

Tendring Reports

Latest news for Council tenants in Tendring

March 2025

NEW COUNCIL HOMES



We have recently acquired much needed new homes from two new housing developments in the district.

Five properties have been gifted to the Council by the north Essex based Hills Building Group, as part of the planning agreement for its 62 home Asterwood Estate, off School Road in Elmstead Market. The first eight of eighteen homes due to be gifted to us as part of the approved planning permission for Matthew Homes' 200 home Meadow Gardens development at Brook Park West in Clacton have also recently been received. All of these properties, which are a mix of one, two and three bedroom properties will be added to our housing stock and allocated to households on our Housing Register. The Brook Park West development also has a new play area for children in the community to enjoy.

We have also recently bought back two properties previously sold under the Right to Buy – a two bedroom flat in Manningtree and a three bedroom House in Ramsey.



WE WANT YOUR VIEWS

Housing Allocations Policy

We are currently consulting tenants, prospective tenants and other stakeholders on revisions to our Housing Allocations Policy.

Our current Housing Allocation Policy was produced in 2013 with some minor updates made in 2019 to reflect changes in the law. We now need a new Housing Allocations Policy to address the current housing challenges facing the district and to take account of recent regulatory changes.



Across the country, councils are experiencing unprecedented levels of demand for social housing. The Council currently has just over 3000 homes and there are more than 2,200 households on the Housing Register. Much of this demand is driven by the growing cost of housing for sale and rent and, more recently, the cost-of-living crisis. The increasing number of homeless households seeking assistance from us has added to the demand.

Our main objectives in developing this policy are to:

- ▶ Set out clearly how we assess and prioritise applications to join the Housing Register and how we allocate our homes
- ▶ Ensure that those households with the greatest need receive adequate priority
- ▶ Ensure decisions are made fairly and with clear reasons
- ▶ Make it easier to understand the eligibility criteria, who qualifies and who we cannot house
- ▶ Manage the demand for social housing as effectively and fairly as possible
- ▶ Ensure the policy is clear, transparent and easy to understand for applicants, staff, and other stakeholders
- ▶ Make sure we comply with legislation, regulatory standards and good practice



You can view a full draft of the Policy together with a summary of the proposed changes on our website at www.tendringdc.gov.uk/consultations

Your views and comments on each of the significant changes to the policy can be submitted using our online response form. The deadline for the receipt of your comments is 20th April 2025.

Proposed introduction of flexible tenancies

We are also asking for your views on the proposal to introduce flexible tenancies for certain types of social housing owned by the Council.

In most cases, the Council grants secure tenancies to new tenants once they have successfully completed an introductory tenancy which normally lasts for a year. This means that, after the introductory period, the tenant can rent the home for as long as they want providing, they do not break the terms of their tenancy agreement.

To help ease the demand for social housing, we are considering introducing flexible tenancies – also known as fixed term tenancies for new tenancies of certain properties that are in short supply and / or high demand.

Homes identified as being in short supply or high demand are:

- ▶ Properties with three or more bedrooms
- ▶ Properties that have been significantly adapted for a tenant with disabilities. This will include properties that have undergone structural alterations or extension to accommodate the needs of a disabled person

Flexible tenancies are a form of secure tenancy that are granted for a fixed term period, and we are proposing to grant these tenancies for a maximum period of five years.

These tenancies would only be granted for new tenancies – they will not affect any tenants that already have a secure tenancy.

If introduced, we would be required to review these flexible tenancies before the end of the fixed period to see if the tenant's circumstances have changed and whether their current accommodation is still appropriate for their housing needs. This will avoid people being given lifelong tenancies when their circumstances may change in the future.

Tenant who are given a flexible tenancy will still have the same rights as a secure tenant, including the right to exchange, the right to buy and the right to succession.

You can find about more about this proposal by visiting our website www.tendringdc.gov.uk/consultations and submit your views using the online form.

The deadline for the receipt of your comments is 20th April 2025.

TENANT INVOLVEMENT



Tenant involvement is about giving you the opportunity to influence, challenge and scrutinise the services you receive. It is a two-way process involving sharing of information and ideas, where you can influence decisions and take part in what is happening. You are central to the housing services we provide and are best placed to tell us what works well and what could work better. By listening to and taking on board your views we can ensure that policies and services are more responsive to changing needs and rising aspirations.

We provide a variety of methods that are suitable for you to get involved in a way that suits your lifestyle. Being involved will give you the chance to:

- ▶ Make your area a better place to live
- ▶ Get to know other residents
- ▶ Learn new skills
- ▶ Be part of a group to review and improve services
- ▶ Help us better understand the needs of tenants

Tenant Panel

We're looking for new members from across the district to help us deliver great housing services.

Our Tenants Panel was formed in 2001 to represent and promote tenant opinion to make sure that this is central to the delivery of our housing services. The panel is made up of volunteers who meet with us every three months to discuss and provide direction on housing policy, management and maintenance issues, and to scrutinise and challenge our performance.



Transport can be arranged for you to attend these meetings, or if you use your own vehicle, a flat rate fee will be made for each meeting attended to cover your expenses.

The work of the Panel focuses on discussing and agreeing decisions that will affect services provided by the council to residents living in council managed properties across the district, not just your area, making sure our plans for services match what customers need and want. All participants must be committed to improving our services provided by us for residents living in our homes across the district, not just your area.

Communication Group

This group will provide an opportunity for you to be involved in the production of leaflets, newsletters and website content etc., to ensure that this information is clear, accessible, reliable, timely and appropriate to the needs of all tenants.

Tendring Reports - Tenant Newsletter

We welcome submissions from you for our residents' magazine, Tendring Reports. You could write about events in your local community, favourite places to visit, help or advice for your fellow tenants or suggestions for articles for the magazine. Go to our website: Housing>Council Housing Tenants> Your Home and Neighbourhood>Tendring Reports and complete the form.

**If you are interested in any of the above, please contact your
TENANT ENGAGEMENT TEAM**

**Phone: 01255 686690 or Email: tenant.involvement@tendringdc.gov.uk
for more information, or to join our Customer Involvement Register.**

DIGITAL ACCESS - Help with going online

The North East Essex Digital Access Support Team offer a free service that helps you gain basic skills and confidence using today's smart technology. This service is available to North East Essex residents, helping people to become more digitally aware, whether that be helping them use their smart devices to keep in contact with loved ones, manage health and wellbeing and so much more. They host community-based events, online and in-person digital chat and support sessions, and in some instances one to one support. This service is provided to you free of charge on behalf of the North East Essex Integrated Care Board, Tendring District Council and Colchester City Council.



There are also a number of Fixed Digital Access Points located across both Colchester and Tendring for you to access free of charge. These are fixed, accessible and secure devices that provide you with an easy and convenient way of accessing local information. To find out more please visit their website www.colchester.gov.uk/digitalaccesssupport or phone 01255 686497

We will be hosting some community based sessions across the district to help our tenants gain basic digital skills and confidence.

If you would be interested in attending one of these, please contact our Tenant Engagement team on 01255 686690 or by emailing: tenant.involvement@tendringdc.gov.uk

Housing Advice Surgery

**Community Room, Honeycroft, Waldegrave Way, Lawford, CO11 2DY
every Friday between 10am and 2pm.**

As part of our continued efforts to help tenants access our services and get involved in decisions that affect their homes, we hold regular sessions for you to come and speak to Tendring's housing staff and report or discuss any issues you may have.

These sessions are held in the Community Room at Honeycroft, our sheltered housing scheme in Lawford every Friday between 10am and 2pm

If you would like to discuss any matters relating to your tenancy, please call in and meet one of our team. We will be happy to discuss any issues about your rent account, repairs and maintenance, neighbourhood, anti-social behaviour or the opportunities that exist for you to get involved and have more of a say about our services.

No appointment is needed so please do drop in!

Are you experiencing financial difficulties?

If you would like to contact us for advice you can email us at treed@tendringdc.gov.uk or rentsteam@tendringdc.gov.uk Call us on 01255 686291 / 686468

**Come into one of our drop ins at our Pier Avenue Offices on alternate Tuesdays 10am to 1pm
1st, 15th, 29th April ~ 13th, 27th May ~ 10th, 24th June**

NEW HOUSING POLICIES APPROVED

As part of the work being undertaken to ensure we comply with the Regulator of Social Housing's new Consumer Standards, the Council's Cabinet have recently approved the following policies. Available to read in full on our website at <https://www.tendringdc.gov.uk/content/housing-strategies-policies>

Gas Safety Policy

We want to make sure that all gas systems in our properties are properly managed and operate safely.

Our Gas Safety Policy covers:

- New or replacement gas installations and gas heating
- Landlords Annual Gas Safety Inspections.
- Gas servicing.
- Gas repairs and maintenance work
- Empty property gas safety checks

We are committed to sustainable development and will identify sustainability aims and principles when implementing this policy. This will include, wherever possible, the use of sustainable materials, products and specifications, which will maintain properties to a high standard of energy efficiency.

Electrical Safety Policy

This sets out how we will comply with the relevant legislation and associated guidance on the installation, inspection, repairs, testing and certification of electrical systems in our homes and associated communal spaces.

Whilst there is no regulation, standard or act that defines a frequency for electrical installation inspection and testing in England, it is recommended that domestic tenanted properties are inspected at least once every five years, with an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) produced.

Good practice also provides that electrical checks should be conducted on change of tenancy and that a copy of the certificate be provided for incoming tenants within the sign-up pack at the start of the new tenancy agreement

Fencing and Paving Policy

Fencing is generally assumed to last at least 20 years and paving for 40 years.

Our policy sets out how we will:

- Provide fencing and paving in new and refurbishment projects
- Replace fencing in communal areas
- Replace fencing in individual gardens of tenanted and empty properties
- Develop a fencing standard for type/style of fencing
- Prioritise fencing where it is part of a boundary area such as pathways, bordering on land not owned by the council and provision of gates where appropriate.
- Maintain all fencing and gates to communal areas
- Ensure value for money for the fence and paving renewal works

Empty Homes Management Policy

We want to provide decent homes to people in the community and to minimise the time that any of our homes are empty. The Housing Revenue Account's primary source of income is rent and so the number and length of time that a property is empty is a significant factor in being able to fund services.

Our policy sets out how we will:

- Minimise rent loss through reducing the length of the empty period
- Minimise any repair costs and recharge in line with the recharging policy.
- Set out the Empty Homes Standard ensuring that all staff, contractors and tenants are aware of exactly what condition the council expects of its empty properties.
- Ensure that properties are let in a state fully in accordance with the standards

TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES: Our survey said ...

Each year, we have to measure and report on our performance against 22 Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs), introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing

The TSMs are grouped into the following five themes:

- ↳ Keeping properties in good repair
- ↳ Complaints handling
- ↳ Maintaining building safety
- ↳ Neighbourhood management
- ↳ Respectful and helpful engagement



12 of these measures are informed by the tenant perception survey that we have to carry out each year and the remaining 10 comes from our own management information.

Our perception survey was carried out between October and December last year and the responses we got are set out below:

81.3% are satisfied with the overall service provided by the Council, as a landlord

81.4% are satisfied with the overall repairs service

78.1% are satisfied with the time taken to complete most recent repair

77% satisfied that their home well maintained

79.6% are satisfied that their home is safe

65.2% are satisfied that we listen their views and act on them

68.5% are satisfied that we keep them informed about things that matter to them

79.9% are satisfied that we treat them fairly and with respect

48.8% are satisfied with our approach to complaint handling

51% satisfied that, their communal areas are kept clean and well maintained

60% are satisfied that we make a positive contribution to the neighbourhood

56% are satisfied with our approach to handling anti-social behaviour

What happens next?

We have to submit our TSM results to the Regulator by the end of June each year. The Regulator will then publish the results for all social housing landlords, who own more than 1,000 in the Autumn to enable our performance to be compared with other housing providers.

MAKING A COMPLAINT ABOUT OUR HOUSING SERVICES

It is important that we know as soon as possible when things have not gone well, so that we can investigate what happened and take action to put things right if needed. Complaints also help us to learn and improve the service we provide.

We use the Housing Ombudsman's definition of a complaint which is:

“An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.”



You can make a complaint to us in any of the following ways:

- by filling in our Complaints form, which is available on our website <https://www.tendringdc.gov.uk/content/complaints> and on request from any member of staff
- by raising it with any member of our staff
- by emailing councilhousingcomplaints@tendringdc.gov.uk
- by phoning 01255 686868 or the direct number of the team you have been dealing with; or
- by visiting our Reception at Pier Avenue in Clacton, which is open Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from 10am to 1pm

To help us deal with your complaint you will need to tell us:

- What the problem is and how it has occurred
- How it has affected you
- What you consider we should now do to put the matter right

What can I complain about?

A complaint must be about something specific. It is most likely to be about one or more of the following:

- the standard of service provided by us
- our failure to provide an agreed service or to respond to your request for a service
- the attitude or conduct of a member of staff
- we have not followed an agreed procedure

What can I not complain about?

We will always accept a complaint unless we have a valid reason not to do so.

However, there are some things which are outside of our Housing Complaints Policy and these include:

- requests for a service (for example, the first time you ring to request a repair)
- complaints about the actions of a third party (for example, a noisy neighbour)
- matters where there is a separate means of resolution (for example, a Tribunal or appeals route)
- insurance claims against the Council
- requests for information
- complaints made twelve months after the date you learned that something went wrong (unless there are exceptional circumstances why the complaint has not been made sooner)

How will your complaint be dealt with



Stage One

If your issue is not something we can resolve straightaway as part of our day to day business, we will usually deal with it as a Stage 1 complaint.

We will acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days of us receiving it. This will set out our understanding of your complaint and the outcome you are seeking. It will also tell you who will be investigating your complaint and when you can expect a full response.

You should then receive a thorough response to your complaint within 10 working days of our acknowledgement. If this is not going to be possible, we will contact you to explain why and will also advise when you should receive a response. This will not exceed a further 10 working days unless there are exceptional circumstances. If you are unhappy with the initial response you have received to your complaint, you should contact us and ask for your complaint to be escalated to Stage 2.

Stage Two

We will send you an acknowledgement of your Stage Two complaint within 5 working days of us receiving it. This will again set out our understanding of your complaint and the outcome you are seeking. It will also tell you who will be investigating your complaint and when you can expect a full response. The Investigating Officer will not be the same person that investigated your complaint under Stage 1 to ensure that their investigation is independent and objective.

You will then receive a thorough response from us within 20 working days. If this is not going to be possible, we will give you an explanation and advise when the Stage two response will be sent to you. The revised response date should not exceed a further 20 working days without good reason.

If you are not comfortable or confident making a complaint, a representative can do this on your behalf, providing you agree to this.

You can also get support and advice from the Housing Ombudsman by visiting their website www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk or by phoning 0300 111 3000.

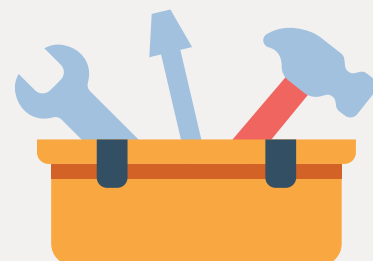
RECHARGEABLE WORKS POLICY FOR COUNCIL TENANTS

We are responsible for carrying out most of the repairs that are needed to your home and this normally refers to when fixtures or fittings have worn out or come to the end of their natural life.

However, there are some repairs that are your responsibility to carry out. For example, you are responsible for keeping the inside and outside of your home, your garden and any outbuildings in a reasonable condition and for decorating the inside of your home.

You are also responsible for certain minor repairs including:

- Renewal or repair of door handles, cupboard catches and hinges (not normal wear and tear)
- Putting up curtain rails (but not battens).
- Easing and refitting doors after carpets have been laid.
- Replacing toilet seats.



There are certain circumstances where we will carry out repairs to your home and charge you the amount it cost us to do these. These circumstances include:

- Where the repair is your responsibility.
- If the damage is due to wilful damage, neglect, misuse or abuse by you, a member of your family or visitors to your home
- Where a repair is needed, that is not due to fair wear and tear, after you have moved out of your home to bring it up to an acceptable standard before we can let it to someone else.
- Repairs or safety checks needed where alterations have not been carried out to a reasonable standard.
- Clearing waste, or your possessions left in the home, roof space, or any outbuildings and garden after your tenancy has ended.
- Works to restore gardens to an acceptable and manageable condition where you have refused or failed to maintain your garden.
- Clearance of blocked drains inside the property boundary caused by negligence (e.g. putting cooking fat down the sink or flushing wipes down the toilet)
- Where you fail to keep an appointment time that has been agreed with us or a contractor, without prior notification unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- Cost of emergency call outs in certain circumstances, for example no emergency work is found to be needed or where there is not any credit on a gas or electric meter.
- Costs associated with forced entry and associated damage, where keys have not been returned for a property, garage or other outbuilding

Rechargeable works will normally be identified when you report a repair to us or when a member of our staff or a contractor visits your home.

If we are going to charge you for the cost of any repairs or maintenance to your home, we will inform you and tell you what the potential cost will be. You will normally then have the option to arrange the repair yourself unless it relates to gas, electricity or water or is an urgent health and safety matter.

We will send you an invoice for the works after the works have been completed and this will include the cost of travel to your home, all materials and labour costs. An administration charge will also be added at a rate of 15% of the recharge, subject to a minimum of £20.00

If you have reported an emergency to us out of hours that is subsequently found not to be an emergency, we will charge you our standard call out cost. This amount will also be charged where a repair or other work cannot be carried out because you have not kept a previously agreed appointment and have not made any attempt to rearrange this.

SPENDELLS HOUSE WALTON ON THE NAZE



Towards the end of last year, work was completed on the conversion of Spendells House to provide temporary accommodation for households who are homeless.

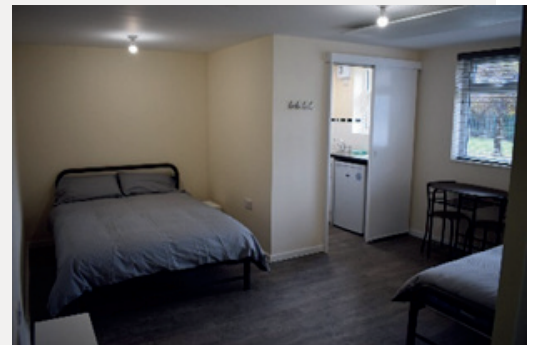
The £2.3 million revamp of the former sheltered housing scheme was completed after contractors Arc Group London Ltd undertook the conversion works to provide 31 flats, one of which is wheelchair accessible – with flexibility to connect some flats to accommodate larger families.

Laundry and bathroom facilities have also been provided, while the adjoining bungalow on the site has been converted to provide office space for our staff and partner agencies supporting the families temporarily housed there.

Members of staff are on site during office hours, with other provision outside of those times, to manage the building and support households.

Creating this new facility at Spendells House provides much-needed emergency accommodation and will reduce the reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation for those in need.

The first families moved in at the start of December and one new resident has praised the accommodation and our staff for helping her family to settle in saying “this is the safest I have felt in a long time thanks to the staff and security along with the rules and regulations. Spendells House is a really good temporary accommodation and works well.”



NEED TO CONTACT US?



01255 686464 Rent account enquires	General enquiries: housing.services@tendringdc.gov.uk
01255 686468 Rent arrears enquiries	
01255 686455 Right to buy enquiries	Report any non-urgent repairs that are needed to your home: housingrepairs@tendringdc.gov.uk
01255 686488 Report anti-social behaviour or other nuisance complaints	
01255 686477 Report a repair during working hours	Report any incidents of anti-social behaviour or nuisance: housingASB@tendringdc.gov.uk
01255 222022 Report emergency repairs only outside of normal working hours	
01255 686466 Housing Register or allocation enquiries	Find out more about getting involved in our services: tenant.involvement@tendringdc.gov.uk
01255 686436 Enquiries about special needs housing or adaptations	
01255 686888 Sheltered Housing	Out of Hours call Careline 01255 222022

Operations and Delivery – Housing and Environment
Tendring District Council, Pier Avenue, Clacton on Sea, Essex CO15 1TN

Visiting:

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