

# Tendring Reports

Latest news for Council tenants in Tendring

March 2024



## RENT YEAR 2024/2025

Your rent will be changing on 1 April 2024, and you should have received a notice of the annual rent variation, but in summary all charges have increased by 7.7% in line with Government limits.

**If you are in receipt of Universal Credit Housing Cost Allowance, you will need to advise Universal Credit of the new rent from 1 April 2024 to ensure that you continue to receive the correct amount of housing costs to enable you to cover the months' rent.**

Additionally, next year is a 53-week year. The standard calendar year has 52 weeks and 1 day – this is why your birthday and Christmas change days of the week every year. This extra day and any leap days accumulate until there is an additional week, the 53rd week. This occurs every 4 to 5 years. This means that an additional week's rent will be due in March 2025.

You should be aware that Universal Credit only pay 4 weeks rent a month, so Housing Costs payments alone will not cover the 53rd week. You will need to top up your payments to ensure that your rent is covered. We would therefore suggest that from April 2024 anyone this affects top up the rent account by £10 per month to avoid an unexpected bill in March 2025. A barcode can be sent out to enable you to pay this top up locally.

How should I pay my rent to ensure that I am in advance?

You will see in your tenancy agreement that rent should be paid in advance (unless agreed otherwise), so you will need to make sure you do this by whichever frequency you choose. Your account should be put into enough credit each time you pay to cover any charges until your next payment.

If your monthly rent is £400.00 per month, each time the monthly payment is made your account should go into credit for that amount. As rent is calculated over the course of a whole year, you may find that in a 'four-week' month the credit is exceeded but in a 'five-week' month it is not enough. Please make sure you make payments that keep your account in credit all through the year.

Please telephone **01255 686468** if you need a new barcode or need to discuss any issue relating to your rent account.



We are pleased to share that we have received a Silver Paw Prints Award from the RSPCA in recognition of going above and beyond to deliver world-class animal welfare services in Housing.



## MICROCHIPPING YOUR CAT

From 10th June 2024 all pet cats in England must be microchipped and you will be given 21 days to get your cat chipped or face a fine of up to £500 if you don't comply.

Speak to your local vet for details or get in touch with your local rescue centre or cat charity. Often, charities and reputable cat rescue organisations may be able to microchip your cat for a reduced rate.



As a council housing tenant, you must follow our Pet Policy [www.tendringdc.uk/sub-content-pages/living-in-your-home](http://www.tendringdc.uk/sub-content-pages/living-in-your-home), go to the **Pets section and select Keeping Pets in your council home**. If you own a pet, you must have applied for permission to keep it in your home if you have not done this, then you must do so via **Tendring District Council website, My Tendring, MyTendring Forms and choose Application to keep a pet in my council property**, as a matter of urgency.



We would like to thank all those XL Bully owners that notified us of your pet, applied for permission and sent us your exemption certificate.

From 1 February 2024, it is illegal to own an XL Bully dog in England and Wales – unless you have a Certificate of Exemption for your dog and you follow the rules, which include:

- Microchipping your dog.
- Muzzling your dog and keeping them on a lead in public.
- Neutering your dog.
- Taking out third-party insurance against your dog injuring other people – this can be provided through Dogs Trust Membership.
- Be over 16 years old.

**Neutering will be compulsory** for XL Bully dogs by 30 June 2024 for dogs over 1 year old on 31 January 2024, or by 31 December 2024 for dogs under 1 year old on 31 January 2024. All owners of XL Bully dogs will have to follow these specific guidelines.

If you decide not to keep your XL Bully, the government has announced the option to take your dog to a registered vet to be euthanised. There will be a compensation scheme towards the cost of euthanasia if you choose this option. You and your vet must fill in a compensation form to make a claim.

**If you are found in possession of an XL Bully dog without a Certification of Exemption, the law may subject you to a criminal record and an unlimited fine, and authorities could also seize your dog.**

If you've missed the deadline for applying for a Certificate of Exemption, you should contact your local police force as new exemptions can only be authorised by a court order.

Sadly, if you cannot adhere to these requirements by then, you may be convicted of a crime. This can lead to an unlimited fine, a prison sentence and/or having your dog seized and potentially euthanised.

You may also be in breach of your Tenancy Agreement which could lead to enforcement action being taken against your tenancy.

# Fire Safety



For blocks of flats and maisonettes - Communal stairs and landings

## Keep it clear

If you live in a block of flats or sheltered housing, we are responsible for the communal (shared) areas and have a duty to make sure that you have a clear escape route in an emergency. This means that we have to be strict about what is left outside of your home, and you may have been asked to remove personal belongings from these areas.

Our policy is that you must not use the communal areas to store any possessions, to dump unwanted goods or for decorative items outside your front door. **This includes bicycles, pushchairs, mobility scooters, wheelchairs, e-bikes and e-scooters as well as plants, door mats, refuse or recycling containers.**

The law around risk requires us to make sure that, if there was a fire in your block, there would be nothing blocking your escape route - or which could give off smoke or fumes that would affect you or hinder the Fire Service in their rescue duties.

Any items left in these areas will be removed and you may be charged for this.

## Importance of Fire Doors

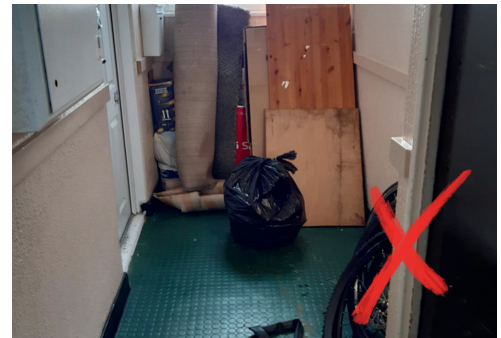
In a block of flats or sheltered housing, you will find fire doors on the stairwells, the corridors and on flat front doors. You will also see them protecting areas where there's a risk of combustion, such as bin storage or mains electricity service cupboard.

On a day-to-day basis, the main purpose of a fire door is just the same as for any other door. However, in the event of a fire, these doors are an essential part of the fire safety measures in place to protect your home as they are specifically designed to resist the passage of fire and smoke for thirty minutes.

Each part of a fire door – hinges, seals, handles and glazing – are as important as the door itself. The seals and the gaps between the door frame and the wall are really vital too. They also stop smoke and fire spreading as quickly.

To make sure that the fire doors in your block work properly, please follow the advice below:

- Never leave or wedge open a fire door – they will only work if they are closed.
- Do not repair or alter any fire door in either your home or block as this can damage it and make it less likely to work properly if there is a fire. For example, don't drill into a fire door or replace any handles, hinges or any hardware.
- Check that the door firmly closes on the latch without sticking on the floor or the frame.
- Never disconnect the fire door closer – the doors are designed to close automatically behind you to make sure they are closed at all times.
- Report any safety concerns about the fire doors in your home or block to us by phoning 01255 686477 or by emailing [housingrepairs@tendringdc.gov.uk](mailto:housingrepairs@tendringdc.gov.uk)



**Your communal landings and stairs are YOUR FIRE ESCAPE – KEEP THEM CLEAR!**

## NEW HOUSING STANDARDS

The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) has introduced new standards for social housing landlords, designed to protect tenants and improve the service they receive.

The changes, which are a result of the Social Housing Regulation Act, come into effect from 1 April 2024 and will apply to all social landlords.

Under the new standards landlords will need to:

- ensure tenants are safe in their homes
- listen to tenants' complaints and respond promptly to put things right
- be accountable to tenants and treat them with fairness and respect
- know more about the condition of every home and the needs of the people who live in them
- collect and use data effectively across a range of areas, including repairs

To hold landlords to account, the Regulator will:

- inspect landlords that own more than 1,000 properties regularly to check they are meeting the standards
- scrutinise data about tenant satisfaction, repairs and other relevant issues
- continue to push landlords to protect tenants and put things right when there are problems
- use a range of tools when needed, including new enforcement powers

The four consumer standards that landlords will be assessed against are:

The Safety and Quality Standard which requires landlords to provide safe and good-quality homes for their tenants, along with good-quality landlord services

The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard which requires landlords to be open with tenants and treat them with fairness and respect so they can access services, raise concerns when necessary, influence decision making and hold their landlord to account.

The Neighbourhood and Community Standard which requires landlords to engage with other relevant parties so that tenants can live in safe and well-maintained neighbourhoods, and feel safe in their homes.

The Tenancy Standard which sets requirements for the fair allocation and letting of homes, as well as requirements for how tenancies are managed by landlords.

## TENANT INVOLVEMENT

We are always keen to encourage you to get involved in the services we provide. As our tenant, you have ideas about what needs to be done to improve your home, estate, and the services you receive. By getting involved and working with us, you can influence the way that our services are delivered and make a difference to the quality of life in your area.

As well as the ways that we benefit from your involvement, you can too by knowing that your contribution helps to get better services.

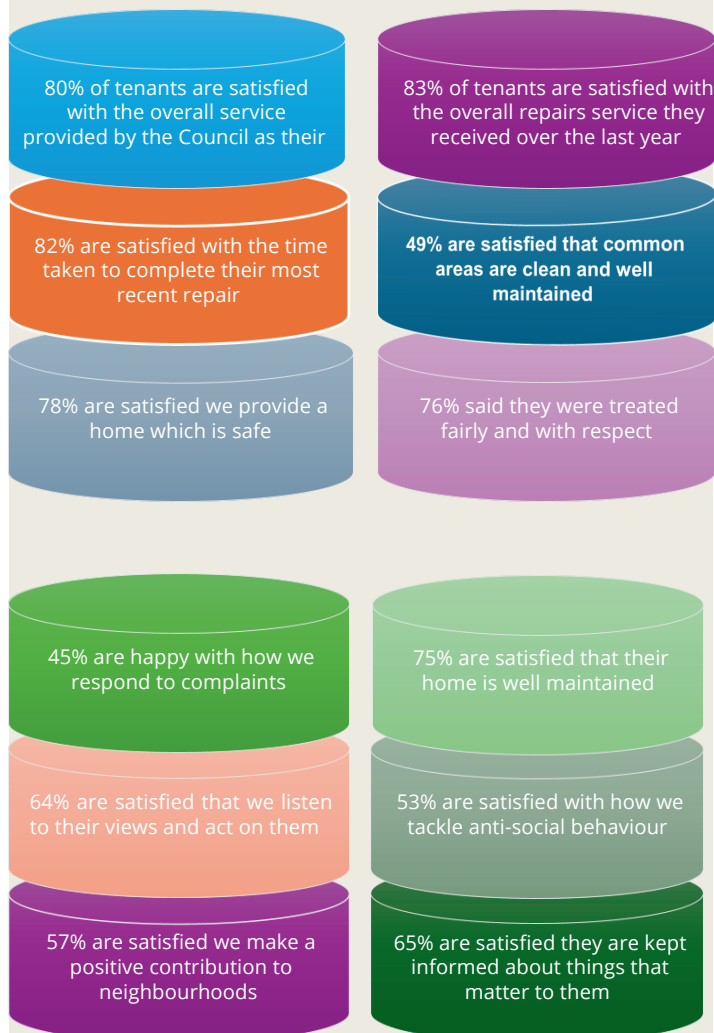
There are lots of good reasons to get involved but we know that everyone will have different priorities and that some people will have more time to get involved than others. That is why we provide a range of ways for you to get involved.

If you would be interested in finding out more about opportunities for involvement, please contact us on **01255 66462** or email **[tenant.involvement@tendingdc.gov.uk](mailto:tenant.involvement@tendingdc.gov.uk)**



## TENANT SATISFACTION SURVEY THE RESULTS ARE IN!

Thank you to everyone who took part in the satisfaction survey that Kwest Research carried out on our behalf at the end of last year. Your feedback will help us improve our housing services guided by a better understanding of how you feel about your homes, neighbourhoods and the services you use. The questions and responses to the questions illustrated below also form part of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures that we are required to report to the Regulator of Social Housing each year. The Regulator will then be able to assess our performance and compare us with other housing providers.



Congratulations to Mr King from Weeley, Mr Mahon from Dovercourt and Mrs Moore from Ardleigh who are the prize draw winners.



We want to provide a high-quality consistent service but accept that, from time to time, things can go wrong. When this happens, we want to resolve problems as quickly as possible. However, if you continue to be dissatisfied you can make a formal complaint to us.

We define a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the council, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.

Situations that may lead to a complaint include when:

- we fail to meet our legal duties, promises or standards we have set
- we do something wrong, poorly, or fail to do something we should
- we are impolite or unhelpful

You can make a complaint to us by letter, email or via our website. You can also call us, visit us in person at the Council Offices or raise the matter with a member of our staff.

You will need to raise your complaint within 12 months of when you first noticed the issue.

How do we handle complaints?

### Stage 1

We will record your complaint and send you an acknowledgement within 5 working days. A member of staff will then be asked to investigate the issues you have raised and they may contact you to discuss your complaint in more detail. Once they have investigated your complaint, they will send you their response telling you the outcome of their review and what we will do to put things right. This response will be sent within 10 working days

### Stage 2

If you are not happy with the response you get, you can ask for your complaint to be escalated to Stage 2. A different member of staff will be asked to look into your complaint and their role will be to look at the actions and decisions taken at Stage 1 to check that they were thorough, reasonable, and fair. Once they have investigated, they will send you their response to let you know the outcome and whether any additional actions will be taken to resolve it. This response will be sent within 20 working days.

If we need more time to investigate your complaint, at either Stage 1 or Stage 2, we may need to extend the deadlines given above but this will not exceed a further 10 working days.

You can also contact the Housing Ombudsman Service at any stage for guidance and support. They provide a free, independent and impartial dispute resolution service. You can find out more by visiting their website [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk) or by phoning 0300 111 3000

# Sheltered Housing News...

## Groundbreaking at Honeycroft Sheltered Housing Scheme



Groundbreaking has taken place at the site of former sheltered housing scheme in Lawford as part of brand-new redevelopment. Local firm Rose builders has been appointed by Tendring District Council to create 13 single-storey bungalows at Honeycroft in Lawford.

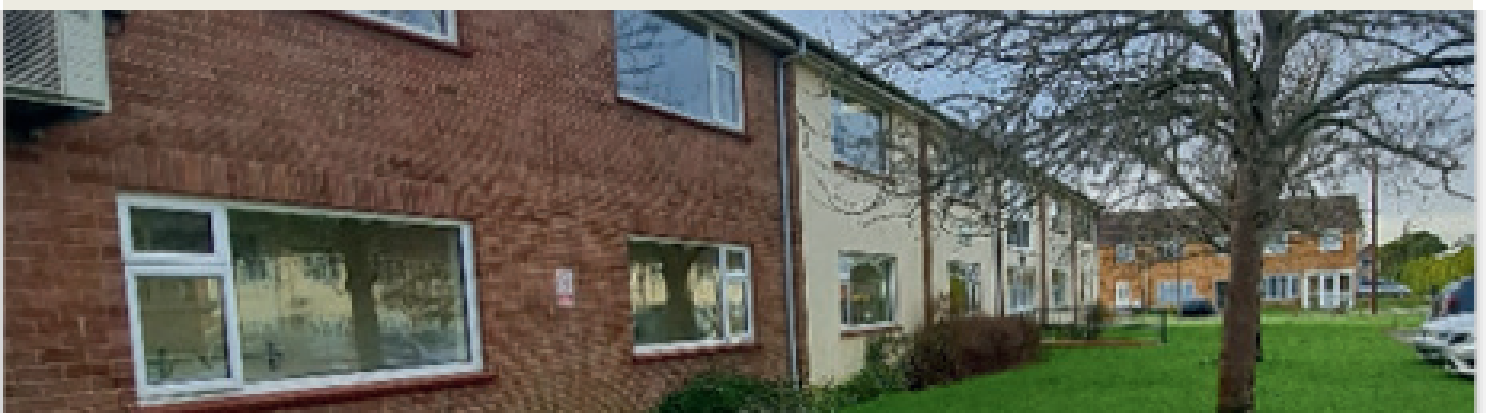
The previous sheltered housing scheme was closed by the council in 2018, demolished in 2021, and preparatory site works began last year.

The scheme, which will be built to top environmental standards – incorporating carbon reduction, energy-saving measures and energy-efficiency standards – and designed to the principles of the former lifetime homes standard meaning residents can remain in their community as their physical needs change.

As well as the new homes, the site will also have a small community building, landscaping, and car parking.



## RHS Anglia in Bloom 2023 Community Award for Kate Daniels House



The residents of Kate Daniels House, Weeley, proudly participated in the RHS Anglia in Bloom 'It's Your Neighbourhood' and were delighted to receive an award in recognition of their efforts in their communal garden.

This year's flora is already underway in their polytunnel greenhouse for planting out in the coming weeks.



# Housing Disrepair

As a responsible landlord, we take all reports of faults in our properties seriously and aim to sort these out as quickly as possible. If we don't meet our obligations to keep your home in repair – including completing repairs we're responsible for in a reasonable time and keeping installations for sanitation, electricity, gas and water supplies in working order – your home could be said to be in disrepair.

A housing disrepair claim is a type of legal case that involves a tenant taking legal action against their landlord for failing to fix disrepair or damage in their rented home.

We want to make you aware that there are companies, often known as Claim Management Companies, that target Council tenants and encourage them to make a claim for disrepair. They may sell your claim to Solicitors who act as intermediaries between you and your landlord (in this case, us), and represent you and handle the claim on your behalf, for a cost.

## **Housing Disrepair Claims: What are the risks involved?**

### **Hidden costs**

These companies will usually tell you that they operate on a "no win, no fee" basis, but you may be charged a lump sum up front to take out an insurance policy to cover the cost of your claim. If you do not do this and are not successful in your claim, you could be asked to pay their fees. Any potential compensation you receive from a claim may reduce to cover solicitor fees or other costs (ours, and yours, if the claim is unsuccessful).

### **Fees if you change your mind**

When you have put forward a claim and signed documentation from a solicitor, you may not be able to stop the process if you change your mind. If you can stop, you may be liable for legal fees, survey costs of your home or the fixed premium for any insurance policy you were advised to take out.

### **Signing paperwork**

You may be asked to 'sign' something electronically or you may be emailed and asked to confirm you want to proceed with claim. When using these methods or even social media you are still signing to say you want the other party to act for you and you will be responsible to pay their costs if your claim is not successful.

### **It takes a long time to resolve**

Some claims can take a very long time to resolve, and you may have to appear in court to give evidence as part of the process.

### **You could be in breach of your tenancy agreement**

During a claim, most companies acting on your behalf will advise you not to allow us access to your home to carry out any repairs. This will put you in breach of your tenancy agreement with us. We'll attempt to visit your home anyway having given you notice of our visit and, if there is a health and safety risk, we may request a court injunction to gain urgent access to do the work.

### **It affects other services we provide.**

Any money we spend on these claims takes away from the money that we have available for repairs, improvements, and other essential services.

### **We're here to help**

If you are thinking of making a disrepair claim against the Council or have any issues with repairs, please contact us first so we can visit your property and sort the problem out. You can contact us by emailing [housingrepairs@tendringdc.gov.uk](mailto:housingrepairs@tendringdc.gov.uk) or by calling 01255 686477. Call 01255 222022 for emergencies only outside of office hours. If you're not satisfied with our response when you report a repair, you can find out more on how to make a Complaint on page 5.

# Need to contact us?



## PHONE

01255 686468

**Rent account enquiries**

01255 686468

**Rent arrears enquiries**

01255 686455

**Right to buy enquiries**

01255 686488

**Report anti-social behaviour or other nuisance complaints**

01255 686477

**Report a repair during working hours**

01255 222022

**Report emergency repairs only outside of normal working hours**

01255 686466

**Housing Register or allocation enquiries**

01255 686744

**Enquiries about special needs housing or adaptations**

01255 686888

**Sheltered Housing**

Careline 01255 222022

**Out of Hours call**



## EMAIL

**General enquiries:**

[housing.services@tendringdc.gov.uk](mailto:housing.services@tendringdc.gov.uk)

**Report any non-urgent repairs that are needed to your home:**

[housingrepairs@tendringdc.gov.uk](mailto:housingrepairs@tendringdc.gov.uk)

**Report any incidents of anti-social behaviour or nuisance:**

[housingASB@tendringdc.gov.uk](mailto:housingASB@tendringdc.gov.uk)

**Find out more about getting involved in our services:**

[tenant.involvement@tendringdc.gov.uk](mailto:tenant.involvement@tendringdc.gov.uk)

**For Right to Buy:**

[rtb@tendringdc.gov.uk](mailto:rtb@tendringdc.gov.uk)

**For Tenant Alterations:**

[tenantalterations@tendringdc.gov.uk](mailto:tenantalterations@tendringdc.gov.uk)

**For Housing Complaints:**

[councilhousingcomplaints@tendringdc.gov.uk](mailto:councilhousingcomplaints@tendringdc.gov.uk)



## OUR OFFICE

**Operational Services –  
Housing & Environment  
Tendring District Council  
88- 90 Pier Avenue,  
Clacton on Sea, Essex CO15 1TN**

*Visiting:*

Housing Reception at Pier Avenue offices in Clacton between 10am to 1pm Monday to Wednesday.