

Talk Housing

News for Royal Greenwich tenants and leaseholders

WELCOME

Welcome to Issue 17 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.

AUTUMN 2021 ISSUE 17



Future of Council Homes

Inside

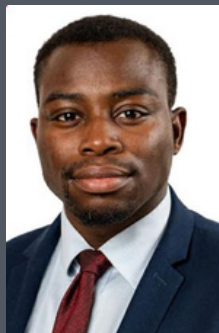
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www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/housing


ROYAL borough of
GREENWICH

5 minutes with Councillor Okereke



A while back my dad told me the story of how he rented his first home in Woolwich. As a black Nigerian man, he was asked to view the house at night because the private landlord didn't want anyone to see him. Depressingly, he agreed as he didn't want the neighbours to cause a fuss.

I was forced to remember this story following comments on social media about our support for Afghan *refugees*. Residents asked us to focus our energy on 'English' people, those born here first, before we turned our attention to housing anyone else. It was not long ago my father was deemed less deserving of a home in this borough because of the colour of his skin. A home I have flourished in and a council I now serve.

Throughout the history of this borough, housing has provided shelter to those in need. So where do we draw the line on who we support and who we don't?

Council housing as we know it has been around for over 100 years, but we have lost 13,734 homes through the government's right to buy policy alone, alongside years of reduced funding to build council homes this drastically reduced our housing stock - creating a

long waiting list and many residents in real need.

As a council we are proud to be building council homes again and through Greenwich Builds we are replenishing what we have lost. We have 750 new homes currently under construction and an additional £38million from the Mayor of London to build more.

Council housing is a safety net for those in need. No matter what the crisis, conflict, recession or pandemic and this is awarded regardless of race, class or creed. I am proud that as a council we will support 20 Afghan families to make a new life for themselves. These individuals worked with the British Army to support our troops while they served their duty in Afghanistan. It's important we don't resort to drawing a line between those we deem deserving and those we don't. The real issue here is the supply of housing, we need more funding from the government to build more so we can provide for all. Otherwise, we can end up discriminating against each other and our neighbours, and people like my father may never have been offered an opportunity to build their life here.

Cllr Anthony Okereke,
Cabinet Member for Housing

100 years of council homes!

Last year marked 100 years of council homes not only in our borough but across the UK, with over 5.5 million homes built across the country over the past century.

To mark the occasion, we visited the Greenwich Heritage Trust to take a look through their archives. We were amazed by what we found – thousands of photos, brochures, newspaper clippings and architectural plans which spanned over 100 years. From the first ground-breaking in Woolwich in 1919, to the last farmland to disappear in London in Coldharbour, and bomb damage during the blitz.



Royal Greenwich suffered severe damage during the Second World War, including a concentration of fly-bomb and long range rocket attacks. A large number of houses were totally destroyed and few houses escaped damage. The images show the Middle Park estate in Eltham, which was opened in 1937. Just four years later, many of the 1,518 homes on the estate were damaged beyond recognition.



The Coldharbour Estate in Eltham comprised an area of 155 acres and 1,715 dwellings, built in February 1947. The site was the last farmland to disappear in London. Then-Minister for Health, Aneurin Bevan, opened the first house in Coldharbour on Saturday 12 July, 1947. Rent at the time was £1.09 per week.

Woolwich Dockyard construction photos circa 1970 (example below)



Woolwich Dockyard was founded by King Henry VIII in 1512 to build Great Harry, the largest ship of its day. The older part of the dockyard was turned into a council housing estate by The Royal Borough of Greenwich in the early 1970s. Surviving industrial buildings include parts of the old factory wall along Woolwich Church Street, and remnants of the Steam Factory with its prominent chimney nearby.

Meeting new tenants at Woodlands Park Road



Greenwich Builds has revived the proud tradition of councils building homes for residents on lower incomes, after many years during which housing stock was depleted by Right to Buy and government restrictions on council borrowing. There are now hundreds of sustainable Greenwich Builds homes approved, under construction or complete.

New residents of one such scheme in Greenwich Peninsula were visited in September by Leader of the Royal Borough of Greenwich, Councillor Danny Thorpe, Cabinet Member for Housing Councillor Anthony Okereke and Deputy Leader and Member for Regeneration and Good Growth, Councillor Denise Scott-McDonald.

Juniper and Jacob House are new developments comprised of 15 homes for over-55s, and Councillors met residents Angela, Temitope, Joseph, Marcia, Vivienne, Anthony and Martin, who all moved into the new developments recently. Marcia was especially enthusiastic about the first time she saw her new home, telling councillors “I was screaming, it’s so lovely! It was like winning the pools”.

Angela said of her flat “the place is beautiful. I’m proud to have a council who are building, thank you so much”. Brothers Martin and Anthony, who downsized from a larger home in the area where stairs were causing problems due to Martin’s mobility issues, were also full of praise for their new home, saying “it’s a lovely flat, two nice bedrooms... we’re very happy”.



More zero carbon Greenwich Builds council home schemes approved

Greenwich Builds continues to go from strength to strength, with recent planning approvals for four schemes adding 31 new homes to those already approved and underway.

The new developments are located in Avery Hill, Shooters Hill, Greenwich Peninsula and Plumstead, and are all part of the council’s commitment to build over 750 sustainable new council homes for local people by 2024.

Responding to demand on housing waiting lists these schemes offer a diverse range of housing options, from one-bedroom flats to four-bedroom houses. Two wheelchair-accessible apartments are also included in one scheme.



All of these homes are built to zero-carbon sustainability standards, affirming Royal Borough of Greenwich’s commitment to tackling the climate crisis, as laid out in our draft Carbon Neutral Plan.

£38 million funding boost for Greenwich Builds

Greenwich Builds has been given a boost in the form of a £38 million grant from the Mayor of London, as part of the new Affordable Homes Programme.

The additional funding will be used to build hundreds of new council homes across Royal Greenwich, as part

of the Greenwich Builds programme.

Over 350 Greenwich Builds council homes are now under construction, with tenants having moved into the first 20 completed homes this year.



SEPTEMBER 2021 UPDATE

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

- **400 homes being designed**
- **0 homes awaiting approval**
- **366 homes being built**
- **22 homes completed**



Talk Housing

Get your voice heard



Signing up to YourVIEW will mean that you will belong to a pool of Tenants and Leaseholders living in our Housing across the Borough.

It is incredibly important to us that we listen to our residents and act on their feedback.

What's in it for you?

- You will be invited to your local housing meetings
- Play a vital role in shaping your housing services
- Attend housing focused meetings alongside other residents
- We will send you a monthly calendar, outlining upcoming meeting dates, events and other opportunities
- Let you know about community training opportunities and local employment opportunities.

To sign up, please go on the following link: royalgreenwich.gov.uk/yourview

We are refreshing the way we engage with you. To hear more about our future plans, visit our YouTube channel and search Housing and Anti-Poverty Scrutiny Panel - 1st July 2021.

It was great to finally be together again and celebrate the amazing mix of cultures, communities and people in our borough. It was wonderful to speak to so many of you on the day including our YourVIEW members.

We want to say a special thank you to our younger residents, who participated in the YourVIEW drawing competition. We received so many wonderful drawings showing why you liked living in Greenwich, from parks to train tracks, your neighbours and many more!

Please see below the drawing from our three winners.



Estate parking Update

We have now proposed and consulted on a new way to manage estate parking more effectively and improve parking availability for our residents. This was in response to changes in government policy about how housing estate parking should be managed.

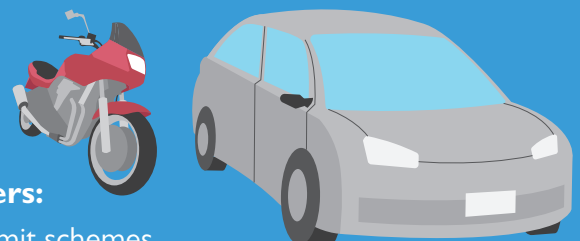
We would like to thank everyone who took part in the most recent consultation which took place in August 2021. Updates will be available via our website and social media pages. Residents affected by the changes will receive a letter in the post.

Parking by numbers:

- **98** permit schemes are included in the Traffic Management Orders across the borough
- **681** responses to the first consultation
- **1** new parking contractor, Greenwich's own Parking Enforcement Team

To hear the latest updates and to view the estate parking plan drawings, please visit:

royalgreenwich.gov.uk/parkingconsultation



Housing Estate Walkabouts

Our new approach to estate walkabouts gives you more opportunity to raise *local* issues and improve your area for the benefit of the community.

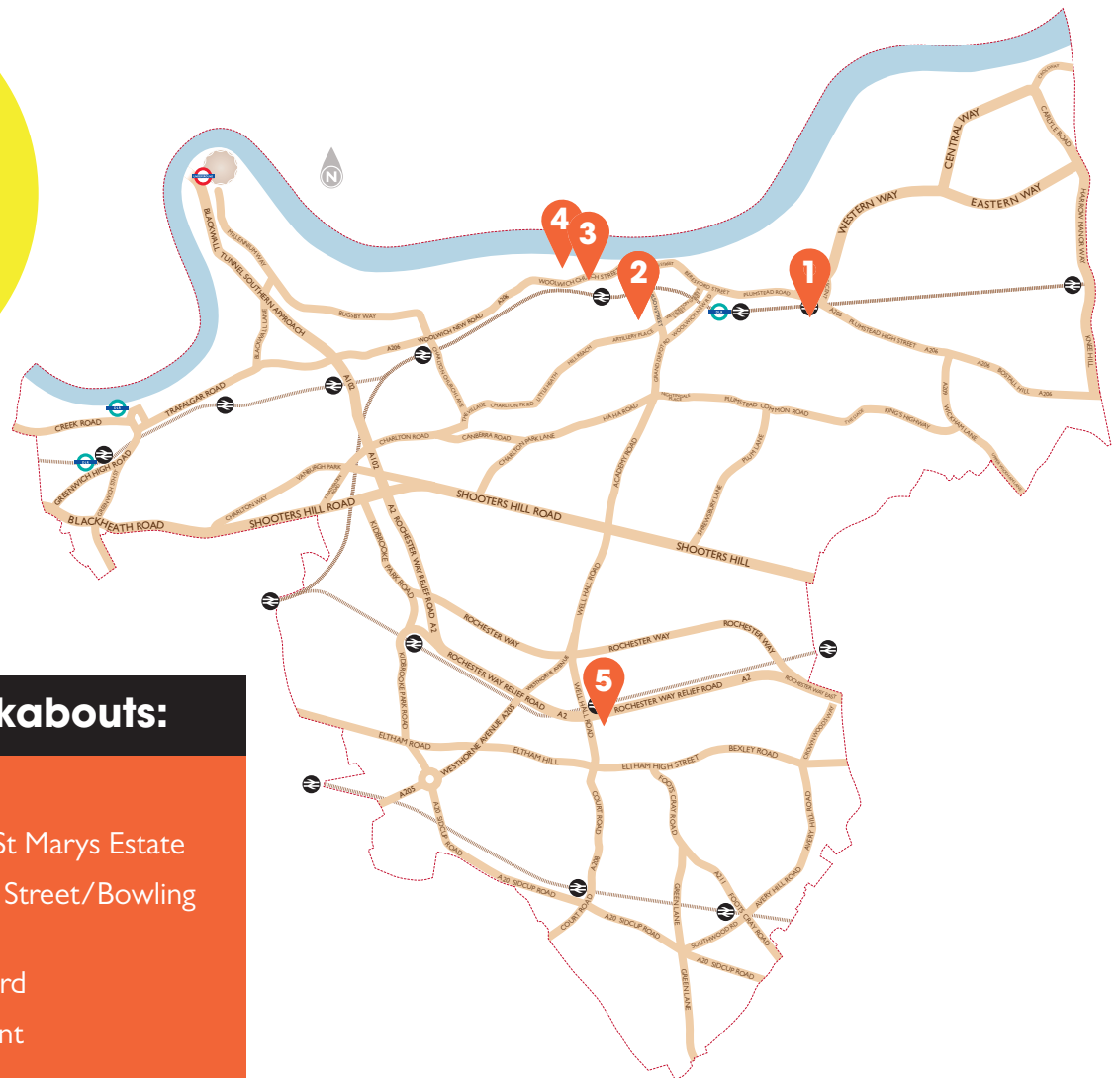
The online pre-meet held before the walkabout, will allow you to share your concerns about any issues that need attention. If you are unable to attend the online meeting, you will have the chance to phone or email in your issues.

These meetings are attended by Councillors, and officers from Repairs, Caretaking, Grounds Maintenance, Waste Services, Enviro-crime Team.

The relevant services will do their best to solve the issues as quickly as possible.

Walkabouts this year:

- ✓ Coldharbour
- ✓ Woolwich Common
- ✓ Shooters Hill
- ✓ Strandfield
- ✓ Gilbert House, Deptford Green, Hughesfield
- ✓ Abbey Wood
- ✓ Meridian



Upcoming walkabouts:

- 1 Walmer Terrace
- 2 Kingsman Street/ St Marys Estate
- 3 Woolwich Church Street/Bowling Green
- 4 Woolwich Dockyard
- 5 Strongbow Crescent

For more information, please email Community-Participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk
To see walkabouts planned for 2022 visit: royalgreenwich.gov.uk/estate-walkabouts



Hate crime will not be tolerated

It is a sad fact that many people are victims of crime purely because of hostility towards who they are, or who they are perceived to be. Home Office figures show hate crimes have risen nationally since 2014, and this year's National Hate Crime Awareness Week, which runs from 9 to 16 October, is reinforcing the message that there is no place for hate in the UK.

This year Hate Crime Awareness Week is focusing on those who are targeted because they are transgender or gender non-binary.

A hate crime is any criminal offence that is motivated by hostility or prejudice towards someone's religion, race, sexual orientation, sex, disability or transgender identity.

Hate crime can affect the health and wellbeing of individuals, which is why we have commissioned services like the Greenwich Inclusion Project (GrIP) and Stop Hate UK to provide free support and advice.

Support is available

GrIP works to ensure people receive the support they need after experiencing a hate crime – **020 3747 9862/ griproject.org.uk**

You can also report hate crime and access support from Stop Hate UK – it operates a 24-hour phone line **0800 138 1625**

Find out more: royalgreenwich.gov.uk/hatecrime

Black History Month

Connecting Communities Dance Festival launches this October, as part of Black History Month. It's set to dazzle with a five-day extravaganza showcasing popping dance styles from our African, Asian, Irish, and Caribbean diaspora communities over October half term week. A creative collaboration bringing together dance pros, keen amateurs, and everyone of every ability who wants to come together, joyfully dance, and learn some new moves; with stellar Kauma Arts working alongside Royal Borough of Greenwich to create the festival it'll shine.

The Connecting Communities Festival is funded with a £50,000 Arts Council England grant, it's part of



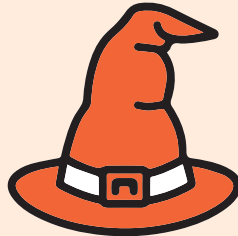
Black History Month and other Black History 365 celebrations events that will run over the year. Watch this space for new announcements of other brilliant events yet to be revealed.

RBG safety tips for staying safe this Autumn

We have got a few tips for staying safe this Halloween, whatever your age.



Use a **torch** or battery tea lights to light your pumpkin, instead of a candle.



Buy or make **flame-retardant costumes**. Apply **reflective tape** to your child's *Halloween* costume, so they are visible in the evening.



Make sure an **adult carves the pumpkin**. When you carve, use a dry knife to help prevent slipping.



Your kids should always trick-or-treat **in groups or accompanied by an adult**.



Avoid chemical aerosols to create your costume or props, because they are **highly flammable**, and they can cause headaches and coughing.

Colourful firework displays will bring some much-needed sparkle to the dark November evenings.

Here's a few words of warning to help you enjoy this time of the year without any accidents!

Sparkler Safety

- It's really important to supervise children around sparklers, making sure they keep them at arm's length and don't wave them in each other's faces or drop them onto anything flammable.

Firework Safety

- Always buy fireworks that are stamped with the safety standard BS 7114. Store unused fireworks in a closed box and keep dry.
- Carefully read instructions on each individual firework and make sure there's plenty of space and clear sky for the fireworks to be let off, directing away from people, trees and overhead cables.
- Never go back to a lit firework or try to re-light it, once the fireworks have been used, put them into a tub of water, and dispose of them in a bin the next day.

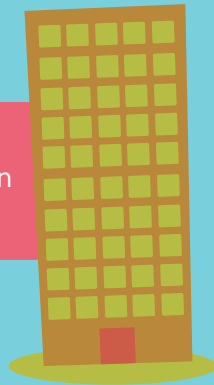
We understand that most of this is common sense, but if not used correctly can cause real damage, but if used safely, can provide an evening of fun and entertainment for the whole family.



Digital Listening Campaign, a year on. You said/ We did



You said...
"You wanted us to clean windows in estates."



You said...
"I feel like ownership is not taken by repairs staff and customer care is poor."



We did...

"Customer care training was carried out all of the admin in Repairs and Investment. There is a programme being devised for all our trade staff."

We did...

"the Caretaking Team have launched a new in-house communal Window Cleaning Team. The team will be working on a 38 week rolling programme, which includes all internal *communal* windows and external communal windows up to the 4th floor (depending on the high of each level). If you have any caretaking concerns, need to report a cleaning issue or have a question on how we provide our services, you can contact the team directly by emailing housing-caretaking@royalgreenwich.gov.uk"



You said...
"I want to know in advance when to expect the council services at my door."

You said...

"I have to wait too long for a repair to be completed."



We did...

"Text messaging will be developed to allow for advance texting – operatives will text 30 minutes before repairs appointment. Pilot will commence from 14th September 2021"

We did...

"During Covid-19 and the 3rd lockdown we have prioritised urgent and emergency repairs which has resulted in longer waiting times.

There has been a significant reduction in the backlog of repairs, we are still working through the backlog. The repairs have been completed either by the in-house team or external contractors. Full service was resumed in July 2021 and residents can have telephone and book all repairs."



Gas Safety in properties

We at the Royal Borough of Greenwich take gas safety very seriously.

We have an in-house team of fully qualified and fully trained gas operatives who are dedicated to keeping our tenants safe.

As a tenant, you can play a part by making sure you allow access for us to service and inspect your gas appliances.

We fit carbon monoxide alarms to all properties that have a gas appliance. These must not be removed. You cannot see or smell or feel carbon monoxide!

If a carbon monoxide alarm activates you must not dispose of it, you must ring the National Gas Emergency Service immediately on 0800 111 999.

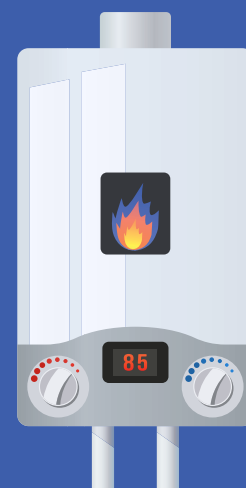
They will attend and make sure the property is safe. This will be followed by an inspection by council Gas Department, who will fix any faults and replace any faulty alarms.

The council are currently in the process of replacing all older less efficient boilers with new more energy efficient condensing boilers.

If you have any concerns or questions, relating to gas safety, please contact us via email:

Gas-section@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Or by phone: **0800 317 715**



Fight flu this winter

People at high risk from flu are also most at risk from COVID-19. The flu vaccine is given free on the NHS to high-risk groups.

To see if you are eligible and the latest updates, please visit the NHS website at: **[nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/flu-influenza-vaccine/](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/flu-influenza-vaccine/)**

Arrange a collection for bulky items

Our bulky collection service is open. To book an appointment please call us on: **020 8921 4661**

Please only put out items that you have booked for collection.

Place them at the front of your property or ground level near the bins outside, if you live in a council estate.

Items should be placed in the correct place by 6am on day of collection.

Benefit payments into Post Office Card Accounts comes to an end on 1 December 2021. If you are currently using this service, please contact the Tax Credits Helpline (**0345 300 3900**), the Child Benefit Helpline (**0300 200 3100**) and/or their relevant benefits office to provide alternative banking details into which your benefits can be paid. This must be done before November 2021.

For further information, please visit **[postoffice.co.uk/post-office-card-account/important-changes](https://www.postoffice.co.uk/post-office-card-account/important-changes)**.



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 with your full name, contact number or email and return this to the Community Participation & Diversity Team at the Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington Street, SE18 6HQ.

Thank you to those of you, who sent in your answers from Issue 16.

Congratulations to **Sandra Ibrahim** for winning the last wordsearch!



The words from the last wordsearch are:

Strategy, Vibrant, Respect, Environmen, Fitness, Electrical, Green, Exchange, Standard and Gardening.

K	E	R	E	F	U	G	E	E	S	E	J	D	H
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P	S	R	U	O	B	H	G	I	E	N	N	E	T
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