

Minutes



Dover District Tenants' Consultative Group Meeting
Tuesday 2nd June 2026
11am-1pm
Council Chamber, DDC

Members

Neil Drakley – Chair of the DDTCG
Patricia (Trish) Hayward – Vice Chair of the DDTCG
Karen Smitton – Tenant Representative
Chris Tough – Leaseholder Representative
Bruce Smithard – Tenant Representative
Alan Adams – Tenant Representative
Carol Hill – Tenant Representative
Chris Hanagan – Tenant Representative

Dover District Council

Andy Vincent – Director of Housing and Place
David Parish – Head of Property Assets
Cllr Pam Brivio – Portfolio for Housing, Skills and Education
Beth Becks – Principal Tenant Engagement and Monitoring Officer
Beth McLaughlin-Aldred (minute taker) – Assistant Strategic Housing Officer
Linus Calvert (Sureserve) – Regional Manager

1	Welcome, Introductions and Apologies 11am Neil gives his thanks to Andy for attending. Neil shares that regulator meeting went very well. Apologies from Sarah Kidney and Jennifer and Gordon Cheeseman.	
2	Minutes and Actions 11.05 Karen suggests a small change on 14.04.26 DDTCG minutes – Mears to attend this meeting, changed to Mears to attend a future meeting. Minutes agreed.	
3	Sureserve – Contract update and communications 11.10 • Dover joined Sureserve on 1 April 2025, with KPIs measured from September to March due to higher winter demand.	

	• SLA performance is currently 97.24% against a 98% target, slightly below target due to initial integration issues across Swale, KNT and Gas Call teams. • First-time fix rate is 88.24%, with a recall rate of 9.63%, meaning most issues are resolved on the first visit in line with DDC's expectations. • Service covers 4,496 properties with 12 engineers (increased from 8), supported by monthly toolbox talks at DDC offices. • Complaints are 1.16% (below industry standard) but increase in winter (Dec-Feb), mainly due to missed or late appointments. • <i>Chris T</i>- will the engineer tell tenant if they will be late? • <i>Linus</i> – Yes, the admin will contact the tenant if the engineer will be late. • 12 engineers in Dover District – 'toolbox talks' are held once a month at DDC offices. • <i>Bruce</i> – would be better if there was a specific time frame. • <i>Linus</i> – specific feedback from DDC to offer AM or PM appointment, when the contract renews, they can look at having more specific timing. • <i>Bruce</i> – could we have your number in the queue so tenants know when they will be seen? • <i>Neil</i> – are you using the same vans from Gas Call/Swale? • <i>Linus</i> – should not be any Gas Call vans, they will all have Sureserve logos. • <i>Neil</i> – communication is a problem, was sent 3 different appointments. • <i>Linus</i> – we have 2 oil engineers; they are currently recruiting but makes it difficult as there are less oil engineers. Tenants informed that they could email Linus to sort any queries. • There are a lot of dated boilers, so they are trying to replace older oil boilers with an air source heat pump as it reduces cost. • Slowly trying to integrate them. • <i>Trish</i> – Is it true that air source heat pumps only work if the house is fully insulated? • <i>Linus</i> – It definitely helps, but if your house is uninsulated, it is not the be all and end all. • <i>Chris H</i> – What is the life span? • <i>Linus</i> - Air source heat pumps last around 15-20 years? • Positives of an air source heat pump are that there are no dual tariffs, hot water pressure improved and better for the environment. • This winter will be the second winter working with DDC, since then there has been an increased number of engineers from 8 to 12.	
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	• <i>Chris T</i> – Are you looking at apprenticeships, and is there a high turnover? • <i>Linus</i> – Good apprenticeship programme, legally they have to have the incentive. Sureserve will subsidise the apprentices gas course, they will then pay it back through their salary. If they decide to leave before it has been paid off, the apprentice will have to pay back the subsidy. • Currently 2 apprentices in Dover. • <i>Chris T</i> – Do you work with the job centre? • <i>Linus</i> –No, but Sureserve will consider this alongside their existing college recruitment approach. • Admin and call handlers have increased from 10 to 15. • Previously there was wait times of up to 25 minutes on the phone, trying to improve the wait times, ideal time to be on hold is 5-10 mins. • Sureserve are going to send out newsletter to remind tenants to check their boiler/ water pressure/thermostat, in September.	
4	Housing Asset management strategy 11.40 • The Housing Asset Management Strategy (2026–2031) has been approved by Cabinet and Scrutiny; it is a 5-year strategy reviewed annually and will be published on the website soon, with a more accessible version being developed. • The strategy aims to deliver safe, affordable homes, with 92% of stock condition surveys completed. • Efforts to improve access include attempting contact at least three times, calling outside normal hours, using Gov.Notify texts, and a joint “no access” group across teams. • <i>Chris H</i> – Are tenants penalised if they do not give access? • <i>David</i> – Forced entry is possible for gas safety checks but not for EICR’s, although legal options are being explored. • <i>Trish</i> – how do you go from a D to a C? • <i>David</i> - fabric first approach, loft top ups – external cavities, LED lighting etc. • <i>Chris H</i> – Is LED light a tenant issue? • <i>David</i> – We try to encourage everyone to use LED lights as it reduces costs. • <i>Neil</i>- Inspectors aren’t looking in the loft. • <i>David</i> – Did he ask you if you had insulation? • <i>Neil</i> – No, he took a photo outside not inside of the house. • <i>Bruce</i> – Sureserve are looking at putting heat pumps in, should they work with DDC to say should they put cavity walls in at the same time? • <i>David</i> – We want everyone to have cavity wall and loft insulation but that is not Sureserve who would do that.	David – follow up St Monica’s alleyway car park drains.

	• Flooding – An investigation is still ongoing, could receive funding for the affected properties, working with the Digital Team to see what areas are likely to flood to then monitor those properties. • <i>Chris H</i> – St Monicas alleyway, flat 21, alongside flat there is a car park with 3 drains, all 3 are blocked. • <i>David</i> – He will follow that up to see if anyone has been out, check if it is a KCC duty. • <i>Bruce</i> – Feels like you feel like you are only doing these things because you are obligated. • <i>David</i> – No not at all, we want to do them to improve homes, and the basis of the strategy is to do that. • <i>Trish</i> – Has a 20-litre dehumidifier has to empty it constantly. • <i>David</i> – Has anyone been out? (Beth B will pass on address to get it investigated) • A few complaints from tenants about stock survey and EPC and how they are not being thorough enough.	David - Send Housing Asset Management Strategy to members of the DDTCG to get feedback. Beth B – to pass on Trish Hayward's contact details to David to investigate damp and mould.
5	Cleaning contract update 12.00 • Tim Goss unable to attend; Beth B provided the update. • Tenant consultation phase ready to begin, including a survey for tenants and leaseholders in blocks. • Process will mirror the repairs focus group. • Purpose is to inform contract content and support the selection process. • Cleaning meeting planned with residents. • Focus group advertised via email and consultations; 4 residents signed up so far. • Further recruitment push planned before launch. • Survey to run for 4 weeks. • Focus group expected to start in July/August. • Surveys include personal questions to update tenant profiles. • <i>Chris H</i> -Asks for an example. • <i>Beth B</i> -What is your ethnic origin, are you disabled? Disability is the most important question, it needs to be asked regularly as it can change frequently. • <i>Karen</i> – Do they have a time limit to complete jobs. • <i>Beth B</i> – Yes, they do, this could be written into contract to have longer time limit. • <i>Chris T</i> – Will it be block specific? • <i>Beth B</i> – No, the standard will be universal across all blocks. • <i>Alan</i>– Unhappy that there is no longer an Independent Living Manager. • <i>Beth B</i> – Their role is not to patrol the area. • <i>Alan</i> – There is a leather sofa outside Solomon house – Beth B will take it back and have it looked into.	

	• <i>Beth B</i>- assures Bruce that the team are there you just might not see them patrolling. • Cleaner has been awarded cleaner of the month – Lambert House • <i>Karen</i> – Report the sofa to housing and they will deal with it. • Aim to get Cleaning Contract members up to 10. • Waiting for GDPR check, then survey will be sent out to residents and on website.	Beth B – look into leather sofa by Solomon House.
6	Tenancy Agreement update – Tenant Information videos 12.15 • Tenants asked what videos they would like to see alongside the handbook: • <i>Trish</i> – An overview on how to use the handbook. • <i>Chris T</i>- How to recycle video. • <i>Beth B</i> – That would be down to Waste not Housing. • <i>Carol</i> – Can the handbook go on the homepage? • <i>Beth B</i> – No, but it can go on the Council Tenants homepage. • <i>Beth B</i> – Suggests Tenancy Agreement video - what happens when you succeed your tenancy, what you need to get permissions for e.g. pets and permissions video. • <i>Carol</i> - Moving in and what to do, when you transfer and when you move out video. • <i>Chris T</i> – That would be good especially on temporary housing. • Link Kent home choice videos.	
7	Resident Engagement update 12.30 • <u>Tenant handbook</u> • Currently at 21,000 words. • 60 pages. • Once text is approved by managers it can be designed. • Beth B talked members through the headings. • Useful for staff and tenants. • <u>Garden competition update</u> • 18 entrants so far. • Order of awards for the ceremony was decided. • Neil would like to present an award. • Tenants took posters away to put up in their own blocks. • <u>Tenant communications</u> • Now using gov.notify. • We do not have enough email addresses would like more. • 2 residents have signed up to the Resident Scrutiny Group.	

	• 3 signups for the for the cleaning group. • <u>Tenant conference</u> • All residents invited. • DDTCG will have a stall. • <i>Chris H</i> – what day of the week. • <i>Beth B</i> – On a Saturday. • <i>Bruce</i> – Put up posters in community boards in supermarket. • <i>Chris H</i> – How will you focus on tenants? • <i>Beth B</i> – we will not turn away anyone who is a tenant, but it will be advertised as an event for tenants and leaseholders. • <u>Inside Housing national conference in London</u> • Bruce is interested in attending. • Neil will be attending.	
8	Forward Plan 12.55 Mears to attend the next meeting. Darren Solley to attend the next meeting. Patricia Hayward has resigned as Vice Chair and as a member of the DDTCG.	
9	Meeting Close Date of next meeting: – Tuesday 14th July 2026, Council Chamber, DDC Offices.	
10	Actions • David - Send Housing Asset Management Strategy to members of the DDTCG to get feedback. • David – follow up St Monica’s alleyway car park drains. • Beth B – to pass on Trish Hayward’s contact details to David to investigate damp and mould. • Beth B – look into leather sofa by Solomon House. • Beth MA -Once posters are made, get in contact with supermarkets and put posters up on their community boards. • Invite Darren Solley and Mears to the next DDTCG meeting.	

Please note: a short comfort break will be included halfway through the meeting.