

MARCH 2022

H*in*oming

The magazine for Harrow Council's tenants and leaseholders

WIN
£25
See p15



My community
GARDEN

**FATJONA AND JADE WANT TO
BRING THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER**

SEE P8

ELECTORAL WARD BOUNDARIES ARE CHANGING P3

**SAFER, WARMER AND
MORE ECO HOMES P4-5**

LAUNCH OF 5 PILOT ESTATE WEBSITES P16

Join the Housing
Matters webinar
WEDNESDAY
11 MAY 2022
6pm

*Harrow*COUNCIL
LONDON

Photo CORNER

£10
for every
printed picture

Chris Timony from Harrow Weald said, "Daisy is one year old and is fond of her photo being taken, she is a lovely playful girl".

Why not send in your favourite photo of Harrow or a photo of your pet to anthea.watkins@harrow.gov.uk and win £10 shopping vouchers when printed

HELLO FROM
PHILLIP O'DELL



We are all aware of the rising cost of living which is making it harder to keep on top of bills. Here are just a few ways that might help your situation, search online:

- **Help Harrow**
 - **London Community Kitchen** (they do a free surplus food market on Friday afternoons in Harrow)
 - **Harrow Food Bank** (via Citizens Advice Harrow referral)
 - **Wealdstone Baby Bank**
- Fuel poverty referral network **Seasonal Health Intervention Network** (SHINE) is a free energy advice service for Londoners, offering a helpline and affordable warmth solutions.

You can also get free water saving devices and advice from your **water supplier** to help you save money on your bill.

Cllr Phillip O'Dell
Portfolio holder for Housing
✉ phillip.odell@harrow.gov.uk
☎ 0208 4242 1897

HOUSING MATTERS ONLINE EVENT

Please join us at the Housing Matters Webinar on Wednesday 11 May 2022. Webinar at 6pm – 7.30pm via MS TEAMS. To get the meeting link contact:
✉ rinvolve@harrow.gov.uk



FULL FIBRE TO YOUR PROPERTY

Community Fibre is installing full fibre to council properties in Harrow on the Hill, West Harrow, Edgware and Wealdstone over the coming months. If you want to know more:
📍 www.communityfibre.co.uk

Cover: Flying start ladies, Jade and Fatjona at Honeypot Close



TENANCY SUSTAINMENT SUCCESS STORY

We have an extremely vulnerable resident who was causing anti-social behaviour (ASB) and had a variety of problems. We worked together with a number of agencies taking on a multi-disciplinary approach to help this extremely vulnerable person sustain their tenancy, we have regular monthly meetings with the agencies and our resident to check on their progress. We are pleased to say the resident has been engaging with all support offered, subsequently the ASB has stopped, and the resident is in control of their life and above all, has managed to stay in their secure accommodation. The work is not over, and we are pleased to take on this approach to help residents sustain their tenancies.



EVICTING A REALLY ANTI-SOCIAL NEIGHBOUR

We had a resident who caused a lot of anti-social behaviour in their home and neighbourhood, and this caused great distress and harassment to the neighbours despite trying to sort things out. We have secured and carried out an eviction in a step towards helping local residents feel safer.

HARROW DECIDES 5 MAY

Are you registered to vote?

Councillors make decisions every day that affect all our lives. Education, transport, bins, street cleaning, social care...the list goes on and on – Harrow Council is responsible for them all.

Local councillors direct this work and they also represent local people at a neighbourhood level – they can help with problems and the issues that you care about most. Harrow's councillors are elected every four years and the next election is on Thursday 5 May 2022.

To have your say in May you must first be registered to vote. If you are not registered at your address, go to www.gov.uk/register-to-vote and add your details. Registering to vote takes 5 minutes. If you're not registered, you can't vote.

To vote in this election you must be 18 or over and either UK born, or EU citizen, or a citizen of a Commonwealth country with indefinite leave to remain in the UK.

You can vote in person or by post. Go to www.harrow.gov.uk/elections for more information.

A review by the Boundary Commission has redrawn Harrow's political map. Some wards have changed shape and also name. The number of councillors elected in 2022 will reduce from the current 63 to 55. Some wards will elect two councillors and others three.

Look out for further information through the post or read more at www.harrow.gov.uk/elections.

LOCAL ELECTIONS AT A GLANCE

- Register to vote deadline – 14 April 2022
- If you're not registered, you can't vote
- Vote in person or by post
- Further information will be posted out to you
- Election Day – 5 May 2022

YOUR STORIES, YOUR MAG

7

Priorities for new Chair of Residents' Board

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New sanctuary for bees

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Puzzle



MAKING YOUR HOMES AND ESTATES SAFER, WARMER AND CLEANER

Bugler and Wates provide free skips for estate tidy up

Making council homes safer

Harrow Council has prioritised the Health and Safety of residents with lots of Capital Programme Projects to update our council housing stock. Our 'Homesafe' projects include brand new video door entry, fire-safe flat front doors, communal emergency lighting, fire, smoke & carbon monoxide alarms and major fire compartmentation works.

Through the Council's Capital Programme delivery

of the Homesafe programme phases 1 & 2, the Council has installed more than 1740 'FD30' (affords a high standard of protection, 30 minute burn time etc) fire safe flat front doors with a further 658 doors due to be upgraded across the borough this year.

Alongside this we are also starting Phase 3 of our Homesafe works where we will be carrying out Health & Safety works to 65 blocks (that's 434 flats) across the borough.



Working with residents to change Estate Standards

The estates team has been working busily behind the scenes since March 2021 to relook at every aspect of the service we deliver on our 33 housing estates. The current service is "responsible for the cleaning of internal and external parts of the communal area of the housing block and estate".

We held two online resident groups, two mixed staff and resident groups in

January and February and consulted external agencies such as Housemark to help us identify: -

1. What you say we do well
2. What we need to improve (if we can afford it)
3. Discuss recommendations for an action plan
4. The minimum acceptable estate standard

We want to ensure the service is delivered "to a high standard,

affordable and offers value for money".

We will:

1. Co-produce with residents a new set of service standards and grading system that is affordable and realistic.
2. Rebrand the 'Caretaking service' to 'Estate Management' and this includes adding more tasks under the one umbrella, such as cyclical tree pruning, pest control and communal window cleaning.
3. Enhance resident involvement in monitoring our estates as identified in the Resident Engagement Strategy.

An example of a quick win to improve customer service has been the setting up of a new dedicated line for caretakers to report communal repairs.

One involved resident said there was a lot more we can do to help prevent pest infestations through training

Air source heat pump for flats at John Lamb Court

Warmer, eco homes

Gas safety servicing and maintenance is an annual legal requirement and forms part of your tenancy agreement. You have to give access to our gas engineers when requested.

We are pleased to announce the new domestic gas contract for residents with individual boilers has been awarded to Liberty Group from April 2022 for 4 years. They will be replacing Quality Heating Services whose contract is coming to an end.

The condensing gas boilers we have been installing over the last 5 years have been more economical



and carbon efficient. However, we recognise we need to do more to reduce the carbon in our homes. Harrow Council housing will be reducing its reliance on gas boilers through ongoing investment in new technology such as Ground Source Heat Pumps and Air Source Heat

Pumps. As an example, we will be replacing communal gas boilers with Ground Source Heat Pumps at 90 properties in the next 12 months.

 Liberty

MONEY

in your pocket



Xcite can help you find a career in construction

On Site Construction Recruitment Event

Xcite ran a live on-site recruitment event in November 2021 on the Higgins site at Grange Farm estate, South Harrow. Clients were invited to attend and see Construction in Action for themselves. Xcite are delighted that Matthew was offered an on-the-spot job as a part time Bricklayer with Stack. Due to childcare commitments, he has been able to start work at 9.30am and finish at 5pm. Thank you Stack and Higgins!

Higgins hosted an on-site visit at Grange Farm estate



Women into construction

Mahnaz had no UK work experience, but she had extensive Electrical Design Engineer skills from Iran. Xcite helped Mahnaz to navigate the UK job market which led to her securing a permanent position at Uxbridge College. During the last 6 months of 2021 Xcite provided advice and CV support and organised a visit to a live Higgins site event.

Mahnaz said, "I have worked as an electrical engineer in Iran for ten years. I arrived in London in March 2021 and searched for hundreds of jobs in this field. I was desperate to find a job in my field until Harrow Job Centre introduced me to the Xcite Team and

Ichla. I met Ichla six months ago, and her experience and dynamic approach were an inspiration for me.

"We visited building construction in the summer that gave me a perspective of work in the UK. Also, it provided the opportunity to meet other professional people. They supported me in completing a CSCS training course and it had a positive effect on my self-confidence during that tough time.

"Now, I am working as an Electrical/Electronic lecturer at Uxbridge College. I am grateful for the help of the Xcite team, as it eased my career journey in the UK".



Mahnaz earns her qualification



Residents' engagement

You can influence services



New Chair, Rosie Weir

Hi, my name is Rosie Weir, and I have lived in Harrow for over 20 years and have had many dealings with the council. Many were positive but all too many were frustrating. Things like, repairs being agreed while others were not, seeing my neighbours getting work done when I was told there was no budget for my repairs, grass not being cut, stairwells not being cleaned regularly etc. I joined the Residents' Board in 2017 as I wanted to know how the council made the decisions they did and why. I now want to encourage more tenants and leaseholders to get involved, especially with the Residents' Board.

Benefits

I have gained a better understanding of the challenges the council faces, and as a group,

Residents' Board

we have also been able to get the council to appreciate some of the challenges we face as residents and our feedback has helped inform Harrow's policies and services.

We can pick a service area, such as Repairs, Estate Services or Leasehold management to focus on and develop our knowledge and understanding.

We are getting involved in creating a Residents Charter to outline what tenants expect from Harrow. Regardless of age or background we need to hear your views. If something is important to you, then please let us know.

Contact the Resident Engagement Team at:
✉ rinvolve@harrow.gov.uk

The council needs your feedback to help drive improvements



Meeting dates for resident groups

(all currently held online)

Housing Matters Webinars (open meeting)

- 11/5/22
- 13/7/22
- 7/9/22
- 9/11/22

From 6pm to 7.30pm

Residents' Board

- 24/3/22
- 26/5/22
- 28/7/22
- 22/9/22
- 24/11/22

Leasehold Improvement Group

- 15/3/22
- 17/5/22
- 19/7/22
- 20/9/22
- 15/11/22

For further details please contact:

✉ rinvolve@harrow.gov.uk



MAKING OUR DREAMS COME TRUE



Fatjona and Jade have big plans for spring and summer planting



'I wanted to create a Bee Paradise' by Terence Mackin, sheltered housing tenant

Terry is one determined gentleman, and this is his story of one man's project to support the bees and other insects where he lives in Harrow Weald by creating a 'Bee Paradise'.

"My intention was to create a garden for bumblebees, honeybees, butterflies, hover flies and other insects. As a keen gardener, I've noticed a decline in the bee population for many years, so my intention was to try and help them."

"There was a strip of land in our communal garden, 125m by 5m, which had been overgrown for many years. With the help of a friend, we decided to clear the brambles and nettles which took us at least three months. Then we planted 500 bluebells and four sacks of daffodils."

"With a Flying Start grant from the Resident Engagement Team at Harrow Council and friends' generosity, I was able to buy plants, wildflower seeds and daffodils and bluebell bulbs. I have sowed



Waiting for Bee Paradise to flourish as the weather warms up

meadow grass seeds along with wildflower seeds and planted bee friendly plants. Fingers crossed we will see the fruits of our labour this summer, by a lovely, scented garden we have created for these insects.

"Thanks to the Resident

Engagement Team, Harrow Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations, Headstone Horticultural Society and many of my friends who have kindly donated plants".

Communal gardening brings people together, believes Jade

Fatjona has several years' experience running her own allotment, but she knew nothing when she first started. She is now a very knowledgeable horticulturalist, using terms like 'no dig gardening,' when we went to



Cllr Philip O'Dell, Julian Higson and housing staff visit Flying Start community garden

visit the communal garden created at Honeypot Close.

Fatjona said, "Our communal garden space was abandoned, just a mix of grass and hard standing in one corner with disused, old, pram sheds along one fence. I wanted to re-create something of my allotment right here. So, I applied for a Flying

Start grant in October 2021 and with the funds we bought a gazebo, table, chairs, along with a raised bed, wood chip and a membrane (to hold back the weeds). We planted raspberries, blackcurrants and dahlias and this summer we will grow some vegetables. It was lovely when residents saw what we were

doing and came down to help, often with cups of tea".

Jade added, "I have three children, I don't drive and helping in this garden makes us happy. We love picking the fruit and the garden has brought the neighbours together, which makes me feel safer, cos we've got to know each other".

If you have a community project in mind and need some money to get it off the ground, talk to the Resident Engagement Team and they will talk you through the process of applying for a Flying Start grant.
✉ rinvolve@harrow.gov.uk

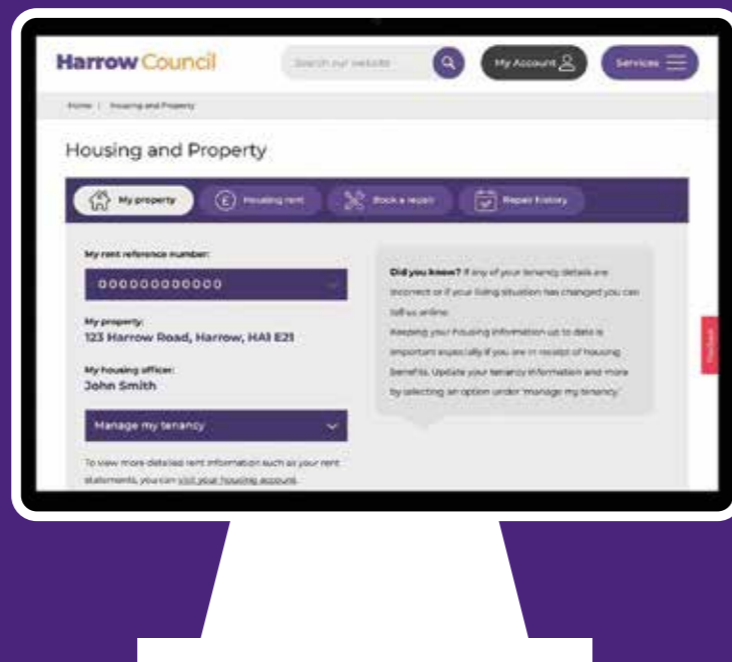


A new way to manage your housing account online is in the works!

A new way of managing your housing account from our council website is launching this spring. The new online housing feature will give you greater control of your housing affairs such as reporting repairs and tracking their progress, viewing your rent statements and making rent payments and viewing tailored housing information and advice.

We aim to continue to develop the new online service over the months following its launch and evolve the service with help from your feedback.

Thank you for your patience while we undertake this work. In the meantime, we have made significant improvements to the housing webpages www.harrow.gov.uk/housing.



There's still time to grab a Covid jab

If you haven't had your Covid vaccine yet but you want to, don't worry! It's not too late to have your booster, your second dose or even your first dose!

Doctors agree that getting a Covid vaccine is the best thing you can do to stop yourself from getting really sick. In fact, if you haven't had the vaccine, you are eight times more likely to end up in a hospital bed than someone who has.

If you are expecting a baby, you can also have the vaccine at any stage of your pregnancy, and it offers protection to both you and your unborn child. It does not affect your fertility.

All the vaccines used in the UK have been thoroughly trialled all around the world, on people from

all communities. They are all safe and effective, and they are helping us to live safely with Covid. You may experience minor side effects after your jab, but these will pass within a few days. You cannot catch Covid from the vaccine itself.

You can also protect yourself by remembering to socially distance from people – remember 'Hands. Face. Space' – and ventilation. Wearing a mask in an indoor space is no longer the law but is recommended by the government in certain settings.

To find out who can have a vaccine and where, visit the Harrow Council website, check out our social media channels or search 'NHS vaccine' online.



RESIDENTS' WALL

Thank you Adna for sending us this lovely photo of Nala



Thank you Zeba Arif for sending in this lovely photo of the sunrise at John Lamb Court Sheltered scheme



NEWSBITE

Experiencing domestic abuse? You're not alone.

National Domestic Abuse Helpline 24/7
☎ 0808 2000 247

Harrow Domestic Abuse Services (Hestia)

Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm
☎ 0208 907 8148
✉ ida.harrow@hestia.org

In an emergency dial 999. To contact the police at other times dial 101.

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.

LEASEHOLD *news*

Leasehold Improvement Group

We are delighted to say it's now much easier to talk to council officers about any leasehold queries you may have. We have recently launched the bi-monthly online Leasehold Improvement Group and have held two meetings so far.

The Leasehold Improvement Group is a great place to get together with other Leaseholders and discuss what it's like to be a Harrow Council Leaseholder and talk through our processes and how we can improve our customer service. Meeting topics are suggested by you, such as:

- Repairs capital programme
- Major improvements capital programme
- Communication
- Access to services
- Involvement and customer care
- Accuracy of the charges
- Value for money
- Extension of lease
- Estate services/grounds maintenance
- Pest Control

To become part of this group and help to make improvements to leaseholders' experiences, please contact us at:
✉ Rinvolve@harrow.gov.uk

You said and we did

At a recent meeting, you asked us to arrange an induction to share more about the roles and responsibilities of the leaseholder and the council as your freeholder. We organised two workshops in December last year and invited all leaseholders to attend.

New homeowners

From now on, once you have moved in, we will hold workshops on a quarterly basis and invite you for a welcome meeting so we can talk through being a homeowner and answer any questions you may have.

Why not join the Leasehold Improvement Group and tell us what you like and don't like about the service?



MUTUAL EXCHANGE

Swapping your home for another social housing home

Mutual exchange is a great way to move home if you want to live in a different part of the country, a neighbouring borough or even a different home in Harrow. Secure tenants (excludes Introductory tenants) can swap their home with a council or housing association tenant from anywhere in the UK.

This means that you can move nearer to your family or closer to your work. For many tenants, mutual exchange is the best way to move home if you don't

qualify for a transfer.

If you exchange homes, you take on your exchange partner's tenancy agreement, so make sure you check what type of tenancy they have before you swap.

There are lots of websites for mutual exchanges and Harrow Council is a member of www.homeswapper.co.uk so you don't have to pay a fee to join.

Landlords will do checks before they agree to an exchange and you must not move unless you have written permission from all landlords.



What is NHS Healthy Start?

If you're pregnant or have children under the age of 4 you can get payments every 4 weeks to spend on:

- cow's milk
- fresh, frozen or tinned fruit and vegetables
- infant formula milk
- fresh, dried, and tinned pulses

You can also get free Healthy Start vitamins.

WHO CAN APPLY

You'll qualify for the Healthy Start scheme if you're at least 10 weeks pregnant or you have at least one child that's under 4.

HOW TO APPLY

Visit www.healthystart.nhs.uk and complete the online form and receive the pre-paid card in the post. You can also ask your **health visitor** or **midwife** about healthy start vitamins.



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

Do ask for council
approval first

Can I make alterations or improvements to my home?

Charlene: You must get written permission from us first if you want to carry out alterations or improvements to your home.

Secure Tenants

The same rules apply if you want to install a garage, greenhouse, shed, parking space, driveway wall, security grille or television aerial. And you are responsible for maintaining improvements you make to your home.

If you make an improvement without first getting our written permission,

we may:

- obtain an order from the court requiring you to put the property back to its previous state
- in very serious cases, obtain an order from the court ending your tenancy
- return the property to its original state and charge you for the cost of doing this, including the cost of repairing any damage you caused

Generally, we won't refuse any reasonable requests from tenants to improve their property.

Leaseholders

You need our written permission because the council (as your freeholder) must protect the structure and safety of the building. We will only refuse permission if we have very good reasons for doing so.

Please note you may also need planning permission and/or building regulations approval.

It is in your best interest to discuss any home improvement plans with us before committing to the works, especially as solicitors will ask about landlord consents for any alterations you've done when you sell your leasehold property.

What types of work needs landlord consent?

- Any addition or alteration to the structure of your flat
- Any alteration to the outside of your flat including a new vent for your boiler or a satellite dish
- Removal of any internal walls
- Alterations relating to the plumbing, gas and electricity resulting in changes to internal supply pipes and circuits and you will need to provide details of professionals carrying out such work
- Individual gardens.

Puzzles Page

Word Search

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

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

Your name.....

Your address.....

Your phone no.....

Win
£25

TO ENTER

For your chance to win £25 Love2shop vouchers, send your 10 words with your contact details by 15 April 2022 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.



WINNER Congratulations to Meena Zramalval from Harrow on the Hill, who won £25 shopping vouchers for winning the December 2021 Puzzle.

Puzzle answers for 'Clues within the magazine', December 2021

Here are the 10 words plus the bonus answer. The answer least found was 'EASTER'.

Diwali, Easter, Hanukkah, Passover, St. Lucia Day, Ramadan, Eid, Christmas, Hajj, Navratri, Yule

Have you seen your **NEW** Housing Estate website?

Benefits:

Have your say about
your neighbourhood

Latest estate
inspection report

Quick response to
estate queries

Latest estate news

Quickly find contact
details for Housing
services

Easy to use

Piloting this on 5 estates as a trial:



Grove / Pinner



Honeybun



Little Stanmore/ Berridge



Weald Village



Scan the QR code to
access the websites



Headstone / Augustine Road

www.harrowcouncilstates.commonplace.is/

Welcome your feedback: please email anthea.watkins@harrow.gov.uk

Rules of engagement – no personalised, negative
comments or foul language will be tolerated

HarrowCOUNCIL
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