Tenants Panel Subgroups –
Housing Anti-Social Behaviour, Neighbourhoods and Rents
22nd September 2026 2pm – 4pm

Connaught Room, Town Hall, Station Road, Clacton on Sea

In Attendance
Panel Members
Carol McDougall (Chair), Helen Dodridge, Chris Gill
TDC Staff
Heidi Foster (Senior Tenancy Management Officer), **Sam Carran** (Tenant Involvement Officer)

1. Welcome and Introductions

Heidi welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from James Hill. Kim Mayhead sent apologies after the meeting.

3. Approval of the previous meeting's minutes

Heidi asked whether the group agreed that the minutes of the June meeting were an accurate record. The group approved the minutes.

4. Garden nuisance

Heidi provided the group with the new Sheltered Housing Newsletter (appendix 1) and began by discussing opportunities for residents to become involved in communal gardening at the different schemes.

Heidi highlighted the 'You Said, We Listened' complaints and compliment boxes introduced at the schemes to make it easier for residents to provide feedback.

Carol said that it was a good way for residents to raise ideas with officers and help improve services.

Chris noted that some tenants may not be able to make suggestions in the same way.

Heidi confirmed that tenants outside the schemes could still make suggestions online or through other available channels.

Heidi also spoke about the fraud awareness talks held at the schemes, which helped residents become more vigilant about fraudulent calls. Residents had also received fire safety visits, giving them an opportunity to ask how to prevent fires in their homes.

Chris asked what fire safety arrangements were in place in the event of an incident.

Heidi confirmed that fire alarms and pull cords are connected to a centrally monitored system. The properties have fire doors and a 'stay put' policy applies, unless residents are in communal areas.

The newsletter also included information about the Winter Ready event at Honeycroft, where residents could learn about and engage with different support agencies. It highlighted the new kitchen at Mead House, Walton, which residents were pleased with, and included a contact sheet with officer details on the back.

Heidi asked the subgroup if they were happy with the information provided in the information pack, to which they all confirmed. Heidi then asked if the group had any ideas for additions.

Chris said it was straightforward and important information, with Carol adding it was not complicated to understand.

Heidi said that, because gardening can have a positive impact on mental health, residents are encouraged to become involved. Residents should notify TDC before beginning any work.

Heidi then discussed the current garden condition letters (Appendix 2) sent to tenants whose gardens are not maintained. The letters remind tenants to keep gardens free from rubbish, keep grass cut and address any signs of rodent infestation or droppings. Letters can be adapted where particular points are not relevant.

Heidi asked if the panel believe a better approach should be taken.

Chris asked whether section 4.10 of the tenancy agreement needed to be included, as tenants may not understand what it means. Heidi explained that the reference encourages tenants to comply and review their tenancy agreement. TDC seeks to support tenants wherever possible but will take action where necessary.

Heidi confirmed that all tenants will receive a first tenancy visit soon after they move in, in order to make them aware of their need to keep their garden tidy.

Chris asked whether properties are ever let to tenants with uncut grass. Heidi confirmed that the grass is cut before tenants move in and, if a delay results in further overgrowth, it can be cut again. Where a garden becomes severely overgrown, TDC may arrange for it to be cut back and recharge the tenant. However, this is avoided where possible because of seasonal staffing pressures within Open Spaces.

Chris asked about tenants who may be unable to maintain their gardens because of a disability or other difficulty. Heidi explained that TDC can signpost tenants to charities and support agencies, although it does not have the resources to provide gardening assistance directly. The letter (Appendix 3) advises tenants that garden maintenance remains a tenancy responsibility and encourages them to seek help from family, friends or support organisations where needed.

Heidi noted that people undertaking probation or community service may sometimes be able to complete gardening work, depending on the area, although this provision is not consistent.

Heidi raised the second (Appendix 4) and third letter (final warning) (Appendix 5) that is provided before works are carried out at a recharge.

Heidi then asked the group whether they believe any updates are required to modernise them.

Chris noted that some tenants may not believe action will be taken and hoped that the new process would enable TDC to respond more quickly when overgrown gardens are not addressed.

The group discussed the difficulties faced by tenants who do not want a garden because of the maintenance required. However, because of the limited availability of council properties, applicants rarely refuse a property when shortlisted. The group agreed that support arrangements should be put in place as early as possible.

Helen suggested that the first letter could include information about gardening support, enabling tenants to advise TDC if they were already seeking assistance. The group agreed that the reference to section 4.10 of the tenancy agreement could be moved to the second letter and that the first letter should have a friendlier tone.

ACTION: Heidi to draft a revised garden condition letter and bring it to the next subgroup meeting.

5. Community Event Briefing Note

Sam spoke about the recent housing event and showed the group a video summary (Appendix 6). He then shared the briefing note (Appendix 7) prepared by Angela Hogg. Sam confirmed that the briefing note would be added to the website to showcase the event and share the positive feedback and constructive comments received.

The panel was pleased with both the video and the briefing note and provided feedback. Suggestions included inviting a range of support agencies to the next event, shortening its duration and including performances by youth clubs.

6. Pet and animal nuisance, including feedback on the Pet Policy

Heidi asked whether the group had any questions about the Pet Policy. She explained that TDC currently holds a Silver rating and that achieving Gold would require pets to be permitted in homelessness accommodation. If TDC is able to secure its own accommodation in future, it may be easier to make this change, as many providers from whom rooms are currently rented do not allow pets.

Heidi explained that TDC takes a flexible approach to pets. Although permission may not always be granted for animals in certain property types, where a property is allocated to an applicant who already has a pet, TDC is unlikely to require the pet to be rehomed.

Heidi confirmed that, subject to the group's agreement, she would progress the policy. The group agreed.

Heidi provided the latest figures. Garden-related complaints decreased from 156 in the year before last to 128 last year. Pet nuisance complaints also decreased, from 23 to 21. Communal areas remain the category with the highest number of reports and are therefore a priority. There were 139 reports of property neglect, a newly recorded category associated with issues such as hoarding and the need to help restore properties to a safe and suitable condition.

Chris asked how this is usually spotted.

Heidi explained that concerns are often identified during annual gas safety checks or visits by other contractors. As hoarding may be associated with mental health needs, TDC takes a sensitive and supportive approach, working with tenants rather than beginning with enforcement action. A Tenancy Sustainment Officer can help tenants access support from other services.

Where support has been offered but a tenant does not engage, TDC may consider legal action if the condition of the property presents a fire risk.

7. Any other business and topics to discuss next time

The following topics were suggested for discussion at the next meeting.

Rubbish and vandalism were suggested because of the high number of reported incidents. **ACTION:** Add rubbish and vandalism to the agenda for the next subgroup meeting and invite the Waste Management team to present relevant case studies.

8. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 3rd November 2026 in the Connaught Room.

Meeting	Action	Lead	Status	Notes
April 26	Draft of the Housing Anti-Social Behaviour Policy brought to the group once finalised and written.	Heidi	Ongoing	
June 26	Discuss opportunities for residents to get involved and how greenswards are managed	James Hill		Couldn't make Sept meeting
June 26	Ask the Waste Team what is classed as household waste and whether they would collect a small bag of garden waste within the household waste.	Heidi Foster		
Sept '26	Draft a revised garden condition letter and bring it to the next subgroup meeting.	Heidi Foster		
Sept '26	Add rubbish and vandalism to the agenda for the next subgroup meeting.	Loraine Pruden		
Sept '26	Invite the Waste Management team to the next subgroup meeting and present relevant case studies.	Loraine Pruden		