



Potential Rent Increase



Voter ID



Condensation and Mould

February 2023
Issue 7

Tenants' Open Voice

for tenants of Lewes District and Eastbourne



Are you insured?



Congratulations to Debbie Twitchen MBE

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Food Partnerships

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Tenants Open Voice Issue 7



Gary Hall

Welcome to 'Tenants' Open Voice', the joint newsletter for the tenants of Eastbourne and the Lewes District. I hope you enjoy this Winter edition. We would love to hear your thoughts (good or bad) so please feel free to share your views by emailing: tenant.involvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

I'm afraid the messages we must share are not becoming much brighter in the current climate. The cost-of-living issues everyone faces continue to be a source of concern, but as I mentioned last time, help is available, and you'll see many money saving ideas in the excellent 'Community Living Well' magazine collated by Jo Wunsch. Tenants will also be receiving a leaflet with the new rent

notification in February, setting out all the help the Council has available to assist you. We recognise that the last thing you will want to hear is that your rent is increasing, but across all areas of the economy prices are rising, with inflation at around 10 -11%. In the past rent has been pegged to just above current inflation, but to limit a considerable increase, the Government has instructed Local Authorities to stick to a maximum 7% increase. We realise that if this is passed onto you, our tenants, it will be a further burden, but the costs that we are incurring are some way more than this and will still represent a challenge to how we provide our services to you. These are difficult times, but we are here to help you.

As always, we want to hear your views and for you to get involved in developing our services. Until next time, stay safe and take care.

Kind Regards

Gary Hall BA(Hons), FCIH, MinstLM
Head of Homes First, Lewes District Council and Eastbourne Borough Council



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Tenants Open Voice is compiled and edited by Harry Hillery (Tenant Involvement) and is designed in-house by Printing Services for Lewes District and Eastbourne Borough Councils.

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Congratulations to Debbie Twitchen

for her MBE award in the New Year's Honours



Debbie has been Chair of the Tenants of Lewes District (TOLD) representing Council tenants for 8 years. She also chairs the Landport Residents' Association, has managed the Landport Foodbank since 2012, and is closely involved in the Landport Community Hub and Pippa's Group, a charity which supports local children and families. Councillor Zoe Nicholson, Deputy Leader of Lewes District Council, paid tribute by saying: "I am delighted Debbie has received this well-deserved recognition for her enduring and varied voluntary service encompassing years of tenant engagement work. I commend her for her

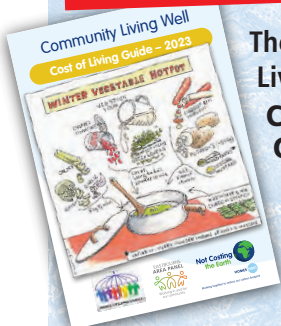
incredible community spirit and for speaking

out and taking action on behalf of others who most need our help such as those who are vulnerable or on low incomes."

Debbie Twitchen said: "I firmly believe this award is for everyone who works in any voluntary capacity, and I am truly grateful that the work of voluntary and community groups and organisations have been recognised in this way. Their work is needed now more than ever, and I thank each and every person who offers-up their time in support of others."

An MBE is a Member of the Order of the British Empire and is awarded for an outstanding achievement or service to the community which has had a long-term, significant impact.

Included with this issue...



The Community Living Well Cost of Living Guide 2023.

Potential rent increase

from April 2023

Due to the significant increase in the cost of providing services, it will be recommended that the Council's make a 7% increase to rent charged from the start of April 2023. We recognise the impact this increase will have to many tenants, but we have kept the proposed rise as low as possible and in line with the limits set by Government. To help cushion the impact we are also enhancing the level of support available to those who might struggle to pay the increase.

Help available

You might be able to claim Housing Benefit or additional payments through Universal Credit to help meet housing costs. If you already claim Housing Benefit your payments should be adjusted automatically, but if you receive help with housing costs through Universal Credit, you will need to contact the Department of Work and Pensions to ask for your claim to be re-assessed. The Councils have put a wide range of support schemes in place in addition to those introduced by central Government and our partners. You can find out more on our website – www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk – by

using the search words 'help with the rising costs of living' in the search box.

How are housing services funded?

The money used to pay for our landlord services must, by law, be kept separate from the other funds used to pay for Council services, in a budget called the Housing Revenue Account. It's your rent and the service charges you pay for communal cleaning or electricity, which goes into this account, and what's raised must cover the costs of delivering all maintenance, tenancy management and staffing costs. Government rules dictate that any increase in costs must be met by either increasing rents and charges, providing services at a lower cost, or by reducing services. We continue to work hard to control costs, but money has to continue to be spent to keep your homes safe, in a good state of repair and well managed. Any increase to the rent will provide extra money in cash terms, but we may still need to face tough choices regarding the repairs and

improvements we can deliver in the future. It now costs 15% more to buy materials for repairs and maintain our housing stock than it did a year ago, which means we have to pay much more to keep homes in a good state of repair. As always, we are fully committed to consulting our tenants further about these choices.

Next steps

A 7% rent increase will be proposed at Council meetings in February 2023, and a decision made on whether to adopt the 7% increase or make changes. Whatever the outcome, we will then write to tenants giving four weeks' notice of any approved rent increase and how this affects the rent and service charge you pay. If adopted, the rent increase will apply from April 2023.

Voter ID

The UK Government has introduced a requirement for voters to show photo ID when voting at a polling station at some elections, and this will apply for the

first time in England at the local elections on Thursday 4 May 2023.

Which forms of ID can I use to vote?

You may already have a form of photo ID that is acceptable, as you can use any of the following:

- Passport
- Driving licence (including provisional license)
- Blue badge
- Certain concessionary travel cards
- Identity card with PASS mark (Proof of Age Standards Scheme)
- Biometric Immigration document
- Defence identity card
- Certain national identity cards

For more information on which forms of photo ID will be accepted, visit electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID.

If you don't already have an accepted form of photo ID, or you're not sure whether your photo ID still looks like you, you can apply for a free voter ID document, known as a Voter Authority

POLLING STATION



Certificate.

You can apply for this at: voter-authority-certificate.service.gov.uk.

If you need any help with applying for a Voter Authority Certificate or want to request a paper application form, contact the council:

Lewes

Email: electoral@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk or telephone: 01273 471600

Eastbourne

Email: elections@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk or telephone: 01323 410000

Or visit our website and use the keywords 'voter ID' in the search box: www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk



Condensation and mould

Every winter we get many calls from tenants reporting black mould growth on walls and ceilings. These reports increase during winter with the onset of colder temperatures, and the likelihood is that the risk of getting mould will increase as energy costs rise and we all try to reduce using our heating.

It is important to understand that there is a difference between mould caused because of property defect, and mould caused by condensation.

Moisture is always present in the air, but when temperatures cool, the air is not able to hold as much moisture and tiny drops of water appear, and this is condensation. It mainly happens during cold weather and appears on cold surfaces where there is little air movement. You'll find it in places such as the corners of rooms, near and on windows or behind cupboards and wardrobes, and it's in these areas that black mould can start to appear.

To manage condensation and mould we need to work with you. There are some simple things you can do that can make a big difference to reduce air moisture levels in your home, and these are:

- Put lids on your saucepans
- When the kitchen or bathroom is being used, close the doors, and open the windows
- Dry your clothes outside
- If using a tumble dryer make sure it is a vented to the outside.
- If you must dry clothes indoors, put them in the bathroom, shut the door and keep the window open
- Mop up any condensation every day, particularly from windowsills.
- Keep furniture away from walls, particularly external walls
- Heat your home more evenly i.e., low level heating all day rather than short blasts – this should also reduce your heating bill
- Most windows have small trickle vents in the top of the window frame – keep these open to increase ventilation.
- Maintain good ventilation of the property as much as possible.
- Ensure that any extractor fans are working and in use at the times they are needed.

These measures should prevent or greatly reduce condensation and mould growth you experience.

When you call our repairs help desk with a damp or mould issue, we will talk to you about it with you so we can understand the severity of the issue and determine the cause i.e., condensation and/or a defect with the property. We will also look at your repair records to see if it is a re-occurring issue.

- If it seems the problems could be related to condensation, we will send you a letter with a leaflet setting out the causes and what you can do to help better manage condensation in your home.
- Depending on the severity and what you tell us, we may raise an order for our contractor to attend to carry out an initial investigation and any immediate works required. They may also give you a spray you can use to wash and treat small areas of mould.
- If this is unsuccessful, we will either raise orders for further works, or send a surveyor out to inspect your home.



- The surveyor will inform you of their findings and works they will organise. They will also outline any further actions you can take to help better reduce air moisture levels in your property.
- The surveyor will schedule a calendar reminder so they can contact you to check how things are.

In cases where mould is found to be mainly due to over occupancy, the housing team will be notified and work with you to support applications for a more suitably sized property.



Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarms

The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022 came into force on 1 October 2022 and these require:

1. At least one smoke alarm on each storey of your home where there is a room used as living accommodation.
2. Carbon monoxide alarms to be installed in any room containing a fixed combustion appliance, except gas cookers. Typically, appliances which are powered by gas, oil, coal, wood, etc., like gas or oil boilers, or log-burning stoves.

The Council is required to ensure smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms are repaired or replaced once we are informed and they are found to be faulty. If your alarms are not in working order, please arrange for the replacement of the batteries. If the alarm still doesn't work after replacing the batteries, or if you are unable to replace the batteries yourself or you have any concerns about your smoke detectors or carbon monoxide alarms, please contact us by telephoning **01273 471600** (Lewes) or **01323 410000** (Eastbourne) where you can speak to an advisor and arrange for a repair or replacement. You can also contact the repairs centre by emailing: homesfjirstcsas@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation

Eastbourne Borough and Lewes District Councils are working towards the DAHA Accreditation for their handling of cases relating to Domestic Abuse. DAHA Accreditation is a UK benchmark which sets out how housing providers should respond to domestic abuse in the UK. By becoming accredited, the Councils are taking an active stand to ensure delivery of an effective response to domestic abuse and provide the best possible outcomes for survivors and their families. The accreditation framework sets out eight priority areas that are needed to deliver safe and effective interventions in domestic abuse cases and builds in processes that guide staff to address the needs of survivors and hold perpetrators to account.



Ray Brickley, who was recently recruited as project lead for the DAHA Accreditation process, said:

"I am extremely proud to help lead the organisation towards achieving the DAHA Accreditation and with it help to ensure that survivors and their families feel empowered and supported by Eastbourne Borough and Lewes District Councils throughout their journey. We will continue to strive for the best possible outcomes for them and their families."

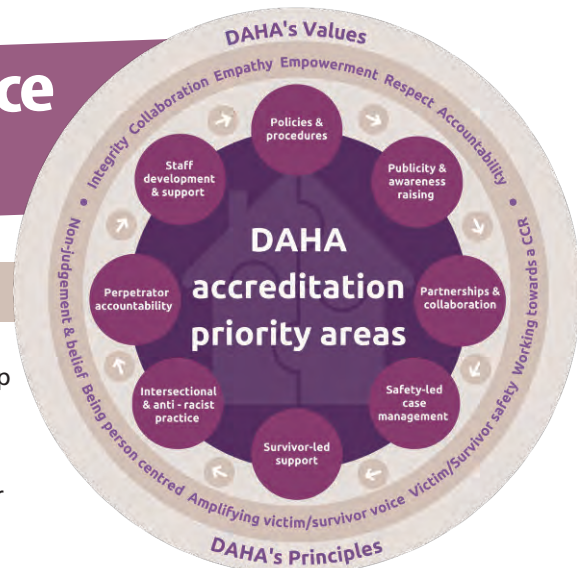


What Is Domestic Abuse?

Domestic abuse is defined as a pattern of behaviour in a relationship used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. Abuse is physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats that influence another. This includes behaviours that frighten, intimidate, terrorize, manipulate, hurt, humiliate, blame, injure, or wound someone. Domestic abuse can happen to anyone and knowing what abuse is helps us all to recognise it when it happens. Whatever form abuse takes, it's never justified, and any behaviour that demeans, frightens or distresses must stop. We can all do something to keep people in our communities safe.

Anyone experiencing domestic abuse, or anyone who knows someone who is, can:

If in immediate danger, call 999 and ask for the police. If you can't speak



and are using a mobile, **press 55** to have your call transferred to the police. Additional support and guidance can be found:

On our website – use the keywords 'domestic violence support' in the search box.

www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-abuse-how-to-get-help

REFUGE

www.nationaldaheline.org.uk or call **0808 2000 247**

ENOUGH.



HM Government

Late last year, the Home Office announced that victims of crimes such as domestic abuse and sexual assault will be better protected following arrests of perpetrators under new provisions collectively known as 'Kay's Law'. The reforms, which came into effect in October 2022, will mean police have a duty to consider the views of victims before releasing someone on bail. Police will be encouraged where it is necessary and proportionate to use a pre-charge bail instead of releasing suspects under investigation. Kay's Law forms part of measures to support victims of crimes. This includes the 'Enough' campaign which aims to provide bystanders with a range of safe ways to intervene if they witness an incident of violence against women and girls.



Say something - You can show your disapproval at what is going on for example, by not laughing and saying, "I don't think that's funny". Or you could be more direct, if you feel it's safe to do so, by saying it's unacceptable and tell them to stop.

Tell someone - You could tell someone in charge, like the bar staff if you're in a pub or club or the train guard or bus driver if you're on public transport.

Offer support - You can ask the victim if they're OK. You could capture what's happening on your phone and ask if they want the footage to report the incident, and you could offer to help report it.

Provide a diversion - Sometimes what is best in the moment is creating a distraction to interrupt what's happening and give the person being targeted a chance to move away or create an opportunity for others to get help by delaying what is happening.

You can find out more about the Enough campaign online at: <https://enough.campaign.gov.uk/>

Your Food Partnerships



Do you want to find out more about getting better access to food that's good for our health, communities, and our planet?

Are you interested in being part of a Good Food movement that brings people together through the joy of growing, cooking, and eating food?

If your answer to these questions is yes, then your local Food Partnership is here to help...

The Lewes District Food Partnership

During the pandemic a dedicated group of individuals (made up of chefs, nutritionists, environmentalists, local business owners, community activists and many others) came together over long zoom meetings to hash out what a Food Partnership should look like for Lewes District. One thing was very clear; our food systems are fragile, and this was made especially apparent during Covid-19. We all became used to the sight of empty shelves at the supermarkets, and news stories about panic buying and the increase in food bank use across the country. And so, the idea of a Lewes District Food Partnership (LLFP) was hatched with the objective of creating better food systems for people and the planet. LDFP believes we can build resilience by strengthening our communities and making the most of the assets we have on our

doorstep. The Grow, Cook, Eat Network is a group of community projects which focuses on the benefits of sharing food and skills, and coming together with neighbours to eat and share harvests. We believe we are stronger together, and there are plenty of opportunities to volunteer, learn from each other and collaborate.

It can be hard to decide on what actions we must take when there are so many issues competing for the top spot, but making sure everyone has access to healthy and accessible food that's also good for the planet is something we cannot afford to postpone. LDFP has a clear agenda for what we want to achieve for a sustainable, local, and equal food system in Lewes District, and we invite you to add your voice to the movement by signing up to the Food Charter at: lewesdistrictfoodpartnership.org/get-involved

For more information, email: info@lewesdistrictfoodpartnership.org or check the website: www.lewesdistrictfoodpartnership.org



The Eastbourne Food Partnership

Much like its partner in the Lewes District, the Eastbourne Food Partnership brings organisations, communities and individuals together to create food systems that work better for both local Eastbourne people and the planet. We believe that everyone in the Eastbourne area should be able to enjoy Good Food and participate in a diverse, equitable and sustainable local food culture.

Get involved

We want to get more people growing, cooking, and eating tasty and nutritious food and vegetables in Eastbourne. If you want to get your fingers in the soil and 'grow a row' for our Eastbourne communities, then use this QR code to find out more.

For more information, email: nancy@eastbournefoodpartnership.org.uk or check the website: www.eastbournefoodpartnership.org.uk
Facebook: [@eastbournefoodpartnership](https://www.facebook.com/eastbournefoodpartnership)
Twitter: [@ebgoodfood](https://twitter.com/ebgoodfood)
Instagram: [eastbournefoodpartnership](https://www.instagram.com/eastbournefoodpartnership)





Eating seasonally The mighty leek



Eating seasonally is a wonderful opportunity to connect with natural rhythms, as well as being kinder on the planet and our wallets. As the winter months draw in and we reach for our blankets ready for hibernation, many of the vegetables too are nestling underground for the season, and earthiness and comfort take over the freshness and flashiness of summer vegetables. The season's unsung hero is the humble leek. Cheap and surprisingly nutritious, leeks are above all very tasty. Gently fried in butter or oil over a low heat or – even quicker – zapped in the microwave, they will add sweetness and silkiness to your winter meals.

Did you know?

The darker green tops of leeks are perfectly edible and packed with vitamins and fibre. Make sure to separate the dark green from the lighter parts so that you can give the darker greens a little more cooking time. Always wash the leeks after you've sliced them by soaking in a bowl or rinsing in a colander to get rid of any pesky grit.

Top Tip

Microwave your leeks - thinly slice and wash the leeks (discarding the very ends) and place the dark green parts in a microwave-safe dish or bowl with a splash of water (1-2 tablespoons). Cook on high for two minutes then stir and add the rest of the sliced leeks for a further four minutes, stirring every two minutes. Ready to stir into mash, pasta or rice, or pile on toast with some butter and salt.

Not Costing the Earth



The Not Costing the Earth project, launched two years ago and led by Jo Wunsch, has now ended. The initiative covered a wide range of carbon footprint reducing themes and worked with the Homes First programme to explore how to go about decarbonising our housing stock. The project was a great success and achieved the following:

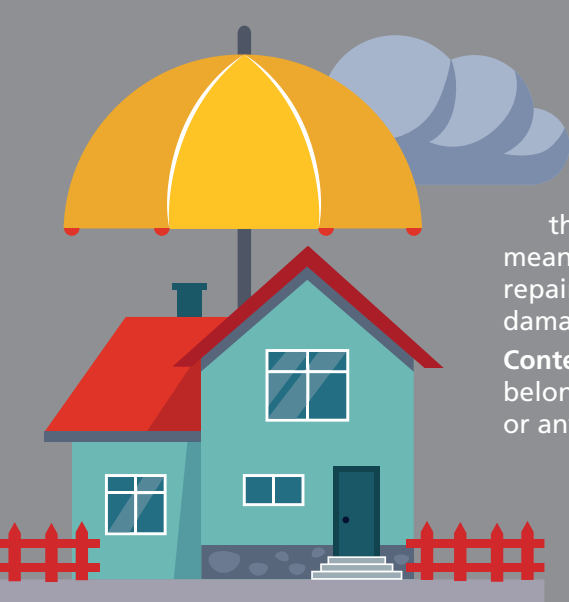
- Energy saving - food waste reduction and money saving tips were promoted and featured in Tenants' Open Voice and the Retirement Newsletters.
- Community Growing - a new Community Growing policy, guidance, and application process for community projects on housing land was developed and piloted with the help of the Peverell's Community Garden. Community gardens help lower the carbon footprint of neighbourhoods by providing locally grown food, increasing biodiversity, and improving soil health.
- Neighbourhood food growing and wildlife planting took place on the DeMontfort Estate and at Saxonbury House in Lewes.
- Close working relationships were established with the Eastbourne and Lewes District Food Partnerships to develop food strategies for both the Borough and the District and the activities of community services and groups offering energy saving advice, repairing, or growing activities were promoted.
- Tenant surveys of renewable technologies such as Air Source

Heat Pumps and Solar PV were conducted to assess their effectiveness from a user perspective and determine their potential future use in retrofitting houses.

- Production of easy-to-understand user guides for households and retirement schemes with renewables or rooftop solar PV.
- Energy case study - 29 households took part, each living in eight architecturally different properties across Lewes and Eastbourne. The study helped us to understand which decarbonisation measures would be most effective, and how energy costs could be reduced and replicated across the Borough and District and other councils in the region.
- Community and neighbourhood events and pop-ups with resources, and climate pledge activities to help reduce waste, costs and encourage food growing took place.
- Coordinating with waste and property teams to consult and engage with tenants and leaseholders on improving recycling facilities at blocks across Eastbourne where bin chutes were being decommissioned.

To mark the end of this exciting project, a Community Living Well booklet is enclosed with this magazine, funded by the Eastbourne Area Panel and TOLD. Tenants who attended the budgeting workshop at the 2022 tenant conference (pictured below) provided many of the useful tips included – thank you!





Are you insured?

Council tenants don't need to worry about buildings insurance as this is the Council's responsibility and the cost of it is covered by your rent. This means that in the event of a fire, water leak or storm damage the Council will repair any damage to the structure of the property and any fittings such as damaged kitchen units or bathroom fittings.

Contents Insurance is different and is needed to protect your personal belongings - items like furniture, household appliances, carpets, and clothes or anything stolen.

Homes First have teamed up with Aviva, the UK's largest insurer, to provide an affordable home contents insurance scheme for our tenants and leaseholders. The package offers exclusive rates and a range of optional extras, including cover for accidental damage. There is also no excess to pay if you need to make a claim, and you can spread the cost with a monthly by Direct Debit from as little as £5 per month. Home contents insurance is important because if something bad happens, the Council is not responsible for the loss or damage of any personal property (whether they belong to you or someone else) no matter how they become damaged. You can find out more about this affordable home contents insurance package on the website www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk by using the keyword 'insurance' in the search box. Alternatively, you can look on comparison sites to find the best value deal. How much you pay will depend on how much your possession are worth, size of your home, location, and the type of cover you choose.



Fire – Case Study

Mr Jones lives with his family in a 3-bedroom house. There was a fire at the property caused by an unattended chip pan. The damage was limited to the kitchen, but it needed a full replacement and all appliances, and other items in the kitchen were damaged. The Council replaced the damaged kitchen units and cleaned up the affected areas, but Mr Jones was responsible for replacing all the household appliances and other belongings that were damaged at a considerable cost because the family had no contents insurance.

Burst Pipe – case study



Mrs Smith lives on the ground floor, and the water tank in the flat above her burst and Mrs Smith's lounge was flooded. The ceiling came down, and her furniture, flooring, and her TV and other appliances were all affected.

The Council

was responsible for repairing the leak and reinstating the ceiling in Mrs Smith's lounge, but it was not responsible for replacing the damaged items. Mrs Smith had to make a claim on her contents insurance for these items, including the flooring.



What are Estate Services?

As some of you will know from the tenant conference last year, we have launched a combined Estates Services approach to working with you and your local community.

Various different teams from within the Council and their contractors all work together to provide a range of services to an area. This could be window cleaning, fly tipping or compliance checks, but together they are Estates Services, and to launch the idea we have developed a dedicated logo which identifies this partnership working.

Households have been sent a newsletter specifically for the zone they live in with contact details for each team and an outline of who to contact in which circumstances. We are also in the process of putting up a revised poster in all our blocks with the same information.

If you haven't received your newsletter for any reason, please contact the Neighbourhood Housing Team on **01323 410000 (Eastbourne)** or **01273 471600 (Lewes)** who will arrange for another one to be sent to you.

HOMES FIRST ESTATE SERVICES

working in partnership with
Neighbourhood Housing • Property Services
Neighbourhood First • Environment First



Tenant Scrutiny team review of the rent arrears service

A thorough review of the service provided to tenants who have fallen into arrears has just been completed, and a report with recommendations will be presented to the Homes First Senior Leadership Team.

To complete the report, the Tenant Scrutiny team conducted a thorough investigation which included reviewing policies, procedures, and communications. They also interviewed Income Maximisation staff and some tenants who had experienced rent arrears, in order to obtain a balanced view. The Tenant Scrutiny Team were very impressed by the proactive approach taken by the Income Maximisation team to try and stop tenants from falling into arrears, and with their commitment to help tenants who had fallen behind with their rent. It became apparent during the investigation that the team maximise the amount of rent collected by ensuring tenants maximise their own income so they can pay the rent. They achieve this by helping tenants' access all of the benefits they are entitled to, by offering budgeting advice and by referral to other agencies who may be able to help. The team see eviction for rent arrears as a last resort and confirmed that this only happens when tenant has done nothing to try to resolve their situation. It was also reported that the team have a higher rent collection rate than other similar housing providers.

The Tenant Scrutiny team had concerns that many tenants still don't engage with the Income Maximisation team until they have high arrears. There was also some concern that some tenants find it difficult to make initial contact with the team, and that there were few opportunities to have face to face meetings with staff now that most continue to work from home. It was felt that the cost-of-living crisis will increase rent arrears and this alongside IT system difficulties might also hamper the work of the team.

There were 18 Recommendations made by the Tenant Scrutiny team which included -

- To positively publicise the Income Management team's key aims i.e., to help tenants to access benefits and maximise their income to encourage increased engagement.
- To investigate ways that tenant calls can be answered and passed to the Income Maximisation team more quickly and efficiently.
- To consider offering virtual face to face meetings when discussing rent arrears with tenants, by using MS Teams for example.
- For all Council staff to work together to produce one document containing up-to-date benefits and grant information with telephone contacts and website links. The document to be reviewed regularly

and included in sign up packs and tenant publications.

- To include in the policy a commitment to send out regular rent statements and upgrade the CX (IT) system as a matter of urgency to allow this to happen. In the interim, make clear to tenants through all channels that an individual rent statement can be requested at any time.

The Tenant Scrutiny Team are pleased to report that many recommendations are already in hand. More details of progress will appear in future editions of Tenants' Open Voice.

If you would like a copy of the Tenant Scrutiny report or are interested in joining the Tenant Scrutiny Team, please email: tenant.involvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

At Homes First we strive to deliver an excellent service, but we recognise that sometimes you may feel the need to make a complaint about one of the services you receive from us as your landlord. We have a process in place to deal with complaints so if there is something you are unhappy with, we can try to put it right.

The Customer Experience team is there to make sure that all Homes First complaints are dealt with professionally and as efficiently as possible. Over the last months, the team have closed 60% of complaints on time, despite a reduction in staffing levels.

We continue to work hard to resolve complaints at Stage 1 within 10 working days and Stage 2 within 20 working days.

You can find out more about how we manage complaints on the website – www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk by using the keywords 'make a complaint' in the search box



Complaints Handling



HOMES FIRST

Eastbourne Area Panel



After the August litter pick, the Eastbourne Area Panel (EAP) held a pop-up event at Kildare Court in Old Town (pictured above) in response to a panel member request. Staff from housing and leasehold services, Environment First, Neighbourhood First and the tenant involvement team attended, and several ideas were explored and followed up in a newsletter.



At the last EAP meeting, Wave Community Bank gave a presentation. Wave are a local community bank offering ethical, affordable FSCS protected loans and savings accounts to people in a way that benefits the local community. You can find out more on their website - www.wavecb.org.uk - or by calling **0300 303 3188** (weekdays 9.30am – 1pm)

Mears were also present to discuss outstanding repair issues, but the focus was on working together on 'social value projects.' Panel members were keen to prioritise employment schemes for local people and self-help seminars enabling residents to do minor repairs themselves safely. Cllr Diplock also attended to share updates on projects going on in the area.

In the last few months, the panel have approved funding applications to help Shinewater Primary School develop their pre-school play area and helped subsidise Tollgate School's outward-bound course for children. The panel also helped fund equipment for the new community space and charity shop in the former TJ Hughes building and ran two children's parties.

Members of the panel have been keen to get involved in the local community. Committee member Jacqui organised Halloween and Christmas parties for children in Langney with panel Chair Andy as Father Christmas. The panel also arranged a residents Christmas quiz, which was a big success. Thanks to all who attended and provided food, which was packaged to share with residents at a Shinewater Santa Grotto supported by the panel.



Eastbourne Area Panel

Residents Voice members were invited to share their views on the development of the Black Robin Farm area as a visitor attraction. Jacqui was able to attend a session and was able to share her views on disabled access – something close to her heart.



Eastbourne Area Panel Dates for the diary

March – Old Town walkabout.
Date to be confirmed.

4 April - Eastbourne Area Panel meeting. St Elisabeths Church, Old Town (to be confirmed).

25 April - Residents Voice meeting. 10.30am-12.30pm at Faraday House, 1 Faraday Close, Eastbourne BN22 9BH

If you'd like to get involved in community events or want to arrange a walkabout with Neighbourhood First or Homes First staff to look at something that concerns you or to discuss an idea to improve your community, get in touch: tenant.involvement@Lewes-Eastbourne.gov.uk

Hampden Park & Willingdon Trees Area Panel

The panel meets on the first Friday of every month at the Hampden Park Community Centre, Broderick Road 10- 12pm and all are welcome. The panel has been able to fund new chairs for the Scouts and following their charity bingo evening, gave a cheque to the local foodbank . More recently the panel has supported the local bowls club and funded a notice board in Hampden Park.



TOLD Tenants of Lewes District

A word from the Chair...

With this edition of Tenants' Open Voice, you'll find a copy of the excellent Community Living Well booklet which was co-funded by TOLD, and contains items and ideas contributed by you. Please keep it handy as it has a wealth of information, you'll find helpful, particularly if you are struggling with the cost of living.



My TOLD colleagues and I are unhappy to have to agree with the proposed 7% rent increase in April. Unfortunately, we recognise that the current climate dictates that all costs across the board have markedly increased, leaving Lewes District Council no other option. We are working hard with the Council to try to minimise the effects that this will have on those not receiving certain support such as Housing Benefit.

Collectively the committee encourages everyone to get involved in the various ways available because your voice is important. We have become aware of repair related complaints being discussed on social media and would urge tenants of Lewes District Council to contact us if they feel that we might be able to help.

To find out more about TOLD's work, you can email me directly: debbietwitchen@gmail.com, check out our new website – www.told.org.uk – our Facebook page or email: tenant.involvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk



Tenants of Lewes District AGM

The TOLD AGM held last October was a great success with many new faces at the meeting. Presentations and discussions took place on the repairs contract, Wave Community bank and social value projects. A new committee was elected, and we welcomed two new members – Amanda Lippiatt and Teddie Walmsley. The TOLD committee team includes:

- Debbie Twitchen** (Chair)
- John Langley** (Vice Chair)
- David Nicolson** (Secretary)
- Sue Wells** (Treasurer)
- Bob Brown • Jenny Dindial**
- Sylvia Gibbs • Bob Hallett**
- Richard Jeneway • Amanda Lippiatt**
- Reny Pulling • Teddie Walmsley**

The TOLD Committee continues to work on your behalf, so if there are any issues you'd like to raise, please don't hesitate. Email: debbietwitchen@gmail.com or toldsec@gmail.com TOLD also manages an annual budget of £20,000 which it uses for community improvements and initiatives. Last year TOLD helped to fund community garden projects, bike sheds and garden furniture, new benches and provided plants for communal gardens. If you'd like to know more, or make an application, email: tenant.involvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

Community Gardens UPDATE

A new community garden is being developed on leased Lewes District Council land attached to **The Peverells Play Park** in the Cradle Hill area of Seaford. The goal is to develop the garden into a place that encourages community food growing, good mental health, wellness, collaboration, and community spirit. An amazing group of volunteers has been preparing the garden for spring, so if you would like to join them or find out more email pevcommunitygarden@gmail.com

Project coordinators Miriam Thundercliffe (Roots Rising CIC) and Dan Ori (GIA CIC) would like to thank LDC for their support, especially Jo Wunsch (Not Costing the Earth) and Councillor Christine Brett.

The **Landport Community Garden** continues to develop thanks to the hard work of helpers, the Open Spaces Team and a successful community improvement application which funded a new shed and base. Volunteer days continue to take place alongside regular drop-ins on the 1st

Saturday of every month. Everyone is welcome - experienced gardeners to those with no growing experience looking to learn and meet like-minded people. Local groups can apply to use the garden to run nature based, health and wellbeing, or other suitable activities in this quiet space.

To find out more, email: debbietwitchen@googlemail.com or check out the Landport Community Hub Facebook page.



Wave Community Bank opens in Lewes

Wave Community Bank continues to run a drop-in service at the Tenants Resource Centre (2A Horsfield Road, Landport, BN7 2TA) on Wednesdays – no appointment necessary. Wave offers a range of savings accounts protected by the FSCS and flexible affordable loans which have a savings element to repayments, so borrowers build a savings pot too. Applying for a loan is quick and easy, and membership offers a range of great benefits including 20% off annual Brighton & Hove Buses tickets and 15% off annual Freedom Leisure membership in Brighton & East Sussex. Membership costs just £5 and £1 to open a savings account.

You can find out more here: www.wavecb.org.uk
Tel: **0300 303 3188** (weekdays 9.30am – 1pm)
Email: info@wavecb.org.uk

Letting us in...



As a condition of your tenancy agreement and when reasonable notice is given, you must allow the Council, or its agents entry to your home to inspect, carry out repairs, improvements or any work considered necessary. If you do not allow access, you could be putting you and your neighbours at risk. The Council will inspect the gas supply and any gas fired equipment which it has a statutory duty to inspect and maintain annually and, the electrics in your property at least every 5 years. You must provide access for these services, inspections, and any resulting repairs needed, again for both your safety and the safety of others. If you fail to give access as requested, you will be recharged any costs incurred as a result of gaining access via the court process.

In an emergency, if your home is not occupied, or access is unreasonably denied, the Council may use reasonable force to gain entry without giving you any formal written notice. An emergency in these circumstances is when there is an imminent risk of harm to either a person or property (this may include a risk to other person(s) or property), such as where there is a suspected fire, burst water pipe, gas leak or electrical fault.

Lastly, if you have any vulnerabilities you believe we should be aware of, you can tell us about these when you call in to report a repair or include the information on the form when reporting a repair online.

The Virtual

300

The Virtual 300 now numbers 149 tenants and the group continues to grow.

In recent months, members have given their views on a range of topics, fed back on policies, chosen logos and judged competitions. It's a really great way that tenants can get involved from home and have their voice heard.

This year we'll be looking at incentivising and rewarding participation in the Virtual 300 which means there's never been a better time to get involved. Why not email tenant.involvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk to get the ball rolling? Anyone who joins the Virtual 300 group by the start of Spring on March 20 will have their name placed in a prize draw to win £50 worth of shopping vouchers.

The Gentle Gentleman

Gerald Shephard of Cumbria Court died at St. Wilfred's Hospice on the 23rd of December, one day after his 84th birthday. He was married to Ruth for over 50 years; they had two sons and he was a proud Grandfather. Gerald was well known to many Eastbourne Homes residents as he held various voluntary positions and gave his time willingly. In the last position he held, as Chair of the Eastbourne Homes Retirement Housing Panel, he arranged various social events at the Age Concern Centre and the Patricia Venton Centre which many residents attended. He also coordinated coffee mornings at the larger schemes and was elected Chair of the Cumbria Court Social Club which he made a roaring success



by organising many events for members, including an annual Christmas lunch at the Langham Hotel which was the highlight of the year. Gerald and Ruth worked very hard to make the club a success and every new resident received a letter welcoming them to their new home with information about how to get involved. After the Councils started working together, Gerald was elected to represent Cumbria Court on the new Retirement Housing Panel, and many residents went to him to voice their concerns regarding services.

Gerald's main interest outside of voluntary work was swimming at Bannatynes Health Club and he was also an avid supporter of Eastbourne Borough Football Club. He went to as many home games as he could, and also pretended to support Brighton and Hove Albion! First and foremost, Gerald was an honest man who held deeply religious views, and both he and Ruth were regulars at King's Church. He was a true friend who valued friendships and was always there if you needed him.

Words by Tom Hastings (Cumbria Court)