

REPORT TO: Cabinet

MEETING DATE: 10 November 2020

BY: Head of Development

SUBJECT: Tenant Participation Strategy 2020-2023

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To seek approval of the Council's Tenant Participation Strategy as the basis for effective tenant participation between now and 2023.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet approves the Tenant Participation Strategy publication in line with legal requirements under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.
- 2.2 That Cabinet recognises that the Strategy is a living document and that as such the action plan in particular will evolve as consultation with tenants and tenant organisations help inform the Council's future plans in this area.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 introduced new rights for tenants and obligations for social landlords in relation to tenant participation and consultation.
- 3.2 These duties include:
- Councils and Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) must prepare and publish a Tenant Participation Strategy. The Strategy must include an assessment of resources required to ensure effective tenant participation. The Strategy should show how the Council intends to take the views of tenants into account, what matters the Council is likely to consult tenants about and the information that it will provide to tenants.
 - The requirement to set up a publicly available Register of Tenants Organisations (RTO's) in line with guidance from the Scottish Government.

- Landlords must ensure that the Tenant Participation Strategy complies with equal opportunities requirements.
- 3.3 The 2016-2019 Tenant Participation Strategy was approved by Cabinet in June 2016.
 - 3.4 Prior to the development of the 2020-23 Strategy it was agreed with East Lothian Tenants and Residents' Panel (ELTRP), who are the umbrella organisation for tenants and residents groups in East Lothian, that the 2016-2019 Strategy should first be reviewed before embarking on the development of a new Strategy.
 - 3.5 This review of the 2016 Strategy involved the Tenant Participation Strategy Group comprising both Council staff and tenant representatives looking at the successes and challenges of the old Strategy.
 - 3.6 The review of the Strategy included, but was not restricted to, consultation with tenants, tenant groups and staff.
 - 3.7 The new draft Strategy was fully consulted on during January and March 2020 and further amendments made to reflect the changes around participation and involvement brought about by the Coronavirus pandemic.
 - 3.8 Consultation methods used included, but were not limited to, letter, email, website information, a consultation event hosted by ELTRP and a freephone service.
 - 3.9 There was strong support for the new Strategy. All views were considered by the Tenant Participation Strategy Group and where appropriate reflected in the new draft Strategy.
 - 3.10 Subject to formal approval, the Strategy will be formally launched at a joint event with ELTRP, the details and date of the event have still to be discussed and agreed.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Tenant Participation Strategy recognises, links to and underpins other Council Strategies, including the Local Housing Strategy.

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The subject of this report has been through the Integrated Impact Assessment process and no negative impacts have been identified. The report can be accessed using the below link:

<https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/iia-housing>

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial – The existing tenant participation budget will not be significantly impacted by the new Strategy.
- 6.2 Personnel – None.
- 6.3 Other – None.

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Appendix – East Lothian Council Tenant Participation Strategy 2020-23

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DATE	October 2020



East Lothian
Council

2020-23 TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY



Contents

Welcome	3	Our Digital Participation Strategy	12-13
Our Vision	4	Working Together	14
Background	5	Monitoring & review	14
Legislation	6	Celebrating Success	15
Our Aims	7	Registered Tenant Organisations	16
Social Housing Charter	8	Action Plan	17
Resources for tenant participation	10	Contact us	18



East Lothian Tenants & Residents Panel members



Spring into Action in East Lothian Event, March 2019

Welcome

Welcome to East Lothian Council's fifth Tenant Participation Strategy, which sets out how we plan to involve our tenants and make sure that they can influence and scrutinise the housing services that we deliver. We will continue to give tenants a menu of options to choose from so that they can get involved in a way that suits them.

We want to build on our recent achievements and continue to support tenants, working in partnership with them and East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel (ELTRP). In the last few years we have achieved Tenants Information Service (TIS) Gold Scrutiny Accreditation, our Tenant Scrutiny Group won the TIS Scrutiny Excellence Award in 2018 and ELTRP won the Tenants Group of the Year Award in 2019.

We realise the importance of involving tenants when we are developing and reviewing our policies. We always strive to work together to provide excellent housing services. We value our tenant volunteers and the work that they do with us every day. We hope this strategy reflects how much more we want to achieve and the steps we will be taking to involve tenants in the next three years.



Jim Herron
Chair
East Lothian Tenants
& Residents Panel



Jim Goodfellow
Councillor and
Cabinet Spokesperson
for Housing and
Community Wellbeing



Monica Patterson
Chief Executive
East Lothian Council

Our Vision

Our vision for tenant participation in East Lothian is to maximise our tenants' involvement in influencing and scrutinising our housing services. We share the same principles of tenant participation with our tenants, ELTRP and tenants and residents groups.

GOOD
WORKING
RELATIONSHIPS

SHARING
INFORMATION
IDEAS &
POWER

AGENDA
SETTING

TIME TO
FULLY
CONSIDER
ISSUES

RESOURCES
FOR TENANT
ORGANISATIONS

TRUST
RESPECT &
PARTNERSHIP

DECISION
MAKING

EQUAL
OPPORTUNITIES

RECOGNITION
FOR TENANT
ORGANISATIONS

INVOLVING
RURAL
TENANTS



Background

East Lothian Council's Tenant Participation Strategy comes from the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 which introduced rights for tenants and placed duties on landlords. We have developed our strategy in partnership with East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel. We carried out a list of actions to review our last strategy and help us to develop this one.



Legislation

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 gives tenants rights, and sets out duties for landlords.

Tenants have the right to:

- Form independent representative associations
- Access information about housing policies
- Be consulted on issues that affect them
- Participate in decisions that affect the services tenants receive and be given adequate time to fully consider proposals.

Key Landlord duties are to:

- Produce a Tenant Participation Strategy
- Make sure that our Tenant Participation Strategy complies with equal opportunities requirements
- Set up a register of tenant organisations in line with Scottish Government guidance
- Take into account representations made by individual tenants or tenants groups
- Inform tenants and Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs) of proposals for housing management, standards of service and the Tenant Participation Strategy.



Spring into Action in East Lothian Event, March 2019

Our Aims

We aim to encourage as many tenants as possible to get involved with us and will give them a range of options. We want tenants to get involved in a way that suits them and will agree timescales with tenants to make sure they can properly participate. We will make sure our tenant participation activities are accessible to all and will be responsive to tenants' individual needs. We will provide tenants with access to the services and resources they need to allow them to become fully involved. We have carried out an impact assessment of this strategy to make sure that we do not discriminate against anyone and uphold equal opportunities in all the work that we do.

We value all forms of tenant participation equally and will make sure that support is available to encourage participation. We will consult, inform, involve and work with our tenants as equal partners to make sure our services are tenant focussed and our scrutiny work is tenant led.

Ways our tenants can get involved include

- as an individual
- through a tenants and residents group
- by getting involved with East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel

We will involve tenants at different stages of our work

Co-production	Drawing on the skills, knowledge and experience of our tenants working with them as equal partners to plan and deliver our services.
Participation	Sharing information and giving tenants the opportunity to take part in decision-making and influence our housing services.
Consultation	Tenants are given the opportunity to comment on services, policies and procedures before they are finally agreed.
Information	Is where tenants are being asked to comment on changes in policy. They will be provided with information in good time to allow them to make informed decisions.

Social Housing Charter

The Social Housing Charter (SHC) was introduced by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 and sets out the standards and outcomes that social landlords should aim to achieve whilst performing their housing services.

The charter has 16 outcomes:

The Customer / Landlord Relationship

1. **Equalities**
2. **Communication**
3. **Participation**

Housing Quality and Maintenance

4. **Quality of Housing**
5. **Repairs, maintenance and improvements**

Neighbourhood and Community

6. **Estate Management, antisocial behaviour, neighbour nuisance and tenancy disputes**

Access to Housing and Support

7. **8. & 9. Housing Options**
10. **Access to social housing**
11. **Tenancy sustainment**
12. **Homeless people**

Getting Good Value from Rents and Service Charges

13. **Value for money**
14. **& 15. Rent and Service charges**

Other Customers

16. **Gypsy / Travellers**



Annual Return on the Charter

The purpose of the Charter is to help improve the quality and value of the services that social landlords provide. We are required by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) to submit an Annual Return on the Charter by the end of May each year. We then need to produce by October a Landlord's Report to explain to our tenants how we are performing as a service.

For more information and a copy of the Charter please go to:

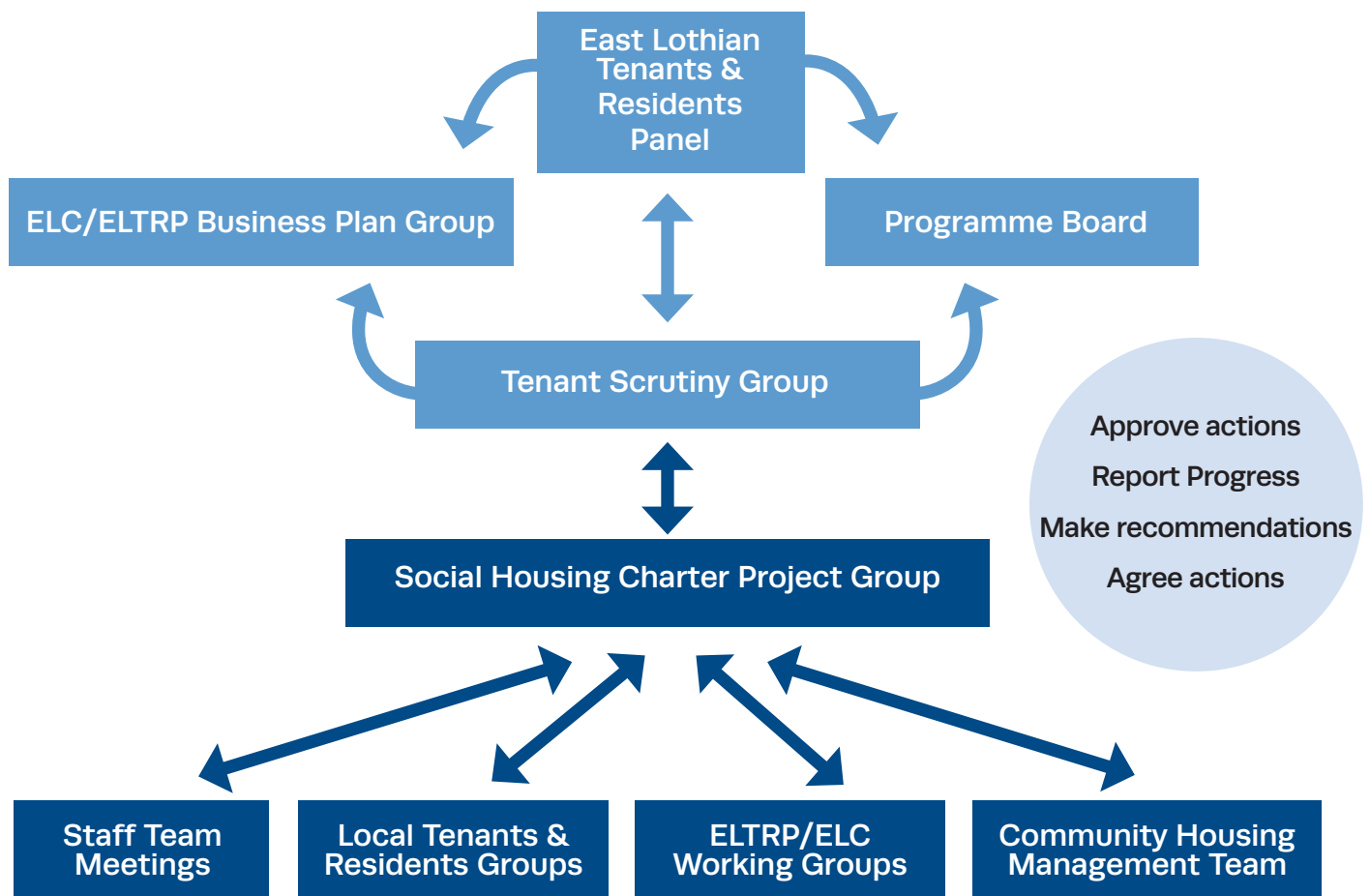
www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-social-housing-charter-april-2017

Annual Assurance Statement

In October each year, we are also required to submit an Annual Assurance Statement to the SHR. www.housingregulator.gov.scot The council needs to confirm to the SHR that it is complying with all regulatory requirements and standards. If it is not meeting these requirements, ELC must advise the SHR and say what it is doing to address the issues. The council gathers evidence from various sources to assess overall compliance and this is monitored on an ongoing basis. A report is submitted to the council's Audit and Governance Committee for approval. Once it has been approved, the Statement is signed and submitted to the SHR and then made available publicly on the council's website. www.eastlothian.gov.uk We continue to monitor our compliance throughout the year and should there be any issues where we are failing, we will inform the SHR and develop an action plan to address the issues.

Tenant Scrutiny

Tenant scrutiny is a form of self-assessment which involves tenants working in partnership with their landlord. The **Scrutiny Framework** below which we have in place ensures the work we are doing is agreed by management and feeds into our group structure.



The framework ensures that communication flows freely, recommendations for improvement are taken on board and progress is made to make sure we improve our services. We continue to develop tenant scrutiny in partnership with ELTRP and carry out scrutiny activities with our tenant volunteers, which are tenant-led.



Resources for tenant participation

We recognise that tenants need adequate time and proper resources to consider proposals and fully participate. The council and ELTRP work in partnership to make sure this is in place to support tenants, tenants groups and ELTRP.

The council has employed the Tenants Information Service (TIS) to provide independent support to ELTRP, tenants and local tenants and residents groups. The East Lothian Development Support Project employs three members of staff to provide a range of support, resources and training to help continue with the development of the tenants movement in East Lothian.

East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel (ELTRP) offers tenants and local groups the opportunity to get involved with them. ELTRP is the umbrella organisation for local tenants and residents groups throughout East Lothian and is run by an Executive Committee. The committee regularly consults with its members on relevant topics like rent levels and policy reviews. They organise events and support and encourage the development of tenant participation in East Lothian.

For more information about the panel visit www.eltrp.co.uk



ELTRP TP Strategy Consultation Meeting– Burns Supper 2020

We provide a budget for our tenant participation activities and shown in the table below is a list of some of the key items of expenditure. The Tenant Participation Budget for 2018/19 was £269,130.

Budget	£
Development Support Contract	112,000
Tenant Group Grants	850
TIS Annual Membership for Tenants and Residents Groups	120
Production of Tenants Newsletter (Homefront)	30,000
ELTRP Delegated Budget	22,000
ELTRP Office costs – i.e. rent, water rates	12,000
Annual spend per tenant	£30.80

We also provide some in-kind support and resources including:

- Free access to council venues for meetings
- Reimbursement of travel expenses
- Training for tenants and tenants and residents groups
- Access to photocopying and stationery supplies
- Transport on request for specific events
- A dedicated council officer with responsibility for tenant participation.

We will provide other resources on request to assist tenants who may be traditionally excluded or have particular needs.

We will always make sure that we keep our tenants informed through regular communication and make sure that they have enough time to consider our proposals when we are consulting with them. Giving feedback to tenants after consultations is something we always do. The methods of communication we will use to do this will be through Homefront, our tenants' newsletter, our website, social media, letters and we will provide information in other formats on request. (e.g. large print, Braille, in other languages).



Spring into Action in East Lothian Event

Our Digital Participation Strategy

We want to make sure we offer tenants a range of different ways for them to get involved and at the same time we want to promote the use of digital channels of communication. We work hard to increase our digital and online presence through the development of our website and use of social media, mainly Facebook and Twitter.

This is in line with some of our aims for tenant participation to make tenant participation accessible and inclusive, encourage engagement, build confidence and continue to build on our success.

Making tenant participation accessible and inclusive

The COVID-19 pandemic required us to, find new and innovative ways of keeping in touch and engaging with our tenant representatives, ELTRP members and local tenants and residents groups. In particular to make greater use of online communication channels.

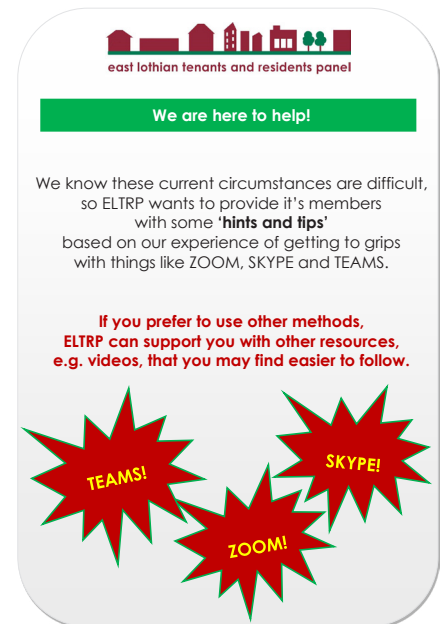
We did a number of things to change the way we worked. We:

- kept in touch with tenants by email and phone
- provided support to enable tenants to attend online meetings with us
- gave one-to-one and group support to help tenants to attend online meetings on Skype, Zoom and Microsoft Teams.



We worked in partnership with ELTRP who:

- were successful in obtaining funding for IT equipment to get more tenants online
- produced a 'Hints and Tips' guide to getting online
- introduced a fortnightly newsletter
- held online quizzes to engage with tenants in a less formal way
- attended regular online meetings to carry on the business of ELTRP with the council
- provided an online Mental Health Awareness Training Session.



The infographic features a header with a silhouette of buildings and trees, labeled 'east lothian tenants and residents panel'. Below this is a green bar with the text 'We are here to help!'. The main body of text explains that ELTRP provides 'hints and tips' based on experience with Zoom, Skype, and Teams. It also offers alternative resources like videos for those who prefer other methods. At the bottom, three red starburst shapes contain the words 'TEAMS!', 'ZOOM!', and 'SKYPE!'.

east lothian tenants and residents panel

We are here to help!

We know these current circumstances are difficult, so ELTRP wants to provide it's members with some **'hints and tips'** based on our experience of getting to grips with things like ZOOM, SKYPE and TEAMS.

If you prefer to use other methods, ELTRP can support you with other resources, e.g. videos, that you may find easier to follow.

TEAMS!

ZOOM!

SKYPE!

We see this as a great opportunity to continue to work with ELTRP to:

- support more tenants to get online and participate with us
- provide resources to make equipment available to those who need it
- upskill our staff and ELTRP so they can provide training and support
- continue to use informal ways to encourage tenants and tenants groups to meet online
- regularly engage in innovative ways to increase online tenant participation
- increase the number of online meetings in the future and provide this an option for tenants to get involved.



A red graphic with a white circuit pattern on the left side. The text is centered and reads: 'EAST LOTHIAN TENANTS & RESIDENTS PANEL & EAST LOTHIAN COUNCIL'. To the right of a vertical line, the text reads: 'OUR ZOOM/SKYPE/TEAMS MEETING JOURNEY SO FAR....'.

**EAST LOTHIAN
TENANTS &
RESIDENTS PANEL
& EAST LOTHIAN
COUNCIL**

**OUR
ZOOM/SKYPE/TEAMS
MEETING JOURNEY
SO FAR....**

Working together

We aim to work in partnership with our tenants, ELTRP, colleagues in other council departments and key organisations.

It is essential that tenant participation links into other council policies and strategies, for example:

- *East Lothian Council Plan 2017–2022*
- *East Lothian Plan 2017–2027*
- *Local Housing Strategy 2018–2023*
- *East Lothian Equality Plan 2017–2021*
- *Community Housing & Homelessness Service Plan 2020–21*



We also work hard to make sure that our strategy for tenant participation feeds into other service improvement activities and groups like:

- **How Good Is Our Service (HGIOS)**
- **Social Housing Charter Project Group**
- **Community Housing Communications Group**

Monitoring & review

We will review our strategy every three years through our Tenant Participation Strategy Group. We will also regularly monitor and evaluate our tenant participation activities.

We will do this in a number of different ways by gathering quantitative and qualitative information. This work may involve carrying out impact assessments to make sure that the work we are doing is effective and is working well. Impact assessments help us to show what some of the benefits of getting involved can be, for example increasing skills, knowledge and confidence. Measuring the impact will also allow us to see how our activities are having an impact on our communities.

Celebrating success

We are proud of our tenant participation structures and work hard to support them and have achieved a number of successes since our last strategy was written. We want to continue to build on these and become even more successful.

The infographic features a central cluster of blue stars of various sizes, with larger stars pointing towards specific achievement boxes. To the right, a vertical column of blue boxes lists tenant satisfaction statistics. The bottom right corner contains a logo with a stylized star and the text 'celebrating success'.

We achieved the Tenants Information Service **Gold Scrutiny Accreditation in 2017**

Our Tenant Scrutiny Group were **TIS Scrutiny Excellence Award 2018 Winners**

89% of tenants are satisfied with being **kept informed**

Our Tenant Scrutiny Group reached the **CIH Excellence Awards finals in 2017 & 2018**

Leah Hay, of the East Lothian Champions Board won **TIS Awards 2019 Young Achiever of the Year**

87% of tenants satisfied with the **quality of their home**

East Lothian Tenants & Residents Panel were **TIS Excellence Awards 2019 Tenants Group of the Year Winners**

85% of tenants are satisfied with **opportunities to participate**

Our Tenant Scrutiny Framework features in the CIH publication **Developing Effective Tenant Scrutiny**

88% of tenants satisfied with their **neighbourhood**

92% of tenants satisfied with our **repairs service**

88% of tenants rate rent as **good value money**

84% of tenants satisfied with **overall service**



Registered Tenant Organisations

A Registered Tenant Organisation (RTO) is an independent organisation which is set up to represent tenants' interests on housing and related issues. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 gives tenants groups a statutory right to register with their landlords as a RTO.

Some tenants groups may want to become registered and there is a criteria which requires the group to be democratically elected, have an appropriate constitution and a defined area. The benefits of being a registered tenant organisation can include:

- **A right to be consulted over proposed changes to housing services**
- **It places a duty on the council to consult with RTOs on issues that affect them**
- **In addition, the council is required to take notice of representations made by RTOs within a reasonable timescale (these timescales will be agreed with tenants)**
- **An opportunity for RTOs to get involved in the regional networks which operate across Scotland.**

East Lothian Council set up and maintain the register of RTOs in East Lothian on behalf of the council, East Lothian Housing Association and Homes for Life Housing Partnership. The council has a duty to provide and maintain the register and it is updated annually. The register is on public display in our offices. More information about registered tenant organisations and a copy of the register can be found on the council website www.eastlothian.gov.uk



Action Plan

We have specific aims for tenant participation activities in East Lothian. The purpose of these is to make sure that tenant participation is inclusive and accessible. We will regularly look at the tasks we need to complete and the timescale for doing this will be for the life of this strategy. The Action Plan will be monitored and reviewed by our Tenant Participation Strategy Group and will help us achieve our aims and plan for a successful future in tenant participation.



Contact us

Email

tenantconsultation@eastlothian.gov.uk

Write

East Lothian Council
Community Housing Service
Service Development Team
Penston House
Macmerry EH33 1EX

Call

East Lothian Council Tenant Consultation Line	0800 413 721
East Lothian Tenants And Residents Panel	0131 665 9304
East Lothian Council Contact Centre	01620 827827

Visit

www.eastlothian.gov.uk www.eltrp.co.uk www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk



Versions of this leaflet can be supplied in Braille, large print, audiotape or in your own language. Please phone Customer Services if you require assistance on 01620 827199

Data Protection

East Lothian Council uses the personal data you provide for purposes associated with the delivery of our services. For more information go to: www.eastlothian.gov.uk/communityhousingpn

Personal data will be retained in line with East Lothian Council retention policies. Data Protection Officer, East Lothian Council, John Muir House Haddington, EH41 3HA. Email: dpo@eastlothain.gov.uk