

## **CLEAN BILL OF HEALTH AND SAFETY FOR HOUSING SERVICE**

Folkestone & Hythe housing tenants have been further reassured that the work being undertaken to ensure their health and safety is first-rate.

A breach of Consumer Standards notice, issued by the government's Regulator of Social Housing, is being lifted reflecting the huge turnaround in the performance of the council's landlord housing service.

The notice had been issued in September 2019 when the arms-length management organisation, East Kent Housing, was running F&HDC's service along with those of Canterbury, Dover and Thanet councils.

Problems identified included not following up actions arising from the inspection of fire precaution works, failing to repair faulty emergency lights, not carrying out repairs to lifts and failure to address a large number of recommendations to prevent legionella in water supplies.

In October 2020 the landlord service was brought back into the council and a new team created who have worked quickly to bring about major improvements in the service for tenants in the Folkestone & Hythe district.

Councillor David Godfrey, F&HDC Cabinet member for Housing, Transportation and Special Projects said: "The housing team has achieved a massive transformation and in doing so has provided our district's tenants with a first-rate landlord service. We welcome the lifting of this regulatory notice and recognition that we are meeting health and safety standards.

"Tenants are telling us that repairs are being completed on time and that they feel reassured. There is work still to be done but we have committed to investing in the housing service and ensuring that we have an effective team in place to deliver what our tenants have every right to expect.

Chairperson of the Strategic Tenant Advisory Panel (STAP), Elaine Bostock said: "Since bringing the housing service back in to the council, the new team has made it clear that they do not just want to hear the voice of tenants, but they want to listen. I have seen first-hand various issues being raised with officers, councillors and the leadership team, which have been followed up and acted on in a collaborative way,

finding resolutions and trouble-shooting these issues together in order to make improvements.

“This by itself is an achievement, but the team has made this work happen during a global pandemic, where communication and forging new relationships has been really tough, not just with the tenants, but with each other as a new team. Where there is a will, there is a way and I believe the housing team is on the right track and is committed to providing a great service for its tenants.

“Even though the housing service is coming out of regulation, we (the STAP) will continue scrutinising the service and ensuring the best possible outcome for the tenants and leaseholders of Folkestone & Hythe District Council.”

Last month independent auditors also reported on the significant work being undertaken by the council to keep tenants safe in their homes and provided the service with a substantial rating. In practice this means that, for example, where gas appliances had previously remained un-serviced for more than 12 months, all appliances are now routinely serviced annually.

Ends