work to do. Similarly, with damp and mould, whilst cases are now much fewer, we are conscious of the importance of managing the risk of this type of problem recurring next winter. We are actively looking for ways to improve things and are committed to doing what it takes to deliver a great service.

We have also recently approved a longer-term plan to invest in the fabric of our homes. This includes improvements in energy efficiency to reduce the cost of keeping them warm. This will involve a multi-million-pound commitment each year over the next decade or so. More information about our asset management strategy can be found on the next page.

As always, my Board colleagues and I greatly value your feedback about our service and plans for future investment. Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to share their views and, particularly,



to the members of the new customer repairs taskforce. By the time you read this, I expect their recommendations will have been considered by the board and actions will be in progress.

Finally, in response to your feedback about grounds maintenance, we have appointed new contractors. Find out more about them on pages 6 and 7. I hope they will provide the reliable, quality service that you are entitled to expect. Do let us know how they are doing.

Simon Hardwick,

Saxon Weald's Chair of the Board

Embracing our differences

Equality, diversity, and inclusion are really important to us, both as a service provider and as an employer. So, over the coming months, we'll be reviewing our services to make sure they are fair and accessible.

So, what do these terms mean?

- **Equality:** making sure everyone can access the same opportunities
- **Diversity:** recognising and appreciating the differences between people and valuing the different ideas and perspectives this brings
- **Inclusion:** creating an environment where everyone feels welcome and valued



As part of our review, we'll also be asking for your views on whether our services meet your needs and whether you think we are an inclusive landlord. Your feedback will help shape what we do. Look out for news of our progress in future editions of Spotlight.

Investing in homes

Investing in our homes is one of our key priorities. With significant spending planned for the next three years, our new asset management strategy details how we will maintain and manage our properties. The strategy has six main themes:



1. **Safe, warm, and weathertight homes** – we'll invest in the external fabric of buildings (e.g. roofs, windows and doors) to ensure that they are in good condition.
2. **Energy performance** – We want to make homes more affordable to live in and are working to achieve an energy efficiency rating of EPC band C across all our properties by 2029. Currently only 54% of our homes meet this standard, so this is a challenging target.
3. **Active asset management** – this means planning maintenance work and improvements to keep homes in a good condition, rather than waiting until something fails before we take action.
4. **Property safety** – we will follow robust property compliance processes (such as fire risk assessments and legionella testing) to ensure your homes are safe and secure.
5. **Property disposal** – we will look to sell a small number of homes that would be excessively costly to bring up to modern standards, or are in remote geographical areas. We will use this money towards building new homes, replacing those lost with properties of a better standard.
6. **Customer engagement** – we will work with customers to develop a property standard which sets out what you can expect in terms of the quality of your home.

Keep an eye out for updates and progress in future editions of Spotlight and on our website.

The upside of downsizing

Is it time for you or someone you know to make the move to a smaller home? It could be a bereavement or change of job that makes the thought of moving more appealing. You could be struggling to maintain a larger home or want to be closer to loved ones. Whatever the reason, here are some of the benefits of moving to a smaller property:

To save money - smaller properties are generally cheaper to run, as you can typically expect lower rent, council tax and energy bills. If you have been assessed as having one or more spare bedrooms in your current home, you could also save the cost of bedroom tax.

To be closer to family or friends - as life changes, our friends and family often move away, and you may find yourself feeling more isolated. A move to a smaller home in an area closer to them could have real benefits to your wellbeing.

To make life a little easier - by moving into a smaller property, it can be a lot easier to manage household tasks. Our retirement and extra care schemes offer a sense of community, while having a bit of support from our scheme managers should you need it.

Interested in downsizing? Contact us to discuss your options further.



Quality of repairs review

At the beginning of the year, we launched our first Task and Finish group. This followed the success of our 'quality of repairs' event held in December. The group consists of six residents who have been working together to scrutinise the quality of repairs carried out by our HomeFix team.

Meeting every fortnight, they have so far interviewed a member of HomeFix, studied statistics, and looked at examples of repairs in greater depth. They are now busy working on a report with their recommendations, which will go to Board for review.

We've had great feedback so far and would like to say a huge thank you to the residents involved. Your voices will help us to improve our services going forward.



Help shape our services

Your input and feedback play an essential part in helping us shape our processes and decisions. Therefore, we're always looking for new ways for you to get involved and share your views. To make sure we're being inclusive, we offer a variety of different ways for you to have your say. These include telephone interviews, surveys, consultations and more.

If you're keen to get involved, fill out the form on our website and we'll be in touch when opportunities arise: www.saxonweald.com/your-voice/getting-involved.

Find out more in the YourVoice leaflet on our website: www.saxonweald.com/storage/downloads/your_voice_leaflet-1680614279.pdf



To store, or not to store...

We understand that space can be an issue for many households. This means areas such as sheds and outbuildings end up being used to store almost anything and everything. However, these structures are not insulated and tend to get cold, so some items may become damp or smelly. It is therefore important to consider what is appropriate to store in these areas.

Items suitable to store outside include:

- ✓ Gardening equipment
- ✓ Garden furniture
- ✓ Outdoor toys

Items that are better kept inside:

- ✗ Clothing and bedding
- ✗ Household electrical items
- ✗ Paperwork and valuables



Tackling mould and condensation

Since the beginning of the year, around 350 customers have reported problems with mould or condensation. To address this, we've so far visited close to 200 homes to clean and treat the affected areas. Our operatives have also used these visits to assess further work required, such as fitting new extractor fans or improving insulation.

Our team of surveyors have also been visiting homes where problems are more severe. We will be carrying out a big programme of repair jobs over the summer and hope this means customers will experience fewer problems in the winter.

For advice on tackling condensation, head over to our website: www.saxonweald.com/condensation. If you have mould or a more severe problem in your home, please get in touch by emailing hello@saxonweald.com.



Gas and electricity contract FAQs

Earlier this year, we sent out estimates for communal service charge increases. We received a few questions in response, and have included answers to some of these below.

How has the latest contract with a supplier been negotiated?

We appointed an independent utility broker to secure utility costs on our behalf, as they have the skills to ensure the best deal. Our Executive Team then reviewed the submissions to ensure value for money for our customers.

Have the utility costs been overestimated?

No, we don't believe so. We have used historic usage amounts, combined with the new contract rate and standing charge, to give us the estimated cost for 2023/24.

Was the best possible price achieved?

Yes, in view of the limited options that were available at the time.

Is there any Government assistance available?

The government has announced that the Energy Bills

Discount Scheme for non-domestic supplies will apply a small discount to bills for 2023/24. We don't yet know how much this will be, but any discount will be passed on to residents.

Were the costs for 2022/23 underestimated?

Unfortunately, it's likely that the actual costs for 2022/23 will be much higher than the estimated amount, due to the significant increase in prices. We will be sending out details of actual costs in September.

Will communal energy prices fall and, if so, has this been considered?

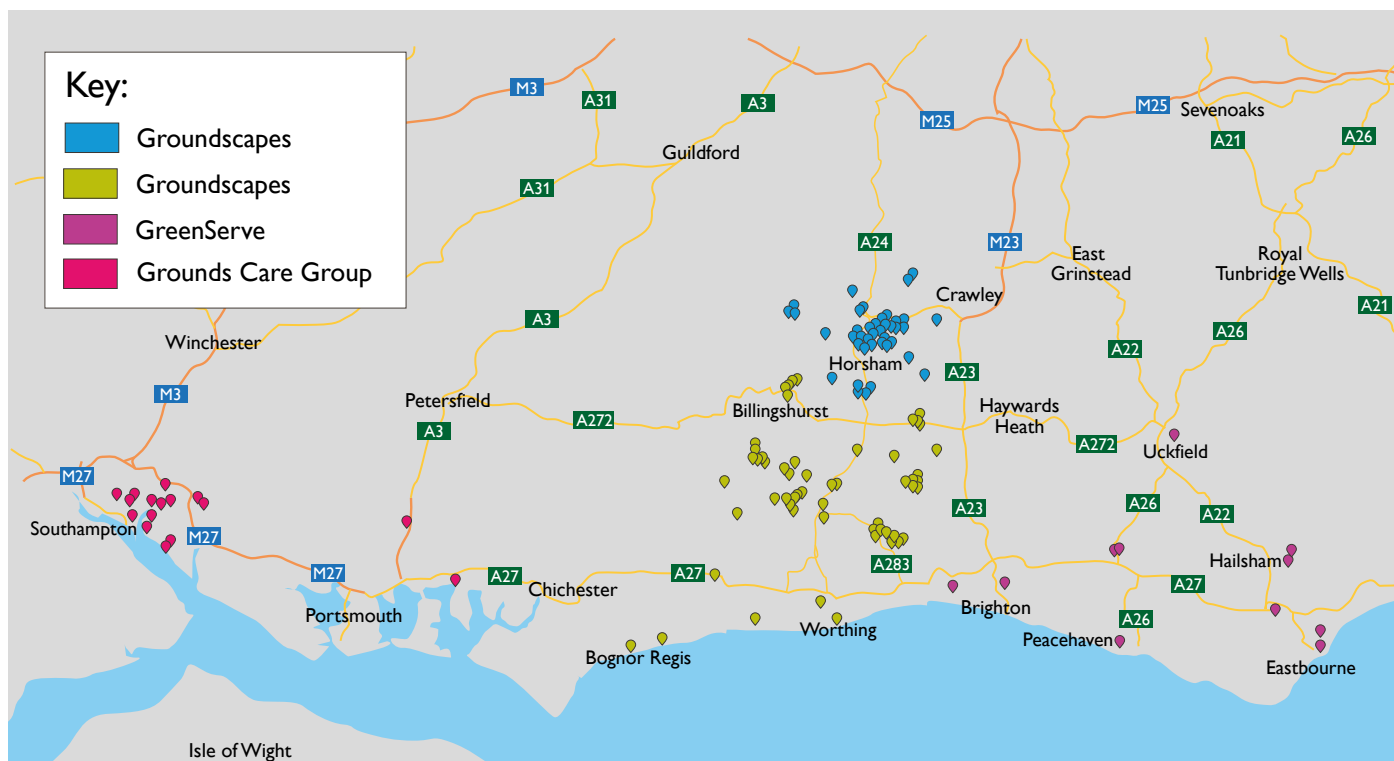
The price will not fall for electricity in 2023/24 because we have fixed the contract price for 12 months. We have fixed gas for six months and will go out to tender for the second half of the year shortly. Should gas prices fall any savings will be reflected in the actual charges at the end of the year.



Introducing our new grounds maintenance contractors

On 2 May 2023, our new grounds maintenance contractors took over from idverde. These contractors include Groundscapes, GreenServe and Grounds Care Group. We're also pleased to introduce Connick Tree Care, who will oversee all of our tree maintenance.

Here's a map of the areas they will be covering:



Groundscapes

Groundscapes have taken over our sites in the Horsham District and across West Sussex. Groundscapes' sister company, Cleanscapes, already handle our cleaning services, so we hold great confidence in their quality of work.

"Groundscapes are delighted to be appointed as the new grounds maintenance contractor for Saxon Weald, and we look forward to working closely with you and your customers to ensure the outside spaces in your communities are well maintained for everyone to enjoy".



GreenServe

GreenServe will be taking care of our sites in East Sussex. Established in 1982, they are a family run commercial grounds maintenance company operating out of Worthing in West Sussex. They currently support some of the largest managing agents in the country, in addition to maintaining single property businesses and organisations.

"We pride ourselves on a hands-on approach and our customer service. We like to keep all the property and facility managers we work with well informed."



Grounds Care Group

Grounds Care Group have taken over our sites in Hampshire. Established in 2008, Grounds Care Group provide services such as grounds maintenance, gritting, invasive weed removal and landscaping. They understand the importance of our grounds and are keen to help improve these areas to make them more enjoyable for everyone.

"If you see us onsite, please come and say 'Hello'. We look forward to working with you."



Connick Tree Care
Specialists in the Preservation and Maintenance of Trees

Connick Tree Care

Connick Tree Care have taken over the monitoring and maintenance of all Saxon Weald's communal trees. With over 35 years' experience, we are confident they will provide a quality service.

"We are delighted that Connick Tree Care has been awarded a new contract with Saxon Weald to provide tree surveying and tree maintenance services at their properties. Our teams of experienced and knowledgeable arborists are committed to producing high quality workmanship and providing excellent customer service."

We appreciate your patience as our new contractors get up to speed!

Keep it fun this summer

We all love getting outside in the summer, however, with more outdoor activity, there's more chance of annoying neighbours and seeing tensions rise. Here's a few tips to stay on the right side of your neighbours:

- ✗ Don't light your BBQ under a neighbour's window and consider which way the smoke will blow.
- ✓ Keep an eye on kids – while the sound of your children/grandchildren may be bliss to you, it could be driving someone else potty.
- ✓ Make sure your children know what is reasonable and fun, and don't allow it to become rowdy or intimidating.
- ✗ Don't have a bonfire in the daytime when people are out enjoying their gardens, have windows open or may have laundry drying.

Equally, if children are just playing, and it's a reasonable hour, then be tolerant. They are entitled to be outside, enjoying the fresh air and summer weather.



And remember, if you're having a BBQ or firepit – keep it safe:

- ✓ Ensure your BBQ is on level ground and away from anything that could catch fire (including your clothes)
- ✗ Never have a barbecue on a balcony
- ✓ Keep children and pets at a safe distance
- ✓ Have a means of extinguishing a fire in case of an emergency



Meet Hannah Eaton...

Weald Living shared owner and Vice Chair of our Board

Hannah has been a Weald Living resident for nearly nine years now and joined the Saxon Weald Board in 2020. After a year or so, Hannah was asked to take up the roles of Vice Chair and Chair of the Remuneration committee, which she continues to hold today. We asked Hannah to tell us why she decided to get involved with Saxon Weald's board and what it's like to be a shared owner...



What is your role as Vice Chair?

My role as Vice Chair of the Board requires me to act as deputy for the Chair, as and when required. In addition, I support the Chair and act as a sounding board for key issues. I also undertake the appraisal for the Chair on an annual basis.

What interested you most about becoming a Board member and what do you enjoy most about being on our Board?

I saw a recruitment ad for a resident Board member in a Saxon Weald customer email. I had been looking for an opportunity to get involved in something that had a link to community, and it appealed to my interest in housing. I love that I can be more involved in where I live and represent the views and interests of other residents like me.

Why was it important to get involved and what impact has it had on you as a resident?

Being a Board member has given me the opportunity to work with excellent colleagues in an organisation that matters to me. I'm grateful to be able to play a part in providing safe and secure homes for people like me. Securing a home for my family through Saxon Weald changed the way that we can live, and I want to help the business continue to do that for other people and keep customers at the heart of the organisation.

Tell us about your shared ownership experience with Weald Living

I was living in a one-bedroom flat with my husband and our first child in Surrey. We were desperate to move into something bigger and I loved the idea of being able to own our home after renting for many years. However, we simply couldn't afford to do that on the open market, and we didn't qualify for social housing in a two-bedroom home. I sought some housing advice and was told about shared ownership as an option. We found a new build development with Saxon Weald and quickly knew it would be a great fit for us.

The development was still being completed when we moved in, so we were one of the first families to arrive. That meant we've watched our community grow, and we know so many of our neighbours well. There is a great community here and we love being part of it.

Would you recommend shared ownership? If so, what are the biggest benefits?

Being able to buy our home through shared ownership means we have been able to put down solid roots and feel secure. We were able to buy a three-bedroom house which has given us enough space to complete our family. I love where I live - shared ownership has changed our lives and the way we live them. If we want to, we have the option to buy more of our home from Saxon Weald in the future. I don't know if we will ever choose to do that, but if our circumstances were ever to change, it's good to know the option is there.



Easter wellbeing roadshow

It was a wet and windy week that saw us out on the road again during the Easter holidays in April. Despite the weather, colleagues visited four areas, keen to help local residents with advice and support during the cost-of-living crisis.

Kicking off the week, we headed over to Broadbridge Heath. There, we saw a few families who enjoyed delicious crepes from our mobile van and benefitted from help with their homes, including energy saving advice. There was keen interest in our prize draws too. Katie Potter won a £50 voucher and luxury Easter egg, while Frankie Davies won the junior prize for guessing the amount of easter eggs in the container and winning that as her prize.

Sadly, the weather got worse as the week progressed. While we saw a number of residents in Slinfold, Southwater and Horsham, who braved the elements to come out and see us, we had to pack up early at a few events for health and safety reasons. If you missed us, we are really sorry!

Remember, our Helping Hand guide is packed with information about energy costs, benefits and where to get extra support should you need it. Go to www.saxonweald.com/storage/downloads/helping_hand_guide-1673611733.pdf to download a copy.



Your FEEDBACK matters

Our customers return around 400 survey responses each month. It's great to get your feedback and hear what you think is good about the services we offer, and what needs improving. Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to give us their thoughts.

Here's a few examples of what you've been saying and how we have responded...



You said: Appointment messages do not give enough notice

We did: You told us that 24 hours' notice for a repair booking reminder wasn't enough. Our systems now send an additional reminder message 72 hours before the appointment.

You said: Calls take too long to be answered

We did: We recruited more staff in our customer support team. Now more calls are being answered and waiting times have reduced.

Repairs service consultation

We have continued to work with our group of volunteers, who have been meeting regularly to discuss "Quality of repairs". They are now finalising their report, which will include recommendations of what they would like to see put in place. The report will be presented to the Saxon Weald Board at the beginning of summer 2023.





Get your gardening gloves on – it's competition time!

Do you have a natural talent for gardening? Show us your unbe-leaf-able skills in our annual gardening competition. We have two great prizes up for grabs...

Best Individual Garden

Send us a snap for your chance to win a £50 garden centre voucher of your choice.

Best Communal Garden

The winning block/scheme will receive a £100 garden centre voucher.

To enter, simply send your pics to competitions@saxonweald.com by Friday 28 July. Please include your name, address, telephone number and category you are entering*.

*Terms & conditions apply, see our website for full T&Cs: www.saxonweald.com/news/get-your-gardening-gloves-on-its-competition-time.html

Community spirit

West Sussex County Council recently held a competition within their Extra Care Housing team. The aim was to improve local environments within the surrounding community. Nicola, a social worker within the team, won the competition by helping to transform the communal garden at Abbotswood in Rustington.

Nicola and a team of eager volunteers spent four days in the garden to make it a lovely place for residents to enjoy.

We would like to say a huge thank you to Nicola, the volunteers, and West Sussex County Council for arranging this kind gesture. Your hard work has made a big difference!



A fundraising hero

Jeffery, a resident at Highdown Court, has recently been busy fundraising for charity. Jeffrey has cerebral palsy and has been a wheelchair user all of his life. Despite this, he's always had an active involvement in the community. This includes volunteering for various organisations and raising an incredible amount of money for charity.

Over the years, Jeffrey has taken part in fundraisers such as a sponsored swim and an obstacle course on his hands and knees, for which he raised over £600! He recently raised over £200 for Active Worthing, who help those with long-term health conditions and disabilities to maintain their independence.

The Mayor of Worthing and the High Sheriff of West Sussex have been blown away by Jeffrey's fundraising efforts. They recently attended Highdown Court to award him for all his achievements.

We'd like to say a big well done to Jeffrey, keep up the great work!



Meet our apprentices

Ever wondered what it's like to be an apprentice? We asked apprentice electricians, Bobbi and Jayden, to tell us all about it...

Why did you choose your apprenticeship?

Bobbi: I always knew I wanted to be in the trade industry, I just didn't know which one. I'm quite academic so I wanted to do something that was hands-on but also involved strong problem-solving and mathematical skills.

Jayden: I've always been a visual and practical learner so I liked the idea of being able to learn on the job and believed it would give me the most hands-on skills. The fact that you also get to earn while you learn is a big bonus.

Tell us about your team and your role

Bobbi: The team are all lovely and I get to work with different colleagues all the time, so no two days are ever the same. I get to do a bit of everything but I'm currently on re-wires which involves ripping out old cables and starting from a blank canvas to refit them all.



Jayden: Each day is very different, and the projects are too. My days can involve anything from general electrical maintenance to re-wiring houses. I get to work with different operatives in my team, which means there is always something new to learn and experience.

What's the most valuable skill you've learnt so far?

Bobbi: I have gained so much knowledge and confidence. I go from learning theory one day a week to working on the job, so it sticks with me much more and gives me lots of experience.

Jayden: I'd say learning to work safely from heights would say the most valuable skill, as there have been a few close calls.



What are your future goals?

Bobbi: After my apprenticeship, I'm hoping to undertake more courses so that I can progress in my career. There are so many different aspects to electrics so expanding my knowledge will help open up so many different opportunities.

Jayden: Once I am a qualified electrician, my plans are to stay with HomeFix to gain more experience. I want to work hard so that I can eventually afford to buy my own house.

What advice would you give to someone thinking about doing an apprenticeship?

Bobbi: I would 100% recommend it - don't be scared to give a trade a try. It's challenging but rewarding at the same time. Don't be scared to ask questions, they are always willing to show you how to do things if you're unsure. I'm so grateful for the support I've received.

Jayden: The advice I would give is 'go for it!' It's excellent for starting your career. You learn all the basics and become fully qualified. I feel like I have good opportunities here to do what I enjoy and earn money at the same time as learning.



If you're interested in an apprenticeship, keep an eye out for available positions on our website: www.saxonweald.com/careers.

Brush up on the rules of recycling

We've recently seen a rise in contaminated recycling bins across our neighbourhoods. A contaminated bin is unlikely to get emptied.

Here's a quick reminder of what goes where:



Green top bin – general waste

- Food waste
- Household rubbish
- Nappies and dog waste
- Non-recyclable packaging

Blue top bin - recycling

- Paper and card – but no shredded paper or paper towels
- Metal cans and empty aerosols
- Plastic bottles and cartons
- Glass bottles/jars – but no drinking glasses, spectacles or crockery

Visit your local council's website for more information.

Saving on broadband tariffs

Could you save around £200 a year by switching to a social broadband tariff?



What is a social tariff?

Social tariffs are low-cost broadband deals that are available to people on certain government benefits. They cost between £10-£20 a month and are usually on shorter-term contracts with no exit fees.

Who qualifies for a social tariff?

If you receive Universal Credit, Pension Credit, Jobseeker's Allowance, or some other government benefits, you could qualify for a social tariff.

4.3 million UK households are eligible for cheaper broadband, but only 220,000 are currently signed up. This means almost 95% of qualifying households are missing out.

If you think you could qualify for a social tariff, contact your internet service provider today or visit www.ofcom.org.uk/cheap-broadband for more information.



Online, anytime, anywhere

Our easy-to-use, online self-service portals put you in charge of your home, anytime, anywhere. They provide secure access to your information and are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week from a desktop, laptop, tablet or mobile.



Pay your rent,
check your balance



Book repairs,
manage appointments



View and update
your details

Sign up today at www.saxonweald.com/getonline.



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PlaceShapers
Together we help communities thrive

