

Tenant Participation in Rural Areas

Report to Local Councils Liaison Committee – 8 November 2006.

As part of the District Council's Tenant Participation Strategy, the Tenant Participation Officer has been looking at ways of involving tenants in rural parts of the district and giving them a greater say in how their homes and neighbourhoods are managed.

To help facilitate this, a Rural Tenant Participation Focus Group, comprising District Councillors and Council officers was set up and met on 12 December 2005 to look at ways of encouraging tenant participation in the rural parts of Epping Forest. At this meeting, it was agreed that the Tenant Participation Officer would liaise with Parish Councils to explain the reason for encouraging tenant participation, outline the various ways in which tenants could get involved and to request the assistance of the Parish Councils in either setting up new tenants associations or encouraging representation through a Rural Tenants Forum.

The Tenant Participation Officer has written to all Parish Councils and has now attended meetings of Sheering; Abbess, Beauchamp and Berners Roding; and Roydon Parish Councils; and was due to attend a meeting of Fyfield Parish Council on 2 November 2006.

In addition to this, a joint Housing/Leisure Services Community Consultation day is being held in Sheering on 5 December 2006.

Attached as part of this report are a summary of the reasons for encouraging tenant participation in rural areas; a précis of the main ways to get involved; and a 'family tree' of the tenant participation in Epping Forest.

The Tenant Participation Officer is in the process of setting up the Rural Tenants Forum and has established a database of interested tenants. Tenants representing Abbess Roding, Matching Tye, Moreton, Roydon and Sheering have agreed to attend the first meeting of the Forum, which will be held towards the end of November. He is also introducing a Rural Tenant Participation Strategy to help facilitate this process.

It is hoped that, through further liaison with Parish Councils and the implementation of the Rural Tenant Participation Strategy, the Rural Tenants Forum can quickly become established with Council tenant representation from all rural parts of Epping Forest district.

The Council's Housing Resources Manager Sandy Lindsay and Tenant Participation Officer, Richard Jones, will be in attendance at this meeting to explain further how local Council's can assist in the process.

Tenant Participation in Rural Areas

What is Tenant Participation?

A two-way process involving sharing of information and ideas, where tenants are able to influence decisions and take part in what is happening

Rural Tenant Participation

Reasons:

- Government requirement to consult with residents
- Council concerns that residents in rural areas do not have a say in how services are managed
- No rural representation on EFDC Tenants & Leaseholders Federation
- Different types of properties & issues
- Lack of feedback from residents
- One-way communication
- Difficulty in reaching residents due to location, etc

Ways to get involved

- **Residents Association**
Focused on specific area or estate. Open to all residents. Run by committee with formal constitution and financial & administrative backing from the Council. Two representatives on EFDC Tenants & Leaseholders Federation. Regular committee meetings & open meetings.
- **Rural Forum**
Forum to represent views of residents in locations out of the main towns, ie Chigwell, Epping, Loughton, Ongar, Waltham Abbey. Made up of village or area representatives. Meet every 6 – 8 weeks? Meetings attended by Council officers, local councillors, police, etc. Travel expenses & hall hire paid for by EFDC.
- **Village Voice/Street Rep**
Individuals, representing the views of residents. Would need to speak regularly with neighbours and be involved in local issues to ensure that views were representative and not individual.

If you would like to get involved or would like to have an informal chat, please call Epping Forest District Council's Tenant Participation Officer Richard Jones on 01992 564524