

# HOUSING



# STANDARD

Spring 2011 • Issue 34

Your newsletter from East Devon District Council

Please complete  
and return  
the enclosed  
questionnaire –  
we value your  
feedback!

## Millwey Play Area opens!

Read the full story inside

Also inside:

- 'Silver Surfing' into 2011
- Three new council homes
- East Devon garden competition 2011

SIMON KEEPING

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Consultation has been key in making this project a success, with the play area with lots of new equipment being opened on 25 February (as shown on the front cover).

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New properties in Axminster and Woodbury have been completed, allowing tenants to move in before last Christmas.

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We've taken on board your feedback and have some new categories this year – so why not get involved!

### Booklet on our standards

Enclosed with your Housing Standard for spring is our new booklet 'Our commitments to you'. We hope it will be a useful reference guide for you.

If you have any questions about the booklet please call our Housing Projects Officer on 01395 519982.



### Also inside

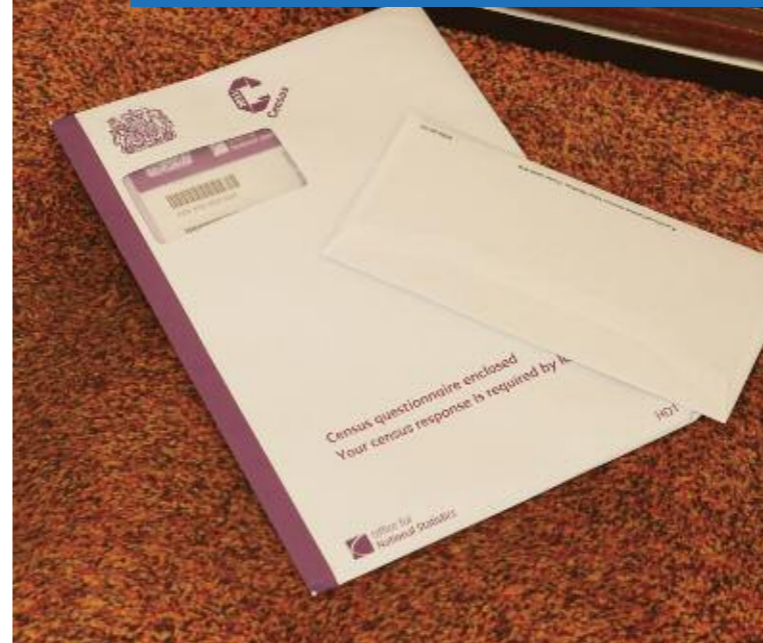
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To request this information in an alternative format or language please call 01395 516551 or email [csc@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:csc@eastdevon.gov.uk)

We consider requests on an individual basis

## Census coming to a letterbox near you!



are available (such as language guidance booklets, large print format, Text Relay, and census field staff on hand, as well as online assistance and telephone helplines).

The census website at [www.2011.census.gov.uk](http://www.2011.census.gov.uk) is

Browse Aloud (text-to-speech) enabled, so that web pages can be read aloud. There's the option to change the size of the text and the colour contrast and to download British Sign Language video and audio guides.

### Collecting the census

Online, posted back or collected by hand – just how will your census answers physically get to be part of history? This is the challenge facing statisticians at the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Because it's a legal requirement for every household in England and Wales to complete a questionnaire, ONS has the complex task of making sure that they have all been returned.

Like most people, if you complete your questionnaire before, on, or as near to 27 March as possible and get it quickly back into the system, you're done. But if you forget to send it off or you need help completing it, you can expect a follow-up visit from a census collector. You'll recognise these people instantly. They'll be wearing an identification badge, normally on a purple census lanyard and carrying a bag with the 2011 Census logo on it (containing spare questionnaires, leaflets and cards). They can also help you complete your questionnaire if you ask.

Complete your 2011 Census questionnaire before, on, or as near to 27 March 2011 as you can. Don't be left out, seek help if you need it at [www.census.gov.uk](http://www.census.gov.uk) or call 0300 0201 101.

You'll easily recognise the questionnaire for the 2011 Census by its purple logo



All residential households in the UK will be taking part in a census during March 2011. Since 1801 a day has been chosen every ten years for this purpose. The census provides an excellent source of information about the population. This enables central and local government, health authorities, and many other organisations to plan housing, education, health, and transport services for years to come.

The census statistics help identify people's needs to help local authorities plan and provide local services, so it is crucial that the population estimate is as accurate as possible. When the questionnaire envelope comes through your door you'll easily recognise it by its purple 2011 Census logo. Take care of it. If, like many people, you choose to complete the questionnaire online you'll need your individual internet code which is on the front of the questionnaire.

The 2011 Census doesn't want anyone to miss out – so there is a wide range of help options that

# Millwey Play Area: a total success



By Sally Hammond, Housing  
Community Development Worker

The site during development and the  
finished play area which was just a  
grassy area prior to construction



**T**he opening of the new play area at Millwey Rise in Axminster on 25 February is the culmination of many hours of planning and consultation and has finally come to fruition with funding from Playbuilder, Devon County Council, and East Devon District Council through its Section 106 participatory budgeting programme.

### A good idea progresses to a great result

Ever since the idea of a new play area at this site was suggested, the local community has taken a keen and very active interest. In fact, without their persistence, this might never have come about at all. They have been involved in selecting the



Children enjoying the new equipment at the Millwey Play Area which includes slides, swings, and a climbing area

**‘Consulting with and listening to the interested parties has been paramount to the project’s success’**

site and in the design and layout of the equipment. This is a community project which will provide some wonderful new play facilities for the young people of Axminster.

In August 2009 East Devon District Council and Axminster Town Council asked residents to vote on where they wanted the £47,000 of Section 106 play money to be spent. Millwey Rise was the top priority of residents.

Local schools also took a very active part in the design of the equipment. Consulting with all the interested parties and listening to what they had to say has been paramount to the project’s success. We are delighted with the result and are sure that you will be too. 🍀

## East Devon District Council Tenant Conference 2011

The Tenant Conference for 2011 will take place on Wednesday 15 June at Exmouth Pavilion. The theme for our fifth Conference is ‘Antisocial Behaviour’. The tenants have suggested this topic as it is a problem that affects a great many people, be they Council tenants or home owners.

The all-day conference will consist of talks by John Golding, Head of Housing and Social Inclusion and Brian Moore, an informed and entertaining speaker. There will also be ample opportunities to speak and question officers from the various Housing Departments. The Premium Drama group will enact realistic and interactive scenarios, which will run alongside the programmed items.

We anticipate this year’s Conference will be the best yet; the venue is perfect and the programme exciting. East Devon’s Tenant and Leaseholder Customer Panel have worked hard to ensure the success of the event and hope tenants will come along and take part in an enjoyable and informative day out.

Refreshments and a free lunch will be provided and transport is available to those who require it. For more information please contact Tenant Participation (details on page 2). 🍀



East Devon District Council Chief Executive Mark Williams speaking at last year’s conference

# Running a business from your council home

By Emma Charlton,  
Housing Projects Officer

**For many tenants, such as single parent families or people with a disability, having the opportunity to run a business from home can make a significant difference to their employment prospects.**

## Running a business from home checklist

- Write to us to ask permission to run a business from your home; make sure that we have written back giving you permission.
- Make sure that you have obtained all other necessary permissions from other agencies.
- Let us know, in writing, of any changes to your business activities.

The current coalition government is keen to support tenants to set up and run businesses from home. For many tenants, such as single parent families or people with a disability, having the opportunity to run a business from home can make a significant difference to their employment prospects. We recognise that many of our tenants may wish to work from their homes and aim to encourage this where possible, with our written permission.

### What is meant by ‘running a business’?

This usually means that you produce something or provide a service which is not for your own or your family’s use, and you get some kind of payment for your product, produce or service.

### What sort of work would be considered appropriate?

There are a variety of businesses which you could consider running from your home such as child minding services, part-time typing or cleaning services. We are likely to refuse permission for any businesses which involve repairing motor vehicles, storing hazardous materials, or involve customers or clients visiting or delivering to the home in such numbers that will disturb neighbours.

### Are there any organisations that can help me get started?

Some local banks will have sections specialising in helping people to set up a small business. You may find the websites of NFEA ([www.nfea.com](http://www.nfea.com)), the Federation of Small Businesses ([www.fsb.org.uk](http://www.fsb.org.uk)), and Business Link ([www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk)) helpful.

### Do I need permission?


If you are thinking of starting a business from your home you need to obtain our written permission first. We won’t unreasonably withhold permission, but we are likely to refuse permission if it will cause a nuisance to neighbours, damage the property, or does not meet the requirements of other agencies. Please write to: Estate Management, East Devon District Council, Knowle, Sidmouth, EX10 8HL. We will reply to your letter within ten working days. Our intention is to give consent where possible but should we have to refuse permission to run the business we will explain the reasons why.

### Do I need to do anything else?

You must obtain any necessary permission from other agencies such as planning permission or a CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) check. You must meet any health and safety requirements. You should notify our Council Tax and Business Rates sections, and if applicable, Housing Benefits.

You should also consider your insurance position, including home contents policies and whether you need to have any public liability or professional indemnity insurance. We will ask to see a copy of your insurance before giving our permission.

### What should I do if I am already running a business from my home?

If you are running a business and do not have our written permission to do so, you must write to us immediately and ask for our permission. If we have to refuse permission we will explain why and you will have to cease running the business from your property immediately. 



## Feedback from Housing Review Board and Housing drop-in sessions in 2010

Tenants have shown an interest in the issues raised during the sessions (Aylesbeare shown above), which have been passed to the relevant departments to be dealt with.

### ■ BUDLEIGH SALTERTON, FEBRUARY:

- Shower/wet room required
- Slippery footpath
- Faulty kitchen cupboards
- Rotten rear fence
- Concerns about rent increases
- Overcrowding in property
- Query about a loft conversion
- Downsizing enquiry
- Temporary accommodation enquiry

### ■ COLYTON, APRIL:

- Required repairs
- Housing transfer enquiry
- Trees need to be cut back
- Bathroom upgrade request
- Untidy garden reported
- Door replacement enquiry

### ■ HAWKCHURCH, MAY:

- Parking problems
- Report of empty council property
- Permission request for bee hives

### ■ WHIMPLE, JUNE:

- Downsizing enquiry
- Mutual exchange enquiry

### ■ AWLISCOMBE, AUGUST:

- Required repairs
- Drains blocked on highway

### ■ AYLESBEARE, OCTOBER:

- Parking problems

### Dates of next drop-in sessions:

- Churchill Court, Lymptone: 25/3/11, 10 am
- Park Close, Woodbury: 28/4/11, 2 pm
- Lymbourne Community Centre, Sidmouth: 11/5/11, 4.30 pm

# 'Silver Surfing' into 2011

When the East Devon Housing Support Services Team took part in the National 'Silver Surfers Day' in 2009, we had no idea that this was just the start of much bigger things to come!

By Amy Gilbert,  
Support Services Manager

Over a hundred of our residents living in sheltered accommodation took part in 'Silver Surfers Day' in 2009, a nationwide campaign to encourage elderly residents to get to grips with technology.

This event saw them able to take part in a variety of activities including testing their co-ordination on a Nintendo Wii and having their first lesson with local school children in using the internet. We were overwhelmed with the number of residents who showed an interest in the campaign and we suddenly received request after request for some sort of IT training.

Through this project residents realised the benefits of the internet as an aid to keep them independent at home. We showed them how to do their shopping and order prescriptions from the comfort of their arm chair, as well as introducing them to social networking. This saw many of them find long-lost friends or family members as well as make new ones.

We also introduced technology such as the Nintendo Wii as a form of exercise that residents can participate in without leaving their own front room. We invited local school children along to demonstrate how the equipment worked and residents were given the opportunity to try out some all time favourite sports such as bowling, tennis and even have a go at boxing!

Pamela Titley, aged 89, a resident of one of our Sheltered Housing schemes, was so impressed by what she saw on Silver Surfers Day that she recently asked for a Nintendo Wii for Christmas. Her family were only too happy to oblige, and

Pamela now takes time every week

to exercise on her Wii at home which she says has improved her general health and flexibility.

## Success paves the way for bigger events

Following the success of the 2009 Campaign we were determined to beat this by an even bigger day for 2010. Again we invited local school children along to help and this time we introduced our residents to the world of Skype. We found residents who had family or friends abroad that may be able to use the facility and arranged Skype calls on an international level. Residents were excited to be able to actually see their families, many of whom have been living abroad for a number of years.

One particularly rewarding case was a resident who Skype called his niece living in New York. He had not seen her for a number of years, as poor health prevents him being able to fly over and visit her. The resident and his niece happily chatted away face to face, with him even being able to get a guided tour of her brand new apartment in New York City.

We also held a 'Mobile Phone Surgery' where we helped residents get to grips with their gadgets. Students of Exmouth Community College assisted in one-to-one support to help residents to find out

The first IT tutorial session held in Lymstone >



how their phones worked. One of the biggest concerns expressed by families of our residents is that they have brought their mother or father a mobile phone but they never see the benefit of using them! We aimed to show residents how knowing how to use this device could one day get them out of a tricky situation.

## A clear demand

After the success of the 2010 Silver Surfers Day, it was clear there was demand for a regular opportunity for residents to surf the net and have access to such facilities. We set about teaming up with Brixington Primary School who very generously offered us the use of their state-of-the-art IT suite for one afternoon a month. We could bring along our residents and they would be tutored by the school children. This has now been running for a number of months and we have seen a great demand for the sessions.

The project has been spear-headed by Mobile Support Officer Andy Austin who has successfully built up a successful partnership which gives the

**'It's been particularly rewarding for us to see residents embrace these new technologies and use them as an aid to keeping their independence'**

school children the benefits of working with the elderly of our society as well as giving our residents a chance to learn from the young and enjoy a trip out once a month. The 'sense of community' this has created is unique and is something that we would like to continue building.

## Success with government grant

With the growing popularity of these sessions we became aware of the 'Digital Unite' government grant available to local authorities to build further on this initiative. We submitted a number of bids for the grant that were centred on demonstrating how our Sheltered Residents would benefit from the funding. We were delighted to be successful on our bids for Clayton House Community Centre in Exmouth and Churchill Court Community Centre in Lymstone. We have been awarded funding to purchase our own IT equipment and have the expertise of an IT tutor who is running the sessions that are now in high demand every Tuesday and Thursday throughout February and March.

The sessions are designed around the needs of the individuals and together with the tutor our residents decide what area of computers they would like to learn more about. We are seeing some residents learning the very basic skills such as how to operate a mouse as well as residents who have expressed a wish to look up ancestry and are setting about tracking down long lost family members. We have also teamed up with the local Police Community Support Officers who are keen for us to use the sessions to promote how local residents can access information on the police as well as report crimes and get in touch with their local Support Officers.

It's been particularly rewarding for us to see residents embrace these new technologies and use them as an aid to keeping their independence. If you would like any further information on these initiatives please contact Amy Gilbert on 01395 516551 ext. 2314. 🌱

# Three new council homes

We are delighted to announce that three new council homes came into our ownership in December 2010 and the tenants were able to move in just in time for Christmas

By Paul Lowe,  
Housing Enabling Officer

These new properties have meant that we have been able to house three local families from the Devon Home Choice Register. A further fifteen properties are being built which have over £900,000 investment support from the HCA. These new properties should be occupied by the end of March 2011. 🌱

Two new two-bedroom flats have been built at Heals Field, Axminster, using £113,000 of investment from the Homes and Community Agency (HCA), the national housing and regeneration agency for England.

ABOVE: Construction at the Heals Field plot and the finished properties  
BELOW: Exterior, kitchen, and interior of the Vickery's Cottage property



The flats have been designed by architects Charles E. Ware and built by R.G. Spiller Ltd. They have been built to Level Three of the Code for Sustainable Homes. They have solar panels and high insulation, making them thermally efficient and cheaper to run.

The two-bedroom house in Woodbury has been purchased using Section 106 money, funds that come to the Council as a result of other developments and which is to be used specifically for providing affordable housing.



## Mobility Scooters

Articles by Chris Brookbank,  
Programmed Works Officer

Before purchasing, please consider that East Devon District Council will not provide sheds, shelters, ramping or charging points – these must be provided by yourself.

**Where will you store your powered scooter when it is not in use?** You will need to keep it secure and safe, ideally in a garage or shed. You need to get permission and advice from your Housing Officer before you buy a scooter if you are going to keep your scooter indoors. Remember you must not store your scooter in a hallway that would block fire escape routes for

yourself or anyone else. It is advisable to have a fire safety check done by the local Fire Brigade to make sure there are no risks involved with where you intend to store your scooter.



**Where will you charge the batteries?** You will need access to a power supply so you can recharge the batteries of your scooter. Ideally you should charge the batteries overnight. If you have any queries about mobility scooters please contact Chris Brookbank on 01395 516551 ext. 2408 or email [cbrookbank@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:cbrookbank@eastdevon.gov.uk). 🌱

## Things to remember about your home

### ■ Using Loft Spaces

In most council homes there will be hatches in the ceiling to allow access to the roof space or loft. These are for authorised use only by Council staff and contractors.

You must not use the loft space in the home without our written consent. We accept no liability should you use the loft space and cause damage to any services such as electric cables, water pipes, insulation or ceilings, or for any damage that may be caused to personal items, personal injury to yourself, any member of your household or any visitors. Any such damage will be recharged to you.

In exceptional circumstances

we will give permission for you to use the loft space, but you need to obtain our written permission beforehand. For further information or to make a request, please contact Chris Brookbank on 01395 516551 ext. 2408 or email [cbrookbank@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:cbrookbank@eastdevon.gov.uk).

### ■ Drain Blockages

Sometimes the foul drain servicing your home gets blocked. In most cases, blockages are caused by inappropriate materials being flushed into the system. Only organic waste and toilet paper should be flushed down your toilet. Please ensure that none of the following items are

disposed of by flushing down the toilet or through the foul drain:

- Disposable nappies
- Sanitary products
- Incontinence pads
- Surgical dressings
- Cotton buds
- Cleaning materials and cloths
- Plastic goods
- Polythene bags or packaging
- Paper kitchen towels

All the above items can be disposed of using your household refuse collection, except surgical dressings which should be packed in special clinical waste bags available from your GP, carer or hospital.

If your drain becomes blocked and it is identified that inappropriate items were the cause then you will be recharged for the cost of unblocking the drain. 🌱

## Tenant Participation

# East Devon 2011 garden competition

As a result of feedback received from you, we have made a few changes to the tenant and leaseholder garden competition by adding a few extra categories; there are now eleven categories to choose from. For each category there will be Gold, Silver, and Bronze winners. Prize money of up to £50 can be won.

Our sponsors this year includes Kings Garden Centre in Exmouth and St Bridget Nurseries in Clyst St Mary. This competition could not take place without the contributions from our sponsors, for which we are very grateful. **The closing date for entries is Monday 15 June 2011.** The judging will take place on 1 and 2 August.

## Competition categories

**Best Overall Garden:** the best display of flowers and vegetables

**First Time entrants:** the most innovative and creative first time entry

**The Recycled/Organic Garden:** the garden that makes the best use of recycled material and encourages wildlife

**Best Back Garden:** the best display of flowers or best original feature

**Best Front Garden:** the best display of flowers or best original feature

**Containers and Hanging Baskets:** category includes tubs, hanging baskets, window boxes

**Communal and Friends Together:** tenants working together to make the very best of their communal area

**Youth novelty garden/grow your own:** best small area designed and maintained by a child under the age of 14 (this can be a vegetable or flower garden, or tallest sunflower)

**Best Lawn:** judged on design and maintenance

**Vegetable Garden:** the best use of space and best vegetable garden (this could be vegetables grown in pots or tubs or in a traditional setting)

**Disabled Garden:** the best garden designed and maintained by a gardener with a disability

## Garden Competition Entry Form

I would like to enter the following:

- Overall Garden
- First Time Entrants
- The Recycled/Organic Garden
- Back Garden
- Front Garden
- Containers and Hanging Baskets
- Communal and Friends Together
- Youth Novelty Garden/Grow Your Own
- Best Lawn
- Vegetable Garden
- Disabled Garden (wheelchair/seated gardeners, single handed gardeners or visually impaired gardeners)

Please indicate any special features you would like to be taken into account by the judges (for example steep slopes, grass/hedges maintained by the Council, etc.):

**Rules:** I agree to abide by the rules of the competition. Only one prize will be awarded per household. Judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into if there is a dispute. I give my permission to publish my photo along with my name and address (excluding house number) in future newsletters if chosen to do so.

Name: .....

Telephone: .....

Address: .....

Your signature: .....

Date: ..... / ..... / .....

PLEASE RETURN TO: Tenant Participation, East Devon District Council, Knowle, Sidmouth, EX10 8HL



## Grow your own potatoes project

This project teaches children about how potatoes grow and how they fit in to a healthy balanced diet. **If you are aged 5-11** please enter the garden competition and we will send you a **free** potato growing kit, which is supported by the Potato Council. Stocks are limited so apply early.

