



Minutes

Dover District Tenants' Consultative Group Meeting

Tuesday 14th April 2026

2pm-4pm

HMS Brave, DDC

Members

Neil Drakley, Chair

Patricia Hayward, Vice Chair

Karen Smitton, DDTCG Member

Alan Adams DDTCG Member

Bruce Smithard DDTCG Member

Chris Tough, DDTCG Member (Leaseholder)

Gordan Cheeseman, DDTCG Member (Leaseholder)

Jennifer Cheeseman, DDTCG Member (Leaseholder)

Dover District Council

Beth Becks, Principal Tenant Engagement and Monitoring Officer

Perry DeSouza, Strategic Housing Manager

Jodi Blizard, Housing Policy Officer

Cllr Pam Brivio, Portfolio Holder for Housing, Skills and Education

Beth Mclaughlin-Aldred, Assistant Strategic Housing Officer (Minute taker)

1	<p><u>Welcome, Instructions and Apologies</u> Apologies from Carol, Chris and Sarah</p> <p>Unanimous vote to vote Bruce Smithard and Alan Adams into the group.</p>	
2	<p><u>Minutes and Actions</u> Minutes agreed.</p> <p>Karen gave an update following her Contract meeting with Mears. Since the last meeting, Karen has attended 2 monthly contract meetings. Everything is going well with the contract and most of the posts have been filled. Outstanding works in progress are due to materials or tenant unavailability. Mears will be introducing a new portal for tenants and would like to attend future meetings to introduce it.</p>	
3	<p><u>Updated Tenancy Agreement Discussion</u></p>	Action: Perry to ask Yvonne for pet

	<p>Consultation results – 273 responses, 99% of responses are council tenants. Vast majority say updated version of the Tenancy agreement is easier to understand. Difficulties arise with understanding the language and formats. 82% feel that the language is clear. Common themes of being too long and overwhelming with complicated language. Positive themes include clearer wording, stronger expectations around gardens, property and neighbours. Negative themes surrounding pets and complex wording. Most tenants feel that nothing is missing from the Tenancy agreement. Reoccurring negative themes around pets and permissions, wording, concern and distrust towards changes. Perry makes it clear that some wording is necessary, but tenants who believe wording is complex will still be listened too. Reminder texts enabled for another 100 survey results. Communication regarding pets, group suggests clear language surrounding the issue, e.g. pets will not be evicted, we just need to be made aware. Questions surrounding pets in flats, Yvonne can send out more information. Factors such as size of flat, previous ASB etc will be considered, especially factors such guide dogs. It will not be a blanket approach. Systems record what pets and how many pets a tenant has. Concerns about what pets need to be registered, but all pets need to be registered. Change wording and how information is being delivered around pets, in pets policy found in Tenant Agreement. Independent living schemes April 27 – 1 May. Perry, Beth and Beth will be present for tenants to speak to us in person. Consultation closes on May 10th results will be reviewed in May/ June. Results will be broken down into bitesize pieces. New agreement in place by August Bruce suggested ‘Bot chat’ could be a potential option for people to get in contact, which is part of a wider council project. Members found the new Tenancy Agreement very straightforward. Push on for videos to be used to explain information to tenants.</p>	<p>management response. Response to be forwarded to Beth to pass on to the group.</p>
4	<p><u>Housing Policy Update</u> Jodi Blizzard attended to provide an update on the upcoming Temporary moves (Decanting) Policy.</p>	<p>Action: Jodi to pass Group views and requested changes to</p>

	<p>Jodi explained that a temporary move is when tenants need to be moved to alternative accommodation whilst major repair works are being carried out to their home. In urgent cases a hotel can be a solution, however, long term other arrangements can be made. Aim to keep disruption to a minimum.</p> <p>Council pay for works, utilities etc at the tenants' home, and cover the cost of the alternative accommodation. Tenants will be responsible for utilities at the property they are residing at. This will be case by case basis.</p> <p>Chris T – temporary accommodation concerns about whether there is any temporary accommodation available. Jodi stated that DDC can use the private renters' sector to provide housing, as well as void (empty) properties. Jodi clarifies the definition of temporary moves is to enable work to be carried out to tenants' homes whereas temporary housing is people who have yet to be given a house and are on the waiting list, using the floods from June 2025 as an example of temporary moves.</p> <p>Members say that the policy is easy to understand and nothing needs to be added to the policy.</p> <p>Looking to broaden tenancy engagement. Trish suggests that a text to all tenants.</p> <p>Beth B points out it is important to not overdo it due to the risk of survey fatigue and to balance the correct amount of consultation with residents. Important to keep questions short, Neil and Trish say that the number of questions in tenancy agreement survey.</p> <p>Neil raises whether to keep 'decanting' in the policy name, the Group decided for this to be removed and keep it as the Temporary Move Policy as decanting has negative connotations, as raised by the Housing Ombudsman.</p> <p>Chris raised whether it is in the tenancy agreement and suggests whether it should be a direct link. Perry confirmed there was a clause in the tenancy agreement.</p> <p>Cabinet date undecided, likely to be July.</p> <p>Jodi thanked everyone for their feedback and will feedback their comments to managers, make their changes and return to the group with an update.</p>	<p>Managers. Changes to be made to the draft.</p>
5	<p><u>Tenant Engagement Update</u></p> <p>- Resident Scrutiny Group update:</p> <p>Recruiting for a Scrutiny Group. By September aim for 8-12 members. Keep current DDTCG members separate to scrutiny group but have a member to report back.</p> <p>Recruit in Summer events, conference, emails/ text and newsletters.</p>	

<p>Meet twice a year to do an in-depth review on a certain service area and find recommendations, then monitor. First meeting members can make changes to terms of reference.</p> <p>Neil suggests a different representative for each review, and then they can report back and vice versa.</p> <p>Tenant led.</p> <p>- Tenant conference</p> <p>Considering 'Your home, your voice' conference, members in agreement.</p> <p>22nd of August, on a Saturday to allow more tenants to come. At the Maison Dieu.</p> <p>Main incentives, asset management strategy, tenant voices are heard and do workshops to make it as interactive as possible e.g. ranking priorities. Bring in stall holders to draw people in.</p> <p>Beth B Staff working group, is there any tenants who want to join in with staff and share ideas, could be monthly.</p> <p>Tenants at the heart of decision making.</p> <p>Pam – will propose idea at local community groups.</p> <p>Neil - volunteered himself to be a part of the group.</p> <p>- Tenant engagement consultation results</p> <p>Ask tenants how they want to be communicated with.</p> <p>448 responses. 436 responses from SMS.</p> <p>Gov.Uk Notify is a system we use to send SMS texts and emails in bulk to residents, it can give us an export of what has or what hasn't been delivered via SMS, we can take non-existent numbers of system and notify tenant.</p> <p>People happy with tenancy agreement therefore do not want to fill out survey.</p> <p>Bruce – if people do not get replies or problems solved then they will not respond to surveys.</p> <p>Perry explains how important it is to ask tenants exactly what they want through communication.</p> <p>45.58 score, just shy of the right amount (50) of communication from DDC to tenants. Majority of tenants would prefer SMS or printed newsletter sent to their house as style of communication.</p> <p>Tenants want clear and concise information. A lot of tenants wanted information on all topics.</p> <p>Very representative of the DDC age profile.</p> <p>Over 50% of tenants said they use WhatsApp and Facebook; a WhatsApp channel would be used.</p> <p>Trish -suggests putting videos in WhatsApp channel.</p> <p>Bruce - says good for instant feedback.</p>	<p>Action: Beth to add Neil to the Conference Joint Working Group.</p>
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	<p>Number 1 reason for people to not be involved is that they don't have an interest.</p> <p>It was recommended that Trish to do a video to explain why tenant engagement is interesting, and to get involved in the tenant conference.</p> <p>Tenant engagement strategy explains barriers.</p> <p>DDC Provide taxis and hybrid meetings, this will be highlighted in the newsletter.</p> <p>Bruce- people cannot afford to pay and claim it back on expenses, suggests a pot of money with a taxi company and we call them directly.</p> <p>Trish- people are lonely, highlights on how it can improve people's mental health.</p> <p>Neil – suggests a tenant stall at conference, he will raise this at the working group.</p> <p>We prefer tenants to come directly to us, rather than going to DDTCG members.</p> <p>20 people would like to be involved in the DDTCG.</p> <p>50% of people would like to join an 'armchair expert' group.</p> <p>Survey closes on the 22/04/26.</p> <p>Beth B will send survey via email and on the Facebook page.</p> <p>Findings of survey will be used to improve Tenant Engagement Strategy.</p> <p>Newsletter is going out in September after the garden competition results.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">- Garden Competition categories</p> <p>Additional prizes for new categories.</p> <p>Keep in best front/ back garden and most improved.</p> <p>Chris- raises point of living in flats and using communal spaces.</p> <p>Try and contact garden centres if they would like to sponsor the Garden Competition.</p> <p>New categories agreed- Best independent living communal garden, communal garden- working together, garden designed by a tenant with a disability, garden designed by a young person.</p> <p>Garden Competition 2026 to be organised by Beth MA.</p> <p>Videos of garden competition to be shown at the conference to provide inspiration and spread the message.</p> <p>Provide initiatives at conference such as seeds.</p> <p>Dave Terry and Shaun Gillmore want to be a part of judging.</p>	
6	<p><u>Forward Plan</u></p> <p>Invite Andy Vincent, Director of Housing and Place, to come to next meeting.</p>	<p>Action: Beth MA to invite Andy Vincent to the June meeting.</p>

	<p>Get an update on the thermal imaging of houses. Jenny- compliance manager to come along to the next meeting and explain oil to Ground source heat pump conversions. Community safety team update. Conference update Police – Neighbourhood Policing Darran Solley – Parks & Open Spaces</p> <p>Chair training course to be provided for Neil and Trish.</p>	<p>Action: Beth MA to confirm Jenny Becket's attendance at the June meeting.</p>
7	<p>Meeting Close Date of next meeting: – Tuesday 02nd June 2026, Council Chamber, DDC Offices</p>	

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