



## SPRING MAGAZINE 2024



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# MARTYN'S COLUMN



A belated happy new 2024. Unfortunately, the weather has continued much in the vein of 2023, but I am sure we are all hopeful of some sunshine soon! This year promises to be different from the past few years in that we have completed the new developments we have at Branstone and Brighstone and are looking towards a period of consolidation.

Within all of the general needs homes we have been providing, we have also added an extra couple of HOLD properties and are currently working in partnership to bring in to management some supported housing units in Newport. So, we are not totally resting on our laurels.

We are shortly to be retendering our grounds maintenance contract and those of you affected by this will already have been contacted for your views. And although it only seems like yesterday that we sent out a survey form asking your views about your home and the services you receive, there will be another one landing on your doorsteps towards the middle of the year. This is a result of a new Government requirement for housing associations to regularly consult with tenants every two years.

You will have noticed some changed faces over the last few months and we still have a few more to come and they will be introduced soon.

I recognise that although inflation may have reduced in recent times, the pressures of the cost-of-living have not necessarily reduced at the same time. We understand that things can be tough, so please remember that we are here to listen and help where we can, so come and speak to us.

*Martyn Pearl*  
Chief Executive, Vectis Housing



# STAR SURVEY



Image by rawpixel.com on Freepik

All households will shortly receive a STAR survey. This is an opportunity for you to express your views about your homes and the services you receive from us. Please complete this survey as your opinion does count and we are always looking at ways to improve what we can offer to our residents.

## A WARM WELCOME TO MARK BYRNE



This month we welcomed Mark Byrne as our new Housing Officer. Mark takes over from Carol who retired last year after over 14 years at Vectis! Mark has a wealth of experience in customer facing roles and is already making a positive impact to the team. He will shortly be carrying out neighbourhood walkabouts (with Rosie) - if you see him out and about in your area and you have any questions, do ask him, alternatively please just say "hello".

# NEIGHBOURHOOD WALKABOUTS

AREA	ADDRESS	DATE
Cowes	Bellevue Road Arctic Road	17th May 2024
East Cowes	Acorn Gardens Black Knight Close Kelsey Court Kent Avenue Queens Court	31st May 2024
East Cowes	Broadsmith Avenue Princess Close Grenville Close Captains Parade Gustar Grove	14th June 2024
Freshwater & Yarmouth	School Green Road Bouldnor Mead	28th June 2024
Newport	Alvington Manor View Ash Lane	12th July 2024
Lake & Shanklin	Greenfields Kenella Court	26th July 2024
Newport	Hunnyhill Wayside Drive Oakwood Court	9th August 2024
Nettlestone	Kerryfields Sycamore Drive	23rd August 2024
Ryde	Jubilee Place Holm Oak Westview Terrace	6th September 2024
Ventnor & Wroxall	Ash Court Badgers Close Berrymead	20th September 2024
Apse Heath	Parkway The Paddock The Chase Winford Court	4th October 2024
Blanchards	All properties	18th October 2024
Branstone	All properties	1st November 2024





# 50 YEARS OF SERVICE!

During 2024 we are celebrating 50 years' of providing homes for island people. Vectis is the principal independent housing association offering homes and creating small, close-knit communities on the Isle of Wight. We started life in 1974, through the Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce, to provide rented homes to key island workers. Our success led to expansion into the provision of more general accommodation.





# A MESSAGE TO OUR SHARED OWNERSHIP MEMBERS FROM THE HOUSING TEAM

Whether you're new to shared ownership or have been part of our community for some time, we want to take this opportunity to remind you that you are not just residents but valued members of our association.



At Vectis Housing, we understand that shared ownership brings with it a unique set of responsibilities and benefits. This, combined with the cost-of-living crisis, can make life quite challenging.

As part of our housing association, you have access to a range of services and resources designed to make your homeownership journey as smooth and enjoyable as possible. The housing department has dedicated members of the team that are here to support you if you have any concerns around your wellbeing, finances or would like to take part in community development.

If you would like to discuss this further, please call the office on **01983 525985** and ask for a member of the Housing Team.

Please remember, as shared owners, you are part of the wider Vectis Housing Community. Whether you're facing challenges or want to take part in community events, we encourage you to reach out to us. Your feedback and input are invaluable as we strive to continually improve our services and support.



*Image by Drazen Zigic on Freepik*





# COMMUNITY EVENTS

## A FESTIVE GET TOGETHER IN EAST COWES



We were pleased to host a festive get together in December, for some of our residents in East Cowes. 'Christmas At the Curve' was an opportunity for residents to get together for a chat over a mince pie and a coffee, at The East Side Curve, just before Christmas.

If you would like to learn more about community activities in your area, please get in touch with Vectis Housing on **01983 525985**.

## A LITTLE EXTRA AT A DIFFICULT TIME OF YEAR

For some, Christmas can represent a time of fun and joy, surrounded by loved ones and far too many sprouts! For others, it can be a challenging time, for so many reasons.

Here at Vectis Housing, we wanted to be able to provide comfort to some of our households across the Island, by providing food items, chocolates and treats, items to help residents stay warm, and toys, in the run up to Christmas.



Vectis Housing Staff worked together to shop for, pack, wrap and distribute 20 Food Hampers, 20 Warm Packs, 20 Chocolate Hampers and toys, which were then hand-delivered across the Island in the run up to the big day.

We were able to offer these gifts as a result of funding from the Department for Work and Pension's Household Support Fund, funding from our Hardship Fund, a kind personal donation and toys which were donated via the Isle of Wight Radio Toy Appeal.

"The hamper today is the first I've ever received, and I will find it a great help in keeping me warm".

"Thank you very much for the (pack), each item is perfect and will all get used. Have already used my hat and gloves".

## BUGS, MINIBEASTS AND BUTTERFLIES AT BUTTERFLY WORLD

It was tails, wings, shells and fins during October half term, for a group of Vectis Housing residents who enjoyed a trip to Butterfly World in Wootton.

Families enjoyed a wander through the Tropical Flight Zone and the Italian and Japanese gardens. They were able to handle a variety of minibeasts and creatures and learn about the friendly and colourful Koi.



We hope those who attended enjoyed themselves, we're pleased to share a few photos from the trip.

If you would like to learn more about community activities in your area, please get in touch with Vectis Housing on **01983 525985**.

## EASTER AT BRANSTONE

Our Housing Team paid a visit to Branstone Farm Lane on Easter Saturday alongside the Isle of Wight National Landscape Team to assist residents with planting flower seeds and vegetables. Easter eggs were handed out to the children who attended.







### **WHAT TO PLANT IN SPRING:**

As the weather gets warmer and the days get longer, many gardeners will be busy sowing seeds and preparing flower borders and vegetable patches. March and April are good months to plant perennials, sow hardy annuals like marigolds and plant summer-flowering bulbs like lilies and gladioli.

### **EARLY VEGETABLES:**

Once the soil is warm enough you can also begin sowing hardy vegetables. This could include broad beans, cabbages, carrots, radishes, lettuce, rocket, and spinach. You can also plant potatoes and onions.

### **THINGS TO DO IN THE GARDEN DURING THE SPRING:**

Spring is an important time for getting on top of weeds before they take light and water from the plants you want. You can also mulch your borders in early spring, provided the soil is moist, and there is still space to get in between the plants.

When you're gardening at this time of year, take care not to disturb nesting birds and always check carefully for them before pruning hedges or shrubs. When you tidy and cut back winter growth in spring, remember there may be insects and amphibians living there or even a hedgehog hibernating.



Spring is the time when we usually start mowing lawns regularly, but you may decide to join the growing trend of leaving all or parts of it uncut for a few weeks at a time. This will allow clover, daisies and other species to flower and provide nectar and pollen for bees and other pollinating insects.

### **CONTAINER GROWING:**

If you have a small garden, patio or terrace then container growing could be for you. Here are some useful tips to help you make the most out of container growing.

### **CHOOSING PLANTS FOR CONTAINERS:**

Bulbs and annuals are great for growing in containers because they can be replanted each year to create new schemes. Herbs such as parsley, basil and thyme will also grow well in pots which can be placed near the kitchen door for easy access. Many perennials and even small shrubs and trees can be grown in containers, but species choice is important so make sure you do your research before you buy.

### **COMPOST AND CARE:**

Use good quality peat-free potting compost for temporary displays. For shrubs and perennials which will stay in the same compost for a while, choose one with soil in it or add your own. Plants in containers need regular watering, so ask a helpful neighbour to take care of them when you're away.

### **MAINTAIN AND ORGANIZE TOOLS:**

If you didn't do so last autumn, scrape excess dirt off tools, wash in soapy water and allow to dry thoroughly. Coat metal parts with boiled linseed oil to prevent rust. Sharpen pruners and loppers. Make sure your lawnmower and other power tools are in good working condition and add oil or petrol as needed. Clean out your garden shed or garage, organize tools and garden supplies, and discard any items no longer of use.



### **CLEAN AND FRESHEN OUTDOOR FURNITURE:**

Wash decks and patios, then wipe down stored patio furniture, if a wipe down is not enough, give it a good scrub with warm soapy water, and set it outside for the season. Check for any damage caused over the winter, rusty chair bolts can be dangerous if you catch your skin and can easily rip your clothes.







# PROPERTY MAINTENANCE/SERVICES

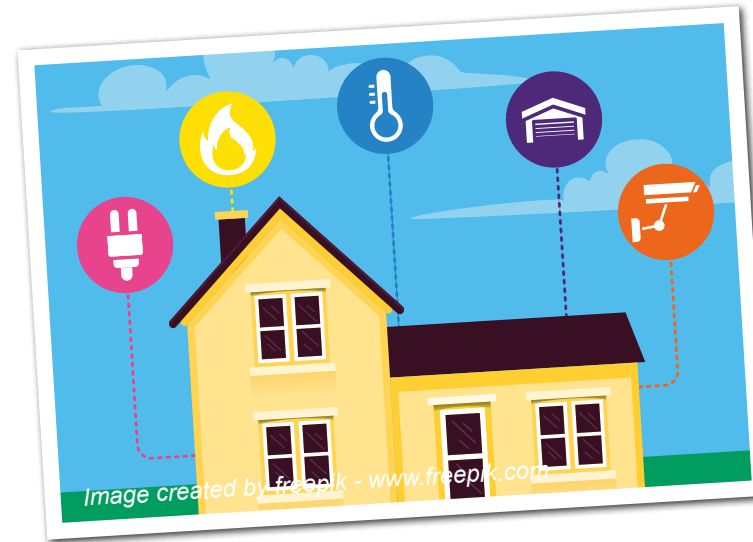
## REPAIRS RESPONSIBILITIES REMINDER

Here is a quick reminder of the repairs you as residents are responsible for in and around your home. Please note that you may be recharged if these works are undertaken by our contractors!!

- Drain blockages within the property boundary.
- Bath, wash basin, toilet, and sink blockages.
- Sweeping of chimneys/flues.
- Minor plasterwork repairs - such as cracks along wall and ceiling joints.
- Keys (replacement or additional) including gaining access if required.
- Broken glass to both windows and doors.
- Toilet seats and fittings.
- Bath, sink, and wash basin plugs and chains.
- All aerials excluding communal facilities.
- Replacement lightbulbs and tubes.
- Replacement batteries.
- Hat and coat rails and hooks.
- Floor coverings (other than supplied nonslip flooring in bathrooms, toilets and kitchens).
- Blinds, curtains, curtain tracks, window battens.
- All repairs required to fixtures and fitting owned by you the resident, both fitted as "new" by you the resident or "gifted" by the Association.



- All works to remove pests, including wasp and bee nests and ants.
- Clothes post or lines and rotary driers (other than where provided by the Association).
- Taking all reasonable precautions to prevent water pipes being damaged by frost.



## RECHARGES

Unfortunately, due to the number of repairs and call outs requested by residents that are not the responsibility of Vectis Housing, we need to send a reminder to all residents that damage, whether it be accidental or malicious, caused by either the tenant, a member of the household, or a visitor, will be recharged. We appreciate that times are difficult financially for some residents, but Vectis Housing cannot

continue to spend large amounts of our budgets undertaking these works. It stops us from being able to undertake improvement works such as kitchen and bathroom upgrades, and means our contractors take longer to attend to the repairs we should be undertaking. Our recharges will be made up of the full costs to the association, including VAT, plus a 15% administration fee.

## REPAIRS REPORTING

It is easy to forget to report repairs, or save them up to report them all together, but it is important to report repairs as soon as possible. Leaving repairs unreported, can lead to additional costs, and longer disturbance in your home. However, don't forget to check your repairs responsibilities first.



It is easy to report a repair, you can do it by:

Telephone on **01983 520353**

Email to [enquiries@vectishousing.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@vectishousing.co.uk)

Website [vectishousing.co.uk](http://vectishousing.co.uk) just click on the report a repair box.

Or to any member to staff if you see them out and about in your area.





## SERVICE CHARGES

Our costs to provide services to communal areas are increasing and this will be reflected in your service charge from April 2024.

Our contractors, like all businesses, have seen an increase in costs. To maintain a level of service, an increase is necessary. The service charge only reflects the cost of the service provided to you.



Vectis Housing Association is committed to providing an excellent service that is valued by our residents and represent great value.

If you have to pay a service charge as part of your rent, a detailed breakdown will have been sent out in March along with your rent increase notification.

- Fire Equipment Servicing
- Management Fees
- Repairs & Maintenance
- Administration
- Cleaning
- Grounds Maintenance
- Electricity
- Refuse Collection



## SERVICE CHARGES 2024/2025



### WHAT ARE SERVICE CHARGES?

Service charges cover the cost of managing, maintaining, repairing, insuring, and providing services to residents beyond the benefit of occupying their own home. These include items such as cleaning, grounds maintenance, communal repair costs, fire equipment servicing, management costs and any other running expenses to the area in which you live. Services will vary according to where you live. You will only be charged if your home benefits from that service. Leaseholders also pay their share of building insurance and are charged separately for this.

We aim to:

- Deliver value for money on your services
- Consult you about any significant changes to your services
- Give you clear information about how your services are managed

### HOW ARE SERVICE CHARGES CALCULATED?

The service charge that you pay, are known as 'Variable Service Charges', This charge can vary each year and is based on an estimate of the service costs provided. If the cost of the service increases or decreases, the charge can be changed accordingly to ensure that you only pay the true cost of the service provided. In these cases, the (surplus)/ deficit will be carried forwards into the following year.





**Example of how a service charge is calculated:**

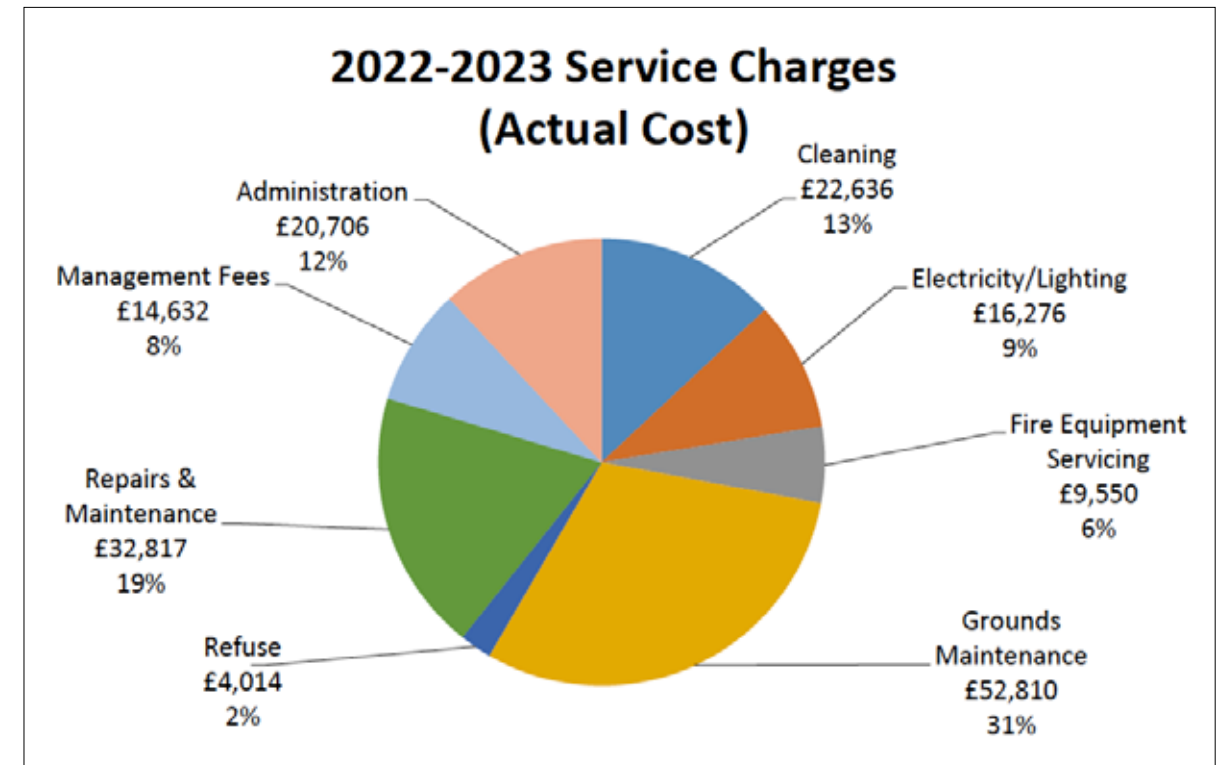
	Per Week (£)
April 2022 to March 2023 Estimated Costs	5.00
April 2022 to March 2023 Actual Costs	4.50
Overcharged (Surplus) - actual costs were lower than expected	(0.50) **
<i>** A positive number denotes an undercharged, or deficit</i>	

Costs received during the first 6 months of the current financial year (2023/2024) are used to project the cost of your service charge for the following year (2024/2025)

April 2023 to September 2023 Actual Costs	5.00
October 2023 to March 2024 Projected Costs for the remainder of the current financial year	5.00
Estimate of costs for the 2023/2024 financial year	10.00
Inflation applied to uplift the costs for the next financial year	0.69
Estimated Service Charge - 2024/2025	10.67
Adjusted for any (Surplus)/Deficit (0.50)	(0.50)
<b>This is the amount you will be charged from April 2024</b>	<b>10.17</b>

**MONITORING SERVICES PROVIDED**

The contractors we use to undertake the work are actively managed by our Property Services team and undergo rigorous checking procedures, both in terms of cost and level of service. We are continuing to improve the way we manage service charges and ensure that they offer value for money.



**SERVICE CHARGE PROJECTIONS 2023/2024**

Our costs to provide services to communal areas are increasing. Our contractors, like all businesses, have seen an increase in costs and this has been reflected in your service charge from April 2024. The service charge only reflects the cost of the service provided to you. Vectis Housing Association is committed to providing an excellent service that is valued by our residents and represent great value. You will have received a more detailed breakdown of your service charge along with your recent rent review letter.

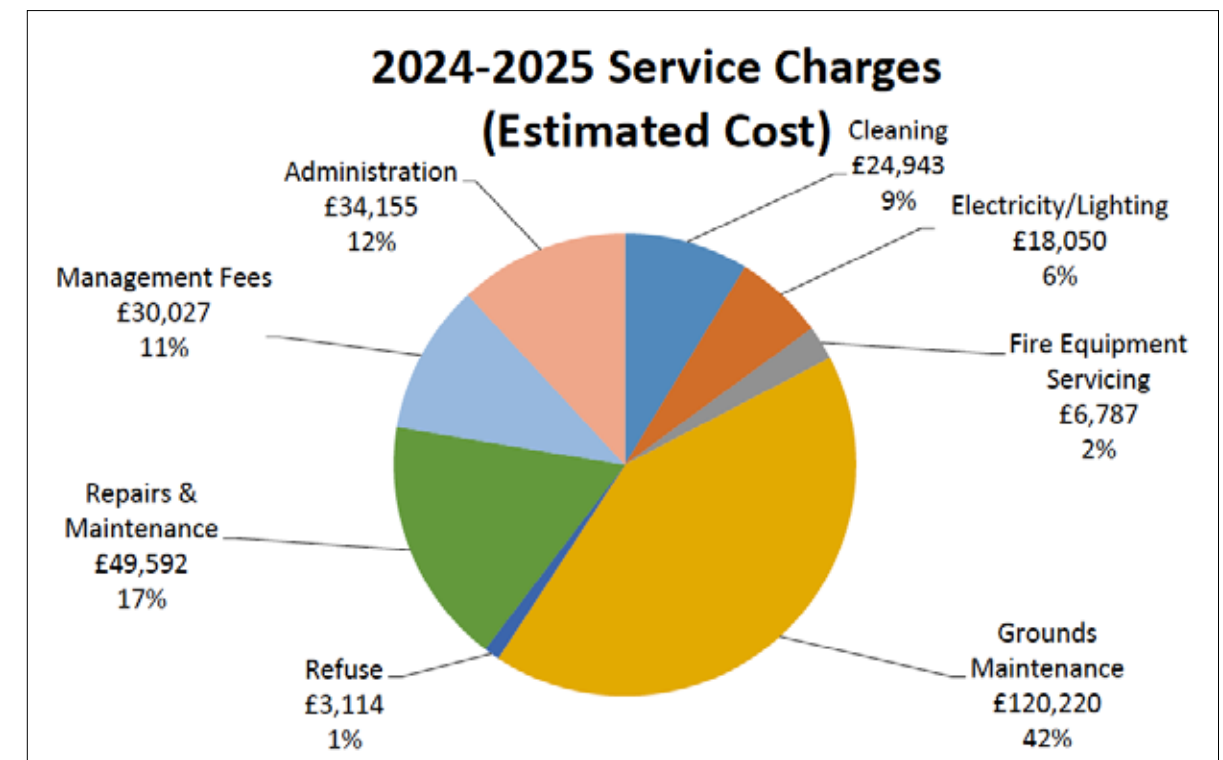
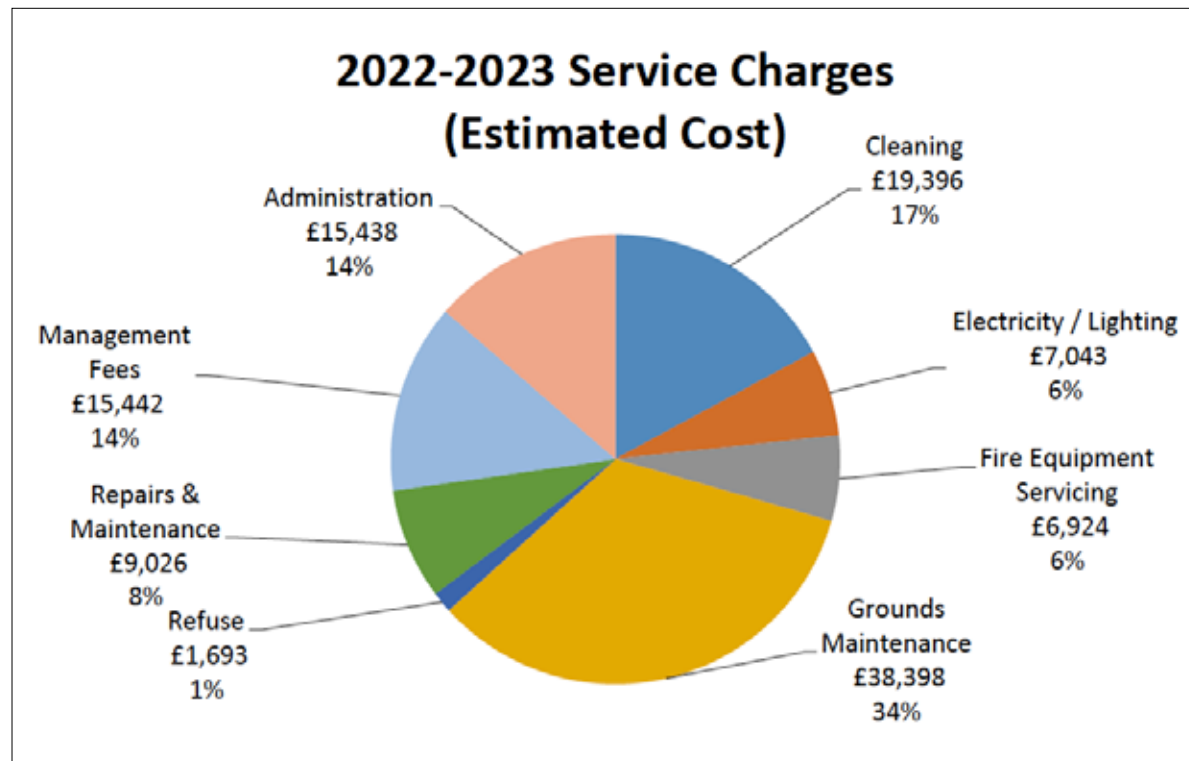






Image by wirestock on Freepik

Join our community for  
**NO MOW MAY**  
 Help our bees & pollinators survive!

**What is NO MOW MAY?** Simply do NOT mow your lawn for the month of May.

**Why?** Your lawn will provide early pollinators with habitat and a place to forage for food. Dandelions, clovers, and violets are good nectar sources.

**Want to know more?**  
[www.plantlife.org.uk](http://www.plantlife.org.uk)



Vectis  
 Housing

# Letting our wildflowers grow for nature

**We are making a change for nature.**

Working with wildlife and letting our wild plants grow, helps not only the wildflowers and fungi, but also the bees, birds and butterflies.



**We are nurturing nature by:**

- Letting our wildflowers complete their full cycle
- Not mowing in large areas but continuing to maintain the aesthetics and safety.
- Making long-term management commitments for nature and climate

**Wildflower-rich habitats are amazing spaces that can:**

- Improve biodiversity
- Store carbon
- Improve air quality
- Benefit our physical and mental wellbeing

In our wildflower-focused approach, we are being **sensible about safety** and framing our verges and green spaces with a shorter cut where needed.

By cutting less and later, we can let wild plants get a head start. So, just sit back and watch the flowers grow.

We're taking part in Plantlife's No Mow May movement (and beyond!) by following the road verge and green space best practice guidance.

For more information visit [joinplantlife.org/road-verges-and-greenspaces](http://joinplantlife.org/road-verges-and-greenspaces)







## HELP WITH PAYING YOUR WATER BILLS

The cost-of-living crisis is being felt all across the country, with many households struggling to pay for essentials, such as food, rent and utilities. During these difficult times, it's useful to know what support is available to you, if and when you need it.

Did you know that Southern Water have a number of schemes and options if you are struggling with paying your water bills? You might be eligible for a discount on your bills, or you could get your bills capped, they can even match your repayments £ for £ if you have accrued high levels of debt.



Image by Freepik

Here is a brief rundown of the support options that Southern Water currently have available:

### ESSENTIALS TARIFF

**(A discount if your household is on a low income)**

- Is your household income less than £21,000 per annum (excluding DLA / AA / PIP), and do you have savings of less than £16,000?

**OR**

- Are you in receipt of pension credits?



If so, you could qualify for a discount of between 45% and 90% through Southern Water's Essentials tariff.

### WATERSURE SCHEME

**(This scheme caps your bills if your water usage is high)**

- Is someone in your household receiving one of the benefits below?
  - Child Tax Credit (you must receive more than the family element)
  - Housing Benefit
  - Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
  - Income Support
  - Pension Credit
  - Working Tax Credit
  - Universal Credit
  - Income related Employment & Support Allowance

**AND**

- are you responsible for 3+ children aged under 19 (OR does someone in your household have a specified medical condition which requires the use of more water than normal, e.g. incontinence, eczema, Crohn's disease etc?)

If so, Southern Water can cap your water bills to a maximum of £439 per annum.

### NEWSTART

**(Helps you to repay an old / existing water debt)**

- Do you have debts with Southern Water of £1,000 or more?
- Has it been a while since you made a payment to Southern Water?

If so, Southern Water can make an arrangement with you, so that for every £1 you pay towards your arrears, they will match it.

### WATERDIRECT

**(Paying your water directly from your benefits)**

- Do you claim one of the following benefits?
  - Income Support
  - Income-based Jobseekers Allowance



Image by rawpixel.com on Freepik





# Home Swapper

The mutual exchange solutions for tenants and landlords

## Want to Move Home?

HomeSwapper.co.uk's local & national service means mutual exchange is better than ever. It's the UK's largest community of social housing tenants looking to swap homes.

• Tenants from over 1,000 landlords are registered

• 2 out of 3 matched to potential swaps in 24 hours

• hundreds of households move every month

How it works:



## HOME SWAPPER

If you have an assured tenancy with Vectis you have free access to the services offered by HomeSwapper. The system is easy to use and has already helped many residents find a new home better suited to their needs.

### VISIT US:

[www.facebook.com/VectisHousing](http://www.facebook.com/VectisHousing)  
[www.vectishousing.co.uk](http://www.vectishousing.co.uk)



Chapel House operates on an appointment basis. If you would like to speak to a member of staff face to face, please call **01983 525985** so that we may book a suitable date and time for you to visit us.

### CONTACT US:

**Emergency Repairs**  
**Phone Vectis Repair Line:**  
**01983 520353**

*Please call this number to report emergency repairs. Inappropriate use may result in any additional costs being re-charged to you.*

*Please do not use the text service for emergencies, especially over bank holidays as we will not receive them out of hours. Please phone these through on the maintenance line **01983 520353**.*

All other enquiries: **01983 525985**  
[enquiries@vectishousing.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@vectishousing.co.uk)