



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 427 completed questionnaires were received. 91 of these were submitted online and 336 paper copies were returned.

In terms of who responded:

- 403 tenants and leaseholders (12% of all tenants and leaseholders)
- 17 other individuals
- 1 response from Addington Street Community Group
- 1 response from Newington Community Association
- 1 shared ownership resident
- 1 response from a former tenant
- 3 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	60% (257)	60% (243)
Tend to agree	21% (91)	22% (88)
Neither agree nor disagree	9% (37)	9% (35)
Tend to disagree	3% (12)	3% (11)

Strongly disagree	7% (28)	6% (25)
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The following comments were made by respondents who agree with the proposal:

- The council knows its own housing stock: 111 comments
- Lack of communication from East Kent Housing: 100 comments
- The council would be more accountable than East Kent Housing: 80 comments
- Unhappy with the general standard of service provided by East Kent Housing: 72 comments
- Lack of action by East Kent Housing to deal with repair and maintenance issues: 71 comments
- Poor value for money provided by East Kent Housing: 31 comments
- Lack of action by East Kent Housing to deal with anti-social behaviour: 30 comments
- East Kent Housing do not provide us with a dedicated Housing Officer anymore: 9 comments

Respondents who disagree with the proposal made the following comments:

- East Kent Housing provide a good service: 14 comments
- Concern that neither the council nor East Kent Housing would deliver a good service: 12 comments
- The council has not managed contracts effectively: 5 comments
- Concern costs may increase if the service is brought under direct council control: 4 comments
- East Kent Housing and Thanet District Council are both to blame for the recent failings: 4 comments
- Unclear on how things would be run if East Kent Housing no longer existed: 3 comments

General comments received regarding the proposal:

- The decision should be made by experts rather than residents: 5 comments
- Concern over the amount of work involved in bringing the service back under direct council control: 2 comments
- No preference on who runs the service as long as it is delivered effectively: 2 comments
- Don't feel able to give an opinion as only recently became a tenant: 2 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	77% (328)
Dealing with anti-social behaviour	44% (189)
Providing value for money for your rent and service charges	35% (149)
Building new council homes	24% (103)

Estate services (such as grass cutting, cleaning communal areas etc)	21% (89)
Dealing with customer enquiries and complaints	26% (113)
Involving and listening to residents	20% (85)
Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No details given x4 All of the above x3 Community cohesion x1 Street cleaning x1 Deal with aids and adaptations more quickly x1 Fire safety x1 Improve leaseholder services x1 Allow tenants to carry out more repairs themselves x1 Provide more support to disabled residents x1 Provide more support to residents with mental health issues x1 More robust action to tackle anti-social behaviour x1 Compliance with health and safety law x1 	4% (17)

2.3. Resident involvement

Tenants and leaseholders were asked if they would like to be more involved in the management of their council homes. 81 tenants and leaseholders said they would, and provided their contact details.

2.4. Other comments

The following additional comments were received:

- Concerns over the performance of contractors: 40 comments
- Support Option 2 (closing East Kent Housing and bringing the service under direct council control): 36 comments
- Support Option 1 (keeping East Kent Housing and improving the way they work): 21 comments
- The council needs to listen to tenants more: 5 comments
- Would like to be more involved in how properties are managed: 5 comments
- Concern over the criteria for ensuring properties are suitable for prospective tenants before they are allocated: 2 comments
- Opposed to Option 4 (asking an outside organisation to look after homes): 1 comment

3. Drop-in events

3.1. St John's Community Centre, Margate, 2 November 2019

This event was staffed by Amena Matin, Lyn Forster and Tasha Love and 1 resident attended.

The main issues discussed were:

- Query on how frequently fire precautions are updated

- Query over works not carried out despite leasehold service charge having been paid
- Lack of action by East Kent Housing to deal with repair and maintenance issues
- Lack of communication from East Kent Housing
- Support bringing the service back under direct council control

3.2. SureStart Millmead, Margate, 7 November 2019

One resident attended this event. They reported concerns with East Kent Housing writing to them regarding rent arrears but they were then subsequently unable to make contact with East Kent Housing. They also reported a lack of action by East Kent Housing to deal with repairs and maintenance.

3.3. Brunswick Hall, Ramsgate, 13 November 2019

This event was staffed by Ashley Jackson and 5 residents attended.

The main issues discussed were:

- Lack of action by East Kent Housing to deal with repair and maintenance issues
- Concerns over communal cleaning
- Lack of action by East Kent Housing to deal with anti-social behaviour

3.4. Newington Community Centre, Ramsgate, 23 November 2019

This event was staffed by Bob Porter, Ashley Jackson and Lizzie Norcott and 4 residents attended.

The main issues discussed were:

- Lack of communication from East Kent Housing
- Repairs and maintenance not being done
- Reports of ASB being ignored and not dealt with
- Repairs on community building not being done, left to disrepair

4. Contact with the consultation team

The consultation team dealt with enquiries from 9 Thanet residents:

- Repairs reported to EKH but not dealt with x4
- Tenant querying how the proposal would affect him x3
- Tenant wanting to complete questionnaire over the phone x1
- Leaseholder requesting a replacement consultation pack x1

NB: One of these tenants also said she supports bringing the service back in house, and one said he would prefer to keep EKH.