



# Tenants

# Voice

April 2011

## News from the Epping Forest Tenants and Leaseholders Federation

### News from the Federation

The Epping Forest Tenants and Leaseholders Federation has recently elected its Chair, Vice-chair and Tenant Liaison Representative for the next twelve months.



They are:

Chair: Molly Carter

*Photograph*

(Oakwood Hill Estate Residents Association)

Vice-chair: Mike Tobin

(Roundhills Residents Association)

Peter Hilton is the Tenant Liaison Representative (Roundhills Residents Association and Epping Forest Sheltered Housing Forum)

The Federation has representatives from every tenants association in the District. Its members hold regular meetings with the Council. They are consulted on new policies and give feedback on how services could be improved.

Recent issues have included:

- The Government's proposals for the future of social housing
- Housing's strategies on Rent Arrears, Tenant Participation and Anti-social Behaviour, and
- This year's proposed rent increase.

### Coming Soon - The Tenant Scrutiny Panel

Do you want to get to the heart of council housing service provision? If so, you may be just the person to be part of our Tenant Scrutiny Panel. Later in the year we will be advertising for interested tenants to apply to join the panel, which will have responsibility for scrutinizing all aspects of the housing service in various ways, such as: performance monitoring; scrutiny of sections within the Housing Directorate, benchmarking against other housing providers; and performance against service standards. Full details in the next Housing News.

We'd like to hear from you if you have an interest in any of these subjects.

Call Richard Jones on 01992 564524 for an informal chat about the Tenant Scrutiny Panel or the Tenant Talkback Panel, or email: [involvetenants@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:involvetenants@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)

### Tenant Talkback Panel

If you have an interest in how the Council provides its housing services, but don't have the time to get involved in a local residents group, you may wish to join our Tenant Talkback Panel. We are using the Panel to consult tenants on specific aspects of the housing service and to do this.

**So, how does it work?** If you are interested, we will add your details to our list, along with the topics you are interested. Among the topics we may consult on are:

- Tenant participation and mystery shopping
- Repairs and Maintenance
- Allocations
- Diversity, equality and disabilities
- Estate and grounds maintenance
- Housing literature and website



The Repairs and Maintenance Customer Focus Group has been looking at the repairs service from the customer's point of view. Its members have worked closely with the Council on the Repairs Refresh Programme. The group now meets quarterly and has suggested a number of initiatives which the Council is introducing, such as property information packs.

The Tenants' Reading Group was also set up to look at housing information literature from a customer's point of view. The group played a big role in agreeing the content and layout of the Annual Report to Tenants 2010.

# The Local Offer

See your Housing News for the latest news about the Council's 'local offer' to tenants. It was drafted following extensive consultation between the Council and the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation. The 2010 Annual Report to Tenants also asked for feedback. Everyone has agreed that the offer should have three parts:

**The Housing Charter**

**Our Housing Service Standards**

**A tenant-agreed action plan**



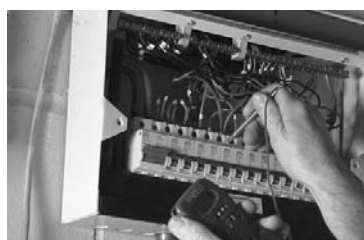
The Charter is printed in Housing News, which also gives details of the Service Standards. **The action plan on these two pages lists 16 actions (or improvements) for the current year.** The Tenants and Leaseholders Federation will monitor the Council's progress against these action points.

## Tenant-agreed action plan

Here are our tenant-agreed actions (or improvements) for 2011-12. The Action Plan is part of our 'local offer' to you - together with the Housing Charter, and our Housing Service Standards.

**We will ...**

- 1** Introduce a more commercial approach to the delivery of our Housing Repairs Service, by appointing an experienced private repairs management contractor to manage and improve the Repairs Service (including the management of the Council's repairs staff who will remain employed by the Council).
- 2** Undertake repairs more quickly, by completing at least 93% of all emergency, urgent and routine repairs within the target times of 24 hours, 5 working days and 6 weeks respectively.
- 3** Provide greater choice and convenience to tenants needing repairs carried out, by increasing the number of urgent and routine repairs undertaken by appointment (excluding emergency repairs) to 50%.
- 4** Improve parking provision on our housing estates, by spending around £327,000 to provide 71 new parking bays through 3 new off-street parking schemes in the District, assessed according to their need.
- 5** Improve the security of blocks of flats on our housing estates, by spending around £18,000 to install new door entry systems, serving at least 20 properties.



- 6** Improve the quality of life for our disabled tenants, and enable them to continue to stay in their home, by spending around £400,000 to undertake at least 160 major disabled adaptations to our properties.
- 7** Improve tenants' homes by spending around £1.5m to install new kitchens in at least 290 properties, assessed according to the properties' age and need.
- 8** Improve the look and thermal efficiency of tenants' homes, by spending around £200,000 to install at least 300 new double-glazed PVCu (plastic) front doors in our properties.
- 9** Improve the effectiveness, and reduce the cost to tenants, of heating our flats on the Ninefields Estate, Waltham Abbey and the Oakwood Hill Estate, Loughton, by completing the installation of individual boilers in our properties, to replace the current communal heating systems.
- 10** Continue to pilot the installation of solar heating panels and other renewable energy schemes in appropriate rural properties, as part of planned maintenance programmes.
- 11** Improve the alarm facilities provided in our sheltered housing schemes for older people, by upgrading all the remaining Careline alarm systems in sheltered housing schemes to the latest "Piper Communicall" system.
- 12** Reduce the average time it takes to re-let Council properties (excluding those that are difficult to let or need major works) to 30 days, by working in a more streamlined way.
- 13** Make it easier for our housing applicants to;
  - Join the Council's Housing Register;
  - Apply for housing in neighbouring districts; and/or
  - Find accommodation in the private rented sector;by investigating the possibility of enhancing our HomeOption Choice Based Lettings Scheme through;
  - Producing a common application form for all HomeOption local authority partners;
  - Introducing a facility for tenants to apply for housing on-line; and
  - Advertising on the website and in the Freesheet vacant properties available for private rent.
- 14** Ensure that the quality and performance of our housing service is independently checked and monitored by tenants, and improved, by helping the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation to introduce a Tenants Scrutiny Panel, that reports to the Federation, to scrutinise the Council's housing performance and undertake reviews of housing services
- 15** Improve the quality of our housing service, and ensure good customer service, by introducing a new scheme to train a selection of Council tenants to undertake "mystery shopping" exercises on the Council's housing services.
- 16** Explain how the Council will maintain and improve its housing estates and neighbourhoods, and meet the Tenant Service Authority's National Standards on Neighbourhood Management, by publishing a policy (and summarising the main elements in Housing News), after consulting the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation.



## Annual Report to Tenants 2010

Last year the Council published an annual report showing how the Housing Directorate had performed over the year, including its key achievements. It also contained lots of information on how housing services are provided and paid for, including how we intend to meet the Tenant Services Authority's national standards. There was information on how to complain, and a feedback form asking what people thought of the report.

### Your views were:

- 95% of respondents said the Council's approach to developing its Local Offer was clear.
- 95% thought the information given on the Council's progress in relation to the Tenant Services Authority's five national standards was clear.

- 90% thought the Housing Directorate's performance overall was acceptable.
- 76% thought the Annual Report was about the right length.
- 81% thought the report contained the right amount of information.
- 86% thought the report was well presented and easy to understand.

### Thanks to all who took the time to respond. Your input will help us to produce our 2011 report.

The Annual Report was produced in consultation with the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation and was sent to all of the Council's tenants. We would like to thank the Tenants' Reading Group; Arthur Anderson, Lisa Holt, June Lewzey and Wyn Marshall, who gave up their time to help agree the content and layout of the report.

## AROUND THE DISTRICT

### Chigwell

The Limes Farm Community Association (LFCA) committee meets regularly to discuss local issues of interest. LFCA holds regular social events and was involved in the consultations on the improvement scheme for Limes Farm Community Hall.

### Ongar

Shelley Residents Association is working closely with EFDC Housing and Community Development and a variety of local groups. Meetings are held in Shelley Primary school. The group is keen to attract new members and to hold some more social events.

### Oakwood Hill, Loughton

Oakwood Hill Residents Association wants to recruit some new committee members and is working closely with the Council. As the result of a community event last year, the Council's Sports Development Team now holds regular sports sessions on the Estate.

### Debden, Loughton

The Debden Tenants Panel meets quarterly with the District Council, Police, Loughton Town Council and other agencies. Guest speakers have recently included representatives of the Councils Environmental and Street Scene, Safer Communities Team and Essex County Council Highways.

### Roundhills, Waltham Abbey

The Roundhills Residents Association continues to work closely with the Council and other agencies. Members took part in a 'Help for Heroes' fundraising event in 2010 which raised over £200 for the charity.

### Ninefields, Waltham Abbey

The Ninefields Residents Panel has been set up to represent the views of Ninefields residents. The group has recently elected its first Chair, Vice-chair, Secretary and Treasurer. In December, the group worked alongside the Council's Community Development Team to stage a Christmas show.

### Romeland, Waltham Abbey

Romeland Residents Association is working closely with the Council on a number of issues. As Romeland is part of a conservation area, the group has been liaising with the Council's Conservation Officer.

### Leaseholders Association

The Leaseholders Association continues to meet regularly with the Council to discuss issues mainly affecting Leaseholders. Regular guest speakers attend Leaseholders Association meetings.

### Sheltered Housing Forum

The Sheltered Housing Forum represents residents living in all the Council's sheltered housing. Meetings are extremely well attended. The Council has recently produced a Careline information pack, following a consultation with the Sheltered Forum.

Epping Forest District Tenants and Leaseholders Federation has representatives from every tenants association in the District. Our members hold regular meetings with the Council. We are consulted on new policies and give feedback on how services could be improved.

Where an association does not exist we will help set one up and give support. Membership of all associations is free. For more details, or to find out about your local association, you can contact Richard Jones the Council's Tenant Participation Officer. Phone 01992 564524 or email: [involvetenants@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:involvetenants@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)