



Tenant
Representative
Group

The voice of council
tenants in East Devon

Getting involved with the Housing Service

Pictured is completed play equipment in the Trim Trail at St Paul's, Heathpark, Honiton, where tenants were engaged with the project right from the outset. This is just one way that tenants can be involved with the Council – **read more inside.**



To request this information in an alternative format or language please call 01395 516551 or email csc@eastdevon.gov.uk

We consider requests on an individual basis

How to get involved with the Housing Service

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 at the end of this leaflet.

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, or
- 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 just one or as many as you wish. Our current groups include:

- **'e-consultation'** – if you are happy to be contacted by email
- **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.
- **mystery shopping** – involves checking performances within the Housing Service and customer satisfaction research.

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 six groups focusing on our Repairs Service, our Sheltered Housing Service, Estate Management, Customer Care, Rental, and Housing Needs.



Attend our annual residents' conference

The Tenant Representative Group (TRG) organise a Residents' 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 speaking to members of a local performance group who staged an interactive drama on antisocial behaviour at the 2011 conference



Mark Williams, Chief Executive of East Devon District Council, speaking at the previous year's conference

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

Through associations, tenants come together to take up issue of common concern relating to their housing, community and general environment. As a tenant you will 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.

We currently have associations in the following areas:

- Lymebourne and Arcot Park, Sidmouth
- Littleham, Exmouth

- Dray and Morgan Court, Exmouth
- Mead Way and St Gregory's, Seaton
- Palmer House, Exmouth
- Spencer Court, Ottery St Mary
- Heathpark, Honiton

Become a member of the Tenant Representative Group (TRG)

During the period 2010/11, new government legislation has prompted East Devon District Council to do a complete review of their Housing Service. As a result of this review, they found it necessary to make some radical changes to the structure of the service.

The Tenant and Leaseholder Customer Panel (TALCP) was set up in December 1995 to encourage tenants to become more actively involved with decision making in the Housing Service. The TALCP members felt that as a change was in the air, this would be an ideal opportunity to look at the role and efficiency of the panel. The outcome is a more streamlined and efficient method of utilising the skills and commitment of the tenants' representatives, so as a consequence it is hoped that from October 2011 the TALCP will be replaced by the Tenant Representative Group (TRG).

The TRG is made up of representatives from all Service Review Groups, thereby improving the exchange of information between housing departments and giving the various groups the opportunity to work together on issues which are of wider concern.

Reports from department managers will be considered and commented on, ensuring tenants have an input into any proposed changes. Members of the TRG will also include

representatives from tenants'/residents' associations and research groups. We want all areas of Tenant Participation to be covered by this group and of course, the meetings will be open to all. We are always keen to hear from tenants who would like to be involved.

Take part in our 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 Standard newsletter. Judging usually takes place in July with a prize giving ceremony in September.



**The winning garden in Mead Cottages, Exmouth
from the 2010 garden competition**

Find out about the Scrutiny Panel

We have an Accountability and 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.

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. The fund is managed by the TRG.

These are some examples of recently awarded grants (2010/11):

- **Dray and Morgan Court, Exmouth:** garden bench
- **Yonder Close, Ottery St Mary:** climbing plants
- **Meadway and St Gregorys Court, Seaton:** notice board



Examples of funding by the Community Initiative Fund: a picnic bench for residents to enjoy in Morgan Court in Exmouth and a laptop computer with Internet access and printer for residents of Dray and Morgan Court, Exmouth



- **Dray and Morgan Court, Exmouth:** laptop computer, printer
- **St Gregorys, Seaton:** communal flower display
- **Lower Brook Meadow, Sidmouth:** fencing
- **Powell Close, Seaton:** shed, lawnmower, plants, and footpath

Request a copy of our Tenant and Council Partnership Agreement or our Tenant 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.

Find out about the work of the Housing Review Board

The Board was set up in 2006 and consists of five members of the Council, five tenant and leaseholder representatives, and two independent community representatives. Normally Board members will serve for a maximum of five years, subject to annual reappointment by the Council.

The role of the Housing Review Board is to:

- consider matters relating to the Council's landlord and housing management functions
- advise the Council's Executive Board on housing policy and operational practice affecting council tenants and leaseholders
- keep under review the housing stock options appraisal and monitor the conditions which will influence the future arrangements for the ownership and management of the Council's housing stock
- promote good practice and monitor the work of the Housing Service.

How tenant involvement fits within the council's structure



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:

I have less time available		ENTER THE GARDEN COMPETITION – once a year
		JOIN THE E-CONSULTATION GROUP – about half an hour every two months
		TAKE PART IN TELEPHONE SURVEYS – about half an hour every two months
		TAKE PART IN POSTAL SURVEYS – about half an hour every two months
		JOIN THE READING PANEL – about two hours every two months
		JOIN A RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION – about two hours every three months
		JOIN THE TRG – about three hours every six weeks
		STAND FOR THE HOUSING REVIEW BOARD – at least three hours once a month
		
		
		
I have more time available		

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.

What you can do next

If you would like to get involved, please complete the form in this booklet and send to us at the address below.

Contact us

Phone 01395 517453

(Monday–Friday, 8.30 AM–5 PM)

Visit Council Offices, Knowle, Sidmouth, EX10 8HL

(Monday–Friday, 8.30 AM–5 PM)

Write Tenant Participation, East Devon District Council,
Knowle, Sidmouth, EX10 8HL

Email tenantparticipation@eastdevon.gov.uk

Online www.eastdevon.gov.uk

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