

Resident Involvement

Code of conduct

Thanet District Council (TDC) took over the delivery of the housing services from East Kent Housing (EKH) on 1 October 2020. This draft will form a consultation with residents before being considered for adoption of this code of conduct by TDC.

Values

All involved residents are expected to share the following values:

- Approachable – be open and welcoming to all
- Trustworthy – be honest and transparent when getting involved with TDC
- Respectful – treat everyone fairly and politely, respecting differences and the need for confidentiality
- Progressive – learn from each other and innovate

General conduct

- Tenants and leaseholders are expected to:
- behave in a manner that will not cause offence to others
- not use abusive or offensive language
- not seek preferential treatment for themselves, friends or relatives
- support tenants and leaseholders who are new to resident involvement and make them feel welcome
- make decisions in an efficient, fair and responsible way
- refer any resident who contacts them with a neighbour dispute or complaint to TDC
- not to use social media to make personal, discriminatory or political statements or comments when acting on behalf of one of TDC's involved residents' groups (e.g. a Local Group)
- not to use unhelpful or personal criticism towards TDC or their contractors
- show respect to other involved residents and TDC officers and their representatives
- abide by the code of conduct when taking part in any activities with or on behalf of TDC or on behalf of Local Groups recognised by TDC
- not to publicly discuss issues raised at meetings, before the minutes have been agreed and issued

Conduct at meetings and other formal involvement activities

All who attend meetings and other formal involvement activities are expected to:

- support and respect the Chair
- arrive on time for meetings, or, if late, enter the meeting quietly so as not to disrupt the meeting
- follow the agenda and help the Chair to keep to time

- indicate to the Chair when they wish to contribute to a debate or comment on any agenda item and wait for the Chair to indicate it is their turn to speak
- switch off or place on silent mobile phones and do not use during the meeting (permission may be granted by the Chair in special circumstances). This applies to all who attend meetings e.g. it also includes officers and visitors. It also includes not using tablets and phones to check messages and emails during meetings, unless the chair of the meeting has given consent to do so
- not interrupt or speak over someone who is already talking
- not to hold separate conversations whilst meetings are in progress and whilst other members of the meeting are addressing the group
- listen to others and respect their views and allow open discussion
- not raise political views or personal issues, unless personal experience is relevant and would add weight and clarity to the agenda item.
- disclose if they have a personal interest that may affect or influence a discussion or decision and not participate in such discussions or decisions (it may be appropriate for the relevant person(s) be asked to leave the meeting while the matter is debated)
- not be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, nor consume any during the involvement activity
- not speak or write on behalf of the group without prior agreement of the group. Make any correspondence sent on behalf of the group available to all members of the group.
- respect the decisions reached by the group/panel and refrain from raising again
- support new group/panel members to help them settle in

Confidentiality

TDC is committed to a policy of openness and transparency. However there may be times when participating tenants and leaseholders have access to sensitive information this could include:

- Personal information
- Commercial information

Tenants and leaseholders are expected to:

- ensure confidential documents (including electronic versions) are kept secure. Confidential information will not appear in meeting minutes and sensitive documents will be clearly marked at such.
- ensure safe disposal of confidential information i.e all confidential information should be returned to TDC so that appropriate arrangements can be made
- respect others confidentiality, and don't mention specific cases which may lead to embarrassment or identification of an individual's circumstances.

Breaking confidentiality may result in a breach of the Data Protection Act 1988 or Human Rights Act 1998 which may amount to a criminal offence.

Equality

- All those participating in any resident involvement activity will not discriminate on any ground against other attendees, whether they are tenants, leaseholders, general public, councillors, council staff.
- All those who participate have the right to be treated with dignity and respect regardless of their race, colour, ethnic or national origins, nationality, gender, marital status, age, sexuality, religion or any other matter which may cause people to be treated unfairly.

- Prejudice towards a person because of their race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, disability, or because they are transgender is considered a hate crime.

Breaches of the code of conduct

Dealing with Minor Breaches of the Code

Examples of a minor breach of the Code of Conduct will include (but will not be limited to) the following:

- Being unhelpfully critical of others e.g. other involved residents, officers and contractors
- Talking over other people repeatedly
- Raising personal issues repeatedly in a meeting or during/ carrying out an organised activity
- Repeatedly turning up for meetings but not contributing, despite having been given encouragement and support

Anyone wishing to report a minor breach should do so within 10 working days of the incident occurring

- Where a minor breach of the code is identified, the Chair or TDC Officer will give a verbal warning.
- If the minor breach continues/is repeated, the following action will be taken
- The Chair and TDC Officer will arrange for a private meeting with the individual concerned to discuss in more detail.
- The Group/Panel will take a vote about the individual's continuing involvement
- The outcome of the discussion and vote will be confirmed in writing within 5 working days.
- If the minor breach has been committed by the Chairperson or by a person who is not a member of a formal group, the TDC Officer will take the above-mentioned action.

Dealing with Serious Breaches of the Code

Some examples of serious breaches of the code include (although this is not an exhaustive list):

- Acting in a discriminatory manner
- Appearing under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs/substances
- Inappropriate behaviour such as harassment, bullying, intimidation
- Persistent disregard of others and/ or rulings of the Chair or activity leader
- Inappropriate use of social media
- Breaching the confidentiality requirements
- Use of inappropriate and/or offensive language

Anyone wishing to report a major breach should do so within 10 working days of the incident occurring

Should any of the above behaviours, in the opinion of the Chair or TDC Officer, happen during a meeting or involvement activity, the person concerned will be asked to leave the meeting/activity immediately. Following a report or observation of a serious breach of the Code, the TDC Officer and the Chair will arrange a private meeting with the person concerned to discuss the situation. The matter will be investigated and the Chair and TDC

Officer will consider the type of further appropriate action, such as a final warning or exclusion from involvement activities.

The decision to exclude from involvement activities may be 'permanent', if the serious breach of the code is severe, for example:

- If the breach involves behaviour that is discriminatory, or behaviour that results in a complete breakdown in the trust between the panel member and other residents and/or staff.
- If physical violence is involved
- If the breach involves verbal or physical intimidation and/or bullying, or bullying or intimidation carried out in writing e.g. by letter, email or using social media

This decision will be confirmed in writing within 5 days of the decision.

If an allegation of serious breach of the code is made against the Chair, the TDC Officer and Resident Involvement Manager will handle the matter.

Raising concerns

It may not always be practical or appropriate for a breach to be raised at a meeting e.g. if a member of a group is feeling intimidated or feels that they are not being given the chance to contribute effectively. Equally, a breach may occur outside of a meeting. In these circumstances, a resident should contact an EKH officer at the earliest opportunity, and no longer than 10 working days after the incident occurs, and report the issue so that it can be dealt with quickly and effectively in line with the process outline above.

Appeals to exclusions from involvement activity

Any member excluded from involvement may appeal against the decision. To do so they should raise their appeal with TDC's Tenant and Leaseholder Service Manager within 7 working days of the final notice of the exclusion. The Tenant and Leaseholder Service Manager will consider the appeal within 7 working days and feedback with a decision, in writing within a further 7 working days. Residents who remain dissatisfied with the decision may at any point use the formal complaints process.