



Future options for managing council housing Analysis of consultation responses

1. Introduction

Consultation on future options for the management of housing services across East Kent took place between 22 October and 20 December 2019.

All council tenants and leaseholders across the district were sent a letter, information sheet and questionnaire inviting them to give their views, and an online version of the questionnaire was available on the council's website.

Additionally, key stakeholders including district councillors, county councillors, MPs, Citizens Advice Bureaux, Civica, Kent County Council Social Services, Kent Police and the NHS were emailed directly inviting them to respond to the consultation.

2. Questionnaire responses

A total of 731 completed questionnaires have been received. 93 of these were submitted online and 638 paper copies were returned.

In terms of who responded:

- 707 tenants and leaseholders (15% of all tenants and leaseholders)
- 13 other individuals
- 11 respondents did not say in what capacity they were responding

2.1. Level of agreement with the proposal to bring the service back in house

As shown below, 81% of respondents agree to some extent with the proposal:

	All respondents	Tenants and leaseholders
Strongly agree	62% (445)	62% (433)
Tend to agree	19% (138)	19% (135)
Neither agree nor disagree	12% (84)	12% (82)
Tend to disagree	3% (20)	3% (20)
Strongly disagree	5% (36)	5% (33)

The following comments were made by respondents who agree with the proposal:

- Unhappy with the general standard of service provided by East Kent Housing: 159 comments
- The council would be more responsive in dealing with issues: 153 comments
- Lack of action by East Kent Housing to deal with repair and maintenance issues: 140 comments
- The council ran the service well before East Kent Housing was created: 124 comments
- Lack of communication from East Kent Housing: 91 comments
- Don't trust the contractors to deliver an effective service: 47 comments
- Each of the four councils should have sole responsibility for their own housing stock: 37 comments
- The council would be more accountable than East Kent Housing: 34 comments
- The council would build stronger relationships with tenants: 32 comments
- It would be easier for residents to deal directly with the council: 29 comments
- Bringing the service back under council control would be more cost effective: 26 comments
- Lack of action by East Kent Housing to deal with anti-social behaviour: 14 comments
- Don't feel that East Kent Housing keep us safe in our homes: 11 comments
- Agree, providing we retain the same Independent Living Manager: 4 comments

Respondents who disagree with the proposal made the following comments:

- East Kent Housing provide a good service: 34 comments
- Don't see the need to change: 8 comments
- Keeping East Kent Housing would mean less work for the council: 3 comments
- Bringing the service back under direct council control would be a waste of money: 2 comments

General comments received regarding the proposal:

- Never had any problems: 24 comments
- No preference on who runs the service as long as it is delivered effectively: 13 comments
- Don't feel able to give an opinion: 5 comments

2.2. What the council should focus on for housing services

Respondents were asked what they feel are the three most important things for the council to focus on for housing services. The following responses were received:

Dealing with repairs and maintenance	85% (618)
Dealing with anti-social behaviour	29% (213)
Providing value for money for your rent and service charges	37% (268)
Building new council homes	26% (191)
Estate services	20% (148)

(such as grass cutting, cleaning communal areas etc)	
Dealing with customer enquiries and complaints	35% (253)
Involving and listening to residents	21% (153)
Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide more of a focus on supporting disabled and vulnerable residents x4 • All of the above x2 • More attention needed on safety inspections x1 • Improve parking x1 • Retain and improve independent living services x1 • No details given x2 	2% (11)

2.3. Resident involvement

Tenants and leaseholders were asked if they would like to be more involved in the management of their council homes. 93 tenants and leaseholders said they would, and provided their contact details.

2.4. Other comments

The following additional comments were received:

- More should be done to support elderly and disabled tenants: 14 comments
- Concern over the criteria for ensuring properties are suitable for prospective tenants before they are allocated: 5 comments
- Parking problems: 4 comments
- The council needs to build more homes: 3 comments
- Concern leasehold service charges would increase if the council managed the service directly: 1 comment

3. Events

3.1. Drop-in events

3.1.1. Guildhall, Sandwich, 28 October 2019

This event was staffed by Louise Taylor and Talha Islam and residents from 7 properties attended.

The main issues discussed were:

- Concerns over maintenance issues
- Had problems over rent arrears
- Complaint with efficiency of service
- EKH are not managing ASB
- Strongly agrees to bring the service back to the council
- Leaseholder of a property has arranged his own boiler services for the 15 years he has been there as EKH does not help
- Query over who is in charge of the maintenance on leasehold properties
- Query over how ASB would be managed by the council

3.1.2. The Ark, Dover, 9 November 2019

This event was staffed by Louise Taylor, Talha Islam, Naomi Palmer and Lizzie Norcott and residents from 3 properties attended.

The main issues discussed were:

- Lack of cleaning in external areas
- Complaint over efficiency of service provided by East Kent Housing
- Query if East Kent Housing staff would transfer over to work for Dover District Council
- Health and safety concerns within property

3.1.3. Community Trust, Aylesham, 18 November 2019

This event was staffed by Louise Taylor, Talha Islam and 2 residents attended.

The main issues discussed were:

- Concern over whether tenants will be kept informed of when works will take place.
- Lack of action by East Kent Housing to deal with repairs and maintenance
- Support bringing the service under direct council control
- Query over whether independent living manager will be retained
- Lack of communication from East Kent Housing
- Concerns over contractor performance

3.1.4. Betteshanger Sports Club, Deal, 19 November 2019

This event was staffed by Louise Taylor, Naomi Palmer and Talha Islam and 7 residents attended.

The main issues discussed were:

- Difficulties contacting Dover District Council
- Want to keep East Kent Housing
- Concern if the council do take the service back it will be managed by the same staff responsible for poor performance of East Kent Housing
- Lack of action from East Kent Housing to deal with repairs and maintenance
- Lack of communication from East Kent Housing
- Concern that the council may outsource the service to a housing association
- Lack of resident involvement
- Support bringing the service under direct council control
- Lack of safety inspections from East Kent Housing
- Query what difference it will make back under council control

3.2. Question and answer sessions for sheltered housing tenants

3.2.1. Barnesende Court, Sandwich, 23 October 2019

This event was staffed by Louise Taylor and residents from 13 properties attended.

The main issues discussed were:

- Query on whether they would still have the same Independent Living Manager
- Query on whether their landlord would be a different council
- Query on whether rent would increase
- Query on whether it would be easier to get through on the phone
- Says it is hard to know who is in charge of what

3.2.2. Lambert House, Deal, 4 November 2019

This event was staffed by Louise Taylor and Tasha Love and residents from 15 properties attended.

The only issue discussed was one resident who commented that he was not worried by the proposal.

3.2.3. Reece Adams House, Capel-le-Ferne, 20 November 2019

This event was staffed by Louise Taylor and Lizzie Norcott and 11 residents attended.

The main issues discussed were:

- Lack of repairs and maintenance by East Kent Housing
- Lack of communication from East Kent Housing
- Concerns if contractors will change
- Concerns over not having a community atmosphere within the property
- All residents wanted to keep their independent living manager

3.2.4. Sunny Corner, Aycliffe, 25 November 2019

This event was staffed by Lizzie Norcott and Pat Turley and 9 residents attended.

The main issues discussed were:

- Lack of action to deal with anti-social behaviour from East Kent Housing
- Repairs and maintenance not being dealt with
- No heating within the communal areas and some flats, has been on-going for a few months
- Lack of communication from East Kent Housing.
- Concerns over rent increasing
- Concerns if they will keep their Independent Living Manager

3.2.5. Eastry Court, Aylesham 11 December 2019

This event was staffed by Lizzie Norcott, Naomi Palmer and Talha Islam and 10 residents attended.

The main issues discussed were:

- Lack of action to deal with repairs and maintenance
- Lack of communication from East Kent Housing
- Concern over losing their Independent Living Manager
- Concerns over health and safety, lifelines haven't been working for months.
- Worries over checks of the property, they don't have any senior staff from East Kent Housing or Dover District Council attending the property.

3.3. Dover District Tenant Group Meeting, 17 October 2019

This meeting was arranged by East Kent Housing, and Louise Taylor attended to discuss the consultation with residents.

The main issues discussed were:

- The residents think that EKH are being treated unfairly by the council
- Why had EKH's planned door knocking exercise been cancelled in DDC?
Explained it would be confusing to do this at the same time as this consultation is taking place
- Why wasn't there an event for Elvington?
- Could residents attend meetings to defend EKH?
- Feel material is biased
- Feel council has taken credit for EKH's hard work
- Asked if material is available in different formats
- Feel that press coverage is biased
- Concerned people would lose their jobs

4. Contact with the consultation team

The consultation team dealt with enquiries from 12 Dover residents:

- Repairs reported to EKH but not dealt with x4
- Leaseholder querying how the proposals would affect her x2
- Lack of communication from EKH x1
- Concerns over P&R performance x1
- Tenant feels she has been unfairly treated by EKH and DDC x1
- Tenant wanting to complete questionnaire over the phone x1
- Query regarding change in gas contractor x1
- Confirming EKH have dealt with repair issue following our team's intervention x1

NB: Three of these tenants also said they support bringing the service back in house.