



**Uttlesford District Council**

**TENANT  
PARTICIPATION  
COMPACT**

**June 2009**

## Introduction

This compact represents the agreement between Uttlesford District Council and its tenants regarding the ways in which tenants and leaseholders may be involved in decisions which affect the way services are provided.

The compact will enable us to build on existing arrangements and work in partnership to help develop tenant participation.

This compact has been updated by members of the Tenant Forum and councillors, working with council officers. The compact is an evolving document that will be reviewed and updated, as appropriate, following consultation with the partnership above.

We will work with tenants to ensure that our services meet your needs. We are a non-political body and it is thought essential that this stays the same.

Uttlesford District Council is committed to providing the best possible services to its tenants. The Tenant Compact will provide the framework to reinforce this commitment and enable tenants to influence the housing services they receive.

The council employs a Tenant Participation Officer who is responsible for ensuring that tenant participation is developed, administered and implemented successfully.

A Tenant Compact is more than just a government requirement, it also represents the commitment from the council and its tenants to work in partnership to improve the way services are delivered.

## Background

Uttlesford District Council established its first Tenant Forum in 1995. We have approximately 2,900 tenants and 120 leaseholders in Uttlesford and we are constantly seeking ways to develop and improve links between the council and the many rural villages in our area. Tenant participation is seen as a vital communication link between the tenants and the council and ensures that all tenants are given an opportunity to have their say on all issues relating to their homes. The original Tenant Compact came into force on 1st April 2000 and was reviewed in 2003 and 2005.

## The Partnership

The partners are the Tenant Forum, the council and its tenants and leaseholders.

### *The Council's Commitment*

The council will act as a fair and reasonable landlord by:

- ❖ Ensuring that information held about tenants is treated in confidence in accordance with data protection and freedom of information legislation.
- ❖ Ensuring all its tenants have equal opportunity to access the services provided by the council, without discrimination or prejudice based for example on a person's nationality, ethnic origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, age or disability.
- ❖ Abiding by legislation/regulations and good practice in its capacity as a caring landlord.
- ❖ Consulting with the Tenant Forum when setting the annual rent and on other major issues such as decent homes and procurement.
- ❖ Setting out its obligations as a landlord in the booklet entitled "Conditions of Tenancy" which will be issued along with a copy of the Tenant Handbook and Tenant Compact at the commencement of each tenancy and when there is a change of tenancy. Extra copies of documents can be requested.
- ❖ Consulting with tenants through the Tenant Forum when considering targets for service delivery, including repairs and planned maintenance/improvements.
- ❖ Fulfilling its statutory duty to consult on issues affecting tenants.

- ❖ Keeping tenants informed through the Tenant Forum, and, where appropriate, via newsletters, on issues affecting changes to their tenancies.
- ❖ Treating tenants in a polite and respectful manner.
- ❖ Investigating any complaint about its services and reporting back to the complainant in accordance with the council's complaints procedure.
- ❖ Ensuring that in the event of a tenant having difficulty in preparing the details of a problem or complaint to the council, the Tenant Participation Officer will independently assist the tenant at a mutually convenient time.
- ❖ Ensuring that a range of options is offered to provide assistance to people who have difficulty reading or understanding council literature (details of such individuals need to be notified to the council).
- ❖ Preparing and updating a range of housing information leaflets about various housing services provided, which will be updated and reviewed when necessary.

## The Tenant's Commitment

By being tenants of Uttlesford District Council, it is expected, by both the council and the forum, that tenants will act in a fair and reasonable way by:

- ❖ Ensuring they conduct their tenancies in accordance with the Conditions of Tenancy.
- ❖ Treating representatives of the council in a polite and respectful manner.
- ❖ Ensuring that any grievance or complaint about a housing-related service is supplied to the council giving full details. This is on the understanding that the matter will be dealt with appropriately in accordance with the council's complaints procedure. Details of the complaints procedure can be obtained from the Tenant Participation Officer on 01799 510571.
- ❖ By acknowledging the fact that councillors and officers are required to abide by the requirements of council policy and legislation. You can contact your Tenant Participation Officer for further information on 01799 510571.

## Tenant Forum

There is a Tenant Forum covering the whole district of Uttlesford. Tenants who are elected to the forum will be expected to represent all tenants and not just those in their own immediate area. There will be an opportunity to raise local issues.

### *Election*

- ❖ The tenants of the council will elect 12 Tenant Forum representatives every two years.
- ❖ The term of office for members of the forum commences on 1 February following the election held in the preceding autumn.
- ❖ The council, via a newsletter, will notify all tenants of the election and nominations duly proposed.
- ❖ In addition to the 12 Tenant Forum representatives, there will be one leaseholder on the forum who will be subject to nomination and election by the council's leaseholders. Details of the election process will be supplied to leaseholders via a special newsletter.
- ❖ In the event of more candidates than vacancies occurring, the council will conduct a postal election within one month of nominations closing.
- ❖ Candidates will be invited to make a statement, which will be circulated to all tenants when postal ballot papers are dispatched.
- ❖ In the event of there being fewer nominations than vacancies those nominated will automatically be elected.
- ❖ Any outstanding or casual vacancy will be filled by co-option onto the forum by existing Tenant Forum representatives. Any person co-opted onto the forum must be qualified for election to the forum. The Tenant Participation Officer will keep a record of anyone expressing an interest to be co-opted onto the Tenant Forum.

## **Exclusions**

- ❖ Candidates for tenant representation at the time of nomination must be a tenant of a council dwelling as their home and must not be subject to a court order for possession of their home or an anti-social behaviour order.
- ❖ Candidates for the leaseholder representative must be a leaseholder at the time of nomination and must not be subject to a court order for possession of their home or be subject to an anti-social behaviour order.

## **Conduct**

- ❖ The Tenant Forum will elect, from its membership, a chairperson and a vice-chairperson neither of whom can be the leaseholder representative. This is because the breadth of issues discussed by the Tenant Forum will not always be relevant to leaseholders.
- ❖ The Tenant Participation Officer will support meetings of the forum.
- ❖ Details of scheduled meetings of the Tenant Forum will be made public through the tenants' newsletter. All tenants may attend and have an opportunity to raise issues at the commencement of the meeting.
- ❖ Agendas for scheduled meetings of the Tenant Forum will be sent out to representatives at least one calendar week before the meeting, unless there is a special meeting called.
- ❖ Tenant Forum representatives may ask for items to be placed on the agenda.
- ❖ To comply with the quorum a minimum of three representatives must attend any meeting of the Tenant Forum.

## *Voting at Meetings*

- ❖ In the event of a vote being taken the majority view present will be relayed to the relevant committee or agency.
- ❖ If the vote is tied the chairperson will have a second or casting vote.
- ❖ Any member of the forum can request a secret ballot be taken which must be granted by the chairperson.

## *Exclusions*

- ❖ Any person eligible for election to the Tenant Forum (tenant representative or leaseholder) will automatically be disqualified from the membership of the forum should the tenancy or lease of the property they live in come to an end (i.e. following right to buy, eviction or voluntary termination of the tenancy).
- ❖ If a member of the Tenant Forum is in breach of his/her 'Conditions of Tenancy' by order of the County or High Court or becomes the subject of an anti-social behaviour order, they will be suspended from the forum until the matter is resolved.
- ❖ In the event of a complaint regarding the honesty or integrity of a forum member being made, the matter will be referred to the council's monitoring officer for independent investigation which if upheld could result in disqualification from the forum by the council.
- ❖ Should representatives be unable to attend a Tenant Forum meeting they are expected to notify the Tenant Participation Officer. Should a representative fail to attend or notify absence for three scheduled consecutive meetings, then they will be deemed to have left the forum's membership. In the event of long-term ill-health the forum may allow leave of absence for six months which can be reviewed.

## *Availability of Information*

- ❖ Minutes of all Tenant Forum meetings will be available for members of the council to view.
- ❖ Minutes of all Tenant Forum meetings will be available for scrutiny by tenants. Hard copies of the minutes can be inspected at the Saffron Walden council offices during normal office hours.

## *Expenses*

- ❖ Travelling expenses and care costs are payable to Tenant Forum members on request when attending meetings of the Tenant Forum or any other approved meeting, or training.

## *Training*

- ❖ Appropriate training on participation and council policies and procedures will be encouraged for Tenant Forum representatives and paid for by the council. This will be agreed each year following individual discussions with members of the forum to identify needs.
- ❖ Arrangements can also be made to show new members of the Tenant Forum around the district so they are aware of where council housing exists.
- ❖ There will be regular reviews of training with housing staff in order to embrace the values of customer care as outlined in the compact.

# Opportunities for Involvement

## *Tenant Groups*

This is where a number of tenants discuss in an informal way, issues relating to the housing services on an occasional or regular basis.

- ❖ To be supported by the council any tenant group has to be registered with the council, who will ensure that the aims and objectives and constitution are acceptable.
- ❖ Any tenant in the area may participate (other residents may be invited).
- ❖ A tenant group is not a decision-making body unless it has been delegated by the council or Tenant Forum.
- ❖ Groups will be consulted and encouraged to discuss issues relevant to that community.
- ❖ Groups will be supported by the Tenant Participation Officer who will record the issues raised and views expressed and ensure that appropriate agencies are made aware of the concerns of the group.
- ❖ Venues for group meetings will be arranged and paid for by the council if requested.
- ❖ Assistance is available, from the Tenant Participation Officer.

## *Meetings with Council Representatives*

- ❖ Confidential one-to-one discussions will be available with a council representative to deal with specific concerns.
- ❖ Meetings with council representatives can be requested by tenants, the Tenant Forum or by ward councillors.

- ❖ Venues for meetings will be arranged and paid for by the council if requested.
- ❖ Reports from meetings (other than confidential one-to-one discussions) will be made available to interested parties without disclosing individual identities.

### *Open Meetings*

- ❖ Open meetings involving larger numbers of tenants can be held at the request of the Tenant Forum or the council where there will be an opportunity for all tenants to voice an opinion on relevant issues.

### *Surveys*

- ❖ Surveys take place when and where necessary to ascertain tenants' views on issues/matters that may affect them.
- ❖ Surveys relating to work carried out at tenants' homes will be undertaken on a random percentage basis for ad hoc repairs and all homes where planned work has been undertaken.
- ❖ Regular feedback from surveys will be presented to the Tenant Forum.

## Representation on Council Committees

- ❖ Two tenants from the Tenant Forum (one of whom is the chairperson) may sit, as non-voting members, on the committee covering housing issues (currently the Community and Housing Committee). Substitutes can be requested by the appointed representatives to attend the Community and Housing Committee on their behalf on a temporary basis.
- ❖ It is the responsibility of the Tenant Forum representatives on the Community and Housing Committee to represent the views of the forum which may require them taking soundings from other Tenant Forum representatives prior to meetings taking place.
- ❖ The council may invite Tenant Forum representatives to sit in a non-voting capacity on any other relevant committee or working group which relates to the housing service.
- ❖ The Tenant Forum will be represented on all service reviews in respect of housing services and the council will take any views expressed into consideration.

## Right to Receive Information

- ❖ A provisional work plan will be agreed each year for the forum.
- ❖ Tenant Forum representatives will receive appropriate operational statistical information at their meetings on a quarterly basis.
- ❖ Tenant Forum representatives will be supplied with copies of relevant housing documents and will be consulted on any review undertaken.
- ❖ All tenants will be kept informed of housing issues by way of either district-wide or local newsletters, which will be produced in conjunction with the Tenant Forum.
- ❖ Tenant Forum representatives will be supplied with minutes of all Community and Housing Committee and other housing meetings.

## Concluding Statement

Uttlesford District Council hopes to encourage and promote tenant participation with this document. It sets out the opportunities available for people who would like to be involved and the standards that are expected. It is the aim of the council, working with the Tenant Forum, to achieve an excellent standard of service for all current and future customers.

## Comments and Suggestions

If you require further information on anything mentioned in this document, or wish to make a suggestion, please contact:

Nicole Shephard-Lewis  
Tenant Participation Officer  
Council Offices  
London Road  
Saffron Walden  
Essex CB11 4ER

Tel: 01799 510571

E-mail: [nshephardlewis@uttlesford.gov.uk](mailto:nshephardlewis@uttlesford.gov.uk)

## Data Protection Act

The information you provide may be put on a computer system registered under the current data protection law. It may be checked with other information or data held by the council. It may be described on the register entry in the council's data protection register.

If you require this publication in an alternative format and/or language please contact us on 01799 510510.

This supersedes all previous versions of the Tenant Compact.

# Useful Numbers

**Housing Repairs – 01799 510573**  
**Septic Tank Emptying, Animal Warden, Pest Control,  
Noise, Air/Water Pollution – 01799 510344**  
**Waste, Recycling and Litter – 01799 510687**  
**Planning, Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings  
and Tree Preservation Orders – 01799 510596**  
**Council Tax and Housing Benefits – 01799 510335**  
**Other Enquiries – 01799 510510**  
**Automated Payments Line – 01799 510551**  
**Out of Hours Emergency Service – 01223 849755**

**Building Control - Building Regulations, Dangerous Structures, Street Naming  
and Numbering 01799 510539**

**Business Rates 01799 510349**

**Committee Information - meetings and elected councillors 01799 510430**

**Community Safety 01799 510555**

**Concessionary Travel 01799 510510**

**Elections and Electoral Register 01799 510431**

## Rent

01799 510357 or

01799 510360

Right to Buy/Leasehold

01799 510388

Shared Ownership

01799 510388

Sheltered Housing

01799 510571

Tenancy Exchange

01799 510576

Tenant Liaison

01799 510571

## Land Charge Searches

01799 510419

## Leisure Centres

Saffron Walden

01799 522777

Dunmow

01371 878690

Stansted

01279 648580

## Licensing

Premises licenses

01799 510613

Taxi Licensing

01799 510578

Other licenses

01799 510589

## Lifeline

01799 510397

## Museum

01799 510333

## Neighbourhood Watch

01799 510555

## Parking

01799 510608

## Trade Refuse

01799 510342

## Z Bikes

01799 510638