

HousingNews

The six-monthly newsletter for Epping Forest District Council tenants

Winter 2023 – ISSUE 67



Christmas Special...

from the North Pole to an estate near you!



A day in the life of an EFDC Caretaker



Residents get involved...



Fire safety at Christmas

New council house building...



Cllr Holly Whitbread (Housing and Strategic Health Partnerships Portfolio Holder)

I have been the Cabinet Member for Housing on Epping Forest

District Council for four years now, and during that time the world has changed significantly - we have gone through a global pandemic, there has been war in Europe (Ukraine) and the economy has been significantly challenged with many residents struggling with the cost-of-living crisis. The rise in inflation, which is now thankfully decreasing, has had a direct impact on the work of the Council.

Despite the challenges we face, Epping Forest District Council remain positive and proactive in the realm of housing.

Unlike many councils we own our own housing stock, over 6000 homes, which we are working hard to regenerate and ensure is of the highest possible quality. The improvement works in Limes Farm will soon be completed and we remain committed to new council house building – with new developments close to completion in Buckhurst Hill and Waltham Abbey. In allocating properties, we also strive to put local people first - you must have lived in the area for at least seven years to be eligible for the housing list.

It must be acknowledged that recent months have been difficult time for many. Our homelessness team have been working non-stop, with great

compassion, to provide individual support to prevent homelessness where possible, and when unavoidable, to provide all the support required, ultimately helping people to get back on their feet. I would like to thank the team at Norway House who do a wonderful job of helping people at a hard time during their life.

As we reach the end of the year, we have another challenging but exciting year ahead. I look forward to seeing new Council homes completed and exciting plans emerging to improve and enhance affordable housing in our District. **I wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy new year.**

Holly



A Word from Wyn

Chair of the Tenants & Leaseholders Panel

and be able to influence the management of our Council housing and related services.

The Tenants and Leaseholders Panel, along with other focus groups, were involved in the reviewing of this strategy and ensuring that it met the needs of the tenants and leaseholders within EFDC. Although the Panel will still operate, there will many other new ways for residents to become involved, e.g., focus groups, scrutiny panels, and sheltered housing forums - and residents will be consulted at the start of each new project or each key decision.

Of course, not all of this will happen overnight, but it is an exciting time ahead for resident involvement.

I know some tenants have already received phone calls from the Regulator of Social Housing, taking part in Tenant Satisfaction Measures that must now by law be completed for each Council. Although too soon to see the results it will be interesting to see, when the results do come out, where EFDC have done well, or improvements are needed.

If you'd like to be more involved with the housing service, then get in touch with the Resident Involvement Team, who have written a piece later in this magazine. And just in closing, I'd like to take this opportunity to wish all our tenants and leaseholders a wonderful Christmas, and a happy and healthy New Year.

Wyn Marshall

It has been a busy year within the housing sector of Epping Forest District Council with a new **Resident Involvement Strategy** being approved by the Communities Select Committee in June.

The aims of the strategy can be summed up as follows...

Through our new Strategy, you will have the opportunity to influence and be involved in the formulation of housing policies; the setting of standards; have scrutiny of the landlord's performance; make recommendations for improvements



A day in the life of an EFDC caretaker

Hiya, I'm Mark...

I work for Epping Forest District Council as a Caretaker – making sure that the housing we provide, and the surroundings, are kept as neat and tidy as possible for our residents. You may see me or one of my colleagues out and about where you live, and wonder what we're up to... well, wonder no more!

The day begins...

I start work this morning at one of the Independent Living Schemes (previously known as Sheltered Housing).

My first duties are...

Hoovering crumbs from the night before! Then cleaning and polishing tables, emptying tissues from bins and clearing newspapers from the lounge. Then I clean the floors, surfaces and sinks in the kitchen using a variety of products and equipment, before moving on to the dreaded toilets! Sometimes we have to use a litter picker to take out hand paper towels from the toilets as people put them in and they won't flush away... we also need to clean stains from the floor around urinals and empty all the toilet bins. As you can imagine, this isn't the highlight of the day!

Next I Hoover and mop the corridors and stairwells, and dust the banister rails and stair railings down, looking for any cobwebs to be removed. To finish off the communal area, I clean the windows and frames, as well as the ceiling lights, and wash the skirting boards. To help out, I take some residents' rubbish to the bin if they can't do it themselves.

Once I've finished the communal areas, I litter-pick the surrounding grounds.

The last bit at the Independent Living Scheme is to clean the guest room if someone has used it. We have to strip the bed, wash the bedding and bathroom towels, make the beds and give a thorough hygiene clean throughout, washing down baths or shower trays and taking limescale off the taps.

All of the above takes about three hours a day, five days a week. Following this I'll move on to the next job... which could be...

Cleaning bin rooms

Depending where I'm working, I may need to remove (and then replace!) between 600 – 1,000 wheelie bins, to wash the bin store floor and also pick up any waste which has overflowed from the bins.

Speaking to the public

Members of the public often come up to us with an issue they are concerned about – if it's something we can deal with, we'll try and resolve the matter there and then. But if it's not something we can help with, we'll always pass the details on to the appropriate team.

All sorts of other things...

When I get time, I'll check my emails for any requests that have come through from any other teams in EFDC – for example, graffiti to be removed, special cleaning requests, clearing dog mess from paths, litter picking communal areas, sometimes removal of dead wildlife, and emergency clearances of flats. Whilst I'm out and about I'll also note any fly-tipped items and report them.

Keeping the team going

As we now use an electric van, I also have to make sure it's charged for enough mileage for my planned route for the next day. To fully charge the van it takes between 10 – 16 hours, depending on the wattage. We also have to be careful not to use the heaters in winter (or the air-con in summer) as they drain the battery too quickly!

We also need to make sure that stock is replenished ready for the team to collect the products and materials they need to carry on their week to week duties. I'm also responsible for making sure everyone has the full, correct uniform so they look spick and span when you see them out and about!

Well I hope you enjoyed a little glimpse into a day in the life of an EFDC Caretaker... My colleagues and I are always out and about keeping ourselves busy somewhere, so if you spot one of us on your estate and want to say hello, feel free! Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas from the Caretaking Team!

Fire Safety at Christmas

With the winter months approaching, it's a time to celebrate with friends and family. However, many of the items we use over this period such as candles, fairy lights, paper hats and wrapping paper are all fire hazards if the proper care isn't taken.

We have put together some simple tips to make sure you, your friends and family are safe in your homes.

- 1 Make sure all lights you use conform to the British Standards**, lights from other countries do not have the same level of safety testing as the UK.
- 2 Decorations in your home can burn easily**, make sure you keep candles out of the way.
- 3 Don't overload electrical sockets**, turn lights off lights, unplug electricals and shut your internal doors before you go to bed.
- 4 Make sure you have a working smoke alarm** in your home – test it regularly to ensure it works correctly and that you know what the sound is like.
- 5 If having a bonfire or using a chiminea**, make sure you extinguish it at the end of the evening and make sure children are supervised at all times around them.
- 6 Most fires in the home start in the kitchen, never leave food cooking unattended.**
- 7 Put candles out when you leave a room**, make sure they are completely out before you go to bed.
- 8 Never place Christmas trees near to heat sources** such as fireplaces, radiators, candles, heat vents, lights, candles or materials that can catch light easily.
- 9 Dried-out trees are a fire risk. Safely dispose of trees after the festive period** or when they are dry. They should not be left in the home or garage, or placed outside against the home.
- 10 Keep your internal exit route in your home clear**, make sure visitors know how to get out.
- 11 Always keep all shared communal exit routes clear.**

- 12 Check in on your neighbours**, and if you are concerned about fire safety in their home you can refer them by scanning this QR code on your smartphone...



If you'd like more information on fire safety, please check out Essex County Fire and Rescue Service www.essex-fire.gov.uk

You may also like to enjoy the Essex County Fire and Rescue Advent Calender on YouTube with some tips for staying safe over the festive season...

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZRrpmC6n7Bc



Residents get involved...

Resident Involvement Strategy 2023

Hello residents, from Leanne, Lorraine and Christina, your Resident Involvement Team.

You may not have heard of 'Resident Involvement' before, but the idea isn't so strange! Put simply, it's giving our tenants and leaseholders a chance to influence and shape the housing services we provide – to make sure those services meet your needs, and to keep improving them all the time.

Our housing services start with the Rehousing Team, who oversee the allocation of homes in the first instance. Once you become a tenant, you're looked after by our Income Recovery (Rent) Team, and the Tenancy and Estates Team, who oversee your estate surroundings and any day-to-day issues and concerns around your tenancy. Some of our more vulnerable residents may opt to live in one of the schemes provided by our Independent Living Team.

Your property is looked after by Qualis Repairs and the Housing Assets Team, and one day you may even wish to purchase your home, in which case you'll speak to the Home Ownership Team.

So, there are quite a few different aspects to the housing services provided by the Council. And your input about any of these services could help us to keep improving them.

Resident Involvement Strategy 2023

In the New Year, we're going to start rolling out new ways to be involved, as described in our Resident Involvement Strategy, approved earlier this year

WWW eppingforestdc.gov.uk/your-council/policies-plans-and-strategies

Some of the ways you could be involved are as follows:

- **Join a focus group** – looking at one specific issue (previous subjects have included repairs, local area improvements, new tenant information and resident involvement itself)
- **Join the Tenants & Leaseholders Panel** – reviewing policies and strategies before they are implemented
- **Be involved on a local level** – keeping in touch with us about issues on your estate
- **Take part in a 'Chatterbox' meeting** – local residents and their Officers keeping in touch
- **Write an article about something relevant to our tenants and leaseholders** – for publication online or in the Housing News



Artist in residence, Lee at Chapel Road.

There are lots more ideas in the pipeline, but if any of this interests you, then just drop us a line and we'll have a chat about what you'd like to take part in.

You can email us at GetInvolved@eppingforestdc.gov.uk or call 01992 564292. Let us know what sort of activity you might be interested in, and then we'll let you know as and when events are arranged.

We'll be writing again in the next edition of Housing News, but in the meantime, we'll be advertising any new opportunities on our facebook page

WWW facebook.com/EFDCGetInvolved

Wishing all our residents a happy and healthy Christmas and New Year – and we look forward to meeting you soon!

Leanne, Lorraine and Christina

You can email us at GetInvolved@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
f EFDCGetInvolved

Safer Streets Project – Ninefields Estate

Look what we have achieved in the past twelve months...

This project has aimed to improve the environment, safety and general health and wellbeing for residents living in the Ninefields area in Waltham Abbey. The area has previously suffered from anti-social behaviour, fly-tipping and drug offences.

Beginning with a consultation of residents in 2022, the project was designed to focus on:

- Reducing environmental crime
- Increasing CCTV in the area
- Improving the security of buildings & bin stores
- Promoting long term community involvement

Environmental

Waste amnesties have been organised for the area, allowing residents to dispose of larger waste items for free at designated times.



Diversionary activities

The local youth club located at the Hazelwood Children's centre runs between 4.30pm-6.30pm on Thursdays, and the sessions have been well attended.



CCTV

CCTV static cameras have been installed at the new play area and mobile cameras are in use at 'hot spot' locations across the area.

The new play area officially opened on 19th May 2023.

Area enhancement



Community safety

The area is still covered by a Crimestoppers zone, and statistics show that reports to Crimestoppers have increased by 400% since the zone has been introduced.



23 new lights have been installed across the area.



Lighting

Healthy Relationships

In March this year, students across four primary schools (Hillhouse, Leverton, Upshire and Waltham Holy Cross) had 'Broadcast Junior' delivered to them.

Bin stores



Bin stores have been improved across the district.

The project ended in September and lots of positive feedback has been received from local residents, whose perception of their environment and community safety has been improved overall. The Community Resilience Team continues to look for new opportunities to improve the safety and wellbeing of residents across the District, and we can't wait to see what they do next!