

*Talk*

# Housing

News for Royal Greenwich tenants and leaseholders

## WELCOME

Welcome to Issue 35 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 issues we would love to hear them.

Please email [community-participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk](mailto:community-participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk)

SPRING 2026 ISSUE 35



## Keeping our homes safe: Fire safety awareness

### Inside

- 5. Fresh start for Tom Smith Close & Chrisp House residents
- 8. Changes following feedback
- 9. Changes to estate parking permit charges

@royal\_greenwich royalgreenwich greenwichcouncil royalgreenwich.gov.uk/follow-whatsapp

[royalgreenwich.gov.uk/housing](http://royalgreenwich.gov.uk/housing)

To opt out of receiving Talk Housing, please contact: [community-participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk](mailto:community-participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk)



## Welcome to Talk Housing

Welcome to the latest edition of Talk Housing. This edition of the Housing Bulletin includes a range of practical information for residents, including fire safety advice and details on how to register to vote ahead of the elections on 7 May.

A lot of the updates in this edition stem from collaboration between you as residents and council officers. As you read through this edition you'll see examples – like the refurbished community hall at Tom Smith close and Chrisp House. This edition also include information about refurbished community spaces, details of the downsizing scheme for secure

tenants who may be considering moving to a smaller home, and guidance for residents who wish to understand more about the support available.

If you feel like your current home may no longer meet your space needs or if you would like to explore options for moving to a smaller property, further information can be found on page nine, along with contact details of the relevant teams who can provide guidance.

We hope the information in this bulletin is helpful. If you have any questions or require support, please get in touch using the contact details provided throughout this edition.



## Food waste collections coming soon to your block!



As part of the new national Simpler Recycling rules, we've started to roll out new food waste collections to housing blocks who do not already have their food waste recycled separately.

Recycling your food waste helps turn it into renewable energy, lowers emissions, and keeps your general waste bin cleaner and odour free.

You'll receive a small kitchen caddy and access to a large communal food waste bin, making it easy to recycle all your food waste.

So look out for your new caddy and information leaflet coming soon!

To find out more about this new service, visit [royalgreenwich.gov.uk/flats-food-waste](https://royalgreenwich.gov.uk/flats-food-waste)

## Residents Corner!

### Fresh start for Tom Smith Close & Chrisp House residents

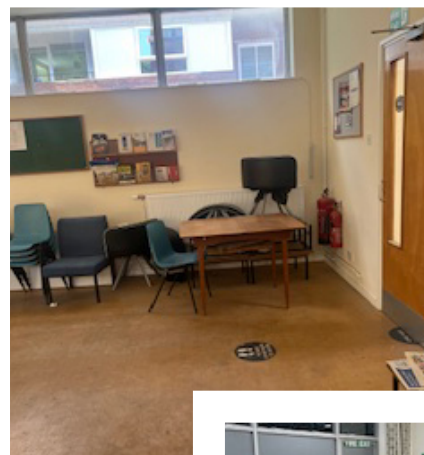
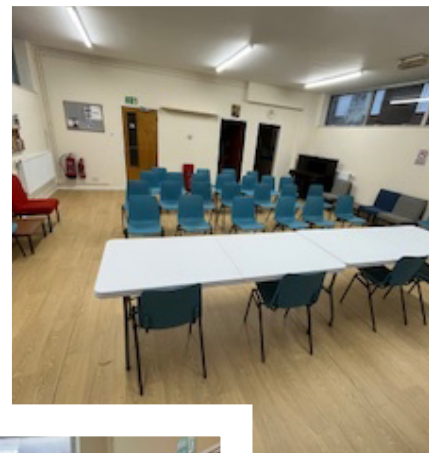
The Community Hall at Tom Smith Close and Chrisp House has reopened and is now available for residents to use.

After being out of use for approximately three years, the hall has now been brought back into service following major improvement works that included upgrades to flooring, window coverings, tables and new equipment including a fridge, microwave and kettle to support community use.

Following joint work by residents, the Tenant and Residents Association (TRA), local officers and the Community Participation & Diversity team, the hall has now been fully restored and refurbished.

In addition, a fully structured and formally constituted residents' group has been created on the estate. The group now has an elected Chair, Secretary and Treasurer, providing clear leadership and accountability. The Tenants and Residents Association (TRA) is fully functional and operational, and residents are actively involved in shaping activities and the future use of the space.

If you are interested in setting up a Tenants and Residents Association, please contact **community-participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk** for more information and support.





## Keeping your home and estate safe

We take the safety of our residents seriously, but fire safety is everyone's responsibility. With that in mind, your support in maintaining fire safety is an essential part of keeping everyone safe and secure.

## Your responsibilities as a resident

As your landlord, we have to take steps to prevent fires breaking out in communal areas, but there are a few things you can do to help:

- Please do not obstruct communal areas, stairs, corridors and landings with any items. These areas form fire escape routes for the building, and in a smoke-filled environment where you can't see your hand in front of your face, these items can potentially become a lethal trip hazard.

- Don't prop open fire doors in communal areas. These doors are designed to form a protective barrier against fire and smoke. Keep them closed.

- Don't store prams, bicycles or mobility scooters in communal areas as they become a barrier to people escaping in a fire.

- Manage your home contents – don't store anything that might catch fire or burn in cupboards that have electrical equipment.

- Please make sure you give us access to your home to carry out essential maintenance.

- Many blocks of flats are built to resist fire spreading between individual flats and communal areas – this is called compartmentation. Please report any damage to the building structure or to compartmentation (e.g. fire doors) to [royalgreenwich.gov.uk/report-fire-or-structural-issue](https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/report-fire-or-structural-issue) or **020 8921 8161**.

- Before doing any DIY, check with us first that this will not affect any of the fire safety features in your flat.

- Some equipment in communal areas – such as dry and wet risers, opening vents and evacuation alert systems – have been installed to help fire and rescue services in an emergency. They should not be moved or tampered with in anyway.

## Preventing communal bin fires

**Deliberately starting a fire (also known as arson) is one of the leading causes of communal bins fires**

There's rarely any reason for someone to deliberately start a fire in a communal bin, other than the person doing it getting a thrill. But fire and smoke can spread very quickly, and people can lose all their belongings, be made homeless, get injured, or suffer a very painful death.

This is why arson, whether deliberately committed with the intent to endanger life, or reckless behaviour which ends up endangering life, is a serious criminal offence.

Some bin fires are purely accidental with no malice

behind them. They can often be caused when someone flicks a cigarette butt into a bin without fully putting it out. The cigarette can still be hot and can set fire to the rubbish inside. Always make sure that all cigarette butts are soaked in water before throwing them into a bin to help reduce the risk of fire.

When using communal bins, always make sure that you do not put anything inside them that could be flammable - for example, fireworks, vapes, batteries or aerosol cans which could explode when crushed.

## Keeping balconies clear

Balconies provide a welcome refuge throughout the year, but it is also important to remember that they can present a hazard. Please follow the steps below to make sure you keep yourself and other residents safe when using your balcony.



- Never use barbeques, including disposable ones, fire pits or patio heaters on your balcony as they pose a fire and carbon monoxide risk.
- Never store flammable or hazardous materials like gas cylinders on balconies.
- Keep communal balconies or walkways clutter free, as they can be an important escape route for residents, or an access point for firefighters.
- If you do smoke on your balcony, do not throw cigarette butts or smoking materials over the balcony. Use a sturdy ashtray with a small amount of water in it to ensure they are fully put out.

## E-bike fires: what you should know

The fire risk associated with e-bikes and e-scooters is primarily linked to the lithium-ion batteries they use. These batteries can fail catastrophically, leading to explosions and rapidly developing fires which are very difficult to put out.

To minimise these risks, it is crucial to follow safety guidelines when charging, storing and disposing of these products.

### Here are some key safety measures to consider:

- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for charging and using e-bikes and e-scooters.
- Install working smoke alarms in your home, especially in areas where you charge or store your e-bike or e-scooter.
- Use the manufacturer-approved charger and avoid any signs of wear or damage.
- Charge batteries while you are awake and alert and never leave them unattended.

## Know what to do if a fire breaks out



Understanding the difference between a 'Stay Put' plan and an evacuation plan is important, as this helps keep everyone safe in a shared building. Information on what actions you should take are provided in the communal areas of all our council blocks and buildings, in a Fire Action Notice which explains what the evacuation strategy is for your building. Make sure you know and follow the appropriate strategy for your building.

### If the advice for your building is to Stay Put:

If there is a fire elsewhere in the building, purpose-built blocks of flats and maisonettes are built to give you some protection from fire. Walls, floors and doors will hold back flames and smoke for a minimum of 30 to 60 minutes.

- Close your windows and doors and stay in your flat or maisonette.
- Call 999. Tell them where you are in the building and the best way to reach you.
- London Fire Brigade control officers will provide you with guidance until firefighters arrive at the scene.
- Once firefighters arrive be prepared to follow their instructions.
- If you are being directly affected by fire, smoke or heat, alert everyone, leave the building and follow the advice below to evacuate.

### If the advice for your building is to evacuate:

- Leave your flat or maisonette and close the doors behind you.
- Move as quickly but as safely as you can, and don't stop to investigate or pick up valuables.
- Use the stairs to make your way out of the building – don't use the lift.
- Call 999 as soon as you are safe to do so – don't assume someone else has made the call.

### Plan an escape route

Think in advance what you would do if there was a fire in your flat where you may need to evacuate.

- Make sure everyone knows where to find the door and window keys.
- Make sure you all know where the fire exits and alarms are.
- It is easy to get confused in smoke, so it is very important to know how many doors you need to go through to reach the stairs.
- Your own flat may have more than one escape route. Make sure none of them are blocked with rubbish or items.

Visit [royalgreenwich.gov.uk/preventing-fire-council-homes](https://royalgreenwich.gov.uk/preventing-fire-council-homes) for more information on preventing fires in your home, or email [resident.safety@royalgreenwich.gov.uk](mailto:resident.safety@royalgreenwich.gov.uk) for further support.



## Number of wheelchair users on our housing waiting list reduced by 42%

**Some residents on the housing register require wheelchair-adapted homes. Demand for these properties remains high, and allocation continues to be based on assessed need.**

We regularly review applications from households who require accessible accommodation to ensure their needs are accurately recorded. This helps us match properties appropriately when homes become available.

Accessible homes are provided through a combination of existing council properties

that have been adapted, as well as new homes that include accessibility features. The size and type of homes available varies throughout the year and waiting times can differ depending on household circumstances and specific requirements.

If your household needs an accessible home or you believe your circumstances have changed, please contact the Housing team by calling **020 8854 8888** for advice on updating your application or discussing your needs.

# Update on Kidbrooke Park Road



**Work has completed at the Kidbrooke Park Road North development, which forms part of a wider programme to increase the supply of social housing in the borough.**

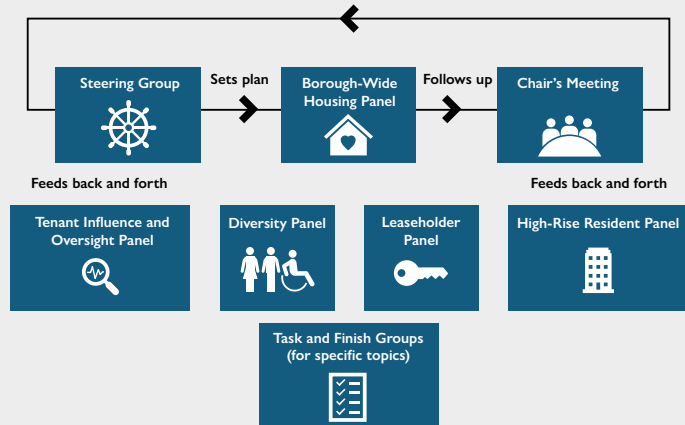
The first phase includes a mix of one, two and three bedroom homes, alongside several shared facilities such as a nursery, landscaped areas and a play space for children. The development also incorporates an energy centre designed to support the site's heating and energy needs.

A second phase of construction is currently underway to the south of the site. This phase is expected to include additional homes and supporting communal space. Construction activity on both phases will continue to follow the published site management and safety arrangements.

Residents living nearby will continue to receive relevant updates about works that may affect access, noise levels or local traffic management.

## Join our latest resident panels

We're currently recruiting residents to join three key panels that help shape how we improve services:



- **Leaseholder Engagement Panel** - a dedicated panel for leaseholders to discuss and improve the council's service offer to leaseholders.
- **High-Rise Resident Panel** - for residents of high-rise blocks (seven storeys or more, or 18 metres and above) with a focus on building safety issues.
- **Tenant Influence and Oversight Panel (TIOP)** - a quarterly tenant group that closely examines housing services, provides feedback and holds officers accountable.
- **Diversity Panel** - meets quarterly to focus on equality and inclusion, examining how experiences vary across diverse groups and recommending improvements.
- **Tenants Complaints Working Group (TCWG)** - a space for council tenants to review and give feedback on how complaints are handled within the Housing and Safer Communities directorate, to support continuous learning and drive improvements.

To find out more or to join a panel, email [community-participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk](mailto:community-participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk)

## Changes following feedback

Responses have told us that complaints take too long, the quality varies and that they want to see real service improvements. We've provided additional training and closer oversight from the corporate complaints team, improved communication about overdue cases, and are establishing a resident-led improvement panel – the **Tenants Complaints Working Group** - to review how housing complaints are handled.

Leaseholders also want a dedicated space for their concerns, more transparency, and greater influence in decision-making. We're setting up new housing panels including the Tenant Influence and Oversight Panel (TIOP), Diversity Panel and the Leaseholder Engagement Panel, and will continue to recruit and support Housing Champions and use project specific groups.

We've held Borough Wide Housing Panel (BWHP) meetings in different locations.

- The next meeting will take place on **Thursday 21 May** from **6:30pm to 8pm** at **Abbey Wood Community Centre, 4 Knee Hill, SE2 0YS**.
- Pre-booked surgery sessions will run before the main meeting from 5:30pm.
- To book a place or to register for a surgery, email [YourVIEW@royalgreenwich.gov.uk](mailto:YourVIEW@royalgreenwich.gov.uk)

Residents have said that they want more design choices when a new kitchen is fitted, along with a better repairs service, as some tenants felt that they were having to project-manage their repairs job. We've introduced more design choices for new kitchens and staff can now book follow-up appointments directly with tenants.



## Fly-tipping crackdown

Fly-tippers can face fines up to £1,000, we're installing more CCTV in hotspot areas, and residents can receive a £100 reward for information that leads to a fine being paid or a successful prosecution.

If you're a council resident, bulky waste collections are already included in your service charge, so there's no extra fee to pay.

Book a free collection by emailing [housing-caretaking@royalgreenwich.gov.uk](mailto:housing-caretaking@royalgreenwich.gov.uk) and leave items out on your agreed day.

## Changes to estate parking permit charges

**On 1 April, the cost of estate parking permits increased from £57 to £60 a year on estates where we operate a resident parking scheme.**

These schemes help make sure there is parking for residents and that emergency vehicles can get onto our estates safely.

To help keep permits affordable, a £5 monthly resident permit is still available to help spread the cost over the year and can be cancelled at any time. Disabled resident and carer permits will continue to be free of charge.

Visitor permits will increase from £3.50 to £4 a year and will continue to include the first 10 half-day vouchers. You can still buy extra vouchers

in packs of 10 for £4 or 20 for £8, which works out at 40p per session.

For more information, visit **royalgreenwich.gov.uk/estate-parking-permits**



## Choose a home that better meets your needs

**Our improved under-occupation scheme - commonly known as the downsizing scheme - has helped to free up 120 much-needed homes and 170 bedrooms for families living in overcrowded conditions, with medical needs or who are experiencing homelessness.**

This is more than four times an increase in the number of homes and bedrooms we've gained back since before the pilot. Of those households, five households have chosen to move out of the borough, six have downsized into specialist housing (five into sheltered accommodation and one into extra care housing) and another five have downsized by mutual exchange.

We also made five concurrent offers to households. This is when a tenant downsizes, and an adult son or daughter who was living with them long term qualifies to be allocated their own one-bedroom flat.

If you are a secure tenant who downsizes you can get £1,000 per bedroom given back (an additional £500 if you downsize by mutual exchange), as well as help to arrange and pay reasonable removal costs.

If you're on Pension Credit you will be eligible for a bedroom for yourself plus one extra bedroom. Our under-occupation adviser can offer support and guidance through the process.

Find out more at **royalgreenwich.gov.uk/move-to-a-smaller-home** or call **020 8921 2941**.



## Tackling social housing fraud

Recent studies suggest that 50,000 social rented homes in London may be affected by some type of social housing fraud. This is around 6% of all social housing at a time when thousands of families remain on waiting lists.

Illegal subletting happens when a tenant rents out their council home without permission, often for profit. Each property lost to fraud is a home taken away from a family in genuine need, increasing pressure on limited social housing stock.

We investigate all reports of suspected tenancy fraud. Proven cases have led to tenancy termination, recovery of the property, repayment of any profit made, and prosecution. Cases brought to court by the council have resulted in significant sanctions, including imprisonment.



We rely on our residents to help protect council homes. If you have concerns about possible subletting or other tenancy fraud, please report it to [fraud@royalgreenwich.gov.uk](mailto:fraud@royalgreenwich.gov.uk) or call **020 8921 5339**.

## GET ELECTION READY

Elections will take place across the borough on Thursday 7 May to elect 55 councillors to our 23 wards.

You are eligible to vote in this election if you live in Royal Greenwich and are a British citizen, qualifying EU or Commonwealth citizen over the age of 18 on election day.

You'll need to be registered to vote. If you're not registered at your current address, apply by midnight on **Monday 20 April** at [gov.uk/register-to-vote](http://gov.uk/register-to-vote).



You will need to bring voter ID to vote in person

Accepted forms of ID include:

- a UK, EEA or Commonwealth passport
- a UK or EEA photo drivers' licence and some concessionary travel passes, such as an older person's bus pass or an Oyster 60+ card
- an expired ID if you are still recognisable from the photo.

If you don't have accepted photo ID, you can apply for a free voter ID document, known as a Voter Authority Certificate (VAC) by **5pm on Tuesday 28 April**. You can come to one of our contact centres or libraries for help registering online.

You can also vote by proxy. The deadline to apply for a proxy vote is **5pm on Tuesday 28 April**.

Find out more at [royalgreenwich.gov.uk/elections](http://royalgreenwich.gov.uk/elections)

## Changes to the two-child limit for Universal Credit: check how your household may be affected

**The two-child limit for families on Universal Credit will no longer apply from April 2026.**

If you are protected from the benefit cap (earning over £881.23 per month from 1 April 2026, claiming carer benefits, disability benefits or certain sickness benefits, among other exemptions) then your Universal Credit entitlement will increase.

If you are not exempt from the benefit cap, this additional money may push you into being capped or increase the level of your cap. This means that your income will either not increase at all or only increase to the benefit cap limit.

If you are currently affected by the two-child limit, then it is important that your benefits are updated

with the details of the children in your household if you have not already done this.

If you are working and have never claimed Universal Credit, it is worth checking online to see whether you could be missing out.

Visit [gov.uk/guidance/claiming-benefits-for-2-or-more-children](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claiming-benefits-for-2-or-more-children) for more information.



### New repayment options for leaseholders



Leaseholders will have received a letter alongside their current service charge invoices, outlining the options available for repaying major works charges.

These changes have been approved to ensure that repayment arrangements remain fair, affordable, and responsive to the increasing financial pressures many leaseholders are facing.

If you would like to discuss the repayment options available to you, request tailored calculations, or if you are experiencing financial difficulty, please contact the Home Ownership Services team by emailing [home.ownership@royalgreenwich.gov.uk](mailto:home.ownership@royalgreenwich.gov.uk)



### New Housing Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Policy

A Housing Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Policy is in place to guide how the council respond to reports of housing-related ASB.

The policy sets out 12 commitments that outlines what residents can expect when you report ASB including information on response times, risk and safeguarding checks, and how different services coordinate when handling cases.

Residents who wish to view the policy or want more information on reporting ASB should visit [royalgreenwich.gov.uk/reportasb-housingestate](https://royalgreenwich.gov.uk/reportasb-housingestate)

## We're here to help

If you are struggling to pay your rent, please speak to your Income Officer.

Our Income Officers can agree an affordable repayment arrangement and give advice on further support.

They can also refer you to the Universal Support Team for guidance with your Universal Credit claim.

The Universal Support Team can check whether your income could be maximised with additional welfare support, ensure your housing costs are being paid at the highest eligible rate, and identify any disability benefits you may be missing out on.

They can also assist with claims or disputes you may be having with the DWP. If you do not receive Universal Credit, your Income Officer can refer you to another team for benefits advice.

Call your Income Officer on the number at the top of your rent statement or email **rent-account-enquiries@royalgreenwich.gov.uk**

## Have your say if you live in a high-rise building

Residents who live in council-managed high-rise buildings can have their say on our Draft Building Safety Resident Engagement Strategy.

Copies of the draft strategy, which includes the draft communications and engagement plan for each building and the results of pre-engagement held with residents last year, have been sent to all households in blocks that are at least seven storeys or 18 metres high.

Surveys can be returned using the Freepost envelope provided or completed online at **royalgreenwich.gov.uk/hrb-safety-strategy** by **Sunday 14 June**.

If you have any queries email **resident.safety@royalgreenwich.gov.uk**

## Get council updates by email

Subscribe now to get the weekly council bulletin sent straight to your email inbox.



From bank holiday bin collections to free events for all the family, our weekly bulletin tells you everything you need to know.

Subscribe at **royalgreenwich.gov.uk/newsletter**

## Regulatory notice removed

The Regulator of Social Housing, the national body which oversees council housing, has removed its regulatory notice it served on the council four years ago.

This notice was put in place after we identified some issues and self-referred in 2022.

On 25 February, the notice was removed by the Regulator following progress made to complete up-to-date health and safety assessments for electrical, fire, asbestos and water safety over the last four years.

Look out for the letter to all tenants sent alongside this issue of Talk Housing, which explains this in more detail.