

HOUSING NEWS

FEBRUARY 2025



A word from Wyn



Chair of the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel

It has been over a year since we published an issue of the housing news, and a lot has changed in that time within the housing world.

We have seen the introduction of the new Consumer Standards which allows tenants and leaseholders to scrutinise their landlords.

The Regulator of Social Housing has been given new powers and there is a big push on building more social housing homes.

The Tenant and Leaseholder Panel has been very busy within Epping Forest District Council (EFDC), we have welcomed a new Resident Involvement Officer, approved new policies and procedures, such as a new repairs policy and we are in the process of agreeing a new constitution for the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel. We anticipate a busy year ahead.

Over the next year residents will begin to see more engagement opportunities and I would encourage you all to get involved where you can. The time you give to EFDC is very important and these opportunities allow you the chance to scrutinise the council's performance as a landlord and hold them to account.

I look forward to meeting many new faces over the next year.

Wyn Marshall

Resident Involvement

My name is Ryan, I am the new Resident Involvement Officer for Epping Forest District Council. I have been in post since September 2024 and come from a background of housing. The main aspect of my role is to build relationships with housing residents as well as creating opportunities for them to get involved and give their input to council policies, procedures and more. I am a big believer that you as residents know your home better than us and your knowledge of your homes and areas that you live in are integral to improving estates and being proud of the places that you call home.

Over the next year I will be creating more opportunities for tenants and leaseholders to get involved with EFDC and would love to see you work with us and improve housing. Residents can get involved through our Tenant and Leaseholder Panel, task and finish groups, surveys, resident associations and resident voices. There will also be an opportunity to work with our in-house repairs provider, Qualis, on their new complaints panel.

For information on how to get involved and opportunities available:

- Email Residentinvolvement@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
- Call 01992 564528



TENANCY AND ESTATES TEAM

Tenancy team

The Tenancy team supports roughly 6,500 council tenants across the district.

The Tenancy team is responsible for:

- Tenancy sustainment
- Breaches
- Succession
- Anti-social behaviour from council tenants
- New tenancies
- Joint tenancy applications
- Changes to tenancies

Tenancy officers are currently conducting tenancy surveys throughout the district. This process involves checking in with the tenant, the tenancy agreement, and the property. The survey will address any concerns raised by the tenant or the council to ensure the safety of both the tenant and the neighbouring residents.

Officers attend a weekly drop-in at the Limes Farm office in Chigwell on Wednesday and Oakwood Hill Community Hub in Loughton on Thursday mornings. Tenants can attend and ask questions to the tenancy and estates officer. Tenants can also access support from Peabody and other council services at the Oakwood Hill Community Hub.

Estates team

The Estates team is responsible for:

- Housing communal areas
- Estate inspections
- Damage to housing estate greens
- Applications for dropped kerbs
- Licenses to cultivate land and cross land
- Land matters
- Wayleave applications
- Assisting with right to buy applications
- Management of EFDC housing land
- Regeneration projects

As of October 2024, sterile zones have been established in communal areas, prohibiting the storage of personal items in these spaces. We understand that some residents may be dissatisfied with this policy; however, it is a measure adopted by numerous councils nationwide. This policy aims to enhance safety for residents in the unlikely event of a fire in communal areas. By maintaining a clear and unobstructed space, we can ensure a safe passage for residents, visitors, and the Fire Service during an emergency.

TENANCY AND ESTATES TEAM

What's new

The Safer Streets project at Oakwood Hill area started in July 2024. 6 months in and various new and improved features have been implemented across the estate, including the installation of new signs for the community hall and new way-finder signs.

Over the course of 4 weekends in 2024, the caretakers applied weed spray throughout the estate, leading to a significant enhancement in its appearance.

The parking bays have also been remarked with future works planned.

Additionally, efforts are underway to install privacy panels and upgrade the paving slabs in the communal gardens in Ninefields, Waltham Abbey.

Funding has also been allocated for the conversion of garages into storage units for mobility scooters within some Independent Living Schemes.

Parking and fly-tipping

The estates team is actively seeking solutions to the parking challenges and fly-tipping on EFDC housing land, both of which are prominent and contentious issues. Addressing these concerns is a top priority for the team, who are committed to identifying and developing effective solutions to these problems.

New refuse company

In November, a new refuse company, Terra Verde Services, took over from Biffa to manage waste collection and fly-tipping.

The transition was seamless, resulting in noticeable improvements in the service provided to residents.



CONSUMER STANDARDS

The Social Housing Act 2023 introduced new measures to improve standards, safety and operation of social housing.

The legislation gave the Regulator of Social Housing more power to hold landlords accountable for 4 main points:

- Landlords must provide their tenants with good-quality homes and services
- They must prioritise their tenant's safety
- They must treat their tenants fairly
- They must be open and honest with their tenants

The Regulator of Social Housing created 4 new standards as a way to hold landlords to account, these are the Safety and Quality standard, the Transparency, Influence Accountability standard, Neighbourhood and Community standard and the Tenancy standard.

Here is a brief breakdown of the 4 standards.

Safety and Quality Standard

This standard looks at the quality of all homes, making sure that all landlords have an up-to-date stock condition survey on their properties and that residents are living in a warm home, free from damp, mould and disrepair.

It also looks at how landlords keep a record of these surveys along with any remedial work that has been done on a property. The regulator will assess all record keeping and make sure that housing providers have an accurate up-to-date log of the conditions of their properties.

Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard

This standard outlines how all landlords should interact with their tenants. This includes how landlords should treat all their tenants with fairness, respect and should adapt services and communication to meet tenants needs.

This standard states that landlords should engage with their tenants on policies, procedures and service changes. Tenants should feel that their opinions are heard and changes should benefit the tenants not hinder them. The standard outlines the requirements for residents to be given the opportunity to scrutinise the performance of their landlord as well as information on landlord performance and services.

Neighbourhood and Community Standard

The Neighbourhood and Community Standard examines how estates are maintained and how landlords can actively address issues such as anti-social behaviour and fly-tipping.

Shared spaces, like communal areas, must be safe and free from fire hazards, with adequate lighting. While tenants are responsible for respecting these communal spaces, landlords should collaborate with them to address repairs and other concerns.

This standard encourages landlords to take a proactive approach to managing anti-social behaviour and hate crimes. When necessary, mediation should be considered to resolve disputes between tenants, with an emphasis on addressing issues efficiently and effectively.

Lastly, the standard outlines that landlords should be sensitive to residents experiencing domestic abuse. They should ensure that staff are educated about domestic abuse and have access to relevant resources, whether in-house or from third-party organisations. All landlords must implement a domestic abuse policy that clearly outlines how they will recognise and respond to such cases effectively.

Tenancy Standard

The Tenancy Standard outlines the allocation and letting of homes, emphasising that landlords must implement effective policies and procedures to address housing needs. They should be knowledgeable about the specific housing requirements within their communities and be prepared to adjust their processes to ensure they meet the needs of prospective tenants.

Registered providers are required to distribute information regarding tenancy fraud, and staff should be trained to recognise signs of fraud and understand how to address it. Landlords should offer support to tenants facing hardship, which may include guidance on benefits, energy assistance, mental health resources, and drug misuse support. When a tenancy is terminated, landlords are obligated to provide adequate assistance to those affected, such as helping with housing applications to other registered providers or directing them to relevant services.

In addition to this standard, the Rent Standard forms part of the growing scrutiny from the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH).

The government has initiated a consultation on a new 5 year social housing rent settlement, proposing to raise rents in accordance with the consumer price index plus 1%, similar to the current settlement that ends in April 2026. As a result, providers will need to ensure that their rent-setting practices are based on robust policies and procedures. They will need to have strict controls in place to guarantee that tenants are charged correctly and that rent increases comply with statutory guidance. All registered providers, including local authorities, are subject to the Rent Standard.

CONDENSATION

Managing your home in the winter months

What is condensation?

Moisture is absorbed into the warm atmosphere of your home, and when your home cools down the moisture condenses on cool surfaces. The effects of condensation are often underestimated and can cause damage to our homes. The major difference between condensation and other forms of dampness is that you have the ability to reduce or solve the problem just through changing behaviour in your home.

An average family of 4 to 5 people can produce up to 17 litres of water vapour per day. This can be from drying wet clothes on radiators, having hot baths or showers, boiling kettles, cooking and, of course, breathing. That is 3.5 litres per person on average.

Top tips for avoiding condensation

- ✓ When cooking, keep lids on saucepans, close doors and use the extractor fan.
- ✓ Pull wardrobes, beds and furniture away from walls especially outside walls, and keep tops of wardrobes clear, to allow air to circulate.
- ✗ Avoid drying clothes on radiators or on airers unless ventilation is increased radically.
- ✓ Open windows regularly to allow air to circulate and keep window trickle vents open for background ventilation.
- ✓ Keep the property moderately heated (with ventilation).
- ✗ Avoid the use of bottled gas heaters.

Read more information on condensation and how to tackle damp and mould:

- [Keep your home free from damp and mould \(pdf 2MB\)](#)
- [Damp and mould webpage](#)

If you experience excessive condensation or evidence of damp and mould in your home contact Qualis:

- Call 0333 230 0464
- [Email Repairs@qualispropertyservices.co.uk](mailto:Email_Repairs@qualispropertyservices.co.uk)
- [Qualis website](#)

HOME OWNERSHIP

Did you know that EFDC tenants have the chance to buy their property at a discount, under the Right to Buy scheme?

If you have a secure tenancy with EFDC and have held a public sector tenancy for a minimum of 3 years (usually with local authority or housing association), then you could qualify to own your own home.

To find out more information contact the team on

- [Email HomeOwnership@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:EmailHomeOwnership@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)



ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) and Hate Crime can have a serious impact on the quality of life of residents and communities. Epping Forest District Council is committed to effectively deal with reports of anti-social behaviour. In 2024, the anti-social behaviour team dealt with 714 reports of anti-social behaviour.

Anti-social behaviour is defined as:

- Conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to any person
- Conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to any person in relation to that person's occupation or residential premises,
- Conduct capable of causing housing-related nuisance or annoyance to any person

Anti-social behaviour covers a range of behaviour from low-level nuisance to serious harassment. This can damage the quality of life and interfere with people's use and enjoyment of their home or community.

Epping Forest District Council has a dedicated anti-social behaviour team who investigates reports of anti-social behaviour and will talk through options with those affected by such behaviour.

If you are experiencing anti-social behaviour report it at

- [Anti-social behaviour webpage](#)
- Call 01992 564499 (option 2)

And finally ...

The council has an obligation to survey a sample of tenants every year. We use a company called Acuity to carry out this work for us. If they do call you please take some time to complete the survey, we typically carry out the work in October and February of each year.