



# TENANT NEWS

Edition 9  
Winter  
2024/25



## News and Information about your Housing Service



### What's in the magazine

- Find out about the NEW Repairs Contract
- Tenant Survey Results!
- Spotlight on new homes

# How you can contact us

- Email [housing@dover.gov.uk](mailto:housing@dover.gov.uk) or call us on 01304 801084 about Housing Management enquires such as tenancy enquiries, lettings, garages, anti-social Behaviour or enquiries about your rent.

- Household and communal repairs: email [Mears at dover.repairs@mearsgroup.co.uk](mailto:Mears@mearsgroup.co.uk) or call 0800 023 4320.

- Gas, hot water and central heating repairs: Email Gas Call Services at

[DDCcustomerservices@gascall.co.uk](mailto:DDCcustomerservices@gascall.co.uk) or call 0800 012 9958.

- Talk to DDC about ongoing repairs, permissions and planned work such as roofs, kitchens etc: Call our property services team on 01304 801110. Alternatively, you can email [housing.repairs@dover.gov.uk](mailto:housing.repairs@dover.gov.uk) for repairs/permissions or [housingplannedmaintenance@dover.gov.uk](mailto:housingplannedmaintenance@dover.gov.uk) for planned works.



If you'd like to make a complaint or share your compliments about any of the housing services you receive, you can do so through any of our contact methods. We're dedicated to making it as easy as possible for you to tell us what you think so we can continue to improve our services by listening to you.

Do you have any awesome photos of our estates? Sunsets, snow days, great views, etc. We're always looking for great photos to feature on the front cover of our newsletters.

If yours is chosen, you will receive a £10 gift voucher!

Please send your photos to [tenantinvolvement@dover.gov.uk](mailto:tenantinvolvement@dover.gov.uk).



## Watch out, scammers about!

It has come to our attention that there have been recent incidents of phone scammers impersonating Dover District Council representatives. These scammers are attempting to deceive tenants into providing personal information or potentially making payments over the phone.

### What You Need to Know:

1. Verification: Dover District Council will not ask for sensitive personal information or card details over the phone without verifying identity. If you receive a call requesting such information, please hang up and contact us to check the call is from us. DDC landlines should appear as 'Dover District Council' or from a 01304 number.

2. Report Suspicious Activity: If you receive a suspicious call, please report it to us.

Additionally, you can report the incident to Action Fraud at 0300 123 2040 or online at [www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk).

3. Stay Informed: Keep yourself informed about common scams and how to protect yourself. Please see Kent Police website for information about personal fraud.

Scan the QR code:



### Protecting Your Information:

- Never share your personal or financial information with unknown callers.

- Be cautious of unsolicited calls, even if they claim to be from a trusted organisation. Can they tell you information only that organisation would know such as a customer reference number? Are you expecting a call from them?

- Verify the identity of the caller by contacting the organisation directly using official contact details.

**We are committed to ensuring the safety and security of our tenants. Please remain vigilant and do not hesitate to reach out to us if you have any concerns or questions.**



# Boosting Supply: We're delivering more affordable homes!

DDC has welcomed tenants into brand new council homes in Wingfield Place in Deal, the homes are within the Freemans Way area of Council owned homes.

The 48 affordable properties were bought by the Council with the support of Homes England funding and developer contributions in 2024.

They have been added to DDC's housing stock, with 38 let at social rent and 10 offered under the shared ownership scheme to help local people get a foot on the housing ladder.

The homes, which are a mix of two and three-bedroom houses, were handed over to the Council in September by the developer Dandara and tenants have now started moving in.

DDC is working on an increased programme of affordable housing with a number of schemes completed in the last year.

CLlr Pamela Brivio, cabinet member for housing, said: "I am

delighted to see people moving into these new council homes.

"We are committed to providing more affordable homes across the district, whether that be through building them ourselves or acquiring them, like we have in this case. "Having a secure home can bring about positive change to a person's life and can give security and comfort to families who might otherwise face unaffordable rental costs or unsuitable housing in the private market.

"This is why increasing our affordable housing stock is a key priority for the council."



Housing officer Rebecca Gardiner, DDC Leader Cllr Kevin Mills, tenant Vickie Dash, DDC Cabinet Member for Housing Cllr Pamela Brivio and housing officer Karen Aristocleous

"I was previously in a privately rented home for 10 years but unfortunately we had to leave.

"We then lived in a caravan on my mum's driveway for 18 months which wasn't easy, so moving into a home here is just wonderful. I still can't believe it, it's quite overwhelming.

"I feel privileged and so grateful to have this beautiful home, all the stress has slipped away and the children are very happy, too."



# Your building, your home

## Response Maintenance and Voids Contract

**We are pleased to confirm that we have appointed Mears Ltd to be our responsive maintenance contractor. Following an extensive procurement process which included an assessment of both price and a proposed quality submission, Mears Ltd scored the highest.**

Members of the Dover District Tenants' Consultative Group were involved in the scoring of the submissions.

Improvements you will see are the Mears Residents Portal which allow you to log repairs, book and manage confirmed appointments, view soft fix videos and advice, 2 way chat

and video call, obtain real time updates, view documents such as electrical/gas certificates. Provide feedback and Communicate with us/receive reminders (in chosen language).

We have started the mobilisation phase ready for a start in April 2025 and further information will be provided before then.



## Stock Condition Surveys

**In the previous newsletter we told you about the stock condition surveys which will eventually provide us with vital information about the condition of each and every home we manage.**

This not only ensures that you are safe and that your home is well maintained, it's also important for us to have this information to directly inform our planned maintenance programme, ensuring that priority is given to homes based on condition.

We started pilot surveys in the Dover area in November 2024,

with the start of the official programme commencing in January 2025 and our contractor, MLCS3 Ltd, will be writing to tenants to advising on their surveys, when in their areas.

It is important that you allow entry to MLCS3 Ltd to complete their vital work, if you have any questions or would like to verify

the identity of an operative at your home please contact our team.



## Warm Homes Social Housing Fund

**DDC have recently submitted an application to the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero for funding under the Warm Homes Social Housing Fund (Wave 3).**

The reason for the bid is to obtain funding to start the journey to bring our housing properties up to EPC 'C' by 2035.

The value of the bid is £1,905,882 with DDC contributing approximately 50% to give a total project cost of £4,048,549, with works being carried out to at least 133 of our poorest insulated homes.



We have been assisted by Mears, who have extensive experience with such bids, and forms part of their quality commitments included in the recently awarded Responsive Maintenance and Voids contract.

We will be informed if we are successful in early 2025 and we would have until September 2028 to complete the programme. We will update you on the outcome of this bid.

# Your Money Matters

**Look out for your Rent Variation Notice which will be sent to you soon!**  
Read it, keep it and make sure you update your UC claim and payment methods (e.g. standing orders) if necessary, on the date specified in the letter.



## Have you done a Benefits check recently?

With the cost of living in the UK rising, lots of people are struggling. Luckily there's help available – and it's not just for those out of work. There's support for those earning but still struggling, plus additional help if you've got children, caring responsibilities, or a long-term health condition.

It is estimated that millions of people across the country are missing out on an estimated £23 BILLION in unclaimed benefits, so it's always worth a quick check.

Visit 'Entitled to' to do a quick and easy independent calculation based on your own circumstances, or you can apply online for Universal Credit and see if you're accepted.



**Scan the QR Code or visit: [www.entitledto.co.uk](http://www.entitledto.co.uk)**

# Managed migration to universal credit

Managed migration is where people getting legacy benefits will have their claims transferred to Universal Credit.

All managed migration notices are expected to be sent by the end of December 2025.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will send you

a notice letter telling you your legacy benefits are ending and what you need to do. If your Universal Credit entitlement is less than your entitlement to your legacy benefits, you will get a 'transitional amount' to top up your Universal Credit.

Once you have verified your

Universal Credit, one of our Benefit and Money advisors will be in touch to support you with the effects on your rent account.

If you need support in making an application, please contact our income team and a Benefit and Money Advisor can offer you support.

## Pension Credit

**Pension Credit is a means-tested benefit for people over State Pension age who have a low income. It comes in 2 parts: Guarantee Credit and Savings Credit. It's separate from your State Pension.**

Pension Credit can also help with other costs:

- If you live alone you might not have to pay Council Tax.
- If you're 75 or over, you can get a free TV licence.

- You'll be eligible for a Cold Weather Payment during particularly cold weather.
- The Government has announced that from winter 2024 onwards, only people who claim Pension Credit (or

another means-tested benefit) will be eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment (if you applied before 22nd December 2024), an annual payment to help with heating costs during the colder months.

### To claim Pension Credit, you can either:

- claim online at **GOV.UK** or scan the QR code



- call the Pension Credit claim line on **0800 99 1234** and they can fill in the application for you over the phone (lines are open Monday to Friday, 8am-6pm).

Or if you want to find out if you're eligible, see the government website **www.gov.uk/pension-credit/eligibility**



## Standing orders

A standing order is a regular payment that you can set up to pay us your rent. You can amend or cancel the standing order as and when you like. You will need to update your standing order when your rent increases in April, or if you want to pay a little extra to pay off some arrears. DDC cannot amend a standing order on your behalf, you must do this yourself.

To set up a standing order, please use these details:

- Sort code: 60-07-04
- Account number: 59275979
- Payee: Dover District Council
- Reference is your rent reference number.

To set up or amend your standing order, it's quick and easy using your bank's online banking website or app.

Many tenants choose to pay via Direct Debit, this is set up by DDC and we can adjust your payments with what you owe so you don't need to do anything in April when the rent increases. It's all done for you and many tenants find this much easier to manage their rent account. You can choose 1 of 4 monthly dates for the direct debit to come out of your account, these are 7th, 15th, 21st and 28th of the month. Direct debits cannot be set up if you're in arrears.

# Joel's story

(Joel is a DDC tenant who has consented to sharing his story.)

**Joel lives alone and found that he started to hang around with the 'wrong crowd,' and found himself taking recreational drugs before moving to harder substances. He felt his social life revolved around this scene.**

Joel recognised it became a serious problem when he was still under the influence at work; his employer let him go and Joel started to struggle. His Mental Health deteriorated, and he was not taking care of himself or eating properly.

Joel was receiving letters about his debts, including from the Council's Income Recovery Team – Joel tried to ignore these at first. But the situation escalated until a Court date was proposed.

At this time Joel reached out to his Income Officer, Graeme. Joel and Graeme spoke at length to find an acceptable arrangement that Joel could present to the Court to prevent further action and Joel losing his home.

Joel attended Court and met with the Citizens Advice worker and together they spoke with the Council's legal advisor. Together an agreement was presented to the Judge and Joel was able to return home.

After the Court Hearing Joel started to make positive changes,

*"If my story can help 1 person it would be great. I hope people read this and seek help if they need it. I don't know where I would be if I didn't: people should not give up."*

including cutting out the bad influences from his life. Joel regularly contacts Graeme and vice versa. Graeme reached out to Joel with details of the Forward Trust's Breakfast and Supper club which Joel decided to attend.

Joel says he did feel anxious going to the Supper Club for the first time and didn't speak much but Forward Trust have shown him other opportunities and he is planning on studying – he has downloaded an App to start learning Spanish. Joel continues to attend the Supper Club and says "when you are feeling alone and struggling, its nice to go to these meetings." Also, the food

is pretty decent and Joel enjoys a milkshake, burger and chips whilst having a chat.

Graeme has provided Joel with details of other services including the Energy Trust Fund for utility debt and Forward Trust have encouraged Joel to attend one of the recent Dover Job's Fairs.

Joel says "seek help : it is a big step and is scary, whether for mental health , financial problems, or drug addictions. Speak to the Income Team. Graeme really helped and is genuinely a nice person who wants to help. He led me down the right path. I want to say thank you to Graeme as he kept an eye on me and rang me weekly to see how I was doing. He was not just doing his job, Graeme actually cares and has a heart. I really appreciate everything he has done. It was scary to make that first contact with the person sending letters about notices and possible Court action but if you speak to them and make an arrangement and keep to it then you won't go wrong."

## Heat the Human, not the home

Whilst you must heat your home to an optimum 17c to avoid developing damp and mould in your property, this might be too cold and a bit uncomfortable for many people, especially those more vulnerable to temperature such as young children, older residents and those with health conditions.

If you wish to save money and avoid the temptation of boosting



your heating, try focusing on heating the people in your home and not the whole home.

This can include using items and gadgets such as: Hot water

bottles, electric heat pads, electric blankets, microwavable wheat bags or simply add more layers or a thick blanket to keep you toasty.

By focusing on keeping yourself warm, you might see some savings in your heating bill and help to combat those rising energy prices.

# Supporting you

## Served in the Armed Forces, or you're a family member of someone who has?



### Do you need extra support?

Dover District Council takes immense pride in holding a gold Armed Forces Covenant award. This prestigious recognition signifies our commitment to going the extra mile in supporting those who have

served our country and their families within our community

Our dedicated Armed Forces lead is available for one-to-one conversations, providing valuable insights and assistance regarding available services

from additional support. With firsthand knowledge and experience gained from a military background, they understand the unique challenges faced by veterans and those new to transitioning from the Armed Forces.

### Do you qualify as a veteran?

A veteran by definition is anybody who has served for at least one day in His Majesty's Armed Forces, regular or reserve, Merchant or Mariner who have participated in military operations. Although

the understanding of the term "veteran" is broad and varied especially from those who have recently left the Armed Forces, in essence it categorizes someone whose commitment extends

beyond mere duty; becoming a lifelong bond forged through shared experiences, camaraderie, and a deep sense of purpose.

**To arrange an appointment, please send an email, or come in and speak to someone in reception. [communitycovenant@dover.gov.uk](mailto:communitycovenant@dover.gov.uk)**

## Pensioner Just Missing Out scheme

**The Pensioner Just Missing Out scheme supports Kent pensioners in need of help with significantly rising living costs. The scheme is available for pension-aged residents on lower incomes who are not eligible for Pension Credit or the government's Winter Fuel Payment.**

The scheme is funded by the Department for Work and Pensions on behalf of the UK government.

Please note – you will need to provide an email address and have online access for energy support activation. Food vouchers will not require online activation and can be issued by email or post.

This scheme provides eligible residents with £200 towards

energy, food, or both. The scheme will close on 28 February 2025, or when all funds are spent.

**You will be eligible for assistance if you:**

- or a partner living with you is aged 66 or over
- are a Kent resident, permanently living within one of the 12 local authorities covered by Kent County Council (this excludes Medway, Bexley, or Bromley)
- have an annual household income (before tax) between

£11,343.80 (£17,313.40 for a joint household income) and £40,000

- do not have more than £1000 in savings
- are not in receipt of Pension Credit

To apply, please use the QR code or visit [www.kent.gov.uk/justmissingout](http://www.kent.gov.uk/justmissingout)



If you're not able to apply online, please contact your local Citizens Advice branch for support.



**Green-fingered Council tenants have been commended for transforming their gardens into beautiful green spaces.**

**The annual garden competition, run by the Dover District Tenants' Consultative Group (DDTCG), saw 19 properties entered from across the district.**

Categories included Best Back Garden, Best Front Garden, Most Improved and Best Use of Space.

Gardens were visited and judged on multiple criteria including sustainability and kindness to wildlife, maintenance, social and leisure, and contribution to the community.

An awards ceremony was held in September at Kearsney Abbey's Billiards Room where the winners were announced.

DDC's deputy leader Cllr Jamie Pout said: "Yet again we've been wowed by the hard-work and dedication of our tenants who

have created these beautiful gardens.

"The standard this year was exceptionally high, and we would like to say a big thank you to all those who entered. We can see how much effort went into making these gardens so special and it really does help to make the Dover district an even better place to live.

"Congratulations goes to the winners and those who were highly commended and thanks to the Dover District Tenants' Consultative Group for hosting the competition once again."

### 2024 winners

#### Best Front Garden

First place	David Hobbs
Second place	Jane Lowe
Highly commended	Chris Holman

#### Best Back Garden

First place	Edward Smith
Second place	Janet Giles
Highly commended	Jane Lowe

#### Most Improved

First place	Wayne Ellerington
Second place	Lee Cobourn
Highly commended	David Hobbs

#### Best Use of Space

First place	Lucy Wells
Second place	Chris Holman
Highly commended	Sue Taylor & Tina Howse

If you or someone you know takes pride in their garden, please consider entering them into the upcoming Garden Competition 2025 this spring. Details on how to enter will be on the DDC website, just search Garden Competition.

Or email [tenantinvolvement@dover.gov.uk](mailto:tenantinvolvement@dover.gov.uk), to be sent the application form when the competition is open for entries.



**To see the Winner's entries on Youtube, scan the QR code:**

# Our housing policies

It's important for the Council to have strategies and policies in place to help us deliver our housing services to tenants in a consistent way and in compliance with housing legislation and regulations.

This year, the Dover District Tenants Consultative Group have been consulted on several housing policies and strategies.

These include:

- Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030 – this sets out the Council's action plan working together with other organisations to prevent and relieve homelessness.
- Vulnerable Tenant Policy – sets out what support and reasonable adjustments to service provision the Council can make for vulnerable tenants.

- Domestic Abuse Policy – sets out how the Council will recognise and work with other agencies to support tenants and homeless applicants who are victims / survivors of domestic abuse.
- Managing Unacceptable Behaviour Policy – sets out how Housing Services will tackle, deter and manage unacceptable behaviour from tenants and homelessness applicants towards staff.
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy – sets out how we will work with other agencies to deter and tackle anti-social behaviour in our neighbourhoods.

- Tenant Engagement Expenses and Incentives Policy – sets out the Council's position on reimbursement for tenants who are involved with various tenant engagement groups.

Views and feedback from the group are listened to and can inform changes and content of the final draft. It's important for us that tenants have a say during development of the policy or strategy since they will impact on you most, and therefore, we need to make sure you can understand them and know what actions will be taken.

You can find all our strategies and policies on our website, [www.dover.gov.uk/Housing/Housing-for-Tenants/Housing-management-documents.aspx](http://www.dover.gov.uk/Housing/Housing-for-Tenants/Housing-management-documents.aspx) or scan the QR code.



If you would like to be a part of the consultative process, consider joining the Dover District Tenant Consultative Group.

## Keep me Posted

Are you looking for a way to stay up to date with local issues? From local events, updates on your bin collection, information about public buildings like the Dover

Museum, to listings for Shared Ownership in the district, there's plenty on this free service which might interest you! To sign up to this emailing list, just search 'Keep Me Posted' on our website and sign up.



## Day in the life of... Tenancy Support Team

The Tenancy Support Team (previously known as the Anti-Social Behaviour Team) is currently staffed by two Tenancy Support Housing Officers Amy Glanville and Gillian Christie overseen by a Senior Housing Officer Simon Drew.



Their main function is to manage tenants who are involved in anti-social behaviour, serious breaches of tenancy and those involved in criminal behaviour. They work with tenants to change their behaviour, using available tools and powers available to them. If the behaviour reported is so severe, legal action may be the only available option. In addition to this, the team work to support tenants who have been affected by criminal behaviour, including survivors of domestic abuse.

Anti-social behaviour caused by some tenants not only affects their immediate neighbours,

but it also negatively affects the community too.

From April to the end of November 2024, the team have dealt with 304 separate complaints of anti-social behaviour and tenancy sustainment issues. The majority of work is received during the warmer months, and it is only too frequent for those reporting such matters not to provide any evidence to back up their complaints. Those cases which continue create additional workload which continues well into Autumn and Winter months.

For those witnesses who possess a smart phone, the team use a third party app called ASB App. A link is sent allowing someone to access the app and send in recordings, photos, videos and sound. These are assessed to confirm authentication and confirm whether the behaviour complained of requires further investigation. For residents who do not have a smart phone, there are other options available. We also have the use of a mediation services to help neighbours air their differences without the need for costly legal processes.

To report anti-social behaviour by a DDC tenant, please contact Housing on 01304 801084 or scan our QR code to report it online.

[www.dover.gov.uk/Housing/Housing-for-Tenants/ASB/Reporting-Anti-Social-Behaviour.aspx](http://www.dover.gov.uk/Housing/Housing-for-Tenants/ASB/Reporting-Anti-Social-Behaviour.aspx)



Thank you to all the residents who got in touch about joining the DDTCG following the previous newsletter. We have welcomed 3 new members starting in January!

The Tenant group still have spaces and are still looking for fellow residents to join them. The only thing you need is a passion for improving services.

### Who are they?

Dover District Tenant's Consultative group (DDTCG) are a local group of DDC tenants who come together every 6 weeks from 11am-1pm (with the option to join in online) to discuss and find ways to resolve local issues and recommend improvements.

### What have they achieved?

Within the last year, the DDTCCG have been instrumental in shaping the new Responsive Repairs Contract, helping the repairs team by adding in things

that they believe will be best use of money and what will benefit tenants. They even joined DDC on the selection panel to select the new contractor, ensuring the process is fair and with Tenants at the heart.

They have also organised the Garden Competition and act as a judging panel. They lead on initiatives to improve areas and celebrate all the tenants that work hard and do their bit for their area.

### What's in it for you?

- Be part of something – play your part and feel proud of all the group's achievements.
- Help improve the Housing Service for all residents.

- Never be out of pocket – DDC will reimburse for travel expenses and will provide refreshments at meetings.
- A chance to join DDC at Conferences and events, such as the Inside Housing Tenant Engagement Conference in London, see photo.
- Add to your CV – Adding a string to your bow, learn new skills and set yourself apart if you're looking for work.

**If you are interested in joining please send Beth Becks an email at: [beth.becks@dover.gov.uk](mailto:beth.becks@dover.gov.uk) or sign up on our website, just search 'DDTCG'.**

## Tenant Perception Survey

In last summer's Tenant News we included a survey for you to complete. Thank you to everyone who sent a survey back in the post and to everyone who completed a survey with

a member of the DDC Housing team, we collected them over the phone and at visits with you.

We are thrilled that tenants have seen an overall improvement

to our services over the last 12 months, and we continue to take on board your valuable thoughts and opinions to develop our services and improve.

Tenant Satisfaction Measure	% of Tenants Satisfied last year (2023-24)	% of Tenants Satisfied this year (2024-25)
Overall satisfaction	68%	77.25%
Satisfaction with repairs	72.8%	78.67%
Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair	68.7%	65.88%
Satisfaction that the home is well maintained	64.4%	74.45%
Satisfaction that the home is safe	70.2%	80.8%
Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them	53.9%	58.78%
Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them	59.5%	64.26%
Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect	71.1%	77.99%
Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints	34.2%	48.3%
Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained	55.2%	59.59%
Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods	51.2%	51.11%
Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling anti-social behaviour	49.3%	48.01%