

# HOUSING



## STANDARD

Autumn 2010 • Issue 33

Your newsletter from East Devon District Council

# Your Autumn Edition

**Your opportunity to  
get involved with ...**

Scrutiny Panel 3

Housing Review Board 3

Devon Home Choice 7

**Young people's  
homelessness in  
East Devon 6**

Advice on condensation  
and mould growth in  
your home 10

This year's garden  
competition results 12

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## Welcome to your Autumn Edition

# HOUSING STANDARD

## In this issue

### Homelessness 6

Useful information from your Housing Needs team about a growing problem faced by some of the District's young people

### Help us review Devon Home Choice 7

Get involved and let us know what you think of how housing applications are dealt with

### Dealing with condensation and mould growth 10

Advice from your Repairs and Maintenance team

### Excellent gardens in East Devon 12

See the results from this year's Tenant Garden Competition

#### Also inside

- From the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion News 3
- Trees are wonderful 8
- Does your garden look like this? 8
- Dealing with emergencies: burst and frozen pipes 9
- Estate Walkabouts 11
- Our commitment to equality and diversity 11



To request this information in an alternative format or language please call 01395 516551 or email [customerservicecentre@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:customerservicecentre@eastdevon.gov.uk)

We consider requests on an individual basis

#### How to get in touch

##### In person

Visit Reception at Knowle, Sidmouth, between 8.30 am and 5.00 pm, Monday to Friday

##### Phone

Call 01395 516551 or 01395 516854 for out of hours emergencies

##### Write to

Housing and Social Inclusion, East Devon District Council, Knowle, Sidmouth, EX10 8HL

##### Visit our website

[www.eastdevon.gov.uk/homes\\_and\\_housing](http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/homes_and_housing)

##### Email

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

#### On the cover



View of Beer by  
Mark Robinson

## From the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion

### Your chance to shape our local service standards!

Enclosed with this newsletter is our first Annual Report to Tenants, which we hope that you will find interesting and informative. Within the report we tell you about how we have performed during 2009/10, the new requirements from the Tenant Services Authority, how

we plan to improve our services, and how you can help us do this.

We are also enclosing a questionnaire about the proposed new standards and the Annual Report. Please fill it in and return to us by 26 November 2010.

Your views are very important and will help shape the housing service for the next year. ■



**John Golding**  
Head of Housing  
and Social Inclusion

# News

## YOUR BOARD NEEDS YOU!

Tenants and leaseholders will soon have the opportunity to stand for election onto the Housing Review Board, the committee that oversees the Council's landlord functions.

Since the Board was set up in the summer of 2006, the tenant board members have been co-opted from the Tenant and Leaseholder Customer Panel, but this new move brings the opportunity for any of the Council's secure tenants or leaseholders to put themselves forward.

The Housing Review Board is made up of five District Councillors, five tenants (one of whom could be a leaseholder) and two representatives of the wider community, each serving for a term of three years. The Board meets on an evening at least four times a year and considers issues such as monitoring of performance and promoting good practice.

The Board also oversees improvements to the Housing service, including the promotion of tenant involvement. There is an opportunity to sit on short term sub-committees that deal with specific issues such as parking on our estates or property re-let times.

The board has vacancies, so have a think about it. This is a great opportunity to influence the management of your home and your estate. If you are interested and would like more information, please contact Tenant Participation on 01395 517453. ■

Tenants at one of the regular Tenant and Leaseholder Customer Panel meetings

## SCRUTINY PANEL

East Devon District Council Housing Service is committed to putting its residents at the heart of the business.

A working party of tenants and staff have been meeting since July to shape the framework of our new Tenant Scrutiny Panel. An information and application pack has been produced which includes guidance, role description, a Code of Conduct, and Terms of Reference, which highlights the aim of the panel.

The recruitment process will begin in October and will be completed by 1 December. If you are a tenant and would like to express an interest in being part of the Scrutiny Panel or would like to receive an information pack, please contact the Tenant Participation team on 01395 517453. ■





## UPDATE ON SWITCH PROJECT

The SWITCH project, which is aimed at 16–25 year olds, has enjoyed a successful summer providing five DJing and beatboxing workshops with Alex Norgate. (For videos of Alex, visit [www.youtube.com/eddibleprawns](http://www.youtube.com/eddibleprawns)).

Activities have been arranged at three events in Manor Gardens in Exmouth as part of the Exmouth Festival and the Season of Sundays, as well as at the Littleham Fete and a Youth Involvement Event, both held on the playing field in Littleham, Exmouth. A DJing session and beatboxing 'Open Mic', as well as circus/play

equipment was provided by SWITCH.

It was great to be able to provide opportunities for young people to use and develop their skills, and just have a great time. A weekly information service from SWITCH, providing free internet access and help finding out about employment, training and volunteering opportunities, will be starting soon at Clayton House, Littleham.

If you would like to help put on SWITCH events for all ages, or for more information, contact Polly Anderson on 01395 516551 ext. 2372 or email [panderson@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:panderson@eastdevon.gov.uk). ■

A local young person on the record decks at a recent SWITCH DJing and beatboxing event

## DECOMMISSIONING OF SHELTERED HOUSING

You may be aware that a Task and Finish Forum has been set up to look at the issue of the 'decommissioning' of Sheltered Housing. This means that we are looking to change the status of some of our Sheltered Housing back to general purpose, as agreed by the Housing Review Board.

This project has now reached stage 2, where we have carried out an initial assessment of all Sheltered Housing and scored it

against the criteria set by Supporting People for what good Sheltered Housing should look like. We are now moving onto the stage of consulting with tenants that this affects.

Decommissioning is a positive process which has been able to identify areas where we need to improve our stock and also ensures that we are providing the correct type of accommodation to meet the needs of our tenants.

If you already receive our Support Services it will mean little change as these services will continue to be available to you as long as you live in your property.

If you have any concerns or questions regarding this process, please contact Amy Gilbert, Support Services Manager, on 01395 516551 or [agilbert@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:agilbert@eastdevon.gov.uk). ■

## 'GET DIGITAL' COMPUTER TRAINING SESSIONS

We have been made aware of some grant funding that could be available to us to provide computers and IT support to some of our Community Centres. The aim is to get more residents who live in Sheltered Housing to benefit from technology such as the internet and we are currently working hard to submit a successful bid for the grant.

A key part of the project is resident involvement and we are working closely with tenants to submit our reasons why we think East Devon residents should benefit from the grant.

Following a successful Silver Surfers Day in May for the second year running, the Support Services team work hard to encourage residents to look at how the latest technology can assist in keeping people independent for longer.

If you are interested in getting involved with the project please contact Tina Cureton on 01395 519162 or [tcureton@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:tcureton@eastdevon.gov.uk).

We have recently also teamed up with Brixington Primary School and are pleased to announce free training sessions in the school's IT Suite. Tutoring will be provided by the pupils and sessions can be arranged in advance by contacting Andy Austin, Mobile Support Officer, on 01395 260368. Call today to book your place! ■



Tenants and local students enjoyed Silver Surfers Day

## CLUSTER WORKING FOR MOBILE SUPPORT OFFICERS

Over the past nine months Exmouth and the surrounding area have been working in a new way known as 'Cluster Working'.

This means that we have teamed up our Mobile Support Officers into teams of three and we have been rotating them around schemes so residents have three points of contact rather than one Mobile Support Officer.

We are about to review the project up to this date and if you live in an area where we have been operating the project then you will soon receive a customer satisfaction survey. We are keen to hear how you have found the change, so please do your best to get the questionnaires back to us.

If you require any assistance to fill them in or wish to discuss any element of Cluster Working please contact Tina Cureton on 01395 519162 or [tcureton@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:tcureton@eastdevon.gov.uk). ■

## ANNE LOWE RETIRING

After nearly forty years working for Local Government, twenty-seven of those being at East Devon, Anne Lowe will be retiring at the end of September.

Anne is a very familiar face around Budleigh and the surrounding area, and will be greatly missed by residents all over the region. Anne has put off retiring for a little while now but has finally decided that she is ready to finish. We wish Anne all the very best for a long and happy retirement! ■





# HOME LESS NESS

**Young people  
excluded by  
their Family**

**The Council sees  
around eighty  
children aged 16  
or 17 years old  
each year – more  
than one a week**

**T**he largest number of homeless people who need Council help are young people excluded from the family home. Most of these young people are children aged 16 or 17 years old. Most of these young people are from homes owned by the Council and the parents or family excluding them are Council tenants.

#### **WHY DOES IT HAPPEN?**

Evidence shows that the majority of children asked to leave the family home come from a single parent household where a parent has a new partner who moves into the home, or the child keeps breaking the house rules parents have set for the family (these range from not being in by a particular time, not helping around the house or drinking/drug taking), or a young daughter becomes pregnant.

The Council sees around eighty children aged 16 or 17 years old each year – more than one a week. We work closely with a number of agencies who help young people to return home or find somewhere else to live.

Many families go through difficulties of one sort or another and sometimes things are said in the heat of the moment and a child finds themselves out on the street. Many children are able to go and stay with friends or family for a few days and they resolve the difficulty with mum or dad. But some do not and the difficulty remains for a long time, sometimes forever and family members are never reunited.

As a parent you have a responsibility to your children until they are 18 years old. If you find this is becoming difficult you can get advice and support from one of the agencies listed on the left.

Whatever you do, before chucking your child out of your home speak to someone in the Housing Needs team at the Council on 01395 517469. We can help. ■

#### **FOR ADVICE AND SUPPORT**

##### **Citizen Advice Service**

Exmouth: T 01395 264645

E [bureau@exmouth.cabnet.org.uk](mailto:bureau@exmouth.cabnet.org.uk)

Honiton: T 01404 47927

##### **Young Devon**

T 01392 331666

E [yes.exeter@youngdevon.org](mailto:yes.exeter@youngdevon.org)

##### **Community Housing Aid**

T 01392 430228

E [info@communityha.org.uk](mailto:info@communityha.org.uk)

##### **Children and Young**

##### **Persons Service**

T 01392 384444

# Help us review Devon Home Choice

**D**evon Home Choice partners are undertaking a review of the policy that sets out how housing applications are assessed and prioritised. This review is being carried out between September and December 2010. We want to ask you about the changes you would like to see to the policy.

You can view the policy online at [www.devonhomechoice.com](http://www.devonhomechoice.com) by visiting *Useful Information to Download* and selecting *Policy*

*Document.* If you do not have access to a computer and would like a hard copy of the policy please contact Tenant Participation (see page 2).

It would help us if you are able to read the policy and let us know your comments, especially on the items below. Please do this by post or email (contact details on page 2) by Monday 15 November. The results of the review will be printed in the Spring edition of the Housing Standard.

## Get involved – let us know what you think

### ITEM 1

**We currently class young people over the age of 16 as requiring their own bedroom.** Children under the age of 8 of either sex can share a bedroom and children of any age and the same sex can share a bedroom.

This means a 2 year old boy and a 15 year old boy can share. The reason for this is because of the severe shortage of family accommodation and the need to use this resource in the most effective way. *Do you think this is fair? Is it reasonable to expect same sex children to share a bedroom?*

### ITEM 2

**If you are a tenant of a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) anywhere in the country and that landlord has properties in Devon you are deemed to have an automatic local connection with Devon and can bid for any social housing property in Devon.** The reason for this was to encourage RSLs to become partners in Devon Home Choice and to give up their own 'waiting lists'. *Do you think this is fair?*

### ITEM 3

**We have a problem identifying housing need because we do not ask people their first choice area of preference.** This is causing problems with

developers and planning and identifying need to justify housing developments in an area. It is proposed that we change this and ask people when making an application to identify the area they would most want to be housed in. *Do you agree applicants should be asked for their first choice?*

### ITEM 4

**There are five housing need bands: A, B, C, D and E.** Band A is for applicants with the greatest housing need and Band E for those with no housing need. Most allocations are made to people in band A, B or C. A proposal has been put forward for a percentage of allocations to be granted to each band, this may mean that properties could be allocated to people with no housing need. *Do you agree to the proposal?*

### ITEM 5

**There are a number of people on Band E – these applicants do not a housing need and a proposal has been made to automatically delete this application from the housing register when the claim comes up for its annual review.** This would mean that these applicants would need to reapply to be registered for housing. *Do you agree with the proposal?* ■

# Don't get yourself *into* L U M B E R !

**M**ost types of tree are a positive feature, adding character and interest, either to gardens or the general landscape. To maintain a green and pleasant environment in East Devon, the Council does not cut down trees on council housing land, unless they are dead, dying or diseased. However very occasionally we do have to carry out works to trees on communal land around housing or parking areas on our estates, which do not fall into this criteria.

If a tree is causing a nuisance, or is damaged, then please report it to us.



Do not take the matter into your own hands – this is criminal damage and the offender is liable to be prosecuted.

If trees are in your garden, they are your responsibility to keep trimmed, as part of your obligation to maintain your garden. If they are on a boundary between two properties, you can trim back to your boundary. When a property changes tenancy, some work may be done, including tree work, but thereafter it is then your responsibility.

Should you wish to remove any trees or boundary hedges, it is a condition of your tenancy to have our written permission before you carry out any work. ■

Does your garden look like this ...

... or worse?

**R**ecently, a tenant was evicted for allowing her garden to be overgrown with brambles, hedges uncut and grass not mowed. It is a condition of your tenancy to keep your garden clean and tidy, and breaching any clause in your tenancy agreement can result in legal action being taken against you.

In this case estate management staff have been trying to get the garden tidied up, over several months, but very little was done by the tenant. So the Council took legal action and obtained a court injunction to require the tenant to tidy the garden to an acceptable standard.

Unfortunately this only had limited effect, and so further legal action resulted in the Council having a possession order against the tenant. This further chance to tidy the garden was ignored, and so the court awarded the Council an order for the tenant to be evicted.

So please remember a house with a garden needs looking after, and it is your responsibility to do that to an acceptable standard. ■

# Dealing with emergencies: burst and frozen pipes



**W**ith the colder months approaching, it's important to know what to do if you have a burst or frozen pipe. Here are some steps to take when you have an emergency, as well as preventative measures to keep your home's water supply running smoothly.

## 1 TURN OFF THE WATER SUPPLY

First, turn off the main stop tap – this should be under the kitchen sink or where the service pipe enters your home. Then **report it to the Housing Repairs and Maintenance team** on 01395 517458 during working hours or 01395 516854 for out of hours emergencies.

Then drain the system by turning on all your cold taps. If water has been leaking through for some time and the ceilings are bulging, be careful as rooms may not be safe to enter. If you notice the leak quickly you can catch dripping water by using buckets.

## 2 TURN OFF WATER HEATING SYSTEMS

Switch off the central heating, immersion heater and any other water heating systems. If the central heating uses solid fuel, let this die out. Once water heating has shut down, turn on the hot taps to help drain the system.

## 3 TURN OFF THE ELECTRICS

If water leaks near electrics or electrical appliances, switch off the mains immediately. If it is wet, don't touch them!

### FROZEN PIPE EMERGENCY

A frozen pipe could burst or leak. Make sure pipes are lagged if open to the cold. Call us if you need advice. ■



### Contents Insurance

If a burst pipe leaks and water comes gushing through the ceiling it can damage the contents of your home. The Council does not insure your furniture, belongings or decorations against theft, fire, vandalism and burst pipes – you need to take out your own insurance.

Under the Home Contents Insurance Scheme it is easy for you to protect your belongings. This service is available to all tenants and leaseholders of East Devon District Council, provided in conjunction with other Local Authorities and housing providers in the West Country.

Premiums range from £2.11 to £17.24 per month. You can choose a Standard cover or Accidental Damage cover. If you would like an application form please ring Tenant Participation on 01395 517453. ■

# Dealing with Condensation and mould growth

**T**here is always moisture in the air, but if the air gets cold some of this moisture appears as tiny droplets of water. This is most noticeable on windows on cold mornings. Condensation can form on or near windows, in corners, in or behind wardrobes and cupboards. Condensation forms on cold surfaces and places where there is little air movement.

Dampness caused by excessive condensation can lead to mould growth on walls and furniture, mildew on clothes and other fabrics and discolours plastic seals on windows and sealants around baths and basins.

### WHAT CAUSES CONDENSATION?

**Too much moisture being produced in your home** causes condensation. Drying clothes indoors can produce nine pints of water a day. Don't dry clothes on radiators and ensure tumble driers vent to outside, unless they are condensing type without the flexible hose.

Cooking can produce six pints of water a day. Always cook with the minimum amount of water with lids on pans and make sure your extractor fan is working correctly. Running the cold tap first when you bath then adding the hot can reduce steam which leads to condensation by up to 90 per cent – again ensure your fan, if fitted, is working correctly. If you use a bottled gas heater, this can produce four pints of water a day.

**Not enough ventilation** can also cause condensation. You can reduce condensation that has been building up over night by cross ventilation. Open windows to the first latch and leave trickle vents in windows open. Be careful not to over-ventilate by throwing open windows this will cause the temperature to drop and make condensation more likely.

**Cold surfaces** in your home should be minimised as these can cause condensation. Install roof or wall insulation and double glazing.

**The temperature of your home** can also contribute to condensation. It is better to have a medium to low heat level in all the rooms of your home rather than one warm room and all the rest cold. Keeping the heating on a low setting all day in cold weather will help to control condensation, but keep a check on your meters to check how much money it is costing.

### How much water?

Moisture that can be produced in your home

#### DRYING CLOTHES INDOORS



9 PINTS

#### COOKING

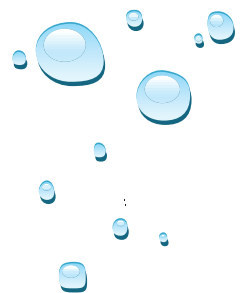


6 PINTS

#### BOTTLED GAS HEATER



4 PINTS



## Estate Walkabouts

**O**ur Estate Management Team identify problems they find on estates as part of their job, as well as dealing with any problems you may face as a tenant.

To maintain standards, we involve tenants and the local police on formal Estate Walkabouts. We are doing walkabouts in October which the results will be reported in the next Partnership News, along with details of our next walkabouts being held in January 2011. If you have any areas that you feel we need to inspect, please call Estate Management on 01395 516551 ext. 2396. ■

### First steps ...



JOHN MOORE

#### **AGAINST CONDENSATION**

Dry any wet surfaces such as window cills and kitchen and bathroom surfaces every morning and wring out the cloth rather than drying it out on a radiator.



AIMEE DANIELLS

#### **AGAINST MOULD GROWTH**

To kill and remove mould wipe down with a Health and Safety Executive approved fungicidal wash and ensure you follow the instructions for safe use. After treatment redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint and fungicidal resistant wall paper paste. ■

## Our commitment to equality and diversity

**E**ast Devon District Council believes that everyone is entitled to be treated with dignity, respect and fairness – regardless of their race, ethnic or national origin, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, age, religion or belief, or political beliefs. We aim to make sure that we do not knowingly create an unfair disadvantage for anyone, directly or indirectly, and by law we must make sure that we do not discriminate against anyone for any reason. Every member of staff has a responsibility to ensure that our Equality and Diversity Policy is put into practice.

Training is given to all staff on their responsibilities under this policy. We also have drawn up Equality and Diversity Commitments for the Housing and Social Inclusion Service. We will take positive action to counteract discrimination in the provision of all our services.

Our Equality and Diversity policy applies to councillors, employees and to everyone who is contracted to provide services on our behalf. Our Complaints Procedure provides a facility for tenants (and residents) to complain if they feel they have been unfairly treated or discriminated against.

To ensure that we are aware of the needs of all our tenants we carried out a 'tenant profiling' exercise last year. We are particularly keen to ensure we know if you have any disabilities and how you wish us to communicate with you, so that we can tailor our services to your needs. Please make sure that you keep us up to date with any changes in your own circumstances so that we can adapt our service to meet your own needs. ■

## Tenant Participation

# Excellent gardens in East Devon



Overall winner Roy Bastin's garden and receiving certificate from Keiron Bewes

**T**enants of East District Council have once again excelled themselves with their creative gardening. This included the new 'Children's Garden' category with a prize of free entry for two adults and two children, kindly donated by Bickton Botanical Gardens. This year was another success with thirty-eight entries.

Kieron Bewes was the judge, using the Royal Horticultural Society judging method. A number of entrants obtained the Gold level. The Tenants Garden Competition is an annual event organised by the Housing and Social Inclusion Service at East Devon District Council. The winners celebrated their efforts with a prize giving tea at the Council Offices in Sidmouth on 2 September.

The sponsors this year were Connaught Partnership Ltd, Skinner Construction, Kieron Bewes Horticultural Consultant, Sidmouth Garden Centre and Jardine Lloyd Thompson Insurance. Raffle prizes were donated by Otter Nurseries, Rio and staff members. ■



Winning garden from Children's Category by Chloe Drake from Branscombe

## 2010 GARDEN COMPETITION RESULTS

### SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Mr Roy Bastin, Honiton 🏆

### OVERALL CATEGORY

Mr Richard Cunningham-Wood, Ottery St Mary (overall winner) 🏆🏆

Ms Angela Bea, Sidmouth 🏆

Mrs Marie Bastin, Axminster 🏆

Mr Eric Hill, Exmouth 🏆

Mrs Shirley Peacock, Sidmouth 🏆

### CHILDRENS GARDEN CATEGORY

Miss Chloe Drake, Branscombe (overall children's winner) 🏆🏆

### BACK AND FRONT CATEGORY

Mr Tom Kimber, Sidmouth (overall winner) 🏆🏆

Mr Richard Ponsford, Broadclyst 🏆

Mr Herbert Trott, Colyton 🏆

Mr Brian Webber, Mrs Angela Webber, Honiton 🏆

Mr Robert Gallagher, Woodbury 🏆

Mrs Sue Dawson, Branscombe 🏆

Mrs Flo Townley, Seaton 🏆

Mrs Patricia Beer, Broadclyst 🏆

### CONTAINERS AND HANGING

#### BASKETS CATEGORY

Mrs Carol Street, Exmouth (overall winner) 🏆🏆

Mr, Mrs Arthur Kellaway, Exmouth 🏆

Mrs Valerie Drew, Exmouth 🏆

Mrs Beryl Wood, Ottery St Mary 🏆

Mrs Wendy Creech, Ottery St Mary 🏆

Mr John Fowler, Sidmouth 🏆

Mr, Mrs Sydney Parkyn, Exmouth 🏆

Mr Mike Smith, Woodbury 🏆

Mrs Edna Millard, Budleigh Salterton 🏆

Mr Mervyn Wackley, Axminster 🏆

#### VEGETABLE CATEGORY

Mr, Mrs Jane Anderton, Axminster (overall winner) 🏆🏆

Mrs Carol Bourne, Sidmouth 🏆

### PERMACULTURE CATEGORY

Mr, Mrs Anthony Vosper, Sidmouth (overall winner) 🏆🏆

Mrs Jenny Jackley, Sidmouth 🏆

Mr Paul Reynolds, Ottery St Mary 🏆

### FIRST TIME ENTRANTS CATEGORY

Mrs Julie Kelleher Broadclyst (overall winner) 🏆🏆

Mrs Rose Rodell Sidmouth 🏆

Miss Amanda Smith, Exmouth 🏆

Mr Rab Butler, Budleigh Salterton 🏆

Mrs T Sandford, Broadclyst 🏆

### COMMUNAL CATEGORY

Mr Bob Marks, Honiton

(overall winner) 🏆🏆

Mr Norman Goodall, Exmouth 🏆

Mrs Flo Townley, Seaton 🏆

OVERALL WINNER 🏆🏆 GOLD 🏆  
SILVER 🏆 BRONZE 🏆