



TENANTS' VOICE

Newsletter of the Tenants of Lewes District (TOLD)

Tenant of the Year 2017

In the last edition of Tenants' Voice we asked you to nominate someone in your community, who you feel has made a difference to the lives of local people, to be Lewes District Council's 'Tenant of the Year'.

Councillor Ron Maskell, Lead Member for Housing, Councillor Stephen Gauntlett, Chair of Lewes District, and Andy Chequers, Head of Homes First at Lewes District Council, were given the difficult task of choosing the winner from the nominations received for Bob Brown, Dorothy Tolhurst, Pam Shallcross, Kathleen Golds, Kathryn Hesketh, Sandra Faulkner, Noel Nichols, John and Linda Horrod.

Nominated by five of her neighbours, Pam Shallcross, a tenant at the Meridian Court sheltered scheme, in Peacehaven, was chosen as the winner.

Among things they said about her were: "Pam is a very caring lady, who will go out of her way to help everyone"; "She works hard to involve the

other residents of Meridian Court, organising games, events, meals and outings"; "We all look forward to Monday afternoons because of Pam's group, and would be lost without that afternoon".

Pictured:
Councillor Stephen Gauntlett, Chair of Lewes District presents the Tenant of the Year certificate to Pam Shallcross



A word from the Chair



Debbie Twitchen, Chair of Tenants of Lewes District

Welcome to the Winter edition of Tenants' Voice.

Following a successful TOLD Annual General Meeting, two new committee members have joined us.

This brings our number on the committee to 11.

I am pleased to continue to represent you as Chair of TOLD.

John Langley is our Vice Chair, Dawn Tideswell is Secretary, and Lawrence Steer is Treasurer.

This year's Tenants' Conference at Seahaven Academy in October was very well attended, and the feedback from delegates was really positive. People particularly liked the interactive workshops on offer. See pages 2-3 for a report on the day.

If you have any ideas for future workshops, please let us know.

TOLD remains committed to keeping new council homes high up the agenda. We also intend to keep a close eye on the way that the new "Homes First" structure will work for Lewes District Council tenants.

If you have any queries or suggestions, please contact TOLD via email:

told@hotmail.co.uk

Or call 01273 483185 and leave a message.

Tenants' Conference 2017 - record attendance



Lewes District Council



Tenants Of Lewes District



Attended by tenants from the length and breadth of Lewes District, this year's conference was staged at Seahaven Academy in October.

Andy Chequers set the conference ball rolling with his lively presentation on progress gathering momentum at the new Homes First team for Eastbourne and Lewes tenants, which he now heads.

Masterful

Daniel Lindop did a masterful job with his talk de-mystifying the complexities of Universal Credit, helping us to prepare for its arrival in June 2018.

Debbie Twitchen, TOLD committee chair, addressed the assembly on the committee's work, furthering tenants' interests in vigorous dialogue with council officers.

Information stands

Coffee breaks afforded opportunities to sample an array of information desks and put questions to housing staff and other experts.

Among those represented were Burleys garden contractors, the Credit Union and the Sussex Community Development Association (SCDA).

The Southover House IT department came to Seahaven Academy to go public with the new Lewes and Eastbourne Councils' website:

lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

Delegates were invited to try the site for themselves and to make suggestions.

LDC reported that a record number of tenants attended this conference. Feedback suggested that they really enjoyed the event, particularly the workshops.

New faces

TOLD Chair Debbie Twitchen said: "It was great to see so many new faces this year. People said to me that they found the whole event very useful.

"They welcomed the opportunity to find out what is happening and how it affects all tenants."

New, fun, useful - it's never too late to learn...

Delegates were offered a choice of participation in one of three interactive workshops:

Don't be scammed: Tony Thompson discussed the latest scams that criminals use to try to defraud you, and offered tips on how to avoid them.



Changing Rooms: Dulux Paints' Louise Murphy demonstrated how to decorate a room and choose your colour scheme.



Growing plants in a container: Mark Tavener and Ian Hutchinson of Burleys horticultural and landscaping service advised how to plant a selection of seasonal plants in a small container or hanging basket.



Comments from participants included:

"Thought the scams workshop was great, learnt so much."

"The changing rooms workshop was informative, useful, good and practicable."

"After attending the growing flowers workshop, I came away with a some ideas to use at home."

"It was informative, useful and friendly."

Top prize: The free raffle for a £75 garden make-over was won by Noel Nicholls (below right), presented with his prize by Burleys manager Mark Tavener



Lawrence Steer makes his point

Empty Properties: "As a tenant living in the south of the district I am well aware that there is a shortage of council homes. So what is happening to the empty properties in Newhaven?"

"Some of these have been empty for over a year. I'm talking about the former council offices in Fort Road, the former fire station and the former Co-op in Newhaven square. All of them could, I believe, be adequately converted into housing."



Hillcrest Court mini-recycling: "As a former resident of Hillcrest Court, I am aware that its mini-recycling is always fly-tipped. This will continue to happen all the time it has wooden panels, as this gives fly-tippers a place to conceal their unwanted items."

"I think fly-tipping in Newhaven area will continue to be a problem because the charge of £50 for the council to remove up to four items is far too high. A lot of people on limited incomes simply cannot afford this. So the council should reduce the amount payable by people on low incomes. Pedestrians, who do not drive or have access to a vehicle, cannot enter the Newhaven waste and recycling tip. So what are they supposed to do?"

Housing fraud investigation

A man has been ordered to pay nearly £3,000 following an investigation by Lewes District Council's Counter Fraud Team.

Troy Hemsley faced an Unlawful Profit Order of £2,984 and costs of £500 to Lewes District Council after pleading guilty to subletting a property owned by the council.

Working closely with colleagues from the Housing and Legal Services departments, the Counter Fraud Team conducted a detailed enquiry that proved Mr Hemsley was not living at the address and had been unlawfully subletting the property.

TOLD Chair Debbie Twitchen said: "We are pleased to hear that Lewes District Council has made tackling tenancy fraud a priority. There is a severe shortage of council housing to accommodate people who genuinely need it. "So it is essential that the Council makes best use of the housing that is available. Taking these measures means that properties are occupied by tenants who are legally entitled to do so."



If you have information that anyone is not using their council property as their main home, or that someone is living in a council property when they should not, you can report your concerns to the Counter Fraud Team via the Lewes District Council web site lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

Dog fouling & street drinking

New rules have come into force to tackle people who consume alcohol on the streets and dog owners who don't clean up after their pets.

Following public consultation, Lewes District Council is implementing new Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs). Dog owners must clear up after their dogs on any land open to the public within the Lewes district. If they

Fire Safety Advice & Information

Following the Grenfell Tower tragedy in London, Lewes District Council wants to reassure all tenants and leaseholders that fire safety is its number one priority.

While no buildings of a similar size or design exist in Lewes district, the council has revisited all properties it manages to ensure everything possible is done to minimise fire risk.

Lewes District Council has always routinely reviewed risk assessments and fire safety

advice. If you live in a block of flats or share a hallway with other residents, you will have seen a fire safety notice close to the street-entrance door. It is important to familiarise yourself with its instructions.



By taking simple steps in your home and communal areas, you can greatly reduce fire risk. There is more fire safety advice on the council website

lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

Fire safety guidance:

- Fit at least one smoke alarm on every level of your home.
- Test your fire alarm by pressing the button until the alarm sounds. If it doesn't sound, you need to replace the battery.
- Make sure your electrical appliances have a British or European safety mark.
- Plan a safe escape. What would you do if a smoke alarm went off in the night? You are more at risk from a fire when asleep.
- Keep communal areas clear. To keep everyone safe, the council has a 'zero tolerance' policy for anything left in communal corridors and hallways.
- If anything is left in your communal areas or you have any other concerns, contact your housing officer.

ignore the order, the council can impose a fine of up to £1,000.

The new alcohol order means anyone drinking in public and acting in an anti-social way in Lewes town can be asked to stop drinking or surrender any alcohol when requested by an authorised officer. Failure to do so risks a maximum fine of £500.

See lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/pspo for more information.

The way you recycle is changing

With the roll-out of wheelie bins now under way Lewes District Council answers frequently asked questions about the new scheme:

Why introduce a new way to recycle?

Making recycling simple and easy will encourage more people to get involved.

When will I get my new bin? Deliveries started in November in East Saltdean, Peacehaven and Telscombe, and will continue through to July 2018.

What can I put in my new bin? You can put glass, dry paper (including magazines and catalogues), dry cardboard, plastic such as bottles, tubs and trays, drinks cans and aluminium foil and lids (these must be taken off before being put in the new bin). All items need to be clean, dry and loose to go in the bin.



What can't I put in my new bin? You can't put coffee cups, laminated or glittery wrapping paper, Tetra Paks (juice cartons for instance), plastic carrier bags and sacks, plastic film (sandwich packs, cling film),

What do I do with my old boxes and bags?

Keep putting out your current containers on your usual collection day. We will take old boxes and bags away when we deliver your new wheelie bin.

What if I need help putting out my bin?

Assisted collections are available to anyone who needs. More info at the web site below.

What happens if I share recycling bins with neighbours?

If you share with neighbours because for example you live in a flat, your new recycling arrangements may vary. The Council will be in touch with further information.

What if I don't have space for a wheelie bin? Please visit our website to let us know at lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

Council to consider clampdown on feeding seagulls



Lewes District Council is the latest local authority to face up to the problem of aggressive seagull behaviour.

Where seagulls have become a constant nuisance for people who live and work in a specific area, the council may consider implementing a Public Space Protection Order and fining anyone who feeds the birds persistently.

One local councillor concerned about seagull attacks in Seaford is Liz Boorman, Seaford West Ward.

She said: "There are local reports of gulls attacking people in their gardens and postal staff being divebombed as they innocently walk down garden paths to deliver the mail.

"I don't blame the seagulls. I blame people who feed these birds. The gulls aren't stupid. They will nest where food is easiest, and some residents are putting it on a plate for them."

Councillor Boorman raised the issue during a Cabinet meeting in November, and this was welcomed by Councillor Andy Smith, Leader of Lewes District Council.

Councillor Smith said: "Seagulls should live in coastal locations, but human behaviour has drawn them further and further inland.

"There is not one solution to the problem but, if people stop habitually feeding them, it will certainly help.

"We have introduced PSPOs to tackle anti-social behaviour. and I am in full support of considering the use of these powers if we receive a mounting number of complaints."

A more access friendly Lewes

With its narrow pavements and busy streets, Lewes isn't the easiest place to live if you have a disability yourself, care for someone disabled, or even push a child's buggy.

So join us at Lewes Area Access Group (LAAG) in trying to eliminate some of these obstacles. We welcome hearing from anyone who has personal experience of difficulties accessing the built or natural environment in or around Lewes, and also anyone offering creative solutions.

Our projects include initial consultations with Santon about development of the North Street Quarter; working to make the Depot cinema more accessible with disabled toilets, an accessible cafe, a hearing loop system, and colour contrasts to assist partially sighted people; ensuring easy access to the new Post Office; and helping to make Lewes Castle accessible to blind and partially sighted people. We also intend to create an access guide for Lewes residents and visitors.

If you experience problems such as obstacles on pavements and badly planned shared foot and cycle ways, we need your input. As cuts to local government mean fewer officers to tackle these problem, we need to help ourselves.

LAAG meets at 10:30-12:00 on the second Monday of every other month, usually at the Phoenix Centre, Lewes. Do join us.

For more information, contact us at laag406@gmail.com or call 01273 480997.

*Councillor Susan Murray,
Green Party, Castle ward*

Congratulations to all participants

There were two categories in the recent sheltered garden competition: best individual garden and best communal garden. The judging panel, who visited all the entries, had a challenging job choosing the winner because of the high standard.

The winning individual garden (pictured opposite) was the handiwork of Newick resident Audrey Ford. Runners-up were Mr & Mrs Lewis, of Lewes.

Winners of the communal gardens section were residents of Seaford House, Seaford, and the runners-up were residents of Meridian Court, Peacehaven.

Green action woman

Karen Rigby-Faux is the community liaison officer for Burleys, Lewes, pictured here with assistant manager Ian Hutchinson.

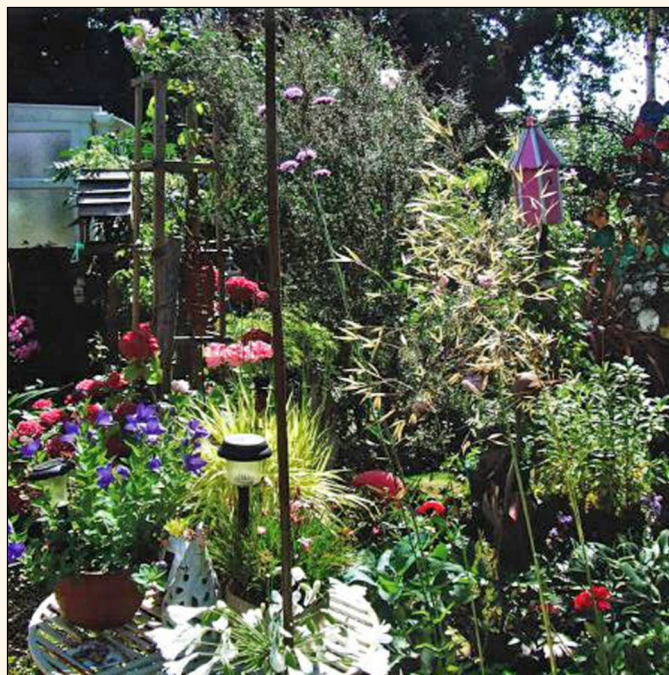


Karen writes: I am very much looking forward to working with Lewes District in the coming months. My role is to co-ordinate between Burleys, who deliver the grounds maintenance contract, the Council and the tenants, to ultimately improve our open spaces.

Our support and advice covers community allotments and gardens, improvements to green spaces and parks, creating community orchards - anything really that's outdoors and will enhance the area for everyone to enjoy, improving health and wellbeing.

I am also keen to support people who want to be actively involved in their environment. The goal is to create a green action squad of volunteers willing to improve things in their own local spaces and and further afield around the district. If interested please get in touch:

krigby-faux@gburley.co.uk





KITTENS

We all love them, these playful little bundles of fun – but we do not want too many of them!

Unwanted kittens can live a miserable life, through no fault of their own. Their cat parents can be unhappy and damaged as well.



If you live on a restricted income or benefits in the BN6-BN10, BN25 and BN26 areas, have a cat, or cats, and wish to really care for them, help is available.

During its current neutering campaign, to prevent unwanted kittens, Cats Protection will cover the whole cost of neutering your cat, or cats.

Your pets will live a calmer, more contented life as a result.

Show that you care for your pets. For further details call 01273 813111 today.



Steps you can take to be "Winter Ready"



UK Power Networks have asked that this message be passed to tenants: While the UK's gas and electricity supplies are very reliable, bad winter weather can cause damage and disruption.

In the unlikely event you experience a power cut - either electricity or gas - you can be prepared in the following ways:

- *Know your free emergency numbers: In a power cut dial 105. Or for a gas emergency call 0800 111999.*
- *Prepare your home: Keep a torch handy in case of a power cut.*
- *Register as a vulnerable customer: Vulnerable tenants - eg: those with a disability, the elderly or with children under 5 - can get extra support in the event of a power failure by signing up to the Priority Services Register.*
- *To register or to help someone you know register you must complete an online form at <http://www.ukpowernetworks.co.uk/internet/en/power-cuts/priority-services-during-a-power-cut/>*
- *Keep your eyes open: Keep an eye on the weather forecast and, if you have a power cut or a gas emergency, check on your neighbours.*



Training tailored for you



The council works with other local housing providers to provide free training for tenants throughout the year.

South East Training Uniting People (SETUP) wants to know which courses you

think it should provide for tenants across Sussex, from April next year.

SETUP has come up with a list of 12 possible options for 2018, and at least five will take place.

Please tell us which of the courses listed opposite you might be interested in attending. Once the programme has been agreed, we shall then contact you with details.

You can then sign up to take part in any training of interest to you. All courses will have limited spaces, so early sign-up is essential. The council can also help with transport costs on request.



The suggested courses are:

- Fundraising for a community project or event: Advice and practical help, how to apply for funding and who to ask.
- Organising a community event: How to make sure your event is successful and safe.
- Committee skills: Interactive session to help your group work better together and understand the roles of chair, secretary and treasurer.
- Food hygiene: Level 2 certificate course meets the national requirements for safe food handling.

- First aid: Level 2 certificate course. Know what to do in a first aid emergency.
- Avoiding scams: How to keep yourself safe from the threat of postal, phone and Internet scams.
- Accessing work: CV planning and interview skills.
- Autism awareness: Interactive session explores what it means to be autistic.
- Dementia friends: Find out what it is like to live with dementia, and turn that understanding into action.
- Keep your home safe: Fire safety training to help you to minimise the risks of fire in your home, and to plan a safe escape route.
- Planting containers: Interactive gardening workshop with tips for planting outside containers.
- Changing rooms: How to decorate a room. Practical demonstrations, design and colour planning tips

Please email contacting.setup@gmail.com with your name, contact details and a list of all these courses that interest you. Or call and leave a message on 01273 487249.

To get this newsletter in a large print document or other format please contact 01273 487249 or email told@hotmail.co.uk

About Tenants' Voice

Tenants' Voice is a newsletter for tenants. The views expressed and materials presented are those of the authors, and do not represent the views or endorsement of Lewes District Council (with exception to pages 6 and 7) or the Editor.

Please note that Lewes District Council is not responsible for, and cannot guarantee the accuracy of, any information in the newsletter, nor for any related content. As such, the Council accepts no legal responsibility for any errors, omissions or misleading statements. Care is taken by the authors to ensure accuracy. Please report any inaccuracies to The Editor, Tenants' Voice, TRC, 2a Horsfield Road, Lewes. BN7 2TA or email: TOLD@hotmail.co.uk