

**You said, we did!**

**Downsizing –  
your best  
move yet?**

April 2025  
Issue 14

# Tenants' Open Voice

for tenants of Lewes District and Eastbourne  
Brought to you with the help of our tenant Communications Panel

**Spring into  
Action**



**A Day to Remember**  
Tenant Celebration Event  
See page 9

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HOMES FIRST



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# The Tenant Voice

## Tenants Open Voice Issue 14



### Graham Filshie

#### Council Tenant

Hello. My name is Graham Filshie, and I have lived in retirement housing since

2021. Before that I rented privately. In January 2023, I became aware of the Residents Voice group and because I found their sessions helpful I've attended all their meetings since. I have also represented my scheme on the Retirement Housing Forum for several years, helped to put their newsletters together, and assisted officers with contract procurement. In 2024 the governance structure in Eastbourne and Residents Voice changed due to the dissolution of Eastbourne Homes Limited and LET (Listening to Eastbourne Tenants) was formed. I have continued to be heavily involved and so far I've

helped monitor performance in relation to the Housing Revenue Account, complaints handling and repairs which has kept me very busy! I really enjoy the meetings because they allow me to talk face to face with Councillors and share my views with senior managers like Gary Hall (Head of Homes First). This year I've also found the time to sit on the Safety and Quality Consumer Group which monitors how well the Council is doing in meeting the requirements of the new consumer standards.

This January there were further governance changes after another review. A sub-group called Eastbourne Residents Voice was formed to support the work of LET and I was elected to chair the meetings which I'm very proud about.

You might ask why I'm so involved and what's in it for me? Well, it's very simple really. I want to try and make a difference,

support my community, and improve how the Council goes about delivering its services to all of us. Anyone can come along to the Eastbourne Residents Voice meetings, so do please come along if you'd like to have your say on local issues.

Meetings take place regularly and everyone is welcome. If you would like to know when and where the meetings take place or find out more about getting involved, just email: [tenantinvolvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:tenantinvolvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk) so they can call you for an informal chat.

We need more people to get involved because the more there are of us, the louder our voice becomes.

**All the best  
Graham**



### Sue Wells

#### Council Tenant

My name is Sue Wells, and I've been a Lewes District Council tenant for more

than 25 years. I'm involved in lots of ways because I believe tenants can really make a difference to their communities, but also because I like to keep a close eye on how our homes are managed!

I volunteer for TOLD (Tenants of Lewes District) and currently work as their treasurer and secretary. I believe volunteering in this way is important because it ensures that tenant voices are heard and taken in account. Let's not forget, the Council provides services which are paid for by our rent, so the services need to work for us - the tenants. Personally, I would love more people to be involved with TOLD because despite being a commitment I can look back with pride and say that the group has achieved a great deal over the years.

As well as TOLD, I also sit on a consumer group made up of Lewes and Eastbourne tenants which looks at a range of topics in detail before reporting their findings to TOLD and Listening to Eastbourne Tenants (LET), TOLD's counterpart in Eastbourne.

If being involved like this interests you, just email [tenantinvolvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:tenantinvolvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk) for a chat because there are many choices to match the time and commitment you're able to make.

Before I go I also want to push the Community Improvement budget which TOLD has been using to make a real difference to communities across the district. There's £15,000 up for grabs and any tenant can apply for some money, as long as it benefits the tenant community. This year I applied for money to pay for a dropped kerb in my area to make it easier for people with buggies or wheelchairs to get around (pictured above). It was easy



to get the idea off the ground with the help of tenant involvement and it's made a big difference!

If being involved is of interest, there's more information on page 11, or you can email [tenantinvolvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:tenantinvolvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk) for a chat. There are a range of choices to match the time and commitment you're able to make.

**Best wishes  
Sue**

# You said, we did...

## How do I contact my housing officer?

The Neighbourhood Housing Team have been listening and responding to tenant feedback, and this has resulted in patch sizes being reduced in size and some other changes. We've created some new email addresses so that tenants can reach the right person in the neighbourhood housing team more easily. The idea is that each patch address will be monitored by a group of officers, so messages always get through in a timely fashion if someone is on leave, sick or having to focus on something very urgent.

We're recruiting to the team at the moment, so we'll share more information to make it even easier once everyone is on board. Until then, here are the patch email addresses we'll be using:

### Lewes District Council

#### Eastern Rural

[easternrural.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:easternrural.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)  
(Barcombe, Cooksbridge, Firle, Glynde and Ringmer)

#### South West Rural

[southwestrural.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:southwestrural.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)  
(Piddinghoe, Kingston, Rodmell)

#### North West Rural

[northwestrural.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:northwestrural.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)  
(North Chailey, Ditchling, Plumpton, Newick, Wivelsfield Green)

#### Newhaven

[newhaven.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:newhaven.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

#### Peacehaven

[peacehaven.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:peacehaven.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

#### Seaford

[seaford.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:seaford.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

#### Telscombe to Falmer

[telscombetofalmer.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:telscombetofalmer.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

#### Lewes Landport

[leweslandport.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:leweslandport.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

### Lewes De Montford and town centre

[lewesdemontfordandtowncentre.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:lewesdemontfordandtowncentre.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

### Lewes West Malling

[leweswestmallings.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:leweswestmallings.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

### Lewes East Malling

[leweseastmallings.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:leweseastmallings.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

### Lewes St. Pancras

[lewesstpancras.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:lewesstpancras.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

### Lewes Neville

[lewesneville.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:lewesneville.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

## Eastbourne Borough Council

**Archery** – [archery.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:archery.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

**Central** – [central.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:central.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

**Upperton** – [upperton.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:upperton.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

### Hampden Park East

[hampdenparkeast.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:hampdenparkeast.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

### Hampden Park West

[hampdenparkwest.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:hampdenparkwest.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

**Martello** – [martello.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:martello.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

**Shinewater** – [shinewater.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:shinewater.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

### Old Town Central

[oldtowncentral.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:oldtowncentral.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

### Old Town Downside

[oldtowndownside.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:oldtowndownside.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

### Langney Village and Rise

[langneyvillageandrise.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:langneyvillageandrise.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

**Tower Dene** – [towerdene.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:towerdene.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

If in any doubt, you can also contact:

[Estates.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:Estates.housingteam@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

*We're here to help.*



## What is ReachDeck?

ReachDeck is a digital tool that helps make websites more user-friendly for everyone, especially those with visual impairments, dyslexia, or difficulty reading online content. It provides text-to-speech, translation, and reading support, allowing users to interact with websites more easily.

The Lewes and Eastbourne Councils website – [www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](http://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk) – includes ReachDeck to ensure our website users can access important information without barriers.



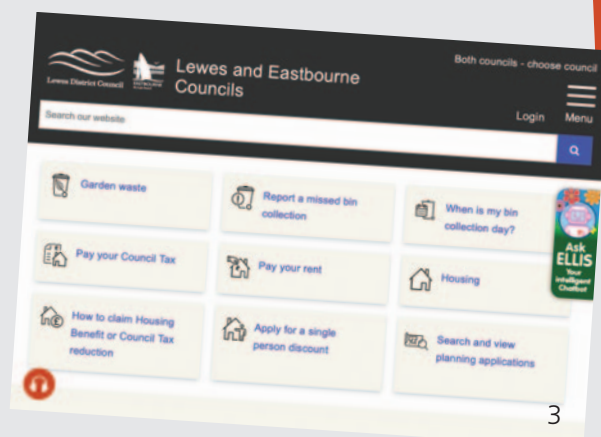
## How to find and use ReachDeck on the website

When visiting the Lewes and Eastbourne Councils website, look for the ReachDeck Icon at the bottom left corner of the home page. It can be identified as looking like a set of headphones inside an orange circle.

Once you've clicked the icon, a toolbar will open across the top of the home screen. You can use various features to enhance your experience:

- **Text-to-Speech:** Click the 'Listen' button to have the text read aloud. This helps users who have difficulty reading or prefer to listen to content.
- **Translation:** Select the translation option to convert the website's text into different languages.

- **Simplified Reading Mode:** This removes unnecessary distractions and makes the text easier to read.
- **Screen Masking:** A highlighted overlay helps user's focus by reducing background clutter.
- **Pronunciation Assistance:** Click on a word to hear how it is pronounced, which can be helpful for those learning English.







Lewes District Council

## Overall Satisfaction

Last Quarter **63%** **65%**



Quality of home  
Last Quarter 77%  
**74%**



Well maintained home  
Last Quarter 62%  
**65%**



Safe home  
Last Quarter 76%  
**74%**



Repairs - Last 12 months  
Last Quarter 76%  
**79%**



Time taken - last repair  
Last Quarter 70%  
**68%**



Repairs & Maintenance  
Last Quarter 59%  
**61%**



Communal area clean  
and well maintained  
Last Quarter 52%  
**56%**



Positive contribution  
to neighbourhood  
Last Quarter 64%  
**55%**



Handling of  
anti-social behaviour  
Last Quarter 62%  
**54%**



Easy to deal with  
Last Quarter 60%  
**61%**



Listen and acts  
Last Quarter 65%  
**49%**



Kept informed  
Last Quarter 76%  
**62%**



Treated fairly and  
with respect  
Last Quarter 77%  
**69%**



Complaints handling  
Last Quarter 27%  
**24%**

Overall satisfaction has improved since the last quarter (65%) but lower satisfaction was recorded this time for the quality of the home (74%) and how Lewes District Council treats its tenants (69%). The provision of a well-maintained home (65%), repairs (79%), being easy to deal with (61%) and communal areas (56%) all showed increased satisfaction levels, but some measures including our handling of ASB (54%) and complaints handling (24%) dipped this quarter.



More than two-thirds of tenants were satisfied with the overall services provided by Eastbourne Borough Council this quarter (69%) but the highest satisfaction result was given for treating tenants fairly and with respect which increased to 81%. Most measures had satisfaction levels in the 60 - 70% range and all of them except positive contribution to neighbourhood (56%) showed an increase in satisfaction in the last quarter, which is great news.

## Overall Satisfaction

Last Quarter **66%** **69%**



Quality of home  
Last Quarter 77%  
**77%**



Well maintained home  
Last Quarter 68%  
**71%**



Safe home  
Last Quarter 75%  
**78%**



Repairs - Last 12 months  
Last Quarter 72%  
**73%**



Time taken - last repair  
Last Quarter 71%  
**75%**



Repairs & Maintenance  
Last Quarter 61%  
**67%**



Communal area clean  
and well maintained  
Last Quarter 56%  
**66%**



Positive contribution  
to neighbourhood  
Last Quarter 60%  
**56%**



Handling of  
anti-social behaviour  
Last Quarter 53%  
**63%**



Easy to deal with  
Last Quarter 66%  
**74%**



Listen and acts  
Last Quarter 53%  
**64%**



Kept informed  
Last Quarter 66%  
**74%**



Treated fairly and  
with respect  
Last Quarter 77%  
**81%**



Complaints handling  
Last Quarter 17%  
**32%**



## Keeping your information up-to-date...



Having your up-to-date email address on file is useful for good communication, and for ensuring you receive important updates, notifications, and information regarding services and activities. It also helps when you want a quick answer to your questions or concerns.

We've recently been doing some tenancy audit visits to help with updating information and better understand the needs of our tenants so we can provide everyone with the right mix of services. These visits have also helped us pick up on property issues and given tenants the chance to talk to us face to face about anything they want to discuss.

Don't worry – all our officers show **photo ID** before asking to come into your home, but if you have any concerns, just contact us on **01323 410000** (Eastbourne) or **01273 471600** (Lewes).

We are currently running a survey to improve the information we hold. Keeping this information accurate not only helps us to deliver services much better, but it's also something the Regulator of Social Housing and the new consumer standards now require us to do:

[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/regulator-of-social-housing](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/regulator-of-social-housing). We have already had a great response to the survey, but it's not too late to reply to the letter or the email with the online survey link we sent. Remember, that those who complete the survey will be entered into a prize draw and have a chance of winning a £25 shopping voucher.

We are working with a research provider called Acuity to help deliver the survey. They will also be

making some follow up calls to gather information from tenants, so please be reassured that any call you receive from Acuity about the survey is genuine. Like us, Acuity fully complies with the Data Protection Act 2018 UK and General Data Protection Regulation or "GDPR". If you want to know more about how your data is managed, look on [www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](http://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk) and search for 'privacy notice.'

If you need any help, please contact us on **01276 487249** and leave a message so we can get back to you.

**Please help us to help you by making sure the contact details we have are up to date.**

## Why **Downsizing** could be your best move yet

**Sometimes, bigger isn't better – it's just bigger!** If you're rattling around in a home that feels more like a museum than a cosy retreat, maybe it's time to think about downsizing. And before you roll your eyes, hear me out – this could be the fresh start you never knew you needed!

### Less House, More Home

A smaller place means less cleaning, lower bills, and a whole lot more time for the things you love. Fancy a stroll instead of dusting spare rooms? Or how about a cuppa with friends in town rather than battling a jungle of a garden? Downsizing isn't just about moving house – it's about reclaiming your time and energy.

### A Financial Lifeline

Let's talk money. Smaller homes mean smaller outgoings – lower rent, reduced council tax, and cheaper utility bills. In the current cost-of-living squeeze, that extra cash could make a real difference. Whether it's a well-deserved holiday, helping out family, or just enjoying life's little luxuries, downsizing can free up funds for what really matters.

### The Right Fit for Right Now

Life changes – kids fly the nest, and what once worked might not anymore. Lewes and Eastbourne Councils have a range of options that might help you to move to a home that better suits your needs.

### Help is at Hand

Can't afford to move? We might be able to help with financial incentives to make it as smooth as possible. Search [www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](http://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk) using the words 'cash incentives for downsizing' to find out more. You could also think about a mutual exchange and try to swap with others looking to move. Simply register on HomeSwapper or speak with your housing officer.

### Take the First Step Today!

If you're sitting in a home that's too big, too costly, or just too much hassle, why not take the leap? Downsizing isn't about losing space – it's about gaining freedom. Have a chat with your housing officer or visit the council's website to explore your options. Your next chapter could be just around the corner!





# Spring into Action

As the chill of winter recedes and the days grow longer, the arrival of spring brings with it a sense of renewal and vibrancy. Spring not only heralds the blossoming of flowers and the awakening of wildlife but also offers a wealth of opportunities for residents to engage with their community, enhance their living spaces, and embrace the spirit of togetherness.

## A Flourishing Community

Spring is the perfect time to explore the many activities and events our local councils offer. From community gardening initiatives to outdoor fairs, there are plenty of opportunities to connect with neighbours and celebrate the beauty of our surroundings. Take some time to look at [www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](http://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk) using the search words 'leisure and events' for a complete guide on places to visit this spring.

Lewes and Eastbourne are known for their strong sense of community, and springtime provides an ideal backdrop for building friendships and supporting local initiatives. Why not think about joining a local gardening club or taking part in a community clean-up day? These activities not only enhance our neighbourhoods but also promote environmental sustainability and instil a sense of pride in our shared spaces.



For those who love gardening, it's a fantastic chance to get your hands dirty! Gardening provides numerous physical benefits and allows you to connect with the local ecosystem while experiencing the therapeutic joy of nurturing plants.

Whether you have a few pots on a balcony, a bright flower bed, or a windowsill herb garden, spring is the perfect time to plant flowers, vegetables, and herbs. Even if outdoor space is limited, you can still reap the rewards of gardening by growing plants in pots, containers, or on your windowsill.

As we welcome the warmth of spring, it's worth remembering the old English proverb: 'Ne'er cast a clout till May be out' – meaning don't put away your coat too soon, as the weather can still be unpredictable. And does 'May' refer to the Mayflower, the white blossom of the Hawthorn, or is it the month of May? While the month of May brings sunshine, it's wise to be prepared for those sudden chilly days!

## Spring cleaning

With the arrival of spring, many people feel a natural urge to declutter and refresh their living spaces. This year, why not embark on a spring-cleaning mission? Organise your belongings, donate items you no longer use, and create a more harmonious living environment. A clean and organised home can positively impact your mental well-being, providing a fresh start as we move into the warmer months.

If you're considering home improvements, spring is an excellent time to tackle those small projects you've been putting off. Whether painting a room, or redecorating, these enhancements can breathe new life into your home.





## Celebrating Nature

One of the most delightful aspects of spring in Sussex is the abundance of nature surrounding us. We are lucky to live among the glorious South Downs, and it's a delight to see the newborn lambs playfully jumping among their flock.

Springtime brings opportunities to connect with the great outdoors. Leisurely coastal walks, a stroll along the South Downs, or a ramble through one of our many forests, where you can witness the stunning sights and sounds of nature coming to life. Consider taking a family picnic in one of the many parks, or organise a nature walk to explore the local flora and fauna.



## Community Engagement and Volunteering

As we embrace the spirit of spring, let's not forget the importance of giving back to our community. Volunteering is a fantastic way to make a positive impact while meeting new people. Whether you help at a local charity, support community events, help a foodbank, or lend a hand in schools, your contribution can make a real difference.

Keep an eye on local council websites and community boards for upcoming volunteer opportunities and events that need support. Spring is a season of growth, and by investing your time and energy into our community, you can help everyone flourish. For information about volunteering, take a look at [www.eastsussex.gov.uk/community/volunteering](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/community/volunteering)

As we welcome spring in, let's embrace the opportunities for renewal, connection, and all that springtime offers. Let's roll up our sleeves, step outside, and make the most of this vibrant season together!

*Happy Spring!*

# Spring Photo Competition

**For this edition we're running a photo competition to celebrate the spring!**

All you have to do for your chance to win £25 worth of shopping vouchers is to send in a spring themed photo that you've taken in your area and send this to [tenantinvolvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:tenantinvolvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk) with your full name, address & telephone number.

Any photographs we receive by **Friday 30 May** will be judged by the Virtual 300 group of tenants and the winning photo will be published in the next edition of the magazine.

**In the meantime, please enjoy the warmer weather, sunshine, flowers and tree blossom.**





# Fire Safety

## How to keep your home and loved ones safe...



Fire safety is essential for everyone, but as a tenant, it's important to understand your responsibilities and the measures you can take to keep your home safe.

Here are a few simple precautions that can reduce the risk of fire and ensure you are prepared in an emergency...

### Fire Safety tips

#### Test Smoke Alarms Monthly



A working smoke alarm can save lives. Press the test button once a month to check it's working.

#### Be Kitchen Safe

Never leave cooking unattended, keep flammable materials away from the hob, and avoid using chip pans.

#### Electrical Safety

- Don't overload plug sockets, replace damaged cables, and turn off appliances when not in use.
- Unplug e-cigarettes when fully charged and always use the right charger.
- Never leave items on charge when you are out.
- Make sure you always follow any manufacturer instructions when using electrical appliances.

#### Candle and Cigarette Care

Always put out candles before leaving a room and avoid smoking indoors.

#### Plan Your Escape Route

Know the quickest way out of your home in case of fire, and ensure exits are kept clear.



**If a fire breaks out, get out, stay out, and call 999 immediately. Never attempt to tackle a fire yourself.**

By staying alert and following fire safety guidelines, you can help keep yourself, your home, and your neighbours safe. For more information, visit [www.gov.uk/fire-safety](http://www.gov.uk/fire-safety) or the East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service website: [www.esfrs.org](http://www.esfrs.org)

If you have concerns about your fire alarms, it's important to deal with these promptly to ensure your safety. If you live in the Lewes District call 01273 471600 or call 01323 410000 if you live in Eastbourne. In both cases, it's option 2 for the repairs team.

### Affordable tenant contents insurance

There are many reasons why people decide not to get insurance for home contents and valuables. These include worries about the cost, that insurers don't pay out, that claims are complicated, and that when you claim the premium goes up.

#### • I can't afford the premiums for contents insurance

Tenant contents insurance is designed to be as affordable as possible, and policy holders can pay in regular instalments with no interest to pay. All our tenants pay the same rates regardless of where they live.

#### • It's too complicated to apply

It's easy to buy cover and you can apply with a few basic details. There are no credit scoring requirements, and the process is simple and straightforward.

#### • It's hard to make a claim

In the same way that it's easy to take out cover, it's also easy to put in a claim quickly and with the minimum of fuss.

#### • Premiums go up if you make a claim

The premium charged is the same for

all our tenants regardless of whether you have made a claim.

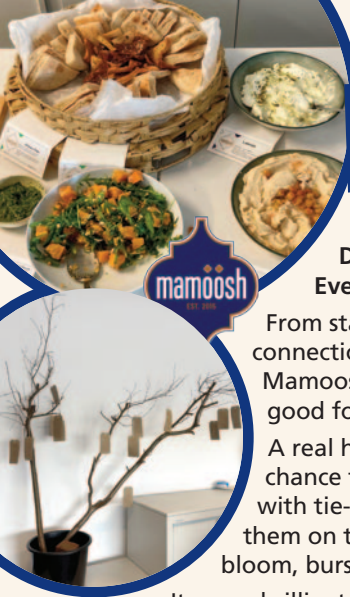
#### • I'm already covered for loss or damage to my property and belongings by my landlord's insurance

We cover your property for damage to the building itself, but we don't insure your belongings and valuables. That's why you should consider tenant contents insurance.

We have teamed up with Aviva (the UK's largest insurer) to help our tenants by providing a home contents insurance scheme for tenants and leaseholders which has exclusive rates and a range of optional extras, including cover for accidental damage. We believe the scheme offers a great package to those who don't normally buy insurance and a cost-effective alternative for those tenants who might have cover with another insurance provider.

You can find out more about tenant contents insurance on our website: [www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](http://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk) by using the keyword 'insurance' in the search box. Alternatively, why not look on comparison sites to find a best value deal. How much you pay will depend on how much your possessions are worth, the size of your home, its location, and the type of cover you choose.





## A day to remember!

On 28th March, we hosted residents from the Lewes District and Eastbourne for a fantastic Tenant Celebration Event at the scenic riverside Marine Workshops in Newhaven.

From start to finish, the atmosphere buzzed with conversation, connection, and community spirit. And let's talk about lunch – Mamoosh served up an absolute feast, proving once again that good food brings people together (every bite a taste sensation!).

A real highlight was our Celebration Tree which gave tenants a chance to share their ideas and suggestions for the future. Armed with tie-on labels, everyone jotted down their thoughts and hung them on the branches. By the end of the event, the tree was in full bloom, bursting with inspiration and creativity!

It was a brilliant day, and just the beginning – watch this space for what's next!

## How to get Adaptations for your Council Property



If you're a council tenant and find it difficult to move around your home you could be eligible for a range of adaptations to make your home more comfortable and accessible.

### Who can apply?

Adaptations are available for tenants who:

- Have difficulty moving around their home or accessing entrances and exits.
- Struggle with using facilities such as the bath or toilet.
- Have difficulty climbing stairs.
- Need modifications to support a disabled household member, including children.

### What adaptations are available?

The type of adaptation depends on individual needs and can include:

- Minor adaptations: Installing lever taps, grab rails, or handrails.
- Major adaptations: Installing ramps, level-access showers, stairlifts, or wider doorways.
- In rare situations, an extension may be required, though moving to a more suitable property may be a better solution.

### Who pays for the adaptations?

If you are a council tenant, we will arrange and pay for the work (subject to available funding).

### How to apply

#### Smaller Adaptations

- If you need grab rails or handrails, contact our customer service advisors using the details below and the team will arrange for a contractor to attend, or if more complex, arrange for a surveyor to visit. Indoor handrails are typically installed within a couple of weeks, while outdoor handrails may take a few months.

Email – [homesfirstcsas@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:homesfirstcsas@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

Call 01273 471600 (Lewes) or 01323 410000 (Eastbourne) – both option 2 to speak to an advisor.

#### Larger Adaptations

If your needs are more complex, an Occupational Therapist (OT) must assess your situation. You can self-refer for an OT assessment through the Adult Social Care website: [www.eastsussex.gov.uk/social-care](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/social-care), or by calling 0345 608 0191.

After the assessment, the OT will inform the council of the necessary adaptations, and a surveyor will then visit to measure up and design the required modifications.

The work will then be sent out to contractors for pricing, and a start date will be agreed upon with you. Please be aware, the process for larger adaptations can take up to 10 months from initial contact to completion, with extensions taking longer.

### Need more information?

For further details, visit the Lewes and Eastbourne Councils' website: [www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](http://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk) or contact your housing officer.



**EAST  
SUSSEX  
COLLEGE**

## Free and low-cost training

Did you know that East Sussex College offer free and low-cost Community Learning courses for any adults aged 19 and over who are in receipt of benefits or who earn less than £25,000 per year?

Courses include arts and crafts such as sewing, drawing and 3D sculpture, wellbeing courses such as Mindfulness and managing stress, singing for wellbeing and healthy cooking.

The sessions take place on the college campuses in Mountfield Road (Lewes) and Cross Levels Way in Eastbourne. To see what's on offer you can scan the QR code, visit [adult.escg.ac.uk](http://adult.escg.ac.uk), email [community.info@escg.ac.uk](mailto:community.info@escg.ac.uk) or call on 030 300 38212.



## Join tpas for free!

Being a Tpas tenant member gives you free help to support you becoming more involved. There are many other advantages to membership which include virtual and in person focus groups and workshops, free webinars, regular newsletters, online networking groups, and the chance to share your experiences and opinions on a national stage.

If you'd like to join tpas for free, just email [tenantinvolvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:tenantinvolvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk) with you name and address and we'll do the rest.

## Job opportunities

It's easy to find out about any vacancies going at the councils by searching on the website – [www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](http://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk) – using the key word 'job.' There are lots of different jobs available and many good reasons to work for the councils, which include:

- Annual leave – a minimum of 25 days for most staff (including two days at Christmas) plus additional days depending on the length of service.
- Agile working – the ability to work in the environment that best suits your job. This could be a council building, in the community, from home or a combination of these.
- Flexible working hours – staff can work flexibly when they have children or other caring responsibilities.
- Health and wellbeing - an Occupational Health Service provides professional medical advice to staff experiencing difficult periods in their life, either personally or professionally,
- Sick pay - at full and/or half-pay rates (depending on the length of service) and special leave for emergency reasons and on compassionate grounds.
- Maternity and paternity benefits - over and above statutory entitlements.
- Pension – optional membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

## A message from the Rents Team...

"We are working towards prioritising our communication with tenants using email. This transition will offer many benefits, including improved efficiency and a more effective way of engaging with our customers. Further details regarding this change will be shared with tenants once they become available."



## Check what benefits you can get

If you're struggling with the cost of living, you should check if you can claim more benefits or increase your current benefits. You might be able to claim certain benefits even if you work, have savings or own a home.

### Use a benefits calculator

Benefits calculators can tell you what types of benefit you might get and how much money you could get.

To get an accurate answer, you'll need information about your savings, income, pension, childcare payments and any existing benefits for you and your partner, if you have one.

For a quick overview of what help you might be able to get, you can use the Turn2us benefits calculator: [benefits-calculator.turn2us.org.uk](https://benefits-calculator.turn2us.org.uk)

For a more detailed check you could use the Entitledto benefits calculator: [www.entitledto.co.uk](http://www.entitledto.co.uk)

To find out about all the benefits that are available, take a look at the Citizens Advice website: [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) – simply type 'benefits introduction' into the search box.

Or if you prefer a face to face chat, why not contact your local Citizens Advice and arrange to see someone in person: [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/contact-us/](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/contact-us/)

**turn2us** Tackling financial insecurity together.

**entitledto**  
independent | accurate | reliable

**citizens advice**

## Changes to Pension Credit from April 2025

From April 2025, Pension Credit in the UK will undergo several significant changes to support low-income pensioners. Pension Credit is a means-tested benefit designed to supplement the income of individuals who have reached State Pension age. It comprises two main components: Guarantee Credit and Savings Credit.

### Key changes

- Guarantee Credit ensures that weekly income is topped up to a minimum level. From April 2025, the thresholds will increase, with single pensioners receiving up to £218.15 per week and couples up to £332.95 per week.
- Savings Credit rewards those who have made modest retirement provisions. Eligible pensioners can receive up to £17.01 per week (single) or £19.04 per week (couples).

### Additional benefits for Pension Credit claimants

- Housing Benefit – Help with rent costs.
- Free NHS Services – Including dental treatment and glasses.
- Cold Weather Payments – Financial support in severe weather.
- Free TV Licence – For those aged 75 and over.

### For further information

Many pensioners are missing out on Pension Credit and the extra benefits it unlocks. To check eligibility and apply:

- Visit [www.gov.uk/pension-credit](http://www.gov.uk/pension-credit)
- Call the Pension Credit claim line on **0800 99 1234**
- Contact a local Citizens Advice Bureau for guidance.

Applications can be backdated by up to three months, so it's worth checking if you qualify.

## Garage mapping



After listening to tenant feedback, we are excited to announce that we are currently in the process of mapping how our garage services are delivered. It's hoped that this initiative will not only improve our ability to manage the garage waiting list more effectively but

that it will also help us use limited resources more efficiently to enable us to keep on top of repairs and maintenance. Ultimately, we want to serve you better and create a smoother, more transparent experience for all our tenants.

If you have a question regarding garages, email: [garages@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:garages@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)



# Every tenant matters, and every tenant has a voice... **GET INVOLVED**

We believe that tenants have everything they need to be involved, because tenants are the real social housing experts who are best placed to make improvements to their local areas. Here are just some of the ways you can get involved!

## Consumer Standards Groups

The Consumer Standards groups are made up of tenant representatives who meet with officers to monitor the Councils' compliance with the new Social Housing regulations.

## Tenant Scrutiny Team

This group is made up of tenants who conduct in-depth reviews of service areas. Reviews to date have included communal repairs, complaints handling, void property management and most recently how damp and mould are handled.

## The Retirement Housing Forum

This is a joint forum made up of representatives from retirement housing schemes in both areas. New members are elected every year to represent residents from individual schemes.

## Tenants of Lewes District (TOLD)

TOLD represents the views of tenants in the Lewes District and meets on a quarterly basis with key Council officers to discuss current housing issues, Homes First



performance and influence decision making. The committee also controls a community improvement budget which can be used for project funding in the community.

## Listening to Eastbourne Tenants (LET)

LET meets quarterly to review and influence policies, services, and performance. The group also oversee a pot of money that can be used for community improvements. Members are elected at an open meeting in the Autumn, so if you'd like to join, please get in touch!

## Eastbourne Residents Voice

LET have formed a sub-group called Eastbourne Residents Voice to support their work and identify community improvement work that LET can help to fund. Anyone is welcome to attend their meetings, so if you would like to come along, email: [tenantinvolvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:tenantinvolvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk) for more information.



## The Virtual 300

The Virtual 300 is a group of tenants who share their views from the comfort of their own homes. It's all done by email so it's easy to be involved as much or as little as you like, and there are also regular prize draws and incentives for taking part.

## Communications Panel / Armchair Advisors

These tenant armchair advisors make sure that magazines and reports are as easy to read as possible. We use the feedback we are given to help us review drafts before they are published and steer future publications.

## GET INVOLVED

## Want to know more?

If you'd like to have your say, make a difference and make sure tenant voices are heard, simply email: [tenantinvolvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:tenantinvolvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk) so we can give you more information or arrange an informal chat to talk about the opportunities available.



Eastbourne involvement.



Tenants of Lewes District (TOLD) Annual General Meeting.

## Welcome Justine!

Justine Swann joined the Tenant Involvement service in late February and brings new skills and a broad range of experience to the team having worked for the police, the NHS and the DWP to name but a few!

If you have any ideas for Tenants' Open Voice articles please email:

[justine.swann@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:justine.swann@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)



## Grounds maintenance contract

Some of you will be aware that the existing Grounds Maintenance contract we have is due to be renewed in March 2026, so we'll be going out to tender soon. Look out for a survey which is coming soon!



# What we do and how to get in touch

## The teams...

### Customer First are

the main point of contact for customers on the telephone, online chat, or via ELLIS the Chatbot. The team deals with all casework across the Councils except housing related work which is managed by Homes First. The team are also responsible for income recovery including Council rents, Housing Benefit and Council Tax.

### Environment

First manage all the waste and recycling services across the Councils. If issues arise with bin collections, street cleansing or anything else waste related this team can help.

The Green Consultancy Team look after communal gardens and green areas such as recreation grounds and play parks. They are responsible for grass cutting, shrub maintenance and tree safety, and employ grounds maintenance contractors to maintain these areas to prescribed standards.

Homes First delivers housing services to Council tenants and leaseholders.

This includes the allocation of homes, tenancy management, the repairs service and managing homelessness on behalf of the Councils.

Neighbourhood First are a team of officers who work to improve neighbourhoods. They act as the link between the

Councils and the community, and work with volunteers, groups, and other Council staff to maintain the quality of the environment.

**CUSTOMER FIRST**

**ENVIRONMENT FIRST**

**HOMES FIRST**

**NEIGHBOURHOOD FIRST**

Neighbourhood First advisors can help with a range of issues including dog fouling, fly-tipping, littering and street cleaning, abandoned vehicles, and fallen trees.

Neighbourhood First also carry out street and open spaces inspections as well as inspections of the communal areas in blocks of flats.

Property Services are responsible for the maintenance of the council's combined housing stock including responsive and emergency repairs, stock condition, aids and adaptations, all statutory health and safety compliance, and Leasehold management

Chat with ELLIS and online chat are available on the website during office hours. Look for the icon on the bottom right-hand corner of the screen. If ELLIS is unable to answer your query, customer advisors are on-hand to help.

If you prefer to call us, you can use **01273 471600** (Lewes) or **01323 410000** (Eastbourne).

## Did you know...?

The Report it (Love Clean Streets) app is also available to download by clicking the 'Report It' smartphone app button.



### There are many ways you can report issues...

One way is to report online at: **www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk**. You simply need to type 'report a problem' in the enter search text field and press return to see many options. The online forms are a quick and easy way to report many things:

- Repairs to your home and, for blocks of flats, repairs to communal areas
- Missed bins and waste and recycling issues.
- Dog and animal problems
- Litter and fly tipping.
- Graffiti and vandalism.
- Noise nuisance and anti-social behaviour.

If you prefer, you can type in a key word. For example, for maintenance issues, type in the word 'repair' and press return.

We can take in documents and letters at our offices, signpost you to other organisations and charities, and also offer basic advice. If we can't help with a query, and you don't have a phone or device available to go online with or to contact us yourself, you can use the telephones inside the areas.

The reception spaces are very small and not in a private setting, so please consider this if you are bringing others with you or want to discuss sensitive matters of any kind. As you can see on this page there are many other easy ways to contact us, but if you want to come to an office, these are currently open Monday to Friday at:

- **6 High Street, Lewes, BN7 2AD (9am to 5pm)**
- **Eastbourne Town Hall reception, Grove Road, Eastbourne, BN21 4UG (10am to 2pm)**



## Update on branding and communications for Eastbourne housing services

The work on moving the governance of our housing services from Eastbourne Homes Ltd (EHL), back to Eastbourne Borough Council is complete, so we have now retired the EHL branding, which includes removing the 'Working in partnership' tagline from the EBC logo.

This ends a hugely successful relationship over the last two decades. EHL have delivered amongst other things

a comprehensive Decent Homes programme, which tenants still benefit from, alongside advocacy for tenants and advice to officers.

A big 'thank you' goes out to the Board and Committee members who were part of the success of EHL.

If you have any questions about branding for any council services, please email: [tenantinvolvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:tenantinvolvement@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)

Find us on Facebook and X for news and information about all our services and housing-related news.

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



Find us on Facebook:  
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Eastbourne Borough Council



Follow us on X:  
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