

July 2022

TENANT NEWS

Plans for lifetime
tenancies move
forward
Page 3

£2m grant to
improve homes
Page 7

Our garden
competition
is back
Page 8



Folkestone
& Hythe



District Council

We know how important the environment is to the wellbeing of our tenants so this edition of Tenant News is an environment special.

We'll be sharing more about our Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund project that will see more than 100 council managed homes in the district benefit from increased energy efficiency. Find out more about this exciting programme on p.7.

We want tenants to feel they can have their say on their local environment. In this issue you can also find details of our Environmental Improvement programme on p.6. Find out how the programme works, read examples of previous projects and learn how to submit your own request.

We'll also be sharing the ways you can help the planet and save money. On p.8 there are tips on how to reduce your water use in the garden this summer as well as some details about our gardening competition. We have some great prizes on offer and the deadline for entries is rapidly approaching so make sure you submit your entries soon.

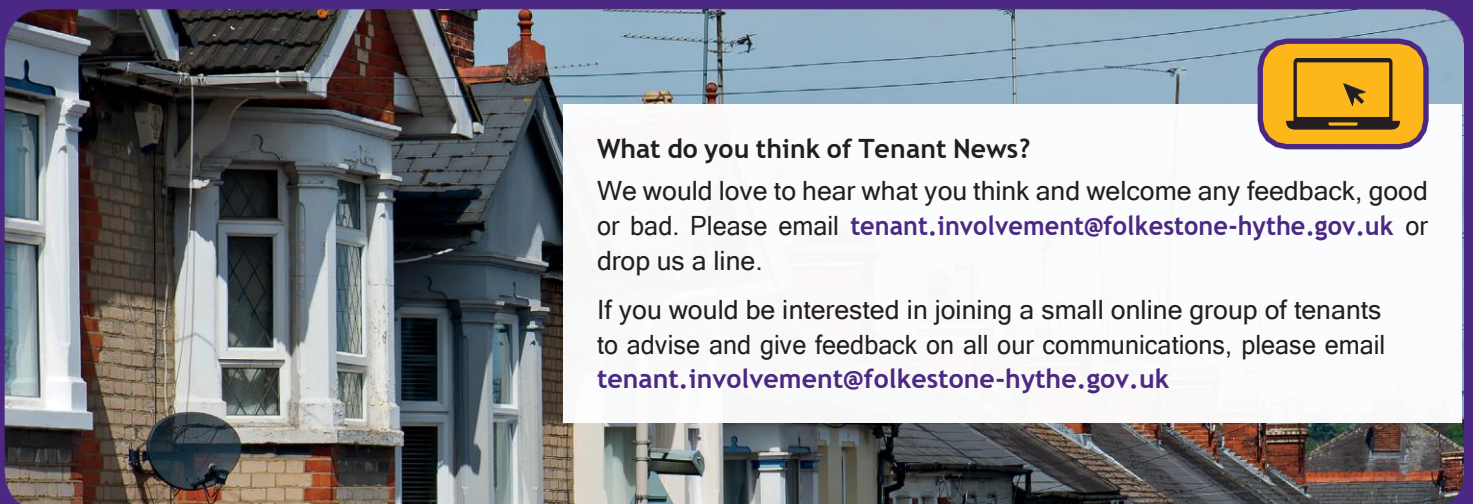
We're conscious that times are tougher for everyone at the moment financially. It's important that if you think you'll have any issues with your rent or energy bills you contact our team as soon as possible rather than waiting until winter. Our team want to make sure you're getting the help you need, when you need it. Take a look at p.9 for details of how to get in touch with us.

Tenants are at the heart of what we do so it's incredibly important to us to get your feedback about our service. I'd like to thank all of the tenants who responded to our 2022 tenant satisfaction survey and we'll be sharing our findings with you in the coming months.



I hope you enjoy this edition and the summer months ahead.

Councillor David Godfrey
Cabinet Member for Housing
and Special Projects



What do you think of Tenant News?

We would love to hear what you think and welcome any feedback, good or bad. Please email tenant.involvement@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk or drop us a line.

If you would be interested in joining a small online group of tenants to advise and give feedback on all our communications, please email tenant.involvement@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

A Lifetime Guarantee

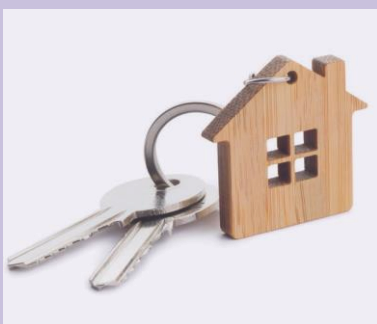
If you've become a tenant since 2013 you'll typically be on a 'fixed-term' tenancy which ends after a certain period of time. This doesn't offer the same level of security as a traditional council tenancy - these continue indefinitely until you decide to move out.

We conducted widespread consultation about this with 300 responses from tenants - over 80% of whom were in favour of scrapping fixed term tenancies. In response, and to improve our service to tenants, we've decided to scrap fixed-term tenancies altogether and only offer secure 'lifetime' tenancies.

This is better for all our 'fixed term' tenants, as it means you will not have to go through the tenancy review process every few years and you have the certainty of knowing that - provided you stick to the tenancy conditions - your tenancy is yours for as long as you want it. All the other terms and conditions of the tenancy are exactly the same, so there is no disadvantage to you.

It is fairer all-round as it means that the majority of tenants will all be on the same type of tenancy.

If you are already on a fixed term tenancy, we will be contacting you within the next few months to talk to you about how your tenancy will convert to a lifetime tenancy.



Contract Cleaners Save the Day!

Cleaners Jo and Shanice leapt into action when they arrived for work at a Hythe block and smelled gas.

They traced the odour to a flat where an elderly tenant had accidentally left her gas cooker on.

The two, who work for Town and Country Cleaners, turned it off and made sure the flat was ventilated to let any gas escape. They called the fire service, who quickly attended to make sure the whole building was safe. Jo and Shanice then stayed with the tenant to make sure she was okay and left her with a friendly neighbour.

Huge thanks to the quick-thinking duo for going that extra mile and potentially averting a serious incident.



Did you know?



Webchat is now available on the below housing pages of the council website:

<https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/council-tenancy>

<https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/council-tenants-leaseholder-service/renting-a-garage>

Our team are on hand to offer whatever help and support you need in these areas.

A big thank you

We'd like to thank all of our tenants who took part in the tenant satisfaction survey. It's incredibly important to us to hear your views on the Housing Management Service and how we can improve. Whilst we don't have the final results just yet, be assured that we will be sharing them with you in the coming months via post and on our website.

Got a good news story?

If you have then we would love to hear it. Email tenant.involvement@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk and you could feature in the next Tenant News.

Looking after the neighbourhood

The district is divided into two housing areas, East (Folkestone and Folkestone Rural) and West (Romney Marsh, Hythe and Cheriton). Each have a dedicated management team who keep in regular contact with tenants and leaseholders.

Gill Butler, our new Chief Officer for Housing, said: "Your Neighbourhood Officers are dedicated, knowledgeable people that are there to provide advice and support on many different topics relating to your tenancy and home, and they can provide help and assistance if you are having any issues in your area or community."

Neighbourhood Officers liaise with a variety of other council teams as well as voluntary groups and organisations, so they will be on hand to point you in the right direction about other services or support that you may benefit from.

The Neighbourhood team do a really great job already, but we are constantly looking at new ways to improve, so we really appreciate your feedback on our service.

We genuinely care about our tenants wellbeing and want to ensure that you are safe, secure and happy in the home and environment you live in."

Your Neighbourhood Officers will;

- Provide support around managing your tenancy and help with any neighbourhood issues
- Help with information on repairs and maintenance
- Ensure reports of any issues of safeguarding, harassment or anti-social behaviour are investigated
- Work to ensure that service requests and complaints are responded to promptly
- Coordinate the programme of estate inspections
- As well as lots more.....

Find out who your Neighbourhood Officer is by visiting

<https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/council-tenants-leaseholder-service/neighbourhood-inspections>



Neighbourhood Inspections

Join the housing team on your local Neighbourhood Inspection. It is an opportunity for residents to share any concerns and help us identify problems in their area.

As part of the inspection, you will be involved in checking the condition of your neighbourhood, buildings and communal areas. You can advise on issues such as caretaking, rubbish and fly-tipping, as well as report any repairs in your neighbourhood. If a problem is identified team members will do their best to put it right.

Find out more about how to get involved by visiting

<https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/council-tenants-leaseholder-service/>



Need to report a repair?

Please contact the following to report any repairs:



Mears for day-to-day repairs
0800 313 4740



To book an inspection with your Neighbourhood Surveyor
housing.service@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

Join the conversation

Gathering the views of our tenants and leaseholders is important to shaping the service that we deliver. We want to hear your views and how you think we can improve the service.

We welcome and encourage tenants to get involved in the way the Housing Service works, in managing their homes and the neighbourhood where they live. There are many ways and opportunities for you to have your say and influence decisions that are taken.

How to get involved:

- Attending estate inspections and contributing to community projects
- Emailing us with your ideas at tenant.involvement@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk
- Visiting our website to learn about the different activities that will be happening
- Completing surveys and/or questionnaires
- Contacting us to keep us informed of activities that you want to see taking place or would like help with
- Letting us know if you were happy with our service or if something was wrong
- Helping us monitor repairs performance

Be part of our Facebook community



A place for tenants and leaseholders to join in discussion, consultation, quizzes, competitions, events and engagement groups.

Join the Facebook group by visiting facebook.com/groups/fhdctenantsandleaseholders

Become an Estate Champion

We're looking for Estate Champions, to represent their estate or block. Champions will liaise with us on neighbourhood level matters in partnership with the neighbourhood officers and surveyors. They will also provide feedback on the services like the caretakers and cleaners.

The role of Estate Champion would suit someone community minded, who wants to make sure that their neighbourhood continues to thrive and be a great place to live, or who has identified issues and wants to work together in partnership with the council to reach resolutions and make improvements where needed.

Communication Champions

If you would be interested in joining a small online group of tenants to advise and give feedback on our communications, please email tenant.involvement@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

Updating where you live

Environmental Improvement Programme

Every year, we have funding to spend on a number of small-scale projects that make lasting and noticeable environmental improvements for our residents.

Environmental Improvement Project (EIP) ideas can be submitted by any of our tenants, employees, Folkestone & Hythe residents or local stakeholders. Some example projects that have been funded in previous years include:



- Building new bin areas to improve the look of rubbish storage
- Installing fencing or bollards to protect grassed spaces from being parked on
- Laying tarmac or hard standing to make an area safe
- Putting benches in a communal garden or on a grassed space

Do you have a suggestion for an environmental improvement project that could make a difference where you live?

Why don't you let us know by submitting an Environmental Improvement Project suggestion for your area?

If the idea you propose meets the EIP criteria, and is successful in being granted funding, our EIP Manager will work with you to deliver your idea for the community.

You can submit ideas all year round to be considered for the programme, as suggestions are considered on an ongoing basis.

Before you submit your idea for a project, please have a look at our website for more information as this will help you understand the types of project we are able to support.

The Environmental Improvements Project programme has been developed with involvement from our district tenant and leaseholder group.

Contact us

To submit an idea for an Environmental Improvement Project (EIP) online, please visit

<https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/council-repairs/environmental-improvement-eip> Or if you would like to request a paper version of the form to complete, please get in touch with us by:

V Telephone: **01303 853300**, this service is open 8.30am - 5pm Monday to Friday, except Wednesday when it is available 9.30am - 5pm.

G Email: tenant.involvement@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

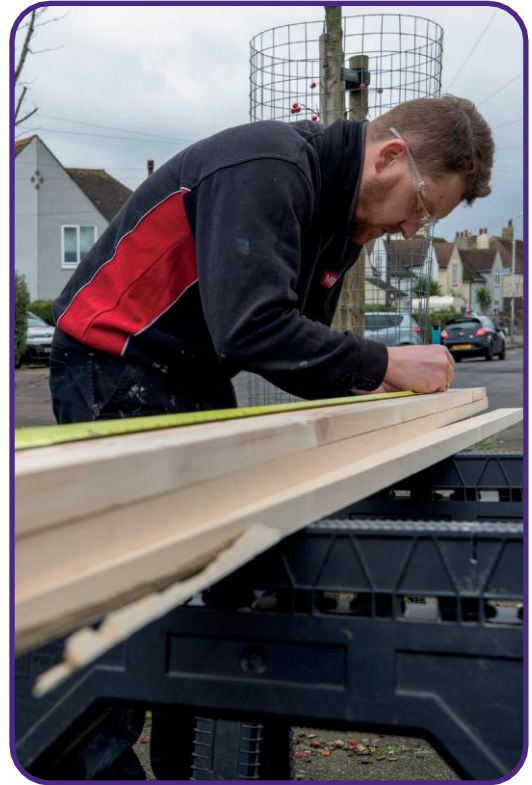
Improving the fabric of your home

More than 100 council-managed homes in the district will benefit from increased energy efficiency, thanks to a £2 million government grant this year.

The successful award is the result of a bid made by Folkestone & Hythe District Council under Wave 1 of The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF). The council housing service is also investing over £800,000 to help on our journey to meet our carbon reduction targets.

The money will be used on a 'fabric first' approach so properly insulating homes with the most urgent need will be one way of creating more energy efficient homes, however there are other energy efficiency measures that we are currently looking at that will be a step along the road to the council's pledge to achieve net zero carbon emissions targets by 2050.

If your home is one of those chosen to be part of this exciting project, you may have already been contacted by us about this. We will be asking you to play your part as well in trying to get your energy costs down and helping to contribute to the consequences of climate change. You can find out more about how the project will impact selected households below.



What does it mean for me?

If your home is one of those chosen then our team will be in contact with you to share the news. The energy measures will be installed at no cost to you and support will be offered before, during, and after the process by our dedicated team.

How does it work?

The improvements will be delivered in a variety of ways depending on your requirements and the needs of your home. Our team will contact you to discuss your individual plan and work with you to ensure it suits your needs.

What will it do?

By the end of the process your home should use less energy, be heated to a comfortable standard and have a higher level of protection from both the cold and the heat.

Will it cause disruption?

Our team will work with you to ensure there is minimal disruption in your home whilst the work takes place and we will leave it in a clean and tidy state after we install the energy efficiency measures.

Greener gardens

Save water, save money and save the planet all at the same time with our top green garden tips

- Use grey water from baths, showers and washing up bowls rather than fresh water from the tap. Grey water contains minimal amounts of soap and detergent, so an eco-friendly washing up liquid should be used if you have frogs or other pond life
- Invest in a water butt for your garden and use the harvested water on your plants
- Water your pots and hanging baskets in the morning or during the evening to reduce evaporation
- Bury a short length of pipe into your pot so you can make sure the water goes directly to the roots where the plant needs it most
- Use mulches to keep moisture in
- Bare terracotta pots tend to lose more water, so use planting containers made from plastic, glazed terracotta or wood

The Royal Horticultural Society has some great tips on how to manage water in your garden from droughts to heavy rainfall. Visit rhs.org.uk/gardening-for-the-environment/water for more details.

Don't miss out

Have you got a blooming marvellous garden?

Grab your gardening gloves and pick up your pruning shears - our tenant gardening competition is back and better than ever.

We're looking for talented tenants who have worked their magic on their green spaces so if you've got a garden to be proud of we want to hear from you.

There are some great prizes up for grabs, so take a look at the categories and get started.

How to enter

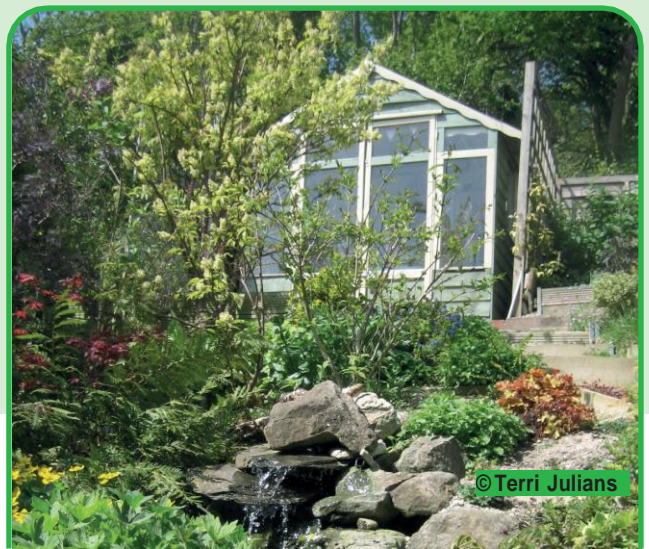
G Email: tenant.involvement@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

V Call: 01303 853723

The deadline for entries is 20th July

The categories are:

- Best front garden
- Best back garden
- Best containers, pots and baskets
- Best community or communal garden
- Best vegetable patch
- Best junior gardener
- Best new garden
- Cllr Keren Belcourt Rose
- Sue Willsher Cup



Don't wait until winter

We know energy prices are going up which is why we're urging you to contact us if you are worried about debt or experiencing financial difficulties. We have a committed Welfare Team to help with rent arrears, claiming benefits and budgeting advice.

Some simple changes around the house can save significant amounts of energy which isn't just good for your purse, it's good for the planet as well.

- Turning down the thermostat by 1 °C
- Turning appliances off rather than leaving them on standby
- Ensuring lights are switched off when leaving the room
- Not overfilling the kettle when boiling water
- Adjust radiator controls so you don't over heat underused rooms

If you are worried about debt or experiencing financial difficulties, contact the council to discuss finding the best solution for you. Our Welfare Team can help with rent arrears, claiming benefits and budgeting advice.

If you have other debts and are struggling to pay your bills, we can signpost you to one of the organisations listed below.

- Money Advice Service
- Citizens Advice
- National Debt Line
- Step Change
- Christians Against Poverty
- Warm Home Discount Scheme

If you receive Housing Benefit or Universal Credit you may be able to apply for Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) if you are in need of financial support to help with your rent or housing cost. If you receive Council Tax Reduction and are facing exceptional hardship, you may be able to get Financial Support Payments (FSP).

To apply for DHP or FSP please visit our website and complete the online application form.

To discuss any of the above in more detail, contact us on **01303 853300** or email the team at **housing.income@folkestone-hythe.org.uk**

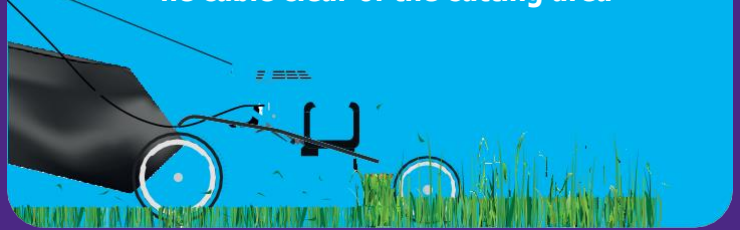


Stay safe in your space

Never leave candles or cigarettes unattended and put them out properly



Do not mow the lawn in wet conditions and be cable clear of the cutting area



Power down appliances at the plug when you're not using them. Not only does this save you money, but it significantly reduces the chances of a fire starting



Make sure communal areas are kept clear



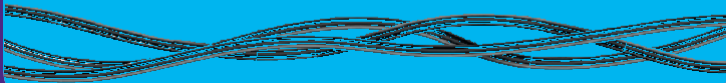
Keep all your gadgets and electrical appliances clean and in good working order



Cover garden ponds or ensure they are fenced off securely



Check any cables for wear, especially if they're hidden behind furniture or under carpets



Only let someone in to your home if you're absolutely sure that they're genuine and you want them in your home



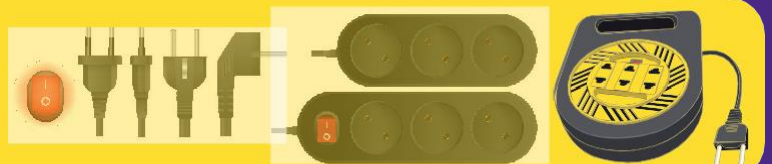
Never overload sockets, extensions or adaptors - only use one extension lead per socket and never plug an extension lead into another one



Always stay with your child if they are using a paddling pool and empty it after use



Fully uncoil power leads and extension reels to equipment to prevent overheating



10 reasons to choose the Pay As You Go home contents insurance scheme

1. Pay premiums alongside your rent.
2. You don't need to have special door or window locks (just a lockable front door).
3. No excess (you don't pay the first part of a claim).
4. Covers theft, water damage, fire and many more household risks.
5. Covers tenants improvements (up to £2,000 or 20% of the sum insured, whichever is the greater).
6. Covers theft or attempted theft of contents in sheds, outbuildings and garages (up to £3,000).
7. Covers damage to external glazing for which you are responsible for.
8. Covers replacement and installation of locks for outside door or windows and alarms, if keys are lost or stolen.
9. Loss or damage to food in a fridge/freezer (excludes damage caused if the electricity supplier deliberately cuts off the supply to your homes.)
10. Tenant's liability – Up to 35% of the contents sum insured for damage to your landlord's fixtures and fittings which you are legally liable for as a tenant (excludes loss or damage whilst your home is unoccupied).



For further information contact us on:

V Call: 03300 589863

Exclusions and limits apply. A copy of the policy wording is available on request.

Thistle Tenant Risks a trading style of Thistle Insurance Services Limited. Thistle Insurance Services Limited is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority FRN 310419. Registered in England under No. 00338645. Registered office: Rossington's Business Park, West Carr Road, Retford, Nottinghamshire, DN22 7SW. Thistle Insurance Limited is part of the PIB Group. For information about what we do with personal data please see our Privacy Policy: www.thistletenants-scotland.co.uk/Privacy-Policy

Folkestone and Hythe District Council advises tenants to carry out their own checks to make sure they're happy with the cover offered and the price of their insurance policy before making any decision about their insurance providers.

Contact your housing team

Online:

You can get in touch with us 24 hours a day, seven days a week by visiting [folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)

In addition to calling and emailing the council you can use our LiveChat service via our website. LiveChat currently offers assistance on the following council services:

Council tax & council tax reduction

Housing benefit

Planning

Parking

Recycling, waste and environmental Services

By telephone:

Call us on 01303 853300. Lines are open 10am to 4pm Monday to Friday.

By post:

If you would prefer to write to us, please send your letters to:

Folkestone & Hythe District Council, Civic Centre, Castle Hill Avenue, Folkestone, Kent CT20 2QY

 housing.service@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

MyAccount - the easiest and quickest way to contact us:

Viewing the council information you need – when you need it – has been made even easier with the launch of MyAccount.

You can find out things relevant to you all in one place – including details about waste collections, council tax, benefits, and more – by using the quick and easy online system. For further details and to find out more about how to register, visit <https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/myaccount-information>

Social media:

To keep up to date with news from F&HDC you can follow us on social media:

 /FolkestoneandHytheDC

 @fstonehythedc

Folkestone and Hythe District Council

 @folkestonehythedc



Or join the Facebook group for tenants and leaseholders:

 /groups/fhdctenantsandleaseholders

