



Housing Standard



Issue no. 30 Spring 2009

East Devon District Council Newsletter

East Devon District Council Tenants' Conference p.2

Devon Home Choice p.4

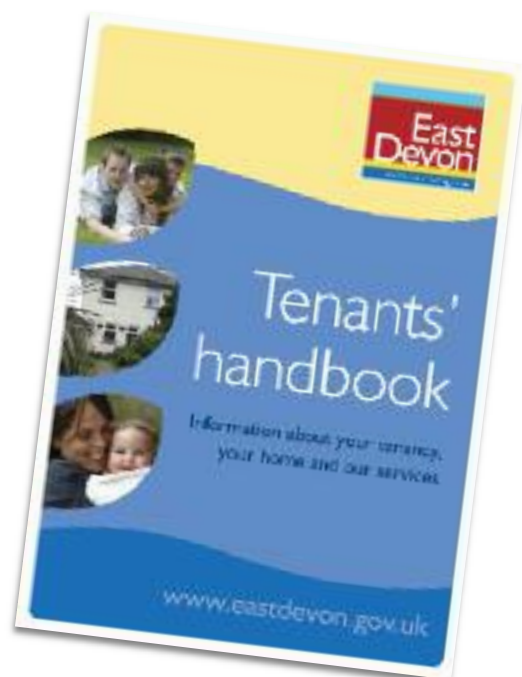
Young tenants'
Speak Now Panel p.6

Tenants take a trip
to Westminster p.9

Welcome

New Tenant Handbook enclosed with this newsletter

We are including your new Tenant Handbook with this edition of the Housing Standard. For those of you who have been tenants a long time this replaces the old Tenant Charter leaflets. For more recent tenants it replaces the loose leaf style tenant handbook which we have used since January 2008. The Tenant Handbook contains lots of information about your tenancy, our services and ways to contact us. We hope you will find it useful.



Don't forget to let us know of any changes to your personal circumstances

Don't forget to let us know any changes regarding your personal circumstances. This could include changes in your name, your marital status, or the people who are living in your home. Perhaps you've had another child since you've moved in, or perhaps someone who was living with you has moved out. Also make sure that we have up to date information about who to contact in an emergency.

Please ring **01395 517469**, email **housingneeds@eastdevon.gov.uk** or write to Housing Needs, East Devon District Council, Knowle, Sidmouth, EX10 8HL to change or update any information.



This publication is also available in CD or audio cassette format.

Please phone 01395 517453.



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How to get in touch



In person

Call at reception at the Council Offices, Knowle, Sidmouth
8.30am – 5.00pm
Mon – Fri



By phone

01395 516551 or
01395 516854 for out of hours and emergencies



By writing to

Corporate Director
Communities
East Devon District Council
Knowle
Sidmouth
EX10 8HL



Visit our website

www.eastdevon.gov.uk/homes_and_housing

East Devon District Council Tenants' Conference

Wednesday 17 June 2009 at the
Tumbling Weir Hotel, Ottery St Mary

Book your place
by contacting the Tenant
Participation Team on
01395 517453 or emailing
tenantparticipation@
eastdevon.gov.uk.

Tenants, the programme we have planned for this years' conference gives you an ideal opportunity to speak to and question the officers of East Devon District Council Housing Department.

This is your chance to talk to the people directly responsible for the service you receive.

This years' conference is also your chance to learn about the history of social housing.

'Boring!' we hear you say, but there is nothing boring about Professor Carl Chinn. We guarantee you will find his talk fascinating, informative and extremely entertaining. He is a much

sought after speaker, broadcaster, newspaper columnist and writer and we are privileged that he has agreed to come to speak to us.

Lunch and refreshments will be provided free of charge and transport can be arranged, if required. Please state any dietary requirements when applying.

Places are limited so please apply as soon as possible. Don't miss out on this opportunity to have an enjoyable and worthwhile day out.

Sue Saunders
Secretary – Conference Committee



Tenant and Leaseholder Customer Panel AGM

Tuesday 28 April, starting at 6.00pm
and ending approximately 8.00pm.

Trumps Court Community Centre, Sidmouth

All East Devon District Council Tenants and Leaseholders are invited to attend.
Refreshments available from 5.30pm.

Please ring the Tenant Participation Team on **01395 517453** for further details.



Flooding doesn't stop the Homework Club!

The Homework Club, held at the Community Flat St Paul's Road, Heathpark, has not stopped running even though the flat was flooded in the New Year.

The Homework Club has been running at St Paul's since 2004 and is very popular with the young people on the estate. Organisers Marian Parker, from the Honiton Community Church and Sue Rowe, Police Constable Support Officer, would not let the flood deter them. They have organised for the young people to be bussed over to the

King's Centre in Honiton while the flat is being dried out.

The Club welcomes young people from 4 to 16 years on a Monday afternoon. Usually the under 10s meet from 4.00pm to 5.00pm and the over 10s from 5.15pm to 6.15pm.

Marian and Sue are arranging for some extra activities to run over the Easter Holidays. These will include a trip to Escot Country Park on 8 April and a session of play and circus skills activities on 15 April.

Recently, young people from the Club gave their ideas for improvements they would like to see on the Heathpark Estate. The Council is currently working with other agencies in the area to draw up plans for redesigning and improving some areas on the estate. Further details about this work will appear in later editions of this newsletter.

Like to know more?

For more information about the Homework Club at Heathpark please contact Marian (tel. **01404 47858** or email marian@tcch.org.uk) or Sue (tel. **0845 6569400** or email susan.rowe@devonandcornwall.pnn.police.uk).

If you would like to consider setting up something similar where you live please contact Sally Jones, Community Development Worker (Youth) on **01395 516551** ext **2536**.

Devon Home Choice

A new way of allocating homes in Devon

Devon Home Choice is a new Choice Based Lettings scheme that will cover the whole of Devon.

Council and Housing Association homes available for letting will be advertised through Devon Home Choice each week. You will be able to bid for homes that suit your housing requirements. Homes will still be offered to those assessed as being in the most housing need.

The new scheme for allocating housing will start in December 2009.

The 10 local authorities in Devon are working together to provide a wider choice for people seeking housing and the opportunity to move within Devon, for example to move nearer relatives who need support or to take up a new job. Under Devon Home Choice we will use a common:

- application form
- single housing register
- approach on assessing housing need and awarding priority
- approach to advertising empty properties.

You will still be able to bid for properties that are advertised and you will be able to do this online or via a new automated telephone service. We are hoping to develop the opportunity for applicants to bid through Digital TV, but this may not be available immediately.

In East Devon we will stop advertising empty properties in the local free newspapers. But, you can find out what is available for letting by visiting the Council's website, or visit local libraries or listen to the

answerline or look on Town and Parish Council notice boards.

You will not see a big change in the way we currently do things.

- We will still place applicants in bands.
- We will still allocate properties to those with the highest priority band and been on the register the longest.

We will continue to label the property so that it shows clearly what band of applicant can apply and give details about the property.

What's the difference?

The main differences with the way that homes are currently let in East Devon are:

- You will be placed in one of five housing needs 'bands' rather than the three bands we have at the moment.
- You may be able to move to another area of Devon if the right home is available.
- You can manage your application online on the Council's website.
- If your housing need priority goes up your date of registration will change to the new date.
- We will start to advertise empty properties owned by Registered Social Landlords and Housing Associations.

It is important that applicants understand that it will no longer be beneficial simply to register with the Council for

housing because 'waiting time' will be measured by the length of time in a 'band' rather than the length of time on the housing register.

When we begin to implement the new scheme you will be asked to re-register for housing with us.

This will allow us to review all existing applicants and ensure the new scheme starts with up to date information. You will be asked to apply online using the Devon Home Choice website. You can do this using your own or a friend or relatives computer or at the library or an internet cafe. Alternatively you can visit the Council offices in Sidmouth and use one of our computers. We will help you to register if required.

The 'old' housing register will stop taking new applicants at the end of July 2009.

If you want to know more, have a look on the Devon Home Choice website at www.consultationfinder.com/devon/devonhomechoice.

Further information will be provided in the next issue of the newsletter.



Weycroft Senior Citizens Centre, Axminster

Running of the Weycroft Senior Citizens Centre back with the Council

The day-to-day management of the Weycroft Senior Citizens Centre at Millwey Rise, Axminster, has come back in house with the Council. For many years the centre was run by the Senior Citizens Club, but the number of members of the club had fallen over recent years and they felt they could no longer continue to run the centre.

We are currently considering the longer term options for the hall as it has already exceed the life expectancy for the type of building and considerable funding is needed to bring it up to modern standards. We have been consulting local residents and would like to thank all those who completed and returned the 'Have Your Say' questionnaire to us. We will keep you updated with further developments in later editions of this newsletter.

Diverse use

The Centre is the only meeting venue on the Millwey Estate and is well used by many groups. Whilst facilities at the hall are fairly basic it is well situated and has off road parking available. The Council has recently refurbished the toilet facilities, installing a unisex disabled toilet, and plans to give the kitchen a 'face lift' shortly.

Groups currently using the hall include two local art groups, a pilates class, Crusaders, and Brownies. Spaces are still available during the week for individuals or groups looking for a venue in the area and the hall can be booked at weekends for activities, meetings or children's parties. Charges for the hire of the hall are currently £6 per session for regular users and £11 per session for one off bookings.

To book the hall please contact either Chris Murton, Mobile Support Officer on **07812 562281** or the Home Safeguard Office on **01395 519162**.

During the half term holiday in February the hall was used by our Play Development team to host two 'Off the Sofa Dayz'. For more information about this please see the article below.

Interested in painting and drawing?

Looking for a friendly group to join? The Axe Valley Art Group which meets at the Weycroft Senior Citizens Centre on a Tuesday morning is currently looking for new members. If you are interested please contact either John Fletcher on **01297 631156** or John Whenray on **01297 33608**.

Two days of exciting play!

'Off the Sofa Dayz' returned to Millwey Rise Axminster on 19 and 20 February 2009 during the half term holidays with great success yet again! 76 children over two days enjoyed facepainting, sports, circus skills, arts and crafts and beat boxing. All the activities were **free** to the children and their families with thanks to funding from the Big Lottery.

A big thank you goes to the local schools for allowing Polly Mercer and Jane Sharp the Playworkers to visit their school assembly and give a short presentation to the children to

encourage them to utilise their free time productively with exciting and fun activities. A thank you also goes to the Town Council for their support and two young volunteers from Colyton Grammar who supported the Playworkers on the two days.

If you are interested or know anyone who would like to become a play volunteer and provide activities for

children in the Millwey Rise area please contact Jane or Polly on **01395 571556** or email **play@eastdevon.gov.uk**. All training will be given and is **free!**



Young tenants' Speak Now Panel

Giving young people a voice!



Are you between 13 and 25 years old, interested in what happens in your local community and live in a Council-owned property? Then we'd like to hear from you.

We've been told young people feel they don't get listened to, so now's the chance to change all this.

We want your views on many different things:

- How do you feel about where you live?
- What you think the Council could and should do for you?
- Are you happy with the house you live in?

- What kind of play facilities, activities, events do you and your friends want?

East Devon District Council's Tenant Participation Team would like anyone who is interested in influencing what happens to where they live to become part of the 'Key Players' register. You can join a group of other young people to talk about the issues that concern you, or we might ask you to fill in a questionnaire to get your views on a particular topic – it all depends on how much you want to get involved.

The team are very flexible and can come out to talk to you in your local

area at a time that suits you. We would like you to plan a young people's event in the summer and would like to hear your views on this. If you've got some spare time, why not volunteer to help organise the event? That way, the subjects up for discussion will be chosen by you for your friends and other young people in the area.

And do you have a local tenant/resident association/youth group that the Tenant Participation Team can come along and talk to?

We can't promise that everything you ask for will happen. With over 130,000 residents in East Devon, who all have their own ideas about where they live, that would not be possible. However, we can assure you that we will listen to what you tell us and will do our best to carry out your wishes.

To find out more please get in touch with the Tenant Participation Team on **01395 517453** or **tenantparticipation@eastdevon.gov.uk** or Sally Jones, Housing Community Development Worker (Youth) on **01395 516551** or **scjones@eastdevon.gov.uk**.

Make sure young people are heard – get in touch with us!



Estate walkabouts

Our Estate Management Team identify problems they find on estates as part of their job, when they are 'out and about'.

However to maintain standards we also involve tenants, police and housing officers on formal estate walkabouts.

We carried out estate inspections with tenants last September and this January, and overall results are detailed as follows.

September 2008

| | Untaxed/or abandoned vehicles | Condition of properties and gardens | External or communal repairs | Grounds maintenance/ Environmental | No. of Council properties of total |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|--|--|
| Moorfield Road Estate, Exmouth | | | | | |
| Moorfield Road | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 33 of 86 |
| Moorfield Close | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11 of 36 |
| Green Close | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 23 of 64 |
| Marpool Crescent | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13 of 32 |
| Kay Close | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 22 of 22 |
| Colleton Way | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 19 of 38 |
| Lovelace Crescent | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 of 18 |
| East Budleigh | | | | | |
| Vicarage Road | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 of 4 |
| Collins Park | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 of 8 |
| Russell Close | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 of 7 |
| Brookfield Road | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 12 of 12 |
| Seaton | | | | | |
| Elizabeth Road | 0 | 9 | 1 | 0 | 16 of 67 |
| Eyewell Grove | 0 | 7 | 0 | 1 | 12 of 31 |
| Northcote Lane Honiton | | | | | |
| Lee Close | 0 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 13 of 20 |
| Minifie Road | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 5 of 20 |
| Northcote Lane | 0 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 11 of 20 |
| George Street | 0 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 11 of 24 |
| Philips Square | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 12 of 19 |
| Tracey View | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 of 6 |
| St Cyres | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 of 14 |



Graffiti in Honiton

Problems with our service?

If you are experiencing problems with the Housing Service and don't know where to turn, contact the Tenants Support Committee to get some support from fellow tenants who can help you through the process.

Contact Sue Saunders on **01395 265 766** for information.

January 2009

| | Untaxed/or abandoned vehicles | Condition of properties and gardens | External or communal repairs | Grounds maintenance/ Environmental | No. of Council properties of total |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Withycombe area, Exmouth | | | | | |
| Blackmore Court | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 18 of 25 |
| Senate Court | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 of 12 |
| Stewart Close | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 of 11 |
| Wade Close | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 8 of 10 |
| Evelt Close | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9 of 13 |
| Gorfin Close | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 6 of 12 |
| Sadler Close | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 5 of 13 |
| Wilmington | | | | | |
| Whitefield | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 11 of 18 |
| Orchard Close | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 of 6 |
| Ottery | | | | | |
| Higher Spring Gardens | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 of 27 |
| Spring Gardens | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 of 12 |
| Longdogs Close | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11 of 11 |
| Longdogs Lane | 0 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 19 of 39 |

Advance notice of estate walkabouts in May

- 11 May:** Sidmouth: Manstone Avenue, Tully Gardens
12 May: Exmouth: Pound Lane, Brimpenney Road, Broadpark Road
20 May: Woodbury: Park Close
27 May: Whitford: Shalford Terrace

For details nearer the time please contact Estate Management on **01395 516551** or email estatemangement@eastdevon.gov.uk.

Tenants take a trip to Westminster

Our small group set off very early on 25 February 2009 to attend the Housing Group Inquiry which ran from midday to 7.00pm at Westminster. Representing tenants, Councillors and East Devon District Council were five tenants, two Councillors and John Golding, Head of Housing at East Devon District Council.

The purpose of this Inquiry is to collect oral and written evidence:

- To support the request for necessary increases to allowances and raise them up to the level required for the management, maintenance and repair of Council Homes, fit for the 21st century.
- To establish the need to provide the funding required for Local Authorities (Councils) to once again start building a new generation of first class Council homes.

At present, management, maintenance and the cost of repairs to Council houses comes out of our Housing Account (Housing Revenue Account).

All our rents are kept in this account, and it is protected (ring fenced) for just this purpose, and we could manage under this arrangement except for the fact that Government on a yearly basis remove a substantial amount for other purposes. Next year (2009/10) it will be 40%, that is £5.8million. Our Council are

doing a good job under difficult circumstances with one hand tied behind their back.

All Council homes in East Devon do meet the Decent Homes Standards which is a requirement by 2010. We achieved this in 2008. We have submitted evidence to the Inquiry showing if we are permitted to retain this 40% we could raise the standard and provide housing fit for the 21st century.

To my shame, it was a first, especially as I was born just a short journey away.

I speak of my recent visit to the Houses of Parliament, and I put it down to being a non political animal, but I have now made amends.

Another issue taken up was the need for Councils to once again be permitted to build Council homes. Our current Housing Stock for East Devon is around 4,200 homes. Since the 1960's, under the 'Right to Buy' scheme tenants

have purchased around 3,500 homes. 75% of the sale price of these homes has been taken back by Government and the Council have not been allowed to replace those homes despite having a Housing Register of over 4,300 applicants. We are asking for a reversal of this situation.

Times are changing and the government is empowering tenants to take responsibility and be influential in effecting that change. East Devon needs a mixture of tenants who will commit to engage at all levels from the Housing Review Board, Tenants Panel, Monitoring Groups, Survey involvement, and occasional clerical duties. Some of the work is demanding and other less so. If you would like to be involved please contact Jane Reading our Tenant Participation Officer on **01395 517453**.

Ted Brown
Vice Chair,
Housing
Review Board



The 2009 Garden Competition

Time to get working on those gardens again!

As a result of feedback received from you, we have made a few changes to the competition by changing and adding categories to encourage children to enter and to encourage those interested in growing vegetables to enter.

There are now eight categories to choose from. For each category there will be an overall winner, gold band winners, silver band winners and bronze winners, with some highly commended gardens. Prize money of up to £50.00 can be won.

Overall Garden

Display of flowers and vegetables.

First Time Entrants

The most innovative and creative first time entry.

Childrens' Garden

Best small area designed and maintained by a child under the age of 16.

The Permaculture and Recycled Garden

The garden that makes the best use of recycled material.

Communal and Friends Together

Tenants working together to make the very best of their communal area.

Back and Front Garden

Display of flowers.

Containers and Hanging Baskets

Including tubs, hanging baskets, window boxes.

Vegetable Garden

Best use of space and best vegetable garden, this could be vegetables grown in pots or tubs or in a traditional setting.

As well as these eight categories there will be a one off prize of £50 for the best or most original feature within the entries. You do not need to enter for this award separately as the judge will make the choice.



2009 Garden Competition entry form

I would like to enter the following: (please tick each category you would like to enter)

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overall Garden | <input type="checkbox"/> First Time Entrants | <input type="checkbox"/> The Permaculture and Recycled Garden |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Back and Front Garden | <input type="checkbox"/> Containers and Hanging Baskets | <input type="checkbox"/> Communal and Friends Together |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Childrens garden | <input type="checkbox"/> Vegetable Garden | |

Please write down any special features you would like to be taken into account by the judges, for example steep slopes, gardeners with disabilities, Council maintained grass and hedges.

Special features:

Rules: I agree to abide by the rules of the competition. Only one prize will be awarded per household. The judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into if there is a dispute.

Name

Address (incl. postcode)

Phone Number(s)

Signed Date

I give my permission to publish my photo along with my name and address (excluding house number) in future newsletters if it is chosen to do so.

Entries must be received by Monday 15 June 2009.



Home Safeguard is a 24-hour personal emergency response service available to anyone who needs to summon help urgently.

The Service we offer includes the following:

- Appointments made to suit you, including Saturday mornings.
- Kind and helpful staff to discuss your individual needs.
- All equipment installed and demonstrated with easy instructions for you to follow.
- 24-hour call-out response to replace faulty equipment or batteries.
- Annual home visit to check on installed equipment.
- Additional Telecare Sensors and home monitoring for customers with health and mobility disabilities.

For more information or advice
telephone **01395 519739**

Email: homesafeguard@eastdevon.gov.uk
www.eastdevon.gov.uk/homesafeguard

Image bottom right © Tunstall Ltd

2009 Garden Competition

Entry form overleaf

Please return the completed application to:

Tenant Participation
East Devon District Council
Knowle
Sidmouth
EX10 8HL



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