

TENANTS & LEASEHOLDERS

# GETTING INVOLVED

with the housing service





### **Cover photographs (L–R):**

- Pat Bention, Mrs Kimber and Cllr Elson present the Kimber cup award and prize
- Gary Wakeham receiving his tenant community award from Cllr Moulding at the 2018 tenant conference
- Pat Benton, garden competition 2018 winning garden entry

To request this information in an alternative format or language please call 01395 517453 or email [tenantparticipation@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:tenantparticipation@eastdevon.gov.uk). We consider requests on an individual basis.

# Tenant and Council partnership statement

**As a tenant, you are at the heart of everything we do.**

That is why we are working hard to get you involved in every step of the way. We have drawn up a statement with our tenants, setting out our commitment to tenant involvement called the 'Tenant and Council Partnership Statement'.

It sets out how we will help tenants to get involved in influencing and shaping decisions taken to deliver a housing service, which meets the needs and priorities of tenants. The key commitments that we will jointly deliver to enable tenants to be involved in the decision making processes related to council housing are:

- provide a housing service that actively works for continuous improvement in quality and value for money
- give tenants a voice in the decisions which affect their homes
- identify priorities based on tenant's requirements
- know what standards tenants want – local standards
- give tenants an opportunity to challenge and ask questions about how the Housing Service is operated
- support existing and new tenant groups and encourage engagement and participation
- support tenants to carry out scrutiny of housing services
- provide ongoing and joint training for tenants, staff and councillors

# Aims and objectives

- to provide a wide and meaningful range of tenant involvement opportunities, making sure that tenants are at the heart of the housing service
- ensure that tenants can engage with us at a level and in a way that suits them
- to ensure that our staff are aware of involvement opportunities and take responsibility for encouraging tenant involvement
- to make sure that we provide tenant involvement opportunities that represent good value for money
- to understand the make-up of our tenant profile and respond to their needs

**Your involvement and skills will help to shape the decisions that affect the service you receive.** Being part of an organised tenants' group will give you a greater voice when talking about local issues with us. Tenant participation is a two-way process involving the sharing of information and ideas with the aim of improving the standard of housing conditions and how housing related services are delivered, including the setting of service standards.



Left: Tenants attending the last Tenant Conference

# Overcoming barriers to involvement

This booklet will show you we have many of ways to getting involved, from just entering the garden competition to helping on the scrutiny committee. We need your skills on one of them. We do not ask you to commit to a long time. All we ask is that you have a try. Come and see what it's like.

- Family responsibilities – we will pay for your childcare facilities during meeting hours to enable people to attend participation meetings.
- Transport – where requested, we will provide transport for tenants to attend events hosted by the Housing Service or if you use your own transport, we will reimburse your travel costs. Mileage allowance is 45p per mile.
- Location of meetings – we will hold meetings in community venues that are accessible, convenient and secure for everyone.
- Times of meetings – we will establish meeting times to take account of the needs and preferences of East Devon tenants.
- Agenda setting for meetings – we will provide training to give tenants appropriate knowledge and also provide specialist assistance as required.
- Accessibility of information – where required we will provide documents in other languages and formats. Interpreting facilities are available and hearing loops are available in all local area offices.
- Attitude – we will provide training to give staff, tenants and other service users an awareness of equality and data protection issues.

# How to get involved

We are keen for our tenants and leaseholders to be involved, at all levels, in decisions regarding the management of the housing service. There are a number of ways you can become involved and these are outlined below. If you would like to register your interest in any of the areas shown please complete the tenant involvement form with this publication.

## ▪ Joint Community Action Panel (JCAP)

Review the work of the Estate Management and the Housing Support services. Take part in estate visits to identify areas for improvement and review performance information. Produce a yearly plan of work for the group. You will consider value for money in all areas of the service. To be involved in and contribute to future plans and budget setting and monitor progress. Be mindful of and promote equality and access to services for all service users. This review group is made up of both tenants and staff.

Below: areas identified for improvement by the JCAP



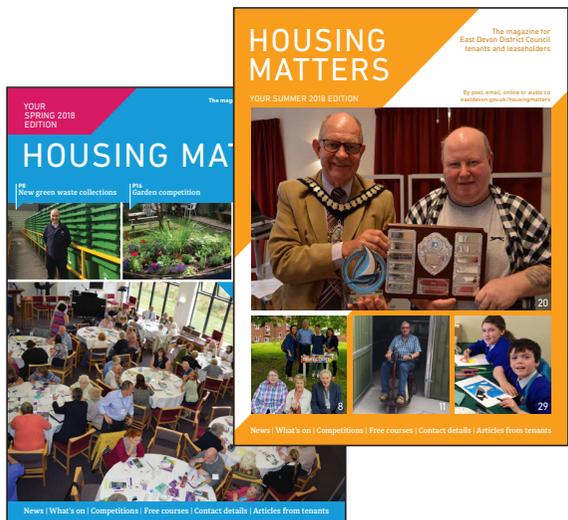
## ■ Repairs and Maintenance Group

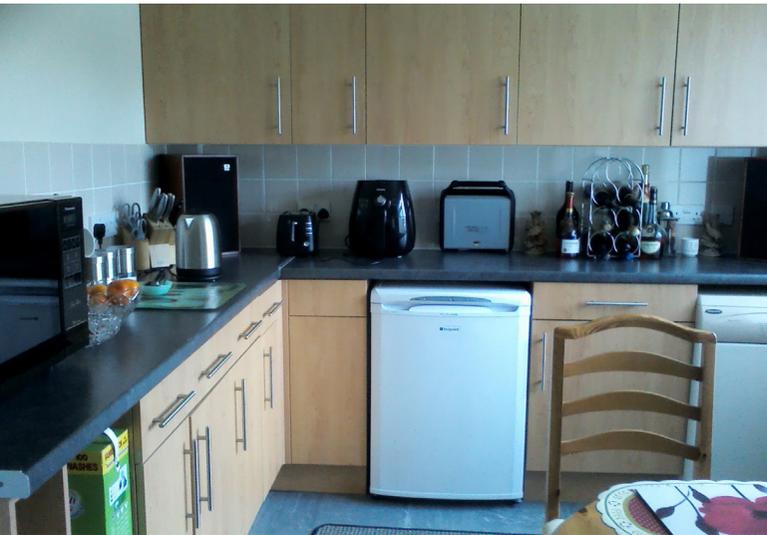
Review the work of Repairs and Maintenance section including programmed work and the performance of the contractors. Be involved in the decision making process at the earliest opportunity, in the setting of the annual budgets to maintain value for money and identify areas for improvement. To be actively involved in the obtaining of goods (doors, kitchens, bathrooms etc) and services and the choices available for all tenants. This review group is made up of both tenants and staff.

## ■ Join the editorial group

The Housing Matters magazine is produced three times a year, which is sent out to tenants and leaseholders. Tenants, staff and councillors are asked to submit articles of interest to be included in the magazine. The magazines are put together and edited by an editorial panel made up of both tenants and staff

Right: The Housing Matters Magazine. Front covers of recent editions





Left: Kitchen upgrade complaint resolved using the DTCP

## ▪ Designated Tenant Complaint Panel (DTCP)

This is our newest involvement panel. This panel tries to resolve tenant complaints at a local level or to refer complaints from social housing tenants to the Housing Ombudsman. The complaint panel also make suggestions on how to improve customer satisfaction. If a tenant remains dissatisfied with the council's response following stages one and two of the formal complaints procedure tenants have the right to take their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman.

### **You can do this by either:**

- waiting eight weeks from the date of our final response letter and then approaching the Housing Ombudsman yourself
- contacting a 'designated' person'. These are:
  - a Member of Parliament
  - a local district councillor
  - the council's Designated Tenant Complaints Panel

## ▪ **Monitoring of Resident Involvement – Tenant & Council Partnership Statement and the Resident Involvement Strategy**

We have drawn up an agreement and strategy with our tenants setting out our commitment to tenant involvement with the Housing Service. If you would like to see a copy of this please contact Tenant Participation or visit our website.

## ▪ **Tenant Inspectors**

Tenant Inspectors help monitor the quality of workmanship and standard of the service provided by our day to day repairs contractors and work alongside officers to ensure agreed standards are maintained.



Left: A new build property in George Street, Honiton purchased by East Devon

## ■ Conference Committee

Conference Committee organise a tenant's conference once a year open to all tenants and leaseholders. The themes we have had over the past years have been 'Communities and Social Housing', 'Your Home Your Future', and 'Antisocial Behaviour'. Refreshments and a light lunch are usually provided.

Tenants have an opportunity to meet staff and ask questions, take part in debates and share their views with managers.

Each year East Devon District Council tenants hold a conference in a different area across the district. The committee are involved in finding the right venue, catering and subjects for the conference. The aim is to find the right formula to encourage more tenants to come along. If you have any ideas then we need you on this group.

Below: Stalls at a previous Tenant Conference



## ▪ Join a tenants'/residents' association or start an association yourself

A tenant/resident association is a group of people living in an area, block or street who have come together to take up issues of common concern in relation to their housing, community and general environment. As a tenant living in your area you automatically qualify for membership.

The associations enable tenants to have a say on housing and estate matters, to help towards building a friendly, caring community, to exercise choice in how services are delivered, and to find out more about how we work. Some of the projects tackled by associations include the landscaping of communal areas, securing a community meeting place, improving shared lighting, fundraising for a children's play area, and car parking problems. For more information please contact Tenant Participation 01395 517453.

### **We currently have associations in the following areas:**

- Lymebourne and Arcot Park, Sidmouth
- Harepath, Seaton
- Lowerbrook Meadow, Sidmouth
- Manor Close, Seaton



Left: Some issues raised at recent tenant association meetings

## ▪ Take part in our annual garden competition

Each year we organise a garden competition that is open to council tenants. There are a number of categories (for example, best overall garden, children's garden, containers and hanging baskets) with prizes awarded for each one. The competition is advertised in the spring edition of the Housing Matters magazine. Judging usually takes place in July with a prize-giving ceremony in September.

One of the recent entries to our garden competition



## ▪ Tenant Involvement Forum (TIF)

The TIF is a new forum being held every quarter from 10am to 3.30pm in various locations in East Devon. All tenants are welcome to attend the Forum and will hear what members of the tenant service review groups have achieved on behalf of other tenants and the projects they are currently working on.

## ▪ Add your name and contact details to the ‘Key Players’ register

We have a register of ‘interested’ tenants and leaseholders who are prepared to be consulted on various topics. This may involve:

- reading and commenting on various documents
- filling out questionnaires
- taking part in review group discussions
- telephone surveys

The range of topics which may be considered include repairs and maintenance, community development, younger/older tenants or black and minority ethnic tenants. Within the register we have several groups. You can add your name to as many as you wish.

Our current groups you can do from home include:

- **‘e-consultation’** – if you are happy to be contacted by email
- **community Initiative Fund Panel** – this involves checking community applications and approving or refusing grant aid.
- **reading panel** – if you are prepared to read through and comment on documents before we send them out to the wider tenant body
- **telephone survey group** – if you are prepared to be contacted at home to answer our phone surveys
- **postal survey group** – if you would be happy to answer brief surveys sent to you at home

You may also be interested in joining one of our ‘review groups’ that look at different parts of our service. These groups are made up of both tenants and staff and we currently have five groups focusing on our Estate Management, Repairs, Sheltered Housing and Housing Needs.

## ▪ Apply for a Community Initiative Grant

If you have a project or an idea that benefits the tenants of East Devon District Council you can apply for a grant from the Community Initiative Fund. You don't need to be part of a recognised group to apply, but the funding has to be a project which will benefit a number of tenants. Each application is passed to the Community Initiative Grant Panel to approve or refuse. The applications are posted to panel members in turn and there are no meetings to attend, so this can be done from your home.

These are some examples of awarded grants:

- Manor Close, Seaton: garden table, chairs, umbrella, cushions, shed, green house, BBQ, trellis and hanging baskets
- The Orchard, Kilmington: Queen's Jubilee BBQ (paper plates, cups, bunting, etc.)
- Wescott Way, Honiton: water butts
- Ratcliffe House, Burnside, Exmouth: Queen's Jubilee party
- The Vault Youth Project: Hontion Community Church Trust
- Littleham Association, Residents and Friends (LARF): Country Fayre 2013



Right: Some other examples of funding by the Community Initiative Fund, a picnic bench for residents to enjoy in Morgan Court in Exmouth and storage units for Dray Court in Exmouth

## ▪ Focus Groups

Why not volunteer a little of your time for one off focus groups. We would call on you from time to time to help us improve and refine aspects of our services.

## - Issues affecting ethnic minority tenants

Working with black and minority ethnic communities in their own environment and respecting their rules and decision-making processes is the most successful approach by linking with established networks, community organisations and cultural events.

## - Recruitment and Selection Panel

Be involved in recruiting new housing staff and acknowledge the tenant perspective will help to recruit employees who are committed to customer focused services and tenant involvement. Staff and tenants on the interview panel are considered equal members of the recruitment process.

## - SWITCH group

SWITCH is the way we brand all the activities we do, which are aimed at young people and their families. We run creative space/homework clubs every week during term time in Exmouth, Axminster and Honiton. They also run holiday activities. We provide activities, opportunities and safe places for young people, and aim to get them more involved in their communities.



Left: Young people at SWITCH club playing games and making clay tea lights

# Additional groups

## **Housing Review Board**

The board was set up in 2006 and consists of five councillors, five tenant and leaseholder representatives and two independent community representatives. The board considers matters relating to our landlord and housing management functions. It advises our executive board on housing policy and operational practice where this affects tenants and leaseholders. It monitors service delivery and promotes good practice. The Board meets at least 4 times a year, during the daytime, with other interim meetings also possible. You can view more information about the Housing Review Board by visiting [eastdevon.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/committees-and-meetings/housing-review-board](http://eastdevon.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/committees-and-meetings/housing-review-board)

## **Find out about the Scrutiny Panel**

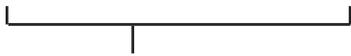
We have an independant Scrutiny Panel for tenants and leaseholders to influence and hold us to account for our management and performance in the delivery of services.

This voluntary role needs tenants who are fairly confident, can say their piece in a constructive way, can work with others, understand services and priorities for tenants and who are willing to undertake some training to equip them more fully for this challenging and crucial role. As scrutiny is independant, you are not allowed to be on any other groups.

# How tenant involvement fits within the council's structure

Cabinet

|  
Housing Review Board      Tenant Scrutiny Panel



— 'Key Players' register

— **Service review groups:** Repairs and Maintenance and Joint Community Action Panel (JCAP).

— **Forums, panels, and boards:** Tenant Involvement Forum, Young Persons, Scrutiny panel, Housing Review Board and Designated Tenant Complaint Panel

— **Surveys and consultation:** by email, postal or phone

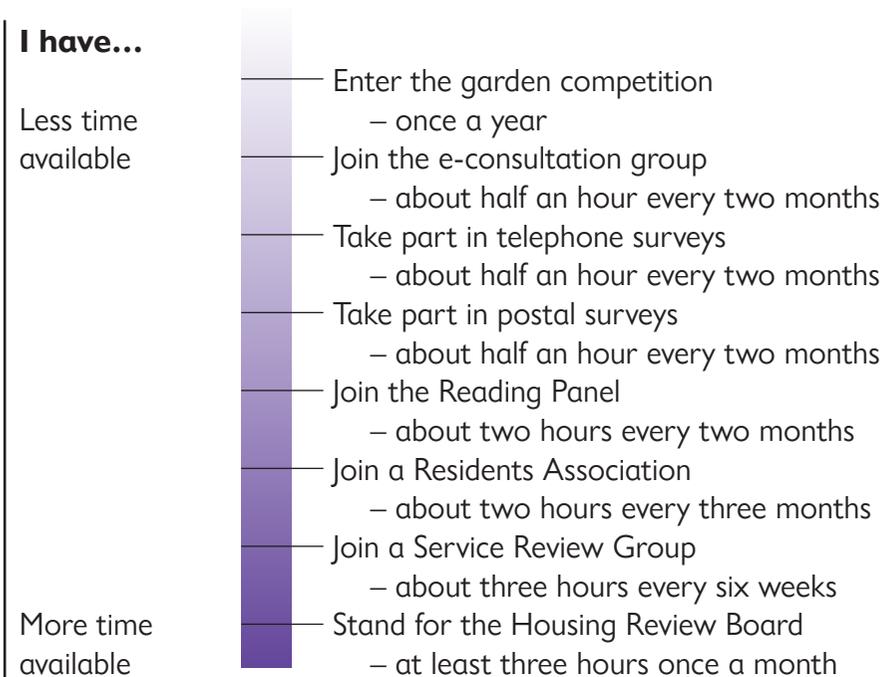
— **Project groups:** Conference, Review of Tenant and Council Partnership, Community Researcher, Mystery Shopping, Editorial

— **Support groups:** Recruitment and Selection, Reading

— **Monitoring groups:** Tenant and Council Partnership Statement, Resident Involvement Strategy

# Levels of involvement – how much time have you got?

How much you'd like to get involved depends entirely on you, with plenty of options for however much time you have:



**Expenses** It is important that being involved in Tenant Participation does not leave anyone 'out of pocket'. Expenditure covered must have been spent when carrying out some approved tenant involvement activities. For further information on what activities are covered, please contact Tenant Participation.

# Data protection statement

Our register of tenants interested in being involved with the Housing Service is called “The Key Players Involvement Register.

Your contribution is extremely important and is highly valued by the housing service as this helps to improve the services provided based on your involvement. If you are asking to be involved and receive information from us about tenant meeting, events, training etc. we need you to complete and return this consent form to Tenant Participation.

The new Data Protection Act 2018 (General Data Protection Regulation) which came into effect on the 25 May 2018 is to make sure we have your permission to hold your information and use it for tenant participation purposes. If we do not receive your signed completed form, we are unable to put your details into our database (Key Player involvement register) and you will not receive any correspondence about tenant involvement.

If you have any questions about this privacy notice or about how East Devon District Council handles your personal information, please visit [eastdevon.gov.uk/privacy](http://eastdevon.gov.uk/privacy) or contact the Data Protection Officer on 01395 517417 or email [dataprotection@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:dataprotection@eastdevon.gov.uk).

You are under no statutory or contractual obligation to provide personal information to the Council during the resident involvement process

# What you can do next

If we have caught your attention and you would like to get involved, or have any questions please complete the form in this publication and send to us at the address below or call Tenant Participation on the below number, we will be pleased to hear from you.

Phone: 01395 517453

Write: Tenant Participation  
Blackdown House, Border Road  
Heathpark Industrial Estate  
Honiton, EX14 1EJ

Email: [tenantparticipation@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:tenantparticipation@eastdevon.gov.uk)

Online: [www.eastdevon.gov.uk](http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk)

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