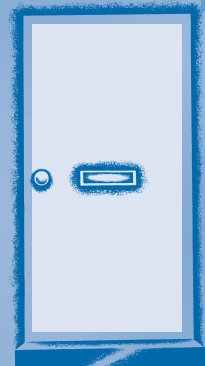




# Tenant Participation

HOUSING DIRECTORATE



## **What is tenant participation?**

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As a tenant of this Council we want you to have your say about the way we manage your home. Tenant participation is about giving choices, and encouraging tenants and leaseholders to take part in the way their housing service is run.

We are committed to this process and we have been working closely with our tenants for many years. They have had the chance to give their views on some major issues such as choice based lettings and a proposed large scale housing stock transfer. Our decision not to pursue the option of a transfer was based on tenants' views. Tenants and leaseholders are also encouraged to get involved in the way we make decisions on important issues like repairs and improvements.

## **How can I get involved?**

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### **Residents associations**

Residents associations give tenants and other residents the opportunity to meet and discuss issues that affect their housing, their estate or the local area. Our own officers often join these meetings, to talk about the Council's plans and to seek views. Guest speakers are often invited from other organisations, for example the Police could be invited to discuss anti-social behaviour. Residents groups also offer a great opportunity to get together as a community, and organise social activities.

There are certain rules that an association must meet to be 'recognised' by the Council. Recognition means the Council has agreed that the group is representing the interests of its tenants and leaseholders. These associations are supported by the Council's Tenant Participation Officer. They can also get some funding from us to start up and run their groups, or to make minor estate improvements. Each group is also invited to send two representatives to meetings of the District's Tenant and Leaseholder Federation.

There may be a residents association for your area. You can ask our Tenant Participation Officer - see the end of this leaflet for contact details. Information can also be found on our website which has a page on Tenant Participation, including details of the associations:

**[www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/housing](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/housing)**

You will also get regular information on the residents associations in 'Housing News', our magazine for tenants and leaseholders.

### **Leaseholders Association**

Leaseholders are people who live in former council flats or maisonettes that have been sold under the Right to Buy scheme. As 'freeholder' the Council still has some responsibility for these properties. Council leaseholders have the right to be involved, in much the same way as tenants, so they have their own Leaseholders Association. The group meets with representatives from the Council on a regular basis. Any leaseholder issue can be discussed, such as service charges, building maintenance and estate issues.

### **Sheltered Housing Forum**

The Sheltered Housing Forum includes representatives from the Council's sheltered schemes, grouped dwelling schemes and properties with a visiting scheme manager. The Forum meets regularly to discuss housing matters, and many other issues of special interest to older people.

### **Rural Forum**

If you are living in one of the rural areas you may have different priorities to people living on the larger housing estates. Perhaps you are keen to get involved, but your area has too few residents to start a residents association. The Rural Forum was set up to speak for tenants and leaseholders who live in the District's smaller towns and villages. The group includes individual representatives from the rural areas and it meets regularly with the Council.

## Tenant Talkback Panel

Tenant Talkback Panels differ from residents associations in that they are 'issue based' rather than area based. Our panel gives residents the chance to have their say on specific areas of interest. You can choose an issue that interests you, such as repairs and maintenance, or Housing's information literature, then work as part of a panel with Council staff to consider how improvements could be made. If you would like to get involved in shaping the future of our housing service, then joining the Tenant Talkback Panel may be just the thing for you.

## The Tenants and Leaseholders Federation

The Epping Forest Tenants and Leaseholders Federation includes representatives from recognised tenant and leaseholder groups across the District. Its members hold regular meetings with the Council. We consult with the Federation in various ways:

- We ask Federation members to give their views before we make any changes that will affect tenants, leaseholders and housing applicants.



- The Federation monitors the Council's housing performance.
- Members are invited to discuss issues that matter to people in the areas where they live.
- Federation members feed back to the local residents associations on matters discussed at meetings.
- Representatives of the Federation are sometimes invited to take part in outside visits and other Council meetings.

Our main aim is to enable tenants to influence decisions about the management of their homes. Topics include repairs and long-term maintenance, budgets and costs, the Housing Register, homelessness, services for people with special needs, rent arrears, anti-social behaviour .... and many other issues!

Federation members sometimes have questions about services not run by Housing (refuse collection for example, which is managed by the Council's Environment and Street Scene Directorate). In these cases we may invite a guest speaker to talk to the group.

## **Tenant Participation Agreements**

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A Tenant Participation Agreement (TPA) is a written agreement between the Council and a residents group. These agreements, sometimes known as compacts, are not legal documents but they set out formally how we will work together. They are “statements of commitment” by both the Council and the residents group which look at:

- How information will be provided
- Ways to encourage participation
- What the Council will do for the group
- How the residents group will organize itself

We have a District-wide agreement, written with the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation, and local agreements for other associations. Many councils have agreements or compacts and we use guidelines produced by the Government to draw them up.



## **Estate Level Agreement**

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You may not have a residents association where you live, but that doesn't mean you can't be involved. If there are particular issues of concern to your community, we may be able to work with you to set up an Estate Level Agreement (ELA). We would meet with you and other residents, on site, to discuss your concerns. We would then agree an action plan and aim to make any changes within an arranged time-limit, which is usually 12 months.

## **Estate Inspections**

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Our Housing Officers carry out programmed inspections of Housing's estates. Would you be interested in joining them with other residents of your area? This would not take up much of your time but it would give you the opportunity to look closely at the area where you live, and get involved in making improvements.

## **Mystery Shopping**

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Mystery shopping is a way of testing services and assessing them from the customer's point of view. Our mystery shoppers are trained residents of the District who carry out pre-agreed tasks, such as making a telephone call to report a repair, or visiting one of our offices. They then report their findings back to us so we can learn from their experiences and make improvements to our services.

## Training

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We offer training to help residents start up and run their own groups, and to build on their knowledge of housing matters. Training and seminars may be provided by the Council or by an outside organisation.

### What can I do if my area has no residents association?

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You could start one! It need not be too much work, just get a few neighbours interested and ask us where to start. Our Tenant Participation Officer will show you the ropes, provide you with a pack of information and help you get started.

### I'd like to get involved but I can't get to meetings

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The Council is committed to providing services which reflect the needs and diversity of all its customers and service users. We want to engage in meaningful consultation with the communities we serve, including those that are seldom heard. Some people find it difficult to get to meetings, perhaps because they have family commitments or disabilities. Please speak to our Tenant Participation Officer on **01992 564524** if you would like some advice.

### How else can I get involved?

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Not everyone wants to join a residents group or attend meetings, but we want all tenants to have their say about the housing service. We will provide you with information in plain language, and consult you in a number of ways:

- All our tenants and leaseholders receive Housing News, a magazine produced by the Council which includes housing information and offers frequent opportunities for feedback.
- The Council's website [www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk) has a Housing area which includes information for tenants and other residents, and a feedback option.

- We carry out surveys to assess overall satisfaction and find out what you think of particular services – repairs and maintenance for example.
- If a major issue is likely to affect you, such as an improvement project, we will arrange meetings, presentations and consultations (using special leaflets, personal visits or by letter).
- We have a compliments and complaints scheme which you can read about in our leaflet “Housing appeals, homelessness reviews and complaints”.

We are always looking for new ways to involve people, so look out for information in your Housing News.

## Who to contact

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We are working with residents to establish new groups all the time. Names and addresses of the groups are not printed in this leaflet because we could not keep it up to date!

If you would like to join one of our groups, make a suggestion, or find out how your area is represented, please contact us:

Phone the Tenant Participation Officer on **01992 564524**

### Write to:

**The Tenant Participation Officer  
Housing Directorate  
Epping Forest District Council  
Civic Office, High Street  
Epping, Essex  
CM16 4BZ**

email: [involvetenants@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:involvetenants@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)

website: [www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/housing](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/housing)

or, you can fill in the form on the next page and post it to us at the address given above.

## Tenant Participation reply form:

**Please tick any of the boxes below:**

- I would like to know if there is a residents group in my area
- I would like some advice on starting a residents group

**I would like to know more about:**

- Leaseholders Association
- Sheltered Forum
- Rural Forum
- Tenants Talkback Panel
- Mystery Shoppers
- Estate Level Agreements

Other \_\_\_\_\_

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**My contact details are:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Post to:**

The Tenant Participation Officer  
Housing Directorate  
Epping Forest District Council  
Civic Office, High Street  
Epping, Essex  
CM16 4BZ





## How to contact us:

### Tenant Participation Officer

Telephone: **01992 564524**

Email: **[involvetenants@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:involvetenants@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)**

Write to: **Epping Forest District Council**  
**Housing Directorate, Civic Offices, High Street,**  
**Epping, Essex, CM16 4BZ**

Website: **[www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/housing](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/housing)**

The information given in this leaflet was correct at February 2011. Please be aware that there may have been changes since that time, such as new laws or council policies.

Please tell us if you would like this information provided in any other way, as a large print version for example.  
Telephone: 01992 564292

Epping Forest District Council  
Housing Directorate, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping, Essex CM16 4BZ  
Telephone: Epping (01992) 564000 [www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/housing](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/housing)

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The Government Standard

