

Talk Housing

News for Royal Greenwich tenants and leaseholders

WELCOME

Welcome to Issue 18 of the Talk Housing newsletter, packed with information for tenants and leaseholders. We hope you enjoy it and if you have any feedback or ideas for future editions we would love to hear them.

Please email community-participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk.

WINTER 2021 ISSUE 18



Tackling climate emergency

Inside

3. Huge investment to our council homes 4. Reimagining housing services 6. Greenwich Builds

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ROYAL borough of
GREENWICH

5 minutes with Councillor Okereke



Happy New Year! I hope you all enjoyed a relaxing Christmas, despite the difficulties we continue to face with the pandemic.

Moving into 2022, I wanted to reflect on one of the most important priorities for the council – tackling climate change and global warming.

Growing up, like everyone else in the UK, I've noticed we experience very hot days followed by heavy rainfalls and long cold winter months. But the extreme changes in weather demonstrate the very real threat to our climate and our way of life.

This is why in June 2019, the council declared a climate emergency. We set an ambitious target to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2030 (20 years ahead of the national target), as early planning is key to prevent any unwanted disasters.

One of the things the council has been doing to address climate emergency is updating our council homes. Some of you will have already had innovative water-source heat pumps installed under our trailblazing scheme which you can read more about on page 3. We're also building zero carbon homes under the Greenwich Builds scheme, creating safer routes for walking and cycling, installing electric vehicle charging points and planting thousands of extra trees!

We all have to play our part, whether you're young or old, in making sure the extent and the impact of climate change is limited.

To read the full carbon neutral plan visit royalgreenwich.gov.uk/carbonneutral

Cllr Anthony Okereke,
Cabinet Member for Housing

Zero carbon emissions: net zero carbon emissions means the balance between the amount of greenhouse gas produced and the amount removed from the atmosphere

Climate Emergency - Where are we now?

Climate emergency: Our planet is getting hotter and even with this tiny rise in global temperatures, we are feeling the effects of climate change with erratic weather patterns, including heatwaves, floods and severe storms, loss of polar ice and, rising sea levels. This will only get worse if global warming intensifies. Climate change is triggered by higher levels of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere.

In Royal Greenwich, how we tackle global warming will depend on funding, government decisions, and working together with residents and local organisations.

We have already made progress to reach net zero carbon emissions, these are some of our key achievements:

- building low carbon homes
- creating safer routes for walking and cycling
- creating controlled parking zones to discourage car use

- installing electric vehicle charging points
- planting thousands of extra trees

What can you do to help?

We can all do our bit to help look after the planet.

- Walk, cycle and use public transport where you are able
- Try to shop locally
- Eat less meat and dairy
- Recycle and reuse
- Respect and protect our green spaces



Huge investment to repair and refurbish our council homes

We will be investing £39 million over the next two years to help deliver a Capital Repairs Programme on 10,658 council homes and estates.

Works planned for completion by 2024:



External refurbishment and decoration
6,018 homes

Kitchen & bathroom renewal
1,272 homes



Lateral mains and emergency lighting retrofits
1,755 homes

Boiler replacement
1,600 homes



We have also embarked on several heating renewal programmes to help the borough achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. This means we will be installing water and air-source heat pumps and more efficient boilers in homes across the borough.



Cllrs Denise Scott-McDonald and Sarah Merrill at the bore-hole drilling for the new innovative water-source heat pump at Ernest Dence Estate in Greenwich.

Looking after our trees and green spaces

Did you know there were nearly 200,000 trees in the borough? That's nearly one tree for every resident!

Trees are a hugely important part of our ecosystem. The council has 11 arborists who are responsible for 117 parks and open spaces throughout the borough. They look after 50,000 trees on our roads, estate gardens and parks.

You can become a friend of your local park and help care for our wonderful open spaces. All residents are welcome to join a friends' group - or help to set up one.

To learn more about friends of parks groups and how you can set up one, please contact our parks team on parks@royalgreenwich.gov.uk or call **020 8856 0100**.



Cllr Denise Scott-McDonald during a tree workshop in Oxleas Wood in November.

Reimagining housing services

The Council's Digital team is working with residents and staff to improve the housing services we provide including caretaking, repairs and major works services for leaseholders.

So far we have:

- Interviewed 12 leaseholders on their experience of dealing with the council
- Interviewed staff about what it takes to respond to queries, book repairs, calculate bills and organise major works
- Analysed lots of housing data!



We're now using what we've discovered to identify the problems we need to tackle first.



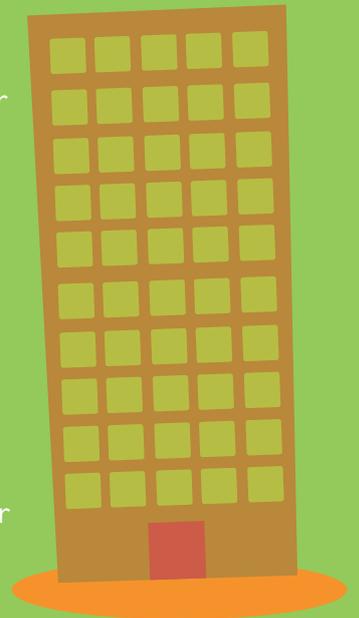
If you'd like to take part in further research and help us test new digital products, you can:

- Join the Leaseholder Working Group. Email home.ownership@royalgreenwich.gov.uk or call 0208 921 8501

We would especially like to hear from residents who are not confident with the digital world or who have other specific needs.

Keep up to date with the project on our digital blog, at: royalgreenwich.gov.uk/blog/digital

This work is part of Royal Greenwich's digital strategy. Find out more at: royalgreenwich.gov.uk/digital-strategy



Greenwich One Card scheme – latest discounts for shoppers



Greenwich One Card holders can get a wide range of discounts on products and services at participating local businesses, shops, cafes and restaurants across the borough.

Some of the latest discounts on offer from local businesses using the One Card scheme include:

- **The London Leather Workshop** - arts and crafts shop offering a 10% discount until 4 November 2022.
- **Greenwich Music School** - get a 20% discount on your first trial lesson or 10% on first enrolment for any group course. Offer valid until 15 May 2022.
- **Ambala Karahi** – authentic Indian dishes. Get 10% discount on all restaurant dining.
- **For Eyes Opticians** - free eye exam with purchase of complete spectacles (frame and lenses). Offer valid until 1 May 2022.

- **Excelmate Consulting Limited** - Spreadsheet and system services. Get a 25% discount on the standard hourly rate for 12 months. Offer valid until 31 July 2022.



To see the full range of discounts available and how you can get a One Card, please visit royalgreenwich.gov.uk/OneCard



HouseProud Pledge

The Royal Borough of Greenwich signed the House-Proud Pledge in April 2021, to demonstrate our commitment to support LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual) residents.



HouseProud

What work have we done?

- ✓ Officers from the team have taken part in a webinar session on Trans Inclusion: Setting the Scene, with Charlton Athletic Trust
- ✓ E-learning on LGBTQIA+ Awareness is available for all officers working in the Housing and Safer Communities department
- ✓ We are working with the Metro Charity to promote free and confidential advocacy and support services for residents from the LGBTQIA+ community affected by hate crime
- ✓ Our staff attended a Trans Myth Busting and Information session at Metro in October



Next steps: Get involved!

We want to tackle the housing-related issues experienced by the LGBTQIA+ community. We would like residents to work alongside us.

You can:

- share your experiences (positive or negative)
- sign up to be an equality champion
- Take part in a focus group

Please contact Lynsey Nunn by email at Yourview@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

How do you want us to engage with you?

We're reviewing our engagement plans and we want to hear your priorities and values.

In August last year, we rolled out our the YourVIEW Survey, which found that the top five areas residents would like us to talk about are:



1. Repairs
2. Improving the look and feel of estates
3. Caretaking
4. Anti-social Behaviour
5. Grounds Maintenance

A quarter of the residents who took part told us they would like to start their own group, whether that's a Tenants' Residents Association (TRA) or a WhatsApp group, to help them stay connected with their local community.

We are currently in the process of developing TRA starter packs, which will provide residents with guidance on how to start a tenants' group. These should be available very soon!



Greenwich Builds tenants see heat pump benefits



A Greenwich Builds tenant has endorsed the eco-credentials of her new zero-carbon council home during a visit by Royal Borough of Greenwich Member for Housing, Councillor Anthony Okereke.

Ginta and her daughter were full of praise for the eco-friendly features of their new home on Southspring in Eltham South, part of a development of three family houses which were completed earlier this year.

The combination of solar panels, heat pumps and efficient *insulation* Ginta said had led to energy bills dropping to just £30 per month.

This sustainable technology is being used throughout the Greenwich Builds programme of over 750 council homes, helping us to tackle both the housing crisis and climate emergency.

Cllr Okereke also visited Ginta's neighbour Christina and her two daughters, who said the favourite feature of their new home was its garden, a big improvement compared to their old flat.

Christina also said she appreciated the peace and quiet in their new neighbourhood. When asked how many council homes they thought Royal Borough of Greenwich should build, her daughters answered "millions!".

Greenwich Builds council homes design wins Best Affordable Housing Development award

A design for 117 Greenwich Builds council homes at Kidbrooke Park Road has won Best Affordable Housing Development (£20m+) at this year's Inside Housing Development Awards.

A design for 117 Greenwich Builds council homes at Kidbrooke Park Road has won Best Affordable Housing Development (£20m+) at this year's Inside Housing Development Awards.

The development will be comprised of a mixture of one, two and three-bedroom apartments and maisonettes, 12 of which will be specifically designed for wheelchair access. Also incorporated is a nursery for both new tenants and existing local Kidbrooke residents.

The homes are spread over four buildings of between four and ten storeys and will feature sustainable technologies like air source heat pumps and solar panels, while two large landscaped communal outdoor areas and a tree-lined corridor will provide amenity space for local residents. Planning approval has been granted and the site is being prepared for development.



Mayor Cllr Denise Hyland with members of the Greenwich Builds and HTA Design teams

IHDA judges stated that “this is an ambitious and high quality development with 100% affordable homes this well thought out project has residents at its heart and the setting has an emphasis on being green”.



DECEMBER 2021 UPDATE

We're building over 750 sustainable council homes for local people! Here's our progress so far:

- **379 homes being designed**
- **0 homes awaiting approval**
- **360 homes being built**
- **27 homes completed**



Operation Stop It!

Operation Stop It is a partnership between the council and Metropolitan Police, which aims to remove abandoned and untaxed vehicles, and those suspected of being used for fly tipping within the borough.

A multi-agency operation ran on the morning of Thursday 30 Sept 2021 north of Nathan Way in Thamesmead, resulting in the removal of 20 nuisance vehicles.

Operation Fortune

A multi-agency operation led by Safer Spaces to tackle street based anti-social behaviour and criminal activity across the four town centres within RBG.

It ran on 12 and 14 October in Plumstead town centre, resulting in:

- 22 alcohol surrenders
- 6 dispersals
- Fixed Penalty Notice for public urination
- 7 Fixed Penalty Notices for *environmental* offences.
- Public Spaces Protection Orders: 1 group Anti-social Behaviour intervention for young people fighting
- 3 drug misuse interventions
- 3 Community Protection Warnings to be issued retrospectively for street drinking and drug misuse



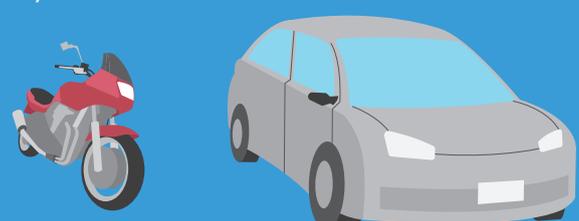
If you see or suspect an abandoned or untaxed vehicle or someone dumping waste report this by calling **0208 921 4661** or visit [fix.royalgreenwich.gov.uk](https://www.fix.royalgreenwich.gov.uk).

Estate Parking Update

By the Summer of 2022, Royal Greenwich will seek to have replaced the existing parking enforcement arrangements. Those affected by changes will be contacted in due course with more detailed information.

In the meantime, please remember to renew your Wing parking permits as normal by contacting the Woolwich Centre or find out more information about renewing your permit at [royalgreenwich.gov.uk/estateparking](https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/estateparking).

Also, in the coming months you may also see some safety improvements to estate roads which will help to keep residents safe at all times by ensuring that emergency vehicles are able to access the estate without any obstruction.



Community Centres in Royal Greenwich

A warm welcome awaits you at one of community organisations in Royal Greenwich where you can join in activities for fun, health, wellbeing and education.

We have a number of halls and centres in the heart of our estates, including:

- Clockhouse Community Centre on the Dockyard Estate
- Glyndon Community Centre in Glyndon
- Middle Park Community Centre in Middle Park

For full list and contact details please visit:
royalgreenwich.gov.uk/communitycentres

What's on?

Many of our community centres hold lunch-clubs, bingo sessions and University of the third age groups for older people, as well as leisure activities such as keep-fit, martial arts, yoga, and dance or theatre classes for both children and adults.

Spotlight on the Clockhouse Community Centre on the Dockyard:

Clockhouse Community café serves affordable, home-made *nutritious* breakfasts and lunches between 10am – 4pm Monday to Thursday, or pop in for a cup of tea and cake.

Clockhouse Advice Hub runs every Friday from 9.30am to 12 noon, where Royal Greenwich residents can drop in for a free face-to-face meeting with an advisor who can help with: Universal Credit, Welfare Rights, Housing /Tenancy, Immigration, and Debt issues.

The **Clockhouse Free Food Fridays**, set up for vulnerable local residents during the first COVID-19 lockdown. Drop in every Friday, between 1-3pm for a free food parcel if you or someone you know needs a bit of help with food.

“I have been doing line dancing at The Clockhouse Community Centre for 5 years. Doing this is not only beneficial to my health, but meeting up with others on a weekly basis gives me the opportunity to make new friends within the community.” Quote from a resident

Facilities

You can hire rooms or halls for all kinds of meetings, activity or celebration events. All venues are fully accessible, and some have dedicated disabled parking – please check with the centre.

Volunteering

Some have volunteering opportunities and gardening clubs, just drop them a line for more information.

For more information visit:

clockhousecc.org.uk/groups-activities or phone: **020 8855 7188**.



**Defiance Walk,
London SE18 5QL
020 8855 7188**

Stay warm

Stay safe

Energy prices have increased and we are all having to spend more on gas and electric bills. You may be able to save money by:

- Checking if you could get a cheaper tariff by changing supplier – use a price comparison website such as GoCompare or Which
- Installing a smart meter may help understanding of what appliances use the most energy and work out how to spend less
- If you are on a low income and struggling financially you may be able to get help via Warm Home Discount Scheme [gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme](https://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme)

Or Winter Fuel Payment

[gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment](https://www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment)

- There are also grants available from energy suppliers – for example
- [britishgasenergytrust.org.uk](https://www.britishgasenergytrust.org.uk) and you don't need to be British Gas customer to apply.

For further information on why the price hike and what you can do to save money – a good source of information is at [moneysavingexpert.com/energy](https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/energy)

This Royal Greenwich scheme provides extra services and support for residents who may be at risk during the cold weather. It particularly targets older people and vulnerable households such as families with young children or with a physical/mental or learning disability. Services include: advice on energy efficiency and reducing fuel bills, benefits advice from the Welfare Rights Service, home fire safety checks and advice on keeping active and well during the winter months.

Call the Live Well Greenwich line on **0800 470 4831** or visit [royalgreenwich.gov.uk/staywarm](https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/staywarm) for more information and top tips.



How to safely dispose of medical equipment

Help Royal Borough of Greenwich and NHS services help others by returning community equipment you no longer need.

You should not dispose of equipment or try to *recycle* independently as all equipment is on loan and council owned property. It is our responsibility to ensure the correct measures are taken for items to be recycled properly.

If you no longer require items such as electric beds, mattresses, chairs, hoists or any other equipment, please contact Medequip to arrange a free home collection.

- Call: **020 8319 5680**
- Or email: **woolwich@medequip-uk.com**
- Alternatively, you can also hand in any items at the Woolwich depot: **Unit 3, The I O Centre, Cornwallis Road, Woolwich SE18 6SR.** There is no need to book an appointment. Opening hours: 8am-5pm (Monday-Friday)



Housing and Homelessness Strategy gets the go-ahead

Housing Strategy approved at Cabinet! The Performance and Policy Team is now working with residents, groups representing people with specific housing needs and other housing partners to introduce the new plan. We will be sharing this in the New Year – so keep an eye on our website and the next edition of Talk Housing for more info.



We are installing new heat meters in all our council homes

We will be rolling out a long-term programme to install heat meters in all council homes across the borough including leasehold properties. This means that you will only be billed for the heating and hot water you use, rather than a proportion of the overall cost.

We will be writing to you at least 14 days in advance of the *installation*, to let you know when we are coming.

Stop and Search? Know your Rights.

Police officers cannot stop you because of your race, gender or any previous criminal records. You must comply if stopped by the police.

Before you're searched the police officer must tell you:

- their name and police station
- why they're stopping you and under what law
- what they expect to find, for example drugs
- that you can have a record of the search and if this isn't possible at the time, how you can get a copy

You are able to record a stop and search, but must not obstruct it.

For more information, please visit royalgreenwich.gov.uk/StopAndSearch



Rent advice during the pandemic

We understand that the COVID-19 crisis has created financial difficulty for many people.

We want to do all that we can to support you, so if you are unable to pay your rent, please contact us immediately to discuss your situation and we will work with you to address any issues.

You can email **rent-account-enquiries@royalgreenwich.gov.uk** to explain your situation and we will get back to you. You can also speak to your Income Officer, whose telephone number is on your rent statement and arrears letters.

If you are currently experiencing financial difficulties, we can renegotiate payment plans and help you claim financial support and benefits that you may be entitled to.

If your income has been reduced, you may be entitled to Universal Credit and/or other benefits. This may include help with your rent payments. If you think you are entitled to any support, take action straight away.

The courts are now open for serious arrears, anti-social behaviour and other cases. If you have high arrears and have not discussed this with your Income Officer – contact us now for advice and to make a repayment plan otherwise you could risk eviction.



Benefits advice and hardship support

If you need advice on your benefits entitlement, support to manage your claim or to complete an application, contact our Welfare Rights and Universal Support Team on **0208 921 3333** (Monday – Friday, 10am – 4pm) or visit **royalgreenwich.gov.uk/benefitsupport**

The team is experiencing a very high volume of queries. If asked, please leave a message and they will get back to you as soon as possible.

Employment and financial support can also be found at: **gov.uk/coronavirus** and **turn2us.org.uk**.

Universal Credit (UC) claimants – Don't miss out on help with your rent!

If you pay housing charges and claim UC – have you updated your new housing charge details on your UC online journal? If not, sign into your UC online account and do it today.

To get up to date details of rent and service charges email or telephone your Income Officer using the contact details on your rent statement.

If you do not have an online UC account, you should contact the UC Service Centre on **0800 328 5644** to tell them about your new charges.

Wordsearch

Have a go at completing our wordsearch, and you could be in with a chance of winning a prize.

There are 10 words in the wordsearch below which will be in italics within this newsletter. You can either:

Email the 10 words to **YourVIEW@royalgreenwich.gov.uk** or tear out the back page and return this to the Community Participation & Diversity Team at the Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington Street, SE18 6HQ.

Please submit with your full name, mobile/telephone number and email.

Thank you to those of you, who sent in your answers from Issue 17.

Congratulations to **Kafayat Eletu** for winning the last wordsearch!



The words from the last wordsearch are: Refugees, Remnants, Developments, Accessible, Neighbours, Local, Wellbeing, History, Halloween Communal.

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