

Trouble with Energy Costs

Grounds Maintenance

Food Partnerships

Winter 2021
Issue 4

Tenants' Open Voice

for tenants of Lewes District and Eastbourne



Emergency Repairs

Benefits of Downsizing



Biscuit...

Prize-winning pet photo

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Tenants Open Voice Issue 4



Gary Hall

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

Well, where has this year gone?! It has certainly been a challenging time for everyone but hopefully you are all set for a good, peaceful, and safe Christmas period. In Homes First we continue to work hard to improve services and come out of the COVID-19 period (even though the pandemic is still with us), with new offers, particularly in the areas of our estate work, our environmental offer and in pursuing safety and compliance improvements

across our housing stock. The Council has also been proud to play its part, along with the other local authorities across the country to help to deliver the Afghan resettlement programme. This is a government funded programme but locally we are building a county-wide protocol across East Sussex to ensure appropriate accommodation and support is in place. We will also continue to concentrate on bringing new good quality affordable housing on stream to try and meet the considerable local demand, and look forward to the New Year and further exciting developments coming up. As always, we want to hear your views and for you to get involved in developing our services through a range of ways to get involved.

In the meantime, enjoy the festive season 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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Eastbourne Homes Ltd**



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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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Webchat

With our webchat service, you can avoid the call queues in our busiest periods!

Webchat is a fast and easy way to contact the Councils for assistance and to get the information you need.

Assistants are available between 8.30am and 5pm, Monday – Friday and will be able to assist with quick-queries or signpost you to webpages with the information you need.

Between these times, you can access our webchat service from any page on the website; just click on the 'Chat live with us' tab at the bottom right of the page to start a chat with an Advisor.

You will need an email address, but you don't need to sign up for an account.

You can even request a copy of the chat transcript be sent to you, so that you can easily refer to any instructions or information you are given.

To give it a go, just head over to:

www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk



What is...

condensation

There is always some moisture in the air, even if you can't see it.

It's formed when you breathe or carry out normal daily activities in the home.

Condensation is caused when this moisture comes into contact with cold surfaces and condenses to form dampness or water droplets. Air can contain varying amounts of moisture, and warm air generally holds more than cold air. When warm air comes into contact with a colder surface, it cools and can't hold the same amount of water vapour. Then the excess water is released and forms condensation.

What can you do to control condensation?

• Produce less moisture

- Put lids on saucepans while you're cooking to reduce the amount of steam.

- Avoid drying laundry on a clothes airer or radiator. If you need to dry clothes indoors, open the window and close the door of the room where the clothes are drying, so that moisture can escape outside rather than circulate around your home.

- If you use a vented tumble drier, make sure it's properly vented to an open window or through an outside wall.

• Stop moisture spreading

- While cooking, bathing, or washing, use an extractor fan and/or open a window, and keep the door closed. Keep the extractor fan on and/or the window open for about 20 minutes after you have finished (with the door closed).

- When condensation appears, wipe it away.

• Ventilate moisture away

- Leave trickle vents (slotted vents in the window frames) open when rooms are occupied – even in the winter when your heating is on. These vents provide constant ventilation which removes water vapour.

- If you can, put free-standing wardrobes and other furniture

against internal walls, leaving a gap between the wall and the furniture so that air can circulate around the room. Try not to overfill cupboards, wardrobes, and drawers so that air can circulate around the contents.

• Provide even heating

- Keep your home warm to avoid cold surfaces and remember that it can take a long time for a building to warm up.

- If your home is unoccupied during the day, make sure the timer is set so that your home is warm by the time you return. During very cold weather it's better to leave the heating on during the day to maintain an even temperature. The temperature can be set a few degrees lower while you're out and turned up when you return.

- If you don't usually use all of the rooms in your home, you should still keep them heated to avoid cold areas. It's better to keep all rooms heated to a low temperature than to have some rooms heated to a high temperature while others have the heating turned off.

• Treat mould

- If you notice mould growing in your home, you should treat it straight away to stop it from spreading.

- Clean the affected area with a suitable fungicidal wash (available from most DIY stores) and follow the manufacturer's instructions.

- Check the affected area regularly. If the mould reappears, wash it down again with the fungicidal wash to make sure the area is thoroughly sterilised.

- If the treatment appears to have been successful, you can carry out any necessary redecoration, but if you're painting, use a good quality fungicidal paint to help prevent mould. Remember

that this won't be effective if it's later covered by ordinary paint or wallpaper. If wallpapering, use a paste containing a fungicide to prevent mould growth.

- If mould or mildew is growing on clothing or carpets, you should dry clean them. Don't disturb mould by brushing or vacuum cleaning, as you can increase the risk of respiratory problems.

- To prevent the mould returning, make sure that you control condensation in your home.

• Next steps

- If you need to, you can call Mears (Repairs Contractor) to report the problem. They will then attend to complete a mould wash and complete some basic checks. If further works are needed to investigate the cause of the mould, Mears will ask a Homes First Surveyor to visit to carry out an inspection.

Trouble with energy costs?

Living in a cold home can harm your health and make health conditions like heart problems and asthma in children worse. The East Sussex Warm Home Check service is available all year round and offers free telephone advice and money saving tips for anyone struggling to afford to keep warm at home. You can apply for a Warm Home Check service by texting WARM to 80011, or by calling 0800 464 7307. There's also a website with lots of helpful information:

www.warmeastsussex.org.uk



Tenant Scrutiny

Helping to improve complaints handling

In May our Tenant Scrutiny team completed a review of the Homes First complaints handling service. They looked at performance reports, procedures and evidence provided by tenants who had made a complaint. Staff involved in complaints handling were also interviewed and it was discovered that a small team had recently been established to resolve and learn from complaints. However, the review demonstrated that the service was under resourced which meant staff were struggling to cope and “firefighting” rather than learning from the complaints. A report was produced for the Homes First Senior Leadership Team which acknowledged the hard work of staff alongside 24 recommendations for consideration to improve the service.

We are delighted to report that since May, many of the team’s recommendations have already been actioned -

- Two additional Customer Experience team members have been recruited to resolve housing complaints
- Senior repair managers now meet with the complaints handling team every week to ensure repair related complaints are dealt with correctly and to target. As a result, the backlog of complaints has reduced significantly and there are fewer complaints coming in.
- Tenants who are unable to use the online form to make an official complaint, can now do so over the telephone.
- The complaints handling team anticipate that in the New Year, they will be able to focus more on learning from complaints, spot trends and improve services.

This is a great achievement and shows that when tenants get involved, they can make a difference! In the New Year the Scrutiny Team will be looking at how rent arrears are managed. If you are interested in becoming a member of the scrutiny team, please email:

tenant.involvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

Telephone SCAM Calls

It can be hard to tell the difference between a scam and cold calling. However, it's good to know some of the typical tricks that scammers use so you can be prepared:



Bank scams

Someone may call claiming to be from your bank to say there's a problem with your card or account. The caller will often sound professional and try to convince you that your card has been cloned or that your money is at risk. They may ask for your account and card details, including your PIN number, and even offer to send a courier to collect your card. They may also advise transferring your money to a 'safe account' to protect it. This is a common scam, and your bank would never ask you to do this.



Computer repair scams

A scammer may call you claiming to be from the helpdesk of a well-known IT firm, such as Microsoft. They'll tell you that your computer has a virus and will ask you to download 'anti-virus software', possibly at a cost. This turns out to be spyware, used to get your personal details. Legitimate IT companies don't contact customers this way.



Compensation calls

This is a call from a company asking about a car accident you've had claiming you may be entitled to compensation. Some of these could be genuine companies looking for business, but others are scammers. Don't engage in these calls. If you've had an accident, call your own insurance company on the phone number provided on your policy.



HM Revenue and Customs scams

You may get a call from someone claiming to be from HMRC saying there is an issue with a tax refund or an unpaid tax bill. They may leave a message and ask you to call back. Again, don't be fooled by this. HMRC would never contact you this way and would never ask you to reveal personal financial information such as your bank account details.



Number spoofing

Scammers now have the technology to mimic an official telephone number so that it comes up on your caller ID display (if you have one on your phone). This can trick you into thinking the caller is really from a legitimate organisation, such as a bank or utility company. If you're in any doubt, hang up and call the organisation directly. If possible, call them from a different phone as scammers can keep the phone line open, so that even if you hang up and call the organisation directly, the line may still be connected to the scammer. If it's not possible to use another phone, then wait for at least 10 minutes before you call.



Pensions and investment scams

This is a call about an 'unmissable' investment opportunity, or the opportunity to access your pension cash earlier.



The benefits of DOWNSIZING

One of the lifestyle options some people consider as they get older is downsizing – whether or not to move into a smaller property. Downsizing has a host of advantages including reducing your outgoings on utility bills and retirement properties are also easier to manage, particularly if your degree of mobility starts to lessen. Many people find that downsizing to a retirement apartment can also offer them a warm and friendly community of new people. So, is moving into retirement housing something to think about?

Homes First retirement housing accommodation is designed to help people over 60 years live independently in their own home for as long as possible. For extra peace of mind, there's a 24-hour Lifeline link, a secure door entry system, and a retirement housing advisor service. All homes have their own front door, kitchen, and bathroom, which gives residents the freedom to come and go as they please. There's a wide range of self-contained flats across 18 different schemes and the Lewes District even has some self-contained bungalows. Existing Council tenants wishing to

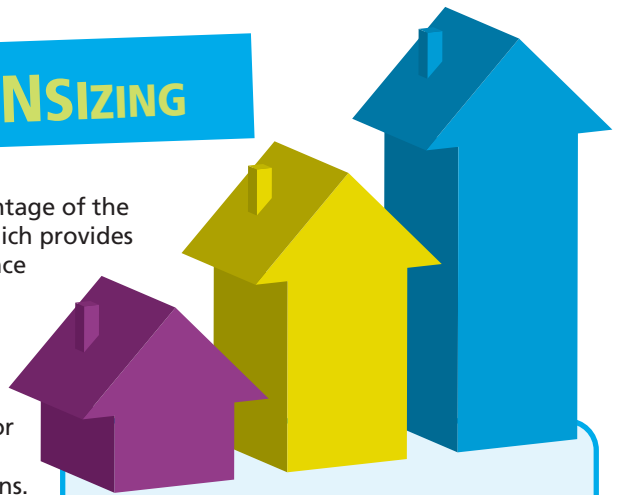
downsize can also take advantage of the tenant's incentive scheme which provides funding to move and assistance with the process.

Each retirement housing scheme has a range of different facilities including:

- a lounge which is handy for entertaining guests or celebrating special occasions.
- a guest room for overnight visitors
- a laundry room with modern washing machines and driers
- beautiful communal gardens.

A Retirement Housing Advisor is also available for housing-related advice so that tenants can manage their tenancy successfully or access additional support services. There are also opportunities for tenants to meet on a regular basis to discuss services and influence changes to improve service delivery.

For more information or to arrange a scheme visit, contact **Mel Carnell**, Senior Retirement Housing Advisor: melanie.carnell@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk



"12 years ago, my daughter suggested I move into retirement housing. I thought it was for old people, and that I was too young, but how wrong was!! Moving into New Derby House was the best decision I made. I've made lots of friends and there are lovely gardens and an excellent social club.

We may be old on paper, but here we're all young at heart and intend to stay that way."

Terry Smart
Chair of the Retirement Housing Forum



Grounds Maintenance

We've been receiving quite a few queries about grounds maintenance, so we spoke to **Mark Tavener** (Idverde Contract Manager) so he could explain some of the issues that have impacted on the service during the pandemic.

"2020 saw the implementation of lockdown in March, and all our services except burials, litter collection and essential maintenance of cemeteries had to stop.

We furloughed 80% of our staff for at least 12 weeks and this meant that 12 weeks of growth had to be caught up with during the growing season. Although lockdown was eased during 2020, staff having to isolate resulted in the loss of many working hours, which severely impacted service delivery. Covid-19 amongst staff, together with isolation, resulted in only a 50% work force on occasions. Operationally we could only have two members of staff in our vehicles, which split the teams and meant some areas could not be maintained

as they should have been.

In 2021, we employed seasonal staff to get us through the spring and summer months, with recruitment starting in January. However, this proved to be a challenging process as few applied for the jobs and those that did were unreliable. We engaged the services of an agency to help us out, but they also had difficulty in recruiting, and the end result was several operatives with no experience. Each time we employ a member of staff either through an agency or our recruitment process a full health and safety induction is carried out and staff need to be kitted out with a uniform and PPE. Despite this time and investment in staff, on occasions they did not show up for work.

This year has also seen 'monsoon' like weather, which proved the perfect growing medium for grass and weeds. No sooner had we cut the grass, it romped away behind our backs, which added to delays in getting the service delivered.

Each year we invest in new machinery, like grass trimmers and hedge cutters, which

generally only last a year due to the amount we have to do with them. The order for new machinery is placed in plenty of time for a March delivery together with the larger equipment that we need. This year the machinery ordered did not arrive until July and even then, orders were not complete. Our suppliers were unable to meet our needs due to the ongoing effect of factories being closed down in 2020, the Suez Canal crisis and Brexit. We normally carry spares and accessories for our equipment but obtaining stock and spares also proved to be difficult. We continue to review our recruitment process and wages to ensure we remain competitive in the industry and find the right people, but we totally understand everyone's frustrations this year and want to thank each and every one for their patience."



Food *partnerships*

Food is at the heart of some of our most pressing social, environmental and economic issues. Poor diets are a leading risk factor for poor health and early death, contributing to the development of many non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and some cancers. The way we produce, process and package food is estimated to contribute around one third of all human-caused greenhouse gas emissions, making food a major consideration in climate change. Many are also experiencing difficulty accessing sufficient nutritious food, with Charity Sustain UK estimating 8.4 million people in the UK are living in food poverty, including 12% of households with children experiencing food insecurity between August 2020 and January 2021.



The good news is that a quiet revolution is going on, and there's a commitment to tackling these issues directly at a local level. Across the country, farmers, food retailers, schools, support organisations, academics, passionate individuals and councils are getting together and forming local food partnerships, with a shared goal

of transforming the local food system for the better.

In Eastbourne and the Lewes District, food partnerships are developing and working collaboratively to:

- improve access to good nutritious local food
- increase opportunities for learning about cooking and growing
- redistribute surplus food and encourage food practices that preserve biodiversity and the environment
- promote prosperous and diverse local food economies and bring joy to communities through food

A major focus for the food partnership work, particularly due to the pandemic, has been the response to food insecurity. The partnership in Eastbourne is co-developing a food strategy, taking a town-wide approach to tackle the underlying issues and plan the broad-scale local action needed. The Lewes District Emergency Food Network is working similarly to allow groups to share resources and information. We know this winter is set to be a difficult one, due to rising costs and the recent reduction in Universal Credit which will leave many households worse off. People are understandably concerned about how they will afford to put food on the table, and for many this is the first time they have asked for help which can feel overwhelming.

Across Eastbourne and Lewes District there are a range of organisations that offer free or reduced-cost food, often alongside other support services. Food banks offer crisis support for those in need, often with a warm drink and additional support and signposting. Some organisations



are also beginning to explore more sustainable alternatives to food banks, such as affordable food schemes and community pantries. In Eastbourne for example, a network of three community fridges in Langney, Seaside and Old Town work together to share quality surplus food with the community, directly tackling food waste and helping residents stretch their food budget that little bit further. For £2, visitors can select up to ten fresh and/or pantry items, and know they are doing their bit for the environment at the same time. There is no requirement to disclose your financial circumstances and everyone is welcome.

In Peacehaven and Newhaven, two community supermarkets run by Sussex Community Development Association offer food and essential items on a 'pay as you feel' basis. As well as offering choice and flexibility members can feel more connected locally and access affordable fresh produce, which is often more expensive, calorie for calorie, than highly processed products. According to one scheme member, the quality of the food is "fantastic," and they are trying things they'd never tried before. There are also many other charities, churches and community cafes across the district and borough which provide food and a warm welcome to their residents.

For an up-to-date food support list for your area, please email: tenant.involvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

For more information on food partnership work, please contact: **Stef Lake** (Food Security Project Manager for Lewes District) stef.lake@sussexcommunity.org.uk

Caroline Tradewell (Food Partnership Development Officer for Eastbourne) caroline.tradewell@3va.org.uk or find us online –

www.eastbournefoodpartnership.org.uk

[f @eastbournefoodpartnership](https://www.facebook.com/eastbournefoodpartnership) [@ebgoodfood](https://www.instagram.com/ebgoodfood)



Energy Saving Top Tips

Not Costing
the Earth



HOMES FIRST

Working together to reduce our carbon footprint

Saving energy means saving money, so helping to protect the planet also makes financial sense.

Here are some easy ideas and tips to remember to help lower your costs, reduce your energy consumption, and decrease your carbon footprint:

Cooking

- Slow cookers are a cost-effective way of cooking. The energy they use is the same as a lightbulb.
www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/collection/slow-cooker-recipes

- Microwaves are energy efficient as they run for less time. As well as warming food, microwaves can be used to cook meals from scratch:
www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/how-cook-microwave

- One pot cooking using only one burner saves energy.

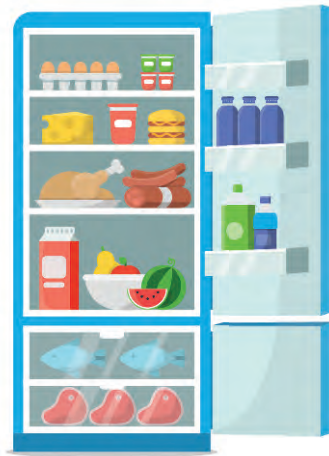
- Stacking or tiered steamers stack on top of the saucepan and are used to steam vegetables. As well as saving energy, vegetables keep more of their nutritional value.



- Choose the right sized pan for the burner, try to avoid heat escaping round the side, and remember it's cheaper to heat water in a kettle than on the stove.
- Only use as much water as you need when cooking, and always cover pots and pans with a lid - food will heat faster and use less energy.
- Don't open the oven door unnecessarily as heat is lost and more energy used.

Around the home

- Cutting time in the shower by one minute, helps save water, energy, and money.
- Turn radiators down in rooms you are not using.
- Closing doors helps prevent heat loss and keeps rooms warmer.
- Place reflective foil behind radiators to prevent heat escaping through the walls behind them.
- Close curtains and blinds at night to prevent heat escaping.
- Turn off lights when you leave a room.
- Replace all light bulbs with efficient LED lightbulbs.



Appliances and Devices

- Descaling appliances helps them heat more efficiently and use less energy. This includes washing machines and dishwashers.
- Energy ratings for appliances change to allow manufacturers to improve energy efficiency. Energy efficient appliances are cheaper to run.
- Only run the washing machine and dishwasher when fully loaded, and wash at a lower temperature to save energy.
- Do not put hot food into the fridge, allow it cool down first.
- Avoid having the fridge or freezer door open for longer than needed. Energy is wasted.
- Defrosted fridges and freezers cost less to run and use less energy.
- Unplug and turn electrical devices off.
- Don't leave laptops, phones or tablets charging overnight.

A message about Fire Safety

from **Adrian Walshe**
Team Leader
(Tenancy Management)



Fire safety in homes is a paramount concern for Eastbourne Homes and Lewes Council, particularly in our blocks of

flats. This is why we ask all residents not to store or leave items in the communal walkways or corridors and why we take action to remove these items if needed.

If you live in a block of flats and you have mobility concerns, a disability or any issue that could hinder you leaving your flat in any emergency please contact the Customer Advisors. They will put you in touch with your Senior Caseworker from the Tenancy Management Team so they can discuss your current accommodation circumstances and look at what can be done to help.

Tenancy Management Senior Caseworkers

There are 9 Tenancy Management Senior Caseworkers, formerly known as Housing Officers, dealing with a broad range of tenancy related issues and queries on our Eastbourne Homes and Lewes District housing estates. It's a busy customer-focussed job that requires stamina, empathy, a hands-on approach, and a range of skills. A typical fulltime Senior Caseworker will have 1,000 or more properties to keep an eye on, which gives you some idea how busy the role can be. This means officers are often out and away from the office, so the best way to reach them when needed, is by contacting the Customer Contact Centre online or by telephone so an assessment can be made, and the right person assigned to answer your query. Customer Advisors can also let you know who your Senior Caseworker is if you're not sure.

For advice on energy supply contact Citizens Advice:

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/energy/energy-supply/

Emergency Repairs



If you have an emergency repair out of office hours, you can still get the help you need, but make sure you call us rather than use the online form.

To be treated as an emergency the repair must carry the risk of immediate injury to people or major damage to property.

Examples of emergency repairs are:

- escape of gas or fumes
- electrical fittings in contact with water
- live or bare electrical wiring
- sewage overflowing into the home
- outside doors that need secured
- burst storage tanks, cylinders, or pipes
- failure of all lights or all power
- failure of heating systems in severe weather and where no alternative is available
- failure of all communal lighting

For general emergency repairs you can use the main contact number which is **01323 410000** for Eastbourne and **01273 471600** for Lewes – just listen for the out of hours message.

For heating and hot water breakdowns only, you can call BSW Building Services on **01444 836036**.

If there is a gas leak you can contact the National Gas Emergency Service on **0800 111 999**.

VITAL (Virtual Involvement of Tenants & Leaseholders)



127 residents have joined the Virtual 300 group so far, but we'd love more of you to join. We email members of the group regularly for their views on new policies, service improvement ideas and sometimes to judge competition entries. Recently the Virtual 300 were asked to choose the winner of the last edition's pet competition, and 'Biscuit' the Syrian hamster took the prize for her owner Ema from Seaford who won £30 of shopping vouchers.



You can get involved in the online activities on offer as much or as little as you like, but every time you do points are awarded and a £50 prize is given to the most active member every year. There's also the opportunity to be entered into regular draws for shopping vouchers and other prizes.

If you'd like to find out more, just email us at tenant.involvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk.

Anyone who does email to ask to join the Virtual 300 before the 31 December, quoting 'Christmas 300' in their email text, will go into a prize draw for **£30 of shopping vouchers** to spend in the New Year sales!

Are you Insured? HOMES FIRST Insurance

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 Direct Debit from as little as £5 per month.

Home contents insurance is important because tenants are responsible for their personal property and the decoration of their homes. 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 at:

www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/housing/tenants-contents-insurance/

Leaseholders Update

We are now consulting all leaseholders in Lewes and Eastbourne about planned major works which will take place over the next six or seven years. Please keep a look out for correspondence about this, so that we can hear your views on the matter.

Eastbourne Leaseholders will also have received updates about our new reserve fund proposals. If any leaseholders affected by the proposals have any queries, please don't hesitate to contact the Leasehold Team: leasehold@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

Fred Burr's century

On August 28th, Fred Burr celebrated his 100th birthday. Fred who lives in Seaford used to service and repair Spitfires during the war and has a keen interest in aviation to this day. Denise, Retirement Housing Advisor, arranged a lovely party which was attended by the Tenant Involvement team and other residents.

Fred was presented with flowers and, after eating some delicious chocolate cake, we all joined to sing him a very happy birthday.

Here's wishing Fred many more happy birthdays and telegrams from the Queen.



This year...

Why not do something to help someone else?

It's been a difficult year for many of us, but in the coming months many will face the added challenge of living in poverty or worrying about losing their home altogether. The holiday season should be a happy time of year, but for a large number of people, it's nothing like that.

Here are six ways in which you could help:

The reverse advent calendar

Instead of buying an advent calendar, do a 'reverse advent calendar' and put something into a box to donate to a foodbank or homeless shelter. There are a number of foodbanks in Eastbourne and the Lewes District providing a lifeline for hundreds living in poverty. You can find your nearest one to you on www.escis.org.uk – just use the word 'foodbank' in the search box.



Cutting the waste and supporting charities

Buying charity Christmas cards and using brown parcel paper for presents could make a big difference if everybody did it. Making or buying second hand presents, gifting experiences and promises can cut back on waste, and if you know someone who doesn't really want anything, a small donation to charity is a nice gesture.



Presents for children in care

Project Rudolph collects new toys and gifts for babies, children and teenagers living in care in East Sussex.

You can donate new, unwrapped presents at County Hall in Lewes, and St Mary's House in Eastbourne, which are then wrapped and given out to young people who might otherwise not get any presents.



Buy someone a Christmas dinner

Refuge has five women's refuges in East Sussex and for £5 you can donate Christmas dinner to a woman spending Christmas there - <https://donate.refuge.org.uk/>



Wear a Christmas jumper

Take part in National Christmas Jumper Day every year to raise money for Save the Children: www.savethechildren.org.uk/christmas-jumper-day



Be a good neighbour

For people without friends or family nearby, Christmas can be very lonely. Why not check in on them with a mince pie, or if you're feeling very generous, invite them round.

In Memory of

We'd like to say goodbye and honour the sad passing of two tireless volunteers...



Cecile Slater

This is really sad news. We will very much miss Cecile who worked selflessly for many years to support residents through her work as Chair of Residents Voice and the Old Town Area Panel. She worked with great skill and grace, and always made sure tenants had a strong voice and had their interests represented.

Ian Fitzpatrick

(Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration & Planning)

'I was truly saddened by the news of Cecile's passing, and my thoughts flooded with happy memories of our times together. She was a pillar of the Area Panels, who championed the

residents of Old Town, many local groups, and several charities, but most of all it was the love and warmth she showed to everyone who had the great pleasure of her company. I will look back on the happy times when she kept us in line and in fits of giggles on a stall piled high with chocolates and wine, cellophane wrapped teddy bears and a lucky dip tombola. We will all miss you so much Cecile'

Sarah Tye

(Project Manager – Commercial Business Property & Development)

In her capacity as a volunteer, and as a friend, her selfless hard work on behalf of residents was never ending. She was the same with staff too, using her personality and diplomacy to achieve the very best for residents. I will always remember Cecile as will my family every time we eat her lemon tart recipe.

Nikki Wickham

(Specialist Advisor – Tenant Involvement)



David Pickbourne

I have great sadness in reporting the passing of David Pickbourne who lived in retirement housing in Lewes.

David was a kind man who volunteered at many events over the years. Despite suffering from several chronic health conditions, he remained a committed member of Landport Residents Association, and rarely missed helping with the Foodbank on a Monday. He also attended LRA meetings, helped with litter picks and before Covid-19, volunteered at the Landport Community Cafe, served teas at the Repair Cafe, and helped at the Summer BBQ. He was also a longstanding member of TOLD (Tenants of Lewes District) and a dear friend. I, like many others who knew him, will miss him very much. *RIP David.*

Debbie Twitchen, Chair LRA

TOLD Tenants of Lewes District

A word from the Chair...

Winter is closing in, and I know for many of our tenants these remain worrying times. At the TOLD AGM in October a new Committee was elected which reflects a diversity of views across the district. Collectively we would like to encourage you to get involved in the various ways available because your voice is important.

As Chair, I am pleased to report that the Committee successfully allocated £20,000 of community improvement funding in the last financial year to a range of schemes and projects which will benefit many tenants. I believe it to be vital that we continue to keep a close eye on any decision making that affects tenants across the district and make our views known. You can find out more about TOLD's work through our Facebook page or by emailing directly to debbietwitchen@gmail.com – contributions to this page are always welcome! It just remains for me to wish you all Seasons Greetings and a Happy and Healthy New Year. Let's hope next year is better than this one!



1. Living wall at Shelley Close,
2. Litter Pick on the De Montfort Estate
3. Community Garden – Seaford.

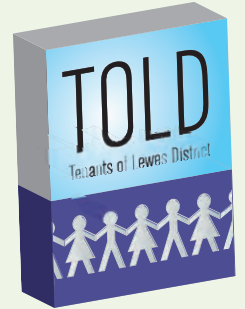
A big thank you to Matt from Malling Close

Matt moved into a flat on Malling Close with his partner and child in March this year. He was surprised to see a severely overgrown communal space which was not being used, so he decided to take some action and clear, clean and strim the area for the benefit of everyone in the block. As if that wasn't enough, Matt also cleared overgrown vegetation from over 30 metres of alleyway which leads to a local park. Matt has certainly proved to be a good neighbour.



Community Improvement budget

This year saw a broad range of community projects approved by the TOLD committee. These included garden furniture and landscaping to a number of housing schemes, graffiti removal and the installation of a living wall to replace it, litter picking initiatives and equipment, a community garden start up and various community events.



Household Support Grants

Does your household need extra financial support this winter? If you're finding it difficult to keep warm, buy enough food or pay essential bills, you may be able to get extra help. Residents can now apply for help from the Government's Household Support Fund, which local councils are now helping to pay out. You must live in the council's area, be over the age of 18, and be finding it difficult to pay for heating, lighting, water bills or food. You must also be in receipt of one of the following benefits -

- Universal Credit
- Housing Benefit
- Pension Credit
- Council Tax Reduction Benefit
- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit
- Income Support
- Income Based Job-Seeker's Allowance
- Income Based Employment & Support Allowance

You can get find out more and make an application here - <https://grantapproval.co.uk> – NB you will need to provide evidence that you are in receipt of an eligible welfare benefit and have copies of any bills you are struggling to pay.

Residents Voice

A word from the Chair...

It's been a busy few months during which the Area Panels have supported a range of projects.



Andy Evans – Chair of Residents' Voice

The Hampden Park & Willingdon Trees Area Panel planted trees to celebrate the Soroptimists centenary year - a group who transform the lives and status of women and girls through education, empowerment and enabling opportunities. The panel also purchased heaters and lamps for the Hampden Park Shed and were invited to join their crafting sessions. The Christmas Fair hosted by the panel at the community centre was also a great success. The Old Town Area Panel provided funding for a local tennis club to purchase equipment and secured a number of free tennis passes to allocate to local tenants – watch this space – and the support of the Langney Area Panel helped make the Shinewater fun day an unmissable event.

All the panels also contributed funding to the Compass Community Artwalks which have been so well received by the community. Panel members were invited to a showcase event opened by Caroline Ansell MP to celebrate the grant received from the SE Consortium to enable the community art walks to continue and develop.

Eastbourne Homes Limited

Eastbourne Homes Limited (EHL) started to provide specified housing management services via a management agreement as an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) on the 1 April 2005. This means that EHL manages Eastbourne Borough Council's housing stock and delivers housing management services but -



Roger Eastwood, Chair of the Board of Directors

- Ownership of the housing stock remains with the local authority.
- The local authority remains the legal landlord.
- Tenants remain secure tenants of the authority with no change in their rights such as the right to buy, right to repair and right to manage.

EHL operates as a customer focussed organisation which contributes to the community by working with residents and agency partnerships to create safe and sustainable neighbourhoods. Increased involvement of customers, alongside being more self-aware and evidencing improvements are key drivers for the organisation. EHL is wholly owned by EBC and governed by a Board of Directors which comprises nine Non-Executive Directors:

- Three Tenant Directors
- Four Independent Directors
- Two Council Directors

The Board have two Committees, Service and Performance and Audit and Risk, as part of their governance structure.

1. Hampden Park Shed crafting
2. Hampden Park Christmas Fair
3. Soroptimist tree planting
4. Shinewater Fun Day
5. Langney Halloween Party
6. Artwalks

The Big Meet

On the 18 January 2022, please join us at The Big Meet in The Hardwick Room, Tennis Centre, Devonshire Park, College Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN21 4JJ

Between 10am – 1pm you'll be able to:

- Mingle with the Directors of Eastbourne Homes Board to share your experiences and ideas for service improvements
- Learn about Eastbourne's approach to recycling and discover how can you help
- Find out how your rent is spent, and discuss the Council's plans for spending it
- Have the chance to win prizes
- Enjoy a delicious buffet lunch

To book a place and any transport needs, please RSVP by 4th January 2022 by email to: Tenant.involvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk or call us on 01273 479249.



Homes First staff visited addresses in Shinewater during half term to coincide with a children's activity event held in the Hub. The Shinewater partnership are using the feedback to develop an action plan and will share the results early in 2022





Christmas Opening Hours

The Councils will be closing their offices at 2pm on Christmas Eve – Friday 24 December.

Our offices will reopen on Wednesday 29 December as Monday 27 and Tuesday 28 are bank holidays in lieu of Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

For Wednesday 29, Thursday 30, and Friday 31 December we will be reopening the Town Hall at Eastbourne only for the public, not Southover House in Lewes.

Our offices will be closed on Monday 3 January as this is another bank holiday (in lieu of New Year's Day) and open again on Tuesday 4 January 2022.

Leak allowances

If you are on a metered supply, the meter will record all of the water supply to your property, which will include any leak on a supply pipe or from appliances in your home. In some cases, you might qualify for a one-off leak allowance which will adjust any charges made back to their normal levels. You can apply for a leak allowance once a leak is satisfactorily repaired and within one month of a repair being carried out. However please be aware that leak allowances are not made where a leak is due to customer negligence, and customers can only apply for one leak allowance per property. You can find out more by searching for 'leak allowance' on <https://southeastwater.co.uk/>

Covid-19 remains a serious health risk



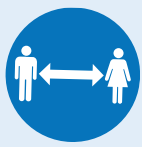
- You should stay cautious to help protect yourself and others.
- Let fresh air in if you meet indoors. Meeting outdoors is safer.
- Wear a face covering in crowded and enclosed spaces where you come into contact with people you do not normally meet.
- Get tested and self-isolate if required to.
- If you haven't already, get vaccinated.



HANDS



FACE



SPACE

Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, a reduced number of Customer Advisors have been available to answer telephone calls. To enable us to assist customers who cannot access online services, we would ask all tenants who can do so, to report issues via our website: lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk and follow the links to the online service you need or use the webchat option.

Conference Update...

Due to the uncertainty surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic, our tenant groups have suggested we move the Tenant Conference we were planning in March 2022 to a date in the summer when the weather will be better and the situation hopefully more settled. We apologise for any inconvenience caused, but as always, safety comes first.

Direct Debits are an easy, simple and convenient way to pay your rent and Council Tax



- You no longer have to worry about paying on time.
- It costs nothing to set up and can be cancelled by you at any time.
- It costs the Council less to collect, and any money we save means there is more money available to help improve the service you receive.

We offer:

- Monthly Direct Debits, taken on the first of every month.
- Fortnightly Direct Debits, taken on the Monday of every rent paying fortnight.
- Weekly Direct Debits, taken on the Monday of every rent paying week.

To set up a Direct Debit, or to download a form visit:

lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/payments/pay-your-rent/

Not Costing
the Earth



Kids Poster Competition...



Ema from Seaford was the lucky winner of our Pet Competition. Biscuit, her Syrian hamster, was chosen by the Virtual 300 group of residents and Ema received £30 worth of shopping vouchers.

With the COP 26 summit fresh in our minds, this time we're asking kids to create a picture on climate change that we might use on a poster for the **Not Costing the Earth** project. Think endangered animals, rainforests being cut down, sea creatures being affected by rising sea temperatures and pollution, or anything that sparks the imagination! There are two categories 1) Under 10 years and 2) 11 – 16 years. The winning entries will be chosen by the Virtual 300 group once again, and the lucky winners will receive Kids Favourites or Teen Favourites vouchers. For each category, the **1st prize is £50, the 2nd prize £25, and the 3rd prize £10.**

All competition entries should be sent by email to: tenant.involvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk with the permission of a parent or guardian to be considered for the competition by Friday 11 February 2022. The winning entries will be featured in the next edition of Tenants' Open Voice, and there will be an online exhibition of all submissions, so get creating!