

UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

# TENANT PARTICIPATION COMPACT



EXISTING TENANT COMPACT

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## Introduction

This compact represents the agreement between Uttlesford District Council and its tenants about 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 written and reviewed by Council Officers, members of the Tenant Forum and Local Councillors. The compact is an evolving document that will be reviewed and updated, as appropriate, (within a minimum of 3 years) 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 are committed to providing the best possible services to their 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 full time 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 Forums in 1995. We have approximately 3000 tenants 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. The original Tenant Compact came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2000 and was reviewed in September 2003.

***'Working together we create a better community'***

***Caring:*** We care for our customers, our staff, our environment

***Partnership:*** We work as a team and with our partners for the good of the community

***Communication:*** We listen to our customers and our staff and keep them informed

***Services:*** We work to provide our customers with the services they require

***Flexibility:*** We adapt to new ideas and make use of better ways of doing things

***Performance:*** We review our performance and services regularly

## The Partnership

The partners are the Council and its tenants.

In delivering the Tenant Compact the Council will listen where appropriate to the views of other interested parties regarding community issues. The views of these interested parties will be taken into account when and where relevant.

### *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 the Data Protection legislation. Ensuring all its tenants have equal opportunity to access the services provided by the Council, without discrimination or prejudice based on a persons 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 and working in partnership with its Tenant Forum representatives when setting the annual rent.
- ❖ 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 both 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.
- ❖ Negotiating with and 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 assist the tenant at a mutually convenient time.
- ❖ Ensuring that a range of services are offered to provide assistance to people who have difficulty reading or understanding Council literature.

## ***The Tenant's Commitments***

Tenants will act as fair and reasonable tenants 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 the council must abide by legislation requirements and Council policy

## Tenant Forum

There is a Tenant Forum covering the whole District of Uttlesford. There is an Annual General Meeting held each year at the Council offices in Saffron Walden, to which all tenants are invited. 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 10 Tenant Forum Representatives every 2 years (Commencing 1 February 2004).
- ❖ The Council, via a newsletter, will notify all tenants of the election and nominations duly proposed & seconded will be invited.
- ❖ In the event of more candidates than vacancies occurring, the Council will conduct a postal election within 1 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 less 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 representatives. The Tenant Participation Officer will keep a record of anyone expressing an interest to be co-opted to the Tenant Forum.

### Exclusions

- ❖ Candidates 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.

### Conduct

- ❖ The Tenant Forum will elect, from its membership, a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Secretary.
- ❖ The Tenant Participation Officer will support meetings of the forum.
- ❖ Details of meetings of the Tenant Forum will be made public through the tenant's newsletter. All tenants may attend and have an opportunity to raise issues.
- ❖ Agendas for scheduled meetings of the Tenant Forum will be sent out to representatives 1 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.
- ❖ A minimum of three tenant representatives must attend any meeting of the Tenant Forum as a quorum.

### *Exclusions*

- ❖ Any qualifying person eligible for election to the Tenant Forum will automatically be disqualified from the membership of the Forum should the tenancy 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, 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.
- ❖ 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 consecutive meetings, then they will be deemed to have left the Forum's membership.

### *Availability of information*

- ❖ Minutes of all Tenant Forum meetings will be available for Members of the Council to note.
- ❖ Minutes of all Tenant Forum meetings will be available for scrutiny by tenants, on request, during normal office hours.

### *Expenses*

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

### *Training*

- ❖ Appropriate training on participation and Council policies and procedures will be encouraged for Tenant Forum representatives and paid for by the Council.



## Opportunities for Involvement

### Community/Residents Groups

This is where a number of tenants/residents discuss in an informal way, issues relating to the Housing Services on an occasional or regular basis.

- ❖ Any tenant/resident in the area may participate
- ❖ Groups will be 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.
- ❖ Venues for group meetings will be arranged and paid for by the Council if requested.
- ❖ Assistance is available, from the Tenant Participation Officer.

### Surgeries

- ❖ Confidential one to one discussions will be available with a Council representative(s) to deal with specific concerns.
- ❖ Surgeries can be arranged for tenants by request.
- ❖ Venues for surgeries will be arranged and paid for by the Council if requested.

### Roadshows

- ❖ Roadshows are held on a yearly basis in areas around the district
- ❖ They are an opportunity for all tenants to voice an opinion on Council services and to seek relevant information.

### Surveys

- ❖ Surveys take place when and where necessary and always following any work carried out at a tenant's home.
- ❖ The purpose of surveys is to voice peoples individual opinion on a certain matter, affecting them

## Representation on Council Bodies

- ❖ Two tenants from the Tenant Forum (one of which should be the Chair or Vice Chair) may sit, as non-voting members, on the Health & Housing Committee. The Council may invite tenants, 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 in all Best Value service reviews in respect of Housing Services and the Council will take any views expressed into consideration.

## Right to Receive Information

- ❖ Tenant Forum representatives will receive appropriate operational statistical information at their meetings on a quarterly basis.
- ❖ 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.

## Relationship with Best Value

The Tenant Compact will be used as a monitoring tool to ensure that tenants are receiving the best possible services.

Reviews will be carried out as part of the Best Value Performance plan, taking into account the 4 C's of the Best Value regime. These are as follows:-

- ❖ Challenging existing arrangements.
- ❖ Comparing services with other authorities.
- ❖ Consulting with tenants on aspects of their housing services.
- ❖ Competing where necessary to ensure the most effective services are delivered.

## Concluding Statement

Uttlesford District Council hopes to encourage and promote tenant participation with this document. It sets out the opportunities available for people that would like to be involved and the standards that all those involved agree to abide by.

## Comments and Suggestions

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

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