

MARCH 2021

Home*in*ing

The magazine for Harrow Council's tenants and leaseholders

WIN
£25
See p19

MAJOR IMPROVEMENTS

NEW ROOFS FOR
PINNER GROVE ESTATE

Housing Matters
online event
WEDNESDAY
28 APRIL
7pm

HELP US FIND NEW WAYS TO LISTEN P16

HOW TO STAY HEALTHY P4-5

HELP LATEST ON HOUSING SERVICES P10-13

HOW TO STAY HEALTHY

Harrow COUNCIL
LONDON



WARNING Please keep a 2-metre distance from front line staff at all times, wear a mask (unless exempt) and avoid gathering in communal areas – help keep everyone safe!



Photo CORNER

"Maurice is eight years old and is a rare breed, a Tibetan (Buddha) Cat. They have been bred for many hundreds of years by the Tibetan monks to keep the young novices in the monasteries warm during the cold winters, wrapping them in their robes like a hot water bottle, hence their name."

£10
for every
printed picture



Photo of your pet to anthrea.watkins@harrow.gov.uk and win £10 shopping vouchers when printed

HELLO FROM PHILLIP O'DELL



It's helpful to have a government roadmap taking us out of the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

We will be talking more about how this affects services at the next online Housing Matters event on Wed 28 April at 7pm, so please join us if you can.

We will also be talking about the new government guidelines for Housing Services and its implications over the coming years, such as developing Decent Homes 2 programme; changing how we listen and feedback to you and how it will affect our building programme.

You will also have the chance to meet Julian Higson, the new Director of Housing.

Cllr Phillip O'Dell

Portfolio holder for Housing

✉ phillip.odell@harrow.gov.uk

☎ 0208 4242 1897

COVID RECOVERY

As we come out of lockdown and into the recovery phase from Covid-19, our housing services will gradually be returning to normal. We will try to do this as quickly as possible, but this is dependent on the speed of the national process of ending lockdown. We know this may yet be subject to change, so as a result we will keep our services under regular review. If you need to know about the status of any of our services, please check with us using the Harrow website or by contacting us via the links on page 3.

HOUSING MATTERS ONLINE EVENT

Please join us for the Zoom Housing Matters event on 28 April 2021 at 7.00pm – 8.30pm. You will have the opportunity to meet Julian Higson, the new Director of Housing, and we will be talking about The Charter for Social Housing Residents, a government document proposing how to engage residents in future, as well as talking about Decent Homes standard.

**WEDNESDAY
28
APRIL**

Cover: Pinner Grove and Grove Avenue - flats are getting new, better insulated roofs. See page 18.

HOUSING SERVICE NEWS

Search for Harrow Council housing to log your repair



NEW HOUSING DIRECTOR

We are sorry to announce that Nick Powell left Harrow Council at the end February 2021 after four years as the Council's Director of Housing. Nick has been of great service to Harrow in two spells, lately leading the Housing Service over some very challenging but enjoyable years. Nick will miss in particular, engagement with Harrow's residents, but is pleased to hand over to Julian Higson. He has wide experience of working for housing association and council landlords, most recently as housing director with Bristol City Council. Julian is excited to be joining Harrow and looking forward to meeting residents. He wants the council to work closely with residents to make sure our services focus on what matters most. Housing is a priority issue in Harrow and we want our housing services to be the best they can be.



RENT INCREASE FROM APRIL 2021

From April 2021, in line with Government policy, council housing rents will increase by 1.5% which is made up of the Consumer Prices Index (0.5% in September 2020) plus 1%. Annual rent increases are expected in subsequent years and these will be used to improve the Council's housing services and support its new build programme.

On page 8, you can see support that is available if you are struggling financially.

HOW TO CONTACT HOUSING SERVICES

Please log your repair or rent enquiry on the Harrow website – just search for **Harrow Council housing**.

If you are unable to access the council online for a repair or tenancy management query, you can call Access Harrow:

☎ **0208 901 2630** or freephone **0800 614 456**

Repairs to domestic gas boiler and central heating systems should be reported directly to Quality Heating Services:

☎ **01494 795 041**

✉ **customer-services@quality-heating.co.uk**

For residents with communal heating and hot water system issues (e.g. sheltered residents) you should call Access Harrow **0208 901 2630** or freephone **0800 614 456**.

YOUR STORIES, YOUR MAG



9

Watch out for
scams

15

Acts of kindness

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Have you filled in
your Census?



FACTS ABOUT YOUR COVID-19 VACCINE



MORE INFO

The NHS website, your GP, your local council, community groups and religious leaders could all help you make up your mind about the vaccine. If you know someone who has had it, why not speak to them? Or the website: gov.uk/coronavirus

...that they affect
...y.
...e trialled on nearly 100,000
...f all ages and ethnicities – and
...e safe.
...you wait to ‘see how things go’
...ore having the vaccine, you could
...tch Covid-19 and end up in hospital
...r develop Long Covid.

Taking the vaccine is the best way to protect our families and ourselves and return to the life we used to love.



Over 70,000 people have already been vaccinated in Harrow

COVID-19
VACCINE



HARROW CITIZENS ADVICE

Harrow Citizens Advice is here to support Harrow residents by providing telephone support for Harrow residents who are feeling lonely at this difficult time
☎ 0808 250 5705

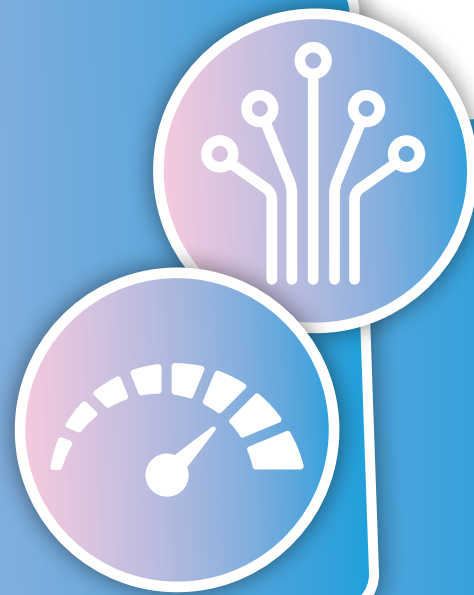
Want to come through the COVID restrictions healthier, happier and lighter on your feet?

This time, the free Shape Up weight management programme is a better option.

The Shape Up app is easy to use



FULL FIBRE BROADBAND ROLL OUT



The UK government target is to have full-fibre broadband available to every building in the country by 2025. Full-fibre broadband providers are therefore partnering with Local Authorities (LA) to bring their fibreoptic networks into LA social housing portfolios. This will give residents more choice through access to better broadband speeds and better-quality services at lower prices than they have been used to.

Once a network provider has established its network in an area, it will naturally grow further to private residents and businesses through market demand. These are the aims:

- Maximise the extent and coverage of fibre broadband availability for residents and businesses
- Deliver the rollout of improved digital infrastructure in a way that minimises the disturbance to residents and businesses
- Ensure delivery of fibre broadband networks at pace (2-3 years ideally)



Expect quicker broadband connection to the internet in the future

EU SETTLEMENT SCHEME

If you're an EU, EEA or Swiss citizen, you and your family can apply to the EU Settlement Scheme to continue living in the UK after 30 June 2021.

The deadline for applying is 30 June 2021. You must usually have started living in the UK by 31 December

2020. It's free to apply to the scheme.

If your application is successful, you'll get either settled or pre settled status.

You may be able to stay in the UK without applying depending on your circumstances- for example, if you're an Irish citizen or

already have indefinite leave to remain.

For more information visit www.gov.uk/eusettledstatus.

If you need help applying Citizens Advice Harrow may be able to assist you. Contact 0808 250 5705 or visit www.citizensadvice.org.uk/local/harrow

RESIDENTS' WALL

Rose Tallon, South Harrow, sent in this picture of residents enjoying playing in Alexandra Park



Nikhil Mashru of Alma Court said, "Full moon from Alma Court Sheltered scheme on 31 December 2020"



Simon Joshua sent in this picture of a juvenile field vole



Maurice the cat asleep on John Allwright's keyboard



PLEASE SEND ANY NEWS ARTICLES, PHOTOS, OR JOKES TO ✉ ANTHEA.WATKINS@HARROW.GOV.UK AND IF IT IS PRINTED, WE'LL SEND YOU A £10 SHOPPING VOUCHER.

MONEY

in your pocket



Help and advice

■ Harrow Council

We know that many tenants and leaseholders have experienced financial hardship during the Coronavirus pandemic. If you are experiencing problems in paying your rent or service charges, please contact Harrow Council on 020 8901 2630. It is much harder to deal with arrears when they build up.

■ Citizens Advice Harrow

Tenants needing free, confidential, and impartial advice on money issues and benefits can be referred by Resident Services to an

Independent

Money Advisor at Citizens Advice Harrow.

☎ **0808 250 5705 to request a referral**

■ Christians Against Poverty

If you are struggling with problem debt, Christians Against Poverty (CAP) can help you with free debt counselling. You can either contact CAP yourself or get a referral by Resident Services and then CAP will arrange an initial appointment with a local CAP Debt Coach.

☎ **020 8901 2630 to request a referral**

🌐 **www.capuk.org**

Want to earn more?

Harrow Council is offering free courses that will up your earning power if you live or work in Harrow and earn less than £10.75 per hour, from a one-day training session to something longer that leads to a qualification.

✉ **xcite@harrow.gov.uk**

🌐 **www.harrow.gov.uk/jobs/harrow-earn**



Have you heard of the Xcite programme?

Xcite is a free training and employment programme providing a full range of support to help Harrow residents back into work. To register for Xcite visit the website for more information and for links to the Xcite virtual employment workshops on Microsoft Teams every Thursday at 1.30pm

🌐 **www.harrow.gov.uk/jobs/careers-advice-training**

✉ **xcite@harrow.gov.uk**

Learn Harrow

Learn Harrow provides a wide choice of learning opportunities for all ages and abilities across a range of courses, such as English & ESOL, Maths, Arts & Crafts, Music, Dance. There are courses for adults and courses for families to learn together.

✉ **learnharrow@harrow.gov.uk**

🌐 **www.learnharrow.ac.uk/**



UPSET AND TROUBLED BY SCAMS?



Written
by Angela,
a resident

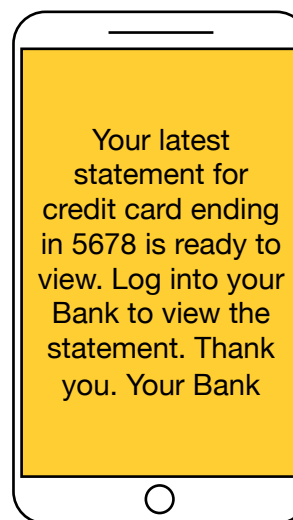
Anyone can be a victim of scammers. The scammers are heartless, greedy criminals. Scams come through unrequested contact in letters, emails, telephone, texts and directly in person.

The most common scams are distraction scams, vaccine and banking fraud, cheque scams, courier fraud, doorstep and holiday scams, you owe tax, identity theft, impersonation, invoice and mandate, payment in advance, purchase and romance scams.

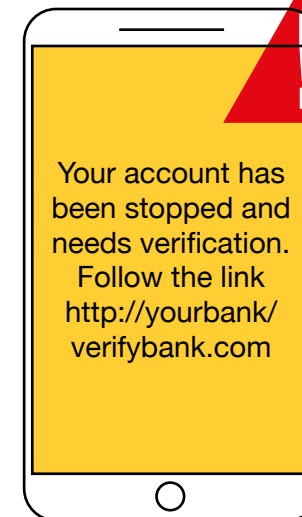
BANK SMS PHISH

Top tip - stop before you even look at the messages

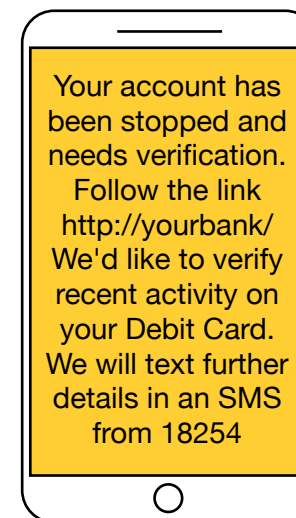
Look out for phishing texts on your phone. Here are three messages. Which were genuine?



The first SMS is genuine. It gives information only. You are told to log into your account but it gives no links that could lead you to possibly malevolent dangerous websites. Only you can log onto your account.



The second SMS is malicious. The link is likely to be for a phishing website. These websites trick you into handing over personal details such as account numbers, credit and cash card numbers or even passwords. Never respond instantly.



The third SMS is genuine. It is a text I received from my bank. It does not ask me to click on a link. The style is the same as my bank's normal messages. Even though it looked genuine when I received it, I did not initially act on it. I checked my bank account and phoned the number on the back of my debit card. I spoke to the helpline and after some checks I was able to confirm it was genuine.

- For support if you've been a victim of scamming go to **www.victimsupport.org.uk**
- You can get emotional support from **mind.org.uk/information-support/support-community-elefriends**
- You can report scams to **Action Fraud** at **www.actionfraud.police.uk** or contact the local police

HOUSING SERVICE UPDATE... HOUSING SERVICE UPDATE...

HOW ARE COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS AFFECTING HOUSING SERVICES?

Lockdown is slowly lifting, but many restrictions remain. We're committed to working in ways that help control the virus and protect staff and residents.

You can read the latest information at www.gov.uk/coronavirus

Repairs and maintenance service

Our repairs contractors (Wates/Slade/Quality Heating Services) continue to provide a 'near normal' repairs service, where it is safe to do so, but for some non-urgent repairs or replacements, these jobs may be delayed or deferred. Examples include fencing, plastering, flooring works or kitchen upgrades.

We continue to carry out annual gas safety inspections/ and essential boiler repairs using the same safety arrangements.

Safety measures in place

- You should not be present or near the area where work is being carried out
- Contractors wear protective PPE
- You should wear face coverings as well as keep windows open for ventilation
- We will not carry out any work if a household is self-isolating because one or more members have symptoms or where an individual is clinically extremely vulnerable unless it is to remedy a direct risk to safety.



Book your repair online, search: Harrow Council housing

You still have to pay your rent

You still have a liability to pay your rent throughout this period and the Council expects residents to continue to pay rent.

How to pay

You can pay your rent over the automated telephone payment line on 0208 424 1125 or pay online www.harrow.gov.uk/housing-property/pay-rent-council-home

For rent queries, please contact your rent officer

☎ 020 8901 2630 / freephone 0800 614 456

✉ housing@harrow.gov.uk

New vulnerable tenants policy underway

During the first lockdown Resident Services undertook a project to try to contact our older and vulnerable tenants. This project highlighted issues such as how to decide who is vulnerable and we have now started working on a Vulnerable Tenant Policy so that we are better prepared for the future.

Contacting the Council

Access Harrow's phone service operates 9 - 5pm on weekdays. However, Harrow Council is following a national strategy of channel shift – this means encouraging you to contact the Council by filling in an online form. The Council recognises that there are residents who may not have online access and who will continue to need to speak to someone in person.

So, if you don't need to speak to a person, please email us via the Harrow Council website and complete the web form or go onto your My Harrow account.

🌐 www.harrow.gov.uk/housing-property



Using the web form gives you an audit trail

Financial and other support

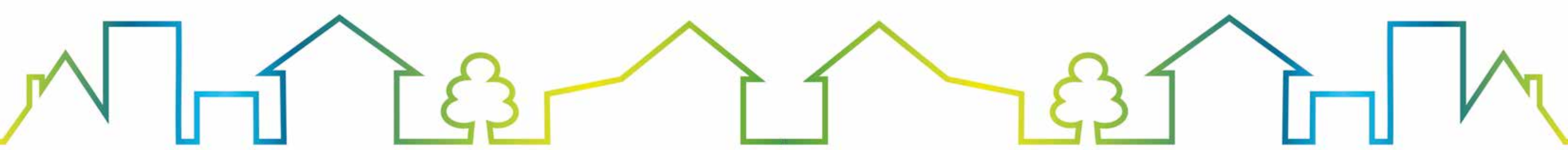
Visit www.harrow.gov.uk/supportforresidents to understand what you might be eligible for, such as council tax support.

If you are experiencing hardship due to Covid-19 or your household has been self-isolating or your salary has stopped/ been reduced, you may be eligible for Universal Credit, see www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit.

If you are struggling to afford essentials call 020 8901 2698. If you are shielding or unable to go to the shops because you are in a Covid vulnerable group and you are having difficulties getting a food delivery slot, you can request a basic food parcel delivery by visiting helpharrow.org.

£

See page 8 for other options



HOUSING SERVICE UPDATE... HOUSING SERVICE UPDATE...

ESTATE SERVICES

Caretaker service

Estate Services has been working with around 50% resources and it has been difficult with limited staff to maintain the usual level of service delivery. Because of this, the caretakers work has been limited to bulk rubbish removal and litter picking and they have not been visiting internal communal areas unless we receive a report of a potential Health and Safety risk.

The good news is that we have recruited additional temporary staff to help with cleaning of internal communal areas, including the programme of wet cleaning which we intend to recommence once current restrictions are lifted.

Play areas on council estates

We took the decision to temporarily close all play areas on housing land until the Covid-19 restrictions are completely lifted and we are able to return to some semblance of normality. Risk assessments were carried out and we could not safely keep the play areas open for the continued use of toddlers and very young children. We would need to regularly check and cleanse the surfaces and we don't have the staff resource to do this.



This situation will be reviewed as we come out of lockdown

Most Council community centres are currently closed



Council's Community Halls

Our community halls have been closed during the 3rd lockdown as per government guidelines. When restrictions start to lift, the single occupancy hiring to nurseries will recommence based on the latest Risk Assessments. We look forward to when the restrictions are lifted and we can resume hiring out all the halls again, based on rigorous risk assessments that cover usage, cleaning, signage, ventilation, maximum numbers and monitoring.

New tenant viewings

Housing Needs team are doing virtual viewings for prospective applicants looking at social housing via the Locata process. Keys can be returned to a key safe in the civic centre at the end of a tenancy.



HomeSwapper can help you to swap your council or housing association home with other social tenants

A mutual exchange is a home swap between two social housing tenants. It's a great option if you can't access or don't want to wait for the normal allocation process. It gives you more control and means you're able to choose a home that suits your needs better in a place you want to live.

You will need to be a social housing tenant with a secure or assured tenancy and you can swap homes with any other council or housing association tenant that lives anywhere in the UK.

The Homeswapper service is free and helps you search for possible swaps, get in touch with other tenants and arrange viewings until you find the perfect new home.

🌐 www.homeswapper.me to register



Send in your questions
and I will answer them

✉ charlene.samms@harrow.gov.uk

☎ 07783 875 969

📁 Customer Service & Resident Engagement Manager,
Housing, Harrow Council, Civic Centre, Harrow, HA1 2XF



Ask Charlene

Please don't pour fat
down the sink, put in an
empty tin or jar



Why is my toilet and sink continually blocking?

Charlene: We get many call outs to clear blocked drains due to nappies and sanitary pads/ tampons blocking the waste pipes. Please don't flush these down the toilet but bag and bin it. This behaviour can affect the whole block and often means that the Council and leaseholders have to pay for getting it unblocked. And cooking oil should be left to cool, then poured into an empty jar or bottle and put in the general waste.

What can I store in a cupboard (that comes with my tenancy) which opens onto a communal part of my block of flats?

Charlene: You should not be storing things in a cupboard that may be a fire hazard. This includes things like: bottled gas, petrol, paraffin, paint tins, aerosols or any material that may be combustible that could catch fire or explode. You also need to ensure that the door to your cupboard is locked at all times.

Staff regularly inspect communal areas. Unsafe items may be removed immediately.

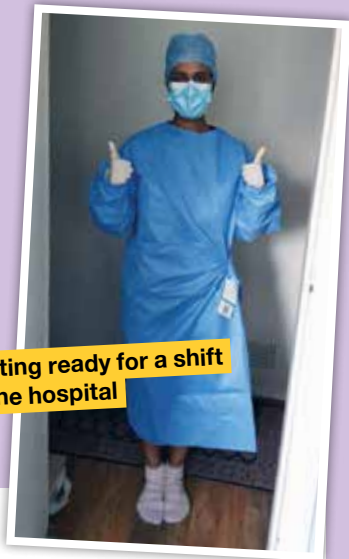
Please don't put other
residents lives at risk



RESIDENT Kindness

We invited residents to write in with examples where a neighbour or family member had carried out an act of kindness during these difficult times. Please do continue to send in your examples for inclusion in future editions.

✉ anthea.watkins@harrow.gov.uk



Getting ready for a shift
in the hospital

SYLVIA, STUDENT DOCTOR



Sylvia Manimaran

Thanks to Renuka Manimaran for sending in this example about her daughter, Sylvia Manimaran.

“ Since March 2020 Sylvia, my daughter, has been working at a doctor's surgery in Harrow whenever they need staff. Particularly at this time of the year she is working in the hospital as well as working in the surgery. When the government called up for all the student doctors, she was one of the doctors who was helping in the Covid ward. Sometimes her shift is from 8am till 8pm, then next day, she has to start at 6am for another 12 hours.

As a student doctor, the responsibility she takes and risking her life to go to the front line to help, she definitely has love for people. Then she carried on working at the surgery too. This she does while she is studying and completing her fourth year of medical school.”

”

RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

News

The world is changing and we need to change with it – in this case, how we engage with each other, such as you telling us your views, making suggestions to improve services or telling us where we are going wrong or getting it right

The government has recently launched the Social Housing White Paper and it puts more emphasis on listening to residents (post Grenfell), and demonstrating how we are listening. We also need to rethink our old ways of carrying out face to face engagement, as we can't do this as easily during our fight against Covid-19.

Janice Johnson, Chair of the Residents Board said,

"We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community... Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own" a quote by Cesar Chavez.

We are working on a new Resident Engagement Strategy, and if you are interested we would love to hear your ideas.



Invitation

You are invited to a Task and finish group meeting on Tuesday 20 April 2021 at 7 pm to 8.30pm on Zoom chaired by Nesan Thevanesan, Interim Head of Resident Services.

We will look further at what we want to achieve:

- 1 Reach a wider, more diverse audience, deal with the gaps
- 2 Creating meaningful opportunities for residents to influence services that

have a real impact

- 3 Evidence we adapt our services based on feedback and publish results in HI
 - 4 Higher % say we listen and act
 - 5 Neighbourhoods nicer, safer place to live
 - 6 Grow and develop residents
 - 7 Build places people want to live e.g. Grange Farm regeneration
- And we will be looking at the gaps we have currently in terms of

listening to different groups such as leaseholders, or our younger voice, or helping residents get more involved in their neighbourhood or in monitoring the caretaking/ ground maintenance on their estate.

To book your place and get the Zoom link contact Resident Involvement team:
✉ rinvolve@harrow.gov.uk

Volunteers needed to help monitor Repairs Contractors performance

We are seeking committed tenants/leaseholders to help us with the repairs monitoring Contractor Appraisals meetings held at either the Civic Centre, Harrow or on-site at contractor's offices. Currently these are being held online via MS Teams due to Covid-19 restrictions. HFTRA, whose members represent tenants and residents in the borough of Harrow through the estate-based Tenants and Residents Associations, have been an invaluable help in this process.

If you feel that you can commit to a couple of hours every quarter then please apply to HFTRA:
✉ hftraoffice@yahoo.co.uk



"CENSUS 2021 – EVERYONE COUNTS"

**CENSUS DAY 2021
SUNDAY
21 MARCH**

Households across Harrow have been asked to take part in Census 2021. The census is a once-in-a-decade survey that gives us the most accurate estimate of all the people and households in England and Wales. It has been carried out every decade since 1801, with the exception of 1941.

Census 2021 will be a 'digital first' census. Census day is on Sunday March 21 2021 but households will have received a letter in early March with unique access codes, allowing people to complete their questionnaire online. You then have another few weeks to complete.

Census statistics help the Council, local community groups and the local health service (amongst others) to understand the local area and all the residents that live there, and help in important decision making such as the need for local housing, GP surgeries or local nurseries.

That's why it is so important everyone takes part and we have made it easier for people to do so online on any device, with help and paper questionnaires for those that need them. Don't worry if you haven't filled it in by the 21st March, you have a little longer to do so, and you will be sent reminders. And if you can't find the letter, you can ask for a new code or paper questionnaire on the Census website or phone 0800 141 2021.

If you have any questions you can visit: www.census.gov.uk or contact Simon Brown, ONS Census Engagement Manager for Harrow
✉ simon.brown39@field.census.gov.uk

BUILDING A BETTER HARROW

Chichester Court



26 NEW HOMES DUE AT CHICHESTER COURT, STANMORE

The Council is building 26 new homes which will be rented at London Affordable Rent at Chichester Court. There will be 20 houses and 6 flats. This involved demolition of some garages, sheds and included re-aligning and widening the existing road which will also provide additional parking once finished.

Some of the blocks have reached a stage where the roof coverings will be going on.

The aim is to have some of these complete and ready for families to move into before the end of this year.

PINNER GROVE / GROVE AVENUE HOMES GET NEW ROOFS

Attractive, thermally efficient and fire-safe compartmentalisation roofs for 13 blocks of flats in Pinner Grove/Grove Avenue commence this Spring. This estate improvement has been requested by residents and will greatly reduce ongoing maintenance costs for many years. See front cover photo.

9 NEW FLATS AT ALEXANDRA AVENUE, SOUTH HARROW

You will see 9 new flats coming up at Alexandra Avenue. Before the main construction works started, the Council's Highways team began and have completed the widening of the access road.

This has enabled the residents to park safely on both sides of the road without mounting the grass verge or pavement without fear of the wing mirrors being clipped.

There will be 6 new flats adjoining the existing block at No 332 and 3 adjoining the block at 313. These will be part of the council's affordable housing stock. In keeping with our policy of reducing carbon emissions, there will be solar panels on the roof. The construction works are due to be completed by the end of the year.

Alexandra Avenue, new homes which will be rented at London Affordable Rent



Before...



...after, showing the widened access road



Puzzles Page

Word Search

Try and find the 10 words below!
The clue is 'Helping Others'.

M	P	F	R	I	E	N	D
D	K	S	K	X	V	E	C
S	S	E	N	D	N	I	K
W	A	L	K	I	N	G	Y
G	N	I	P	P	O	H	S
Y	K	Z	M	Q	T	B	Y
X	L	U	B	A	G	O	P
H	A	R	P	H	G	U	B
F	T	M	L	A	H	R	K
H	E	L	P	E	V	I	G

Win
£25

TO ENTER

For your chance to win £25 Love2shop vouchers, send your 10 words with your contact details by 30 April 2021 to:

✉ Anthea Watkins
Harrow Council, Civic 1,
Housing, Station Road,
Harrow HA1 2XY
✉ anthea.watkins@harrow.gov.uk

Love2shop vouchers can be used at Iceland, Wilkinson, WHSmith, Homebase, Boots, Superdrug, Matalan and many other stores.

Congratulations to Anika P of Bessborough Road who has won £20 shopping vouchers in the September edition of Homing In.

September 2020 Children's Puzzle answers
Name 10 words or phrases and the clue was things you would find on a farm:
Pig, Barn, Rabbit, Goose, Sheep, Yard, Chicken, Lamb, Tractor, Hay

Homing In survey winner

Congratulations to the winner of the 'How are you finding Housing Services Survey' in the September Homing In - Mr Dayalan, Howards Way, who has won £50 shopping vouchers. The majority agreed that we are keeping you well informed about housing services and understandably some repairs and maintenance has been delayed during earlier lockdowns.

GET TESTED

OUT AT WORK? KIDS IN SCHOOL? TEST TWICE A WEEK

harrow.gov.uk/test



Worried about your drinking?

If you live in Harrow and would like to talk to someone about you or a loved one's alcohol use, please contact us- we can help!

Our service is free and open to all Harrow residents aged 18 or over, as well as their families and carers.

For more information, please contact us:

PHONE

0300 303 2868

EMAIL

harrow@wdp.org.uk

WDP
Harrow



6 pints of beer =
14 units

BASED ON
567ML
4% ABV



6 medium glasses
of wine = 14 units

BASED ON
175ML
13.5 % ABV

The recommended
weekly limit of alcohol
for men and women is
14 units