



Environmental Budget

At the TOLD open meeting on the 14th June 2018, tenants were presented with applications for projects throughout the Lewes district. £12,000 worth of projects have so far been agreed by Tenants of Lewes District.

Here are some examples of the projects agreed:

Seaford:

In Seaford, vouchers were awarded to a block of flats for a parasol and portable chairs. A fixed bench and table were also agreed in addition to hanging baskets.

For another scheme, an agreement was made for a parasol, sack trolley and water butt.

Lewes:

In Demontfort, raised flower beds were awarded in addition to vouchers for gardening equipment, compost and a compost bin. (See photo below right)

Rural areas:

Solar lighting has been agreed for Millfield Close tenants in Newick to provide guidance along a footpath.

In Ringmer, Tenants of Lewes District awarded a sheltered scheme vouchers for the purchase of pot plants. These pot plants will be maintained by the residents.

Criteria for applying: (See Page 2 for How to Apply)

- The request must be agreed by the majority of tenants using the area.
- The application must be for an environmental improvement for the tenants who live there.
- The land must be owned by Lewes District

Your application will then be recorded, forwarded onto our maintenance and gardening team for costing and reviewed by the TOLD committee for viability and approval.

- Where possible, applications for smaller works should be provided with a quotation.
- Receipts are required for items purchased with vouchers awarded.
- Photographs are taken off the completed works to promote the Environmental Budget.

A word from the Chair

debbietwitchen@googlemail.com



Debbie Twitchen, Chair of Tenants of Lewes

As Chair of TOLD, the last year has been both rewarding and demanding. I have been able to support a number of projects as part of a TOLD committee that is respected by the council, and who we work in partnership with on behalf of tenants.

This issue includes information on environmental improvement projects that we have approved, the roll out of Universal Credit to Lewes District and details of LDC's new Tenant Participation team.

We do however have important challenges ahead and we need to ensure we have a strong committee to help with this.

We do need to recruit additional committee members as two of our current committee have recently resigned. I would like to extend my thanks to Dawn Tideswell and Lawrence Steer for their dedication to TOLD over the years and wish them all the best for the future.



Demontfort allotment patch

Environmental Budget—Continued

How to apply:

Contact tenant.participation@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk call 01273 487249 and ask for a form and criteria overview to be sent to you by email or post or apply online by clicking:

<https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/housing/get-involved/get-involved-in-your-neighbourhood-in-lewes/environmental-improvements-application-form>

Water - Helping you pay less



Every tenant should have access to an affordable water supply. We have provided below a snap shot of the promotion by Southern Water highlighting their 'Payless' scheme and 'Affordability Team.'

Southern Water offer a range of payment options.

If you receive pension credits, call 0800 027 0363, between Monday to Friday, 8am to 7pm, quoting reference 'ES.' You can also email their team via payless@southernwater.co.uk

You can write to them for details at, Affordability Team, Southern House, Yeoman Road, Worthing, West Sussex, BN13 3NX.

Southern Water invite customers' who have a disability, are elderly or have certain medical conditions that may have extra needs or concerns to register with them as a Priority Services customer.

You can call them on 0800 027 0800 from 8am until 7pm Monday to Friday.

You can also register using the following link <https://www.southernwater.co.uk/register-for-individual-needs>

Southern Water can provide its customers with Talking Bills for blind or partially sighted customers. Audio bills can also be provided on an audio CD via the post.

Southern water can provide bills or correspondence in large print, braille or digitally.

If you have difficulties with hearing or speech due to hearing loss, you can contact Southern Water by textphone, also known as Minicom. Call Southern Water on 0330 303 1265.

You Said...

We Did...

STAR Survey – Homes First - Lewes District

Thank you to everyone so far that has contributed to the STAR Survey. In April 2018, a further question was added to enable tenants to provide feedback to the Repairs or Housing team. Homes First understand that satisfaction in some areas has declined and are following up feedback to address these issues. Tenants are in the process of being contacted by both the repairs and housing teams in order to investigate the reports and inform tenant participation of the outcomes.

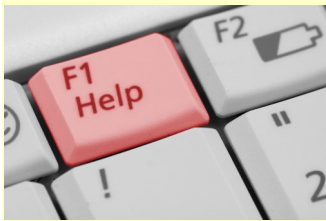
In the next addition of Tenants Voice, we will be providing you with a few of the updates in our new feature, You Said, We Did.

A big 'thank you' to everyone who has responded so far to our **Homes First** Tenant Participation Surveys. We are now contacting tenants who have said **'Yes'** to being involved. We would like to ensure everyone understands what opportunities are available. If you didn't complete a survey and would like to do so, please contact one of the tenant participation team. The winner of the tenant participation survey draw was Mr and Mrs Harvey and Milo the Dog (See photo below) of Piddinghoe. Congratulations on winning £50 Argos Vouchers.



Universal Credit

Homes first has partnered with Brighton Housing Trust to advise Lewes District Council tenants who need to claim Universal Credit. (UC).



Most people are able to claim Universal Credit without any help but we recognise that for some people, especially people who are less

familiar with using computers, claiming UC can be daunting.

From September there will be a Universal Credit Advisor available who will be able to help you by talking you through how to make a claim.



They will also be able to help if you are having problems with a claim, for instance if you have been told you don't qualify for Universal Credit and you don't understand why or don't think it is correct.



They will hold sessions in **Lewes, Newhaven** and other parts of the district where you will be able to meet with them and get help to get your claim up and running.



Once the service is up and running we will publicise contact details but in the meantime, if you want to know more about the service, call 01323 642615 and ask for information about UC Support.

Universal Credit - September 2018

Universal Credit is being rolled out in September to areas covered by Newhaven and Lewes job centres. Some people have already had to claim UC but from September, many more people may find they need to switch to Universal Credit.



Universal Credit is a new benefit being phased in by the Department for Work and Pensions.

It replaces six existing benefits:

- **Housing Benefit**
- **income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)**
- **income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)**
- **Child Tax Credit**
- **Working Tax Credit**
- **Income Support**

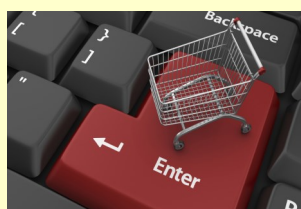
If you are on one of the above benefits you will remain on them for now unless there is a change in your circumstances.

Not all changes will mean you have to claim UC but the following changes might mean you need to switch to Universal Credit.

- **You have your first baby**
- **You need to make a new claim for help with your rent**
- **You get a partner and need to jointly claim benefits**
- **You claim benefits as a couple but you separate**
- **You are on JSA or ESA and start work**
- **You have to stop work because you are ill**
- **You lose your job**

Universal Credit is paid monthly. If you are working and getting UC your monthly payments should automatically adjust if your wages vary.

Universal Credit doesn't affect everyone. It will not affect you if you are getting a State Pension. Nor can you get UC if you have 3 or more children.



Universal Credit is an On-Line benefit. Claims are usually done online and your claim is all managed online.

You do need access to an email address to claim Universal Credit but help will be available if you haven't got one and need to create one.



Mears took over the provision of repairs and maintenance services on February 5th 2018.

Tenants of Lewes District (TOLD) has been aware of a number of issues regarding the delivery of repairs by Mears. TOLD has been working with Mears to assist them in overcoming these problems.

Have you been offered the option of using Mears



hand-held device to provide feedback at the time of their visit? TOLD would be pleased to hear your experiences.

Mears would like to thank residents for their feedback and patience over the last 6 months while they have been establishing the new repair service

Ring 01273 471600

Select Option 3 Followed by, Option 1

8.30am - 5pm

Emergency Repairs:

Evenings, Weekends and Bank holidays, select Option 1

When you call, please note the following:

Where possible, appointments will be made with residents at the time of the call.

If your enquiry is not deemed to be an emergency, you will be asked to call back during normal working hours.

The target response times for the various types of repairs can be found on the Lewes and Eastbourne website.

www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/housing/repairs-and-adaptations-for-council-properties/housing-repairs-and-maintenance

Minor Aids and Adaptations

Did you know that if you are someone you live with has a disability or health issue which affects your independence at home we may be able to help.

Your home could be adapted or fitted with special aids that help make everyday life easier.

Minor Aids and Adaptations include the following:

- Fitting handrails
- Grab rails – e.g. in the bathroom
- Lever taps on sinks and basins



You can ask the repairs team for a minor aid or adaptation and tell us why you think it is suitable for your needs. If the surveyors agree to your request, the works will be arranged.

Major Aids and Adaptations

If you are in need of a Major Adaptation - e.g. ramp to a property, stair lift or level access shower – please arrange for an Occupational



Therapist (OT) to assess your overall needs. An OT referral can be arranged through your doctor. If you have access to the internet, you can make a self-referral by clicking on the following link:

www.eastsussex.gov.uk/socialcare/getting-help-from-us/contact-adult-social-care

You can also Text on 07797 878 111 and type talk Minicom 18001 0345 60

Major Adaptations are only considered after we have received recommendations from the OT.

- **The Mears Repairs Team receives 120 calls a day**
- **50 repairs are issued to operatives & sub-contractors daily**
- **5 homes a week are handed back to the Council**
- **3 major & 3 minor adaptations are completed every week**



Who's who in the Home's First Tenant Participation Team?

Ruth Tahsin

Specialist Advisor

Days of Work:

Monday, Wednesday and Thursdays

Ruth has worked for Lewes District Council in Tenant Involvement for 19 years. During that time she has worked with over 20 tenant associations to help them make improvements to their local area.

She introduced tenant scrutiny, mystery shopping and the Sheltered Forum to Lewes.

Ruth is currently responsible for TOLD liaison,

Sheltered Forum, Join Us events, Scrutiny and assistance to the tenant associations.

Nikki Wickham

Specialist Advisor

Days of Work:

Tuesday, Wednesday and Fridays

Nikki has worked in housing management for many years & most recently in policy and project management for a Housing Association. Staff & resident training was a key part of her role.

Nikki supports various projects—GDPR, policy consultation, Joint tenant's conference and the Tenant Participation Strategy.

Steve Martin

Senior Caseworker

Days of Work:

Tuesday, Wednesdays and Thursdays

Steve's experience includes training, management, maintenance, housing and working with vulnerable people.

Steve administers the Environmental Budget, surveys and undertakes analysis of data, assists TOLD with text and design of Tenant's Voice and posters for events.



Contact us: Telephone: 01273 487 249. Email: tenant.participation@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

Address: Tenant Resource Centre, 2a Horsfield Road, Landport, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 2TA

Articles inside Tenant Voice include: Universal Credit, Repair Contact details, Water, Tenant Involvement and Ruth O'Keeffe

What is happening in Homes First Tenant Involvement?

A [Homes First](#) Steering group made up of tenants and officers are currently working together to discuss and shape the future of Tenant Involvement [across Lewes and Eastbourne](#). They are using all of the information from the Tenant Participation Survey to develop a new strategy to give different options to take part in housing and community decisions. More details in future editions of Tenants' Voice.



AGM: 27 September 2018 at 7PM

Chair of TOLD Debbie Twitchen says : “We are holding our AGM on 27 September 2018 at 7PM at the Tenants Resource Centre, 2a Horsfield Road Lewes BN7 2TA.

Invited guests will be talking about the roll-out of Universal Credit across Lewes district and also the Homeless Reduction Act, which affects how the council assists homeless people. Also you can find out about wildflower projects and how you can get involved.

We will also be agreeing further projects to fund from the Environmental Improvements Budget and electing a new committee. If you would like to come along please contact the Tenant Participation Team, so that we can cater for you. Transport costs can also be provided.”

Homes First Tenants' Conference: 23rd January 2019.

We are currently arranging the first Homes First Tenant Conference for tenants in Lewes and Eastbourne. The event is free and open to all tenants. There will be optional workshops, a chance to meet and talk to Homes First staff, information stalls and a hot buffet lunch. The event will be held at The View in Eastbourne. Further details to follow.

There are limited places available, so if you know you want to come along, contact the Tenant Participation Team now to book your place.



What is happening in your area?

Please let TOLD and the [Homes First](#) Tenant Participation team know what activities have been taking place in your area and dates for the calendar.

GDPR: An update from Lewes and Eastbourne Council

GDPR stands for General Data Protection Regulations and came into effect on 25th May 2018.

Throughout the local authority we have reviewed how and where we store customer data. As a result we have re-issued our privacy notices, each team is looking to update customer preferences offering a clear menu for communication and officers are looking to ensure that contractors working on behalf of both local authorities (Lewes and Eastbourne) have also addressed the regulations.

Articles inside Tenant Voice include: Universal Credit, Repair Contact details, Water, Tenant Involvement and Ruth O’Keeffe

As part of our ongoing articles with Local Councillors across the parties, TOLD Committee member, David Nicholson, interviewed Ruth O’Keeffe

A passion for making things happen

David Nicholson interviews Ruth O’Keeffe for Tenants Voice

A well-known face and voice in Lewes, Ruth O’Keeffe has spent nearly 20 years in local politics. This began in 1999 when she was a Western Road Community Primary School parent governor and Norman Baker (LibDem MP for Lewes, 1997-2015) spoke to her about fund-raising.

She stood successfully for election to the Town Council that year. From 2003, she continued as a successful Independent candidate for election for town, district and county councils, and has been a member of all three since 2005.

Ruth devotes a lot of effort to feed-back into the community via the *Priory News* and *Castle News*, which between them currently enjoy a circulation of 5,000 every two months. She delivers up to 2,000 copies of these in person, and finds the experience of being out talking to residents on their doorsteps invaluable.

Appointed MBE for services to the community in Lewes in the Queen’s New Year’s Honours 2016, Ruth has a passion for solving problems and “making things happen”. Whenever we meet, she enthuses with an account of her latest tussle with authority on behalf of one of her constituents.

She also enjoys being involved in major projects. A particular interest at the moment is the Lewes DC policy that decrees an “income floor” for self-employed housing benefit claimants. Thus, once such claimants have been self-employed for a year, they are deemed by Lewes DC to have earned about £240 a week, even if they have not.

Ruth argues that this is grossly unfair. She also cites evidence that it can have a disproportionate and possibly discriminatory impact on women: recent parliamentary DWP committee concluded that women are 30-35 per cent more vulnerable to the negative impact of the policy.

Where does Ruth stand on the right-to-buy? Her response is that it would not be a problem in itself,



provided that a replacement social housing unit was made available every time one was lost to sale. However, this has not happened, greatly contributing to the council housing shortage.

“We do need more truly affordable council-owned homes to be built,” Ruth believes. “Objections to schemes – such as the 22 former garage sites currently under consideration by Lewes DC – could be better dealt with by speaking to residents first and taking their opinions into account before deciding on sites. It’s essential to consult with the local community on the ground, and not to impose heavy-handed top-down solutions from above.”

Maintenance is one of Ruth’s priorities. She feels it is often target-driven, and insufficient attention is paid to individual cases where the system has failed. “Tenants need to know how to access services, and the service needs to be consistent and clear,” she says. “Performance should be assessed by how well failures are dealt with, rather than the percentage of success.”

Gate-keeping – the basis on which housing is allocated – is Ruth’s other major concern. She believes the current system is fairer because it is based on need, and not just how long an applicant has been on the list. “That’s all very well,” she says. “But the shortage of housing stock makes the lengthening list of people in need of housing a major concern. It means that, no matter how fair the system might be, Lewes DC is not in a position to meet housing need in the district.”



At the TOLD Open Meeting on the 14th June 2018, Sue wells of Health Watch asked for resident’s feedback on the NHS Services in your areas. East Sussex Information and Signposting Service.

You can contact their enquiries line by calling 0333 101 4007 Monday to Friday 10am-2pm. Their website provides details of events in your area.

Articles inside Tenant Voice include: Universal Credit, Repair Contact details, Water, Tenant Involvement and Ruth O’Keeffe

Landport BBQ Summer 2018

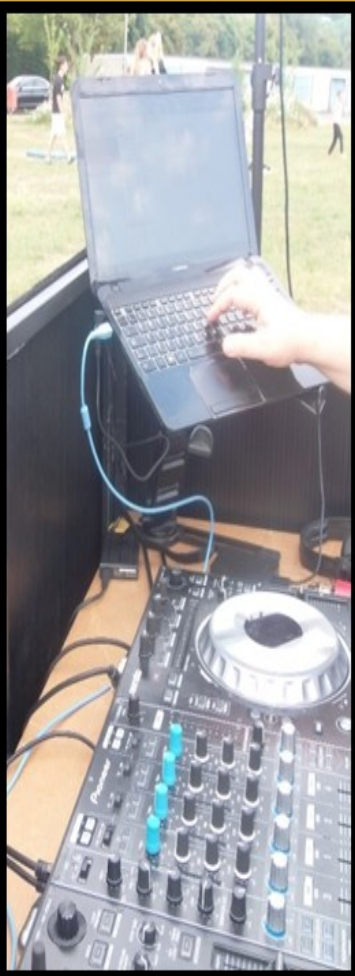


On Thursday 12th July 2018 the Landport Residents Association in Lewes held a summer evening BBQ. The Mayor of Lewes, Janet Baah officially opened the event.

With the free BBQ taking place in the middle of a heatwave, families and friends brought picnic blankets and enjoyed an evening of music, dance and games. We estimate that around 250 people came.

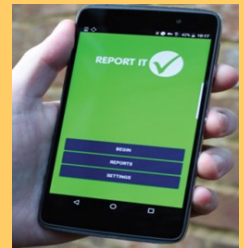
Debbie Twitchen, Chair of TOLD said 'It was great to see so many community volunteers. I would like to thank them for helping it to be our most successful BBQ yet.

Thank you to Pete Dadswell, as always for his excellent DJ'ing, to Landport Stores who kindly sponsor this event every year and a special thank you to Burley's who attended with a tractor to the delight of local children.'



Report IT

In the last edition of Tenants Voice, we informed you of the types of problems that you can report to the team. An APP has been developed to help tenants make reports.



Please note that needles found in parks can be recorded under the 'glass/sharps' drop-down option. The team are currently developing further choices for tenants to click.

You can download the app via <https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/streets-parking-and-travel/report-it/> onto your Smart Phone Android or I Phone. You can also report your findings by calling the team via Customer First on 01273 471600.

If you have used the APP already, please tell us about your experience of using this new tool.

