

MARCH 2024

# H*in*oming

The magazine for London Borough of Harrow's tenants and leaseholders

**WIN**  
**£30**  
See p11

Join the Housing  
Matters webinar  
**WEDNESDAY**  
**27 MARCH 2024**  
at 6pm

## HARROW HERO

Erica (right), a resident volunteer on Grange Farm Estate, won a Harrow Hero award

**RENT AND SERVICE CHARGE INCREASE P3**

**INVESTING IN OUR ESTATES P4**

**SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN P9**



LONDON BOROUGH OF  
**HARROW**

# Photo CORNER

Moira said, "Coral, my 10 year old corn snake lives in a vivarium, she is enjoying the new habitat I have put in for her"

**£10**  
for every  
printed picture



Why not send in your favourite photo of Harrow or a photo of your pet to [anthea.watkins@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:anthea.watkins@harrow.gov.uk) and receive £10 shopping vouchers when printed



## HELLO FROM CLLR MINA PARMAR

Hope you are enjoying the early spring weather.

The housing team is working hard to ensure that we meet the requirements of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023. One of our goals is to give residents a bigger role in scrutinising services so please let us know if this interests you.

We are proud of our Annual Report 2022/23 which tells you how we are performing and you can see how we compare to other London social housing providers - [www.harrow.gov.uk/annualreport](http://www.harrow.gov.uk/annualreport)

We are increasing council rent in line with government guidelines and we have improved the caretaking service based on your feedback. This is reflected in an average 12% per week service charge increase.

I am delighted about the improvements to Ford Close and that we can help the green agenda by providing a number of secure cycle racks across Harrow later this year.

On page 6 we have included advice about 'violence against women' with a link to the Harrow Safer Spaces web page.

We encourage you to engage with the council if you have any service enquiries, such as joining the online Housing Matters webinars or coming to the face to face drop in sessions. Please use the online repairs form to report any repairs: [www.harrow.gov.uk/repairs](http://www.harrow.gov.uk/repairs) as this is the quickest way to service your request.

I hope you stay safe and I look forward to meeting some of you as part of our resident engagement programme.

**Cllr Mina Parmar**  
Portfolio Holder for Housing  
✉ [mina.parmar@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:mina.parmar@harrow.gov.uk)



## HOUSING MATTERS WEBINAR

Please join us in the Housing Matters Webinar on Wednesday 27 March 2024 at 6pm – 7.30pm via MS Teams. To get the meeting link contact:  
✉ [rinvolve@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:rinvolve@harrow.gov.uk)

### Home Contents Insurance prize draw winners

The two lucky winners of the prize draw for the tenants Home Contents Insurance (HCI) Scheme are:  
Arunan Mylvagannam & Mrs Manchula Arunan, Churchill Place and Mr and Mrs Remutulla of Tapley Court.

Front cover: Erica Fontaine, Chair of Residents' Board and winner of 2023 'Supporting vulnerable people' Harrow Heroes Award

# RENT INCREASE FROM APRIL 2024

## Council rent goes up by 7.7% and service charges increase by an average of 12% from April 2024

We will be increasing the number of Caretakers on council estates

**W**e are increasing council rent by 7.7% in line with CPI + 1% from April 2024. This follows government guidelines.

In addition, there is an average increase of 12.0% for service charges. Following feedback from residents last year, we will be providing varying levels of service based on the work required to both internal and external parts of blocks and estates. Therefore, residents who

occupy street properties will pay less compared to those who live in our blocks and estates.

We have funded 4 additional caretakers so that we can improve the standard of cleaning on our estates.

As part of the wider Housing Revenue Account budget we are pleased to confirm that our capital programme growth is £10.7 million over the next 3 years, plus a growth of £8.7 million on our decarbonisation programme over the next 3 years.

## SUPPORT

We do appreciate some of you are struggling with paying heating bills and the cost of living so please do contact your Housing Income Officer if this is the case.  
✉ [housing.residentservices@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:housing.residentservices@harrow.gov.uk)

### Independent Money Advisor (CAB)

If your circumstances change or you have debts which may be affecting your ability to pay your rent we can arrange for you to talk to an Independent Money Advisor working for Citizens Advice Harrow (CAB).

### Housing Support Fund Application Scheme is available

The Citizens Advice Harrow are taking applications for Harrow's Household Support Fund (HSF). For more information on the HSF and the support available visit [www.harrow.gov.uk/benefits/household-support-fund](http://www.harrow.gov.uk/benefits/household-support-fund)

You will need to apply for this scheme by calling Citizens Advice Harrow on their freephone 0808 250 5705. Phone lines are open Monday to Tuesday 9:30am to 3:30pm and Thursday to Friday 9:30am to 1:00pm. Or ✉ [hsf@citizensadviceharrow.org.uk](mailto:hsf@citizensadviceharrow.org.uk)



## YOUR STORIES, YOUR MAG

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# INVESTING IN OUR ESTATES



**In line with the London Borough of Harrow's Climate and Nature Strategy 2023-2030, we are doing our bit to support Green Mobility, one of the council's strategic aims.**

**W**e are pleased to announce that in 2023 we have received a Transport for London (TFL) grant of £65,000 to fund the procurement and siting of 10 bicycle storage racks on estates across Harrow. Each covered bike rack will be able to store 6 bikes and is accessed via a code lock. The contractor building these is JB Riney, in partnership with TFL.

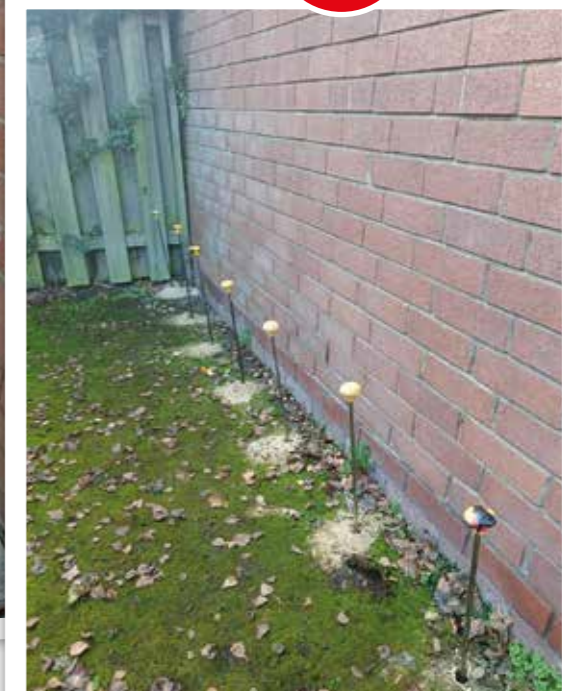
In addition, we put in for another TFL grant of £54,000 to invest in an additional 9 cycle storage racks. We would like your help to identify where best to locate them. So if you think there is a need for bike storage on your estate contact:

✉ [plannedinvestmentenquiry@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:plannedinvestmentenquiry@harrow.gov.uk)

Providing a solution to safely store your cycle



Using innovatory building techniques for building solutions



**In December 2022 we delivered an innovative building renovation by Geobear UK to 18-24 Ford Close that made life easier for the tenants and represented value for money.**

**T**he story begins with a 3 storey block built in the 1970's with trees growing around it that have now matured. This has led to the need to redo the building's foundations and normally this would involve evacuating everyone on the ground floor and digging an additional 2m foundation.

However, Geobear UK have come up with a smart solution where they inject construction geo-polymer that expands in the soil and strengthens

the soil, improving load bearing capacity and stabilises the structure while minimising the effect of clay shrinkage from the surrounding trees. The injection sequence creates a barrier to block the tree root hairs from undermining the soil under the building, hence also forming a root barrier.

The benefits include:

- 10 working days to complete the works vs 5 months
- Residents living there didn't need

- to leave their homes
- The cost using this methodology is 20% of the normal cost for digging 3m trenches to underpin the foundations.
- No skips on site
- Sustainability: it saved 4 trees from being cut down and no lorries were needed to bring concrete or ferry displaced soil.

Alan, a local resident said, "I coped well with the works as there was no disturbance to my flat and the external works were carried out in a couple of weeks. Not much noise at all and the staff were pleasant."



Alan, a local resident



# Conversation Café



**C**onversation Café is all about giving Harrow residents somewhere to talk and find out about support available to them. A dedicated team, comprising of council officers, charities and voluntary organisations welcome the opportunity to meet with residents and offer information, advice and support. Everyone is welcome to drop in for a chat.

You can find the weekly conversation café every Tuesday from 10am to 3pm at St Peter's Church, Colbeck Road, West Harrow, HA1 4BX

**To find out more, including other venues and dates**  
[harrow.gov.uk/adult-social-care/conversation-cafe](http://harrow.gov.uk/adult-social-care/conversation-cafe)  
 ✉ [conversation.cafe@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:conversation.cafe@harrow.gov.uk)  
 ☎ 020 8863 5611

Conversation Café at Ridgeway Gardening project, West Harrow



# Tenancy news



Sorry for the long call wait times you may be experiencing

■ We are aware of longer than usual call waiting times when contacting the Council. Harrow would like to apologise to everyone who has experienced difficulty getting through to us on the phone. We acknowledge the issue and have taken steps to improve the service. In January 2024 we recruited two additional

full time staff members to deal with call answering, responding to emails and web forms. The quickest way to process repairs requests is if you log them online:  
 🌐 [www.harrow.gov.uk/repairs](http://www.harrow.gov.uk/repairs)

■ Our housing portal will be launched in April 2024, where

residents will be able to check their rent accounts and log repairs. The council is also drawing up a comprehensive customer access strategy which we hope will steer transactional services to the website or portal, helping to free up face to face and phone contact for those who genuinely need those services.

# VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Where do you feel unsafe?



Scan the QR code on your phone to access the survey

**N**o one should be made to feel unsafe on our streets at any time of the day. Whether at home or outside, Harrow should be a place where women and girls feel safe to live, work and visit. As part of our ongoing campaign to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) we have a survey (open to all genders) to find out where people may feel vulnerable or have experienced threatening behaviour. If you live, work, study or socialise in Harrow, you can have a say in what areas make

you feel safe or unsafe. Your feedback will help us to identify areas of concern and find improvements to help everyone feel safer. The information will also be relayed in discussions with the community and partners. You can access the survey on <https://talk.harrow.gov.uk/harrowsaferspaces> In Harrow we are committed to our work around preventing gender-based violence against women and girls, and we have several programmes providing support, which you can find details for on our website or using the QR code.

## Communal areas

No one is allowed to store personal items such as (but not limited to) bicycles, pushchairs, electric scooters, plants, pet cages, clothes airers, footwear and children's toys in communal areas. Estate services have noticed an increase in items being stored in communal areas such as utility cupboards, communal hallways, underneath communal stairwells, in between fire doors and outside front door areas. These items prevent the estate teams from cleaning communal areas and they pose a real fire risk. The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005: states that landlords must ensure suitable escape routes are available, kept clear and maintained to allow a safe exit from the building should that be necessary. The Council is entitled to remove and dispose of items left in the communal areas. Please help us to keep residents safe by not storing items in communal areas. If you do see items in communal areas, please report it to us online 🌐 [www.harrow.gov.uk/estateservices](http://www.harrow.gov.uk/estateservices)



## DEALING WITH

# DAMP AND MOULD

**A**re you suffering with damp and mould? If left untreated, not only does this look and smell bad, damaging clothes and furniture, it can harm your health too.

Before you start treatment, you will need to find the cause. One likely root of damp is condensation - when warm air comes into contact with a cooler surface water droplets appear around the house. It tends to be worse in winter. The only way to reduce condensation is to improve ventilation and produce less moisture in your home.

If you're worried about heating costs, contact the Harrow Energy Advice Project delivered by Groundwork London.

📍 [www.harrow.gov.uk/benefits/help-cost-living/2](http://www.harrow.gov.uk/benefits/help-cost-living/2)  
☎ 0300 365 3005.

■ Condensation is not the only cause of damp. Your home may also be affected due to issues like leaking pipes, slipped roof tiles, or blocked guttering. If you need help, send us photos:

📍 [www.harrow.gov.uk/housingrepairs](http://www.harrow.gov.uk/housingrepairs)  
✉ [housing.repairs@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:housing.repairs@harrow.gov.uk)



We prioritise cases of damp and mould in living areas



Clearing blocked gutters can help

# Preparing for changes to social housing regulation



**A**s you are aware, the way social landlords are regulated is changing. In 2020 the government published the Social Housing White Paper. It set out a charter for what every social housing resident should expect, including:

- To be safe in your home.
- To know how your landlord is performing.
- To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly.
- To be treated with respect.
- To have your voice heard by your landlord.
- To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in.

These proposals are being delivered by a new law called the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, which will give tenants greater powers, improve access to redress when things go wrong and strengthen the Regulator of Social Housing's powers, such as:

- Regular inspections and power to issue unlimited fines
- Setting strict time limits to address hazards such as damp and mould

- Setting mandatory professional qualifications for senior housing managers
- Latest version of the consumer standards will be published soon.

### Monitoring services

Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) have been created and we will report our results for the first time to the Regulator in June 2024. 12 TSMs are based on tenant perception and 10 TSMs are based on landlord data.

### Preparing for the regulatory changes

- Housing Satisfaction Survey in March 2022 and again in January 2024 by Acuity
- Housemark assessment of our services against consumer standards in Autumn 2022
- Housing Improvement Board to

deliver recommendations using an action plan and working groups

- Participation in Housemark's Benchmarking Club with other social landlords
- Publishing our first housing annual report for residents in February 2024.

🌐 [www.harrow.gov.uk/annualreport](http://www.harrow.gov.uk/annualreport)

### Housing improvements - in progress

- Quality assurance of responses to your complaints
- Deep dive into case studies to improve the way we work
- Launch of new online resident portal due April 2024
- Reviewing the Repairs Charter
- Setting up a voids task and finish group
- Looking at access to council services.



Cllr Mina Parmar, David McNulty and officers talk to residents at Cornell House Sheltered Scheme, January 2024

# Residents' engagement

## Being heard

**W**e have a number of groups you can participate in online, where you will hear what is going on with that service area, and you will get the chance to influence services. Or you might like to be one of the new Estate Champions? Please see all the groups mentioned below and if you would like some more information, please contact: ✉ [rinvolve@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:rinvolve@harrow.gov.uk)



**How to make a complaint**  
**If you have a complaint with housing services, you can do this in several ways:**

- 📍 Search Harrow Council complaint
- 📍 Harrow Council, Housing Services - Complaints, PO BOX 1367, Forward Drive, HARROW, HA3 3QT
- ✉ [housing.customerservices@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:housing.customerservices@harrow.gov.uk)

The Housing Ombudsman is independent of the council and can advise you on your complaint. You have the right to copy in the Ombudsman should you wish at any stage:

- 🌐 [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)
  - ✉ [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)
  - 📍 Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ
- Customer care standards

### RESIDENT MEETINGS

#### Regular resident drop in sessions

Come and talk face to face with Housing Officers and Repairs staff at resident drop-in sessions – open to all council tenants and leaseholders, no appointment is needed

Northolt Road Hall, Northolt Road, South Harrow, HA2 0LS  
 10am-12.30am  
 ■ Tuesday 28 May

Julie Cook Hall, Augustine Road, Harrow, HA3 5NW  
 4pm-6.30pm  
 ■ Wednesday 13 March  
 ■ Wednesday 19 June

Pinner Hill Community Hall, Welch Place, Pinner, HA5 3TA  
 10am- 12.30pm  
 ■ Thursday 25 April  
 ■ Thursday 11 July

Housing Matters webinars  
 6pm – 7.30pm  
 Open to all tenants and leaseholders  
 ■ Wednesday 27 March  
 ■ Wednesday 17 April  
 ■ Wednesday 22 May

2024/25 online Resident Group Meetings

Asset Management and Repairs - online at 6pm  
 ■ Thursday 11 April  
 ■ Thursday 13 June

■ Thursday 15 August  
 ■ Thursday 10 October

Leasehold Improvement Group – online at 6pm  
 ■ Tuesday 7 May  
 ■ Tuesday 9 July  
 ■ Tuesday 3 September  
 ■ Tuesday 5 November

Complaints Panel – hybrid meetings at 6pm – 7.30pm  
 ■ Tuesday 12 March  
 ■ Tuesday 2 April  
 ■ Tuesday 14 May  
 ■ Tuesday 18 June

For further details please contact:  
[rinvolve@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:rinvolve@harrow.gov.uk)



# Puzzles

# Page

## Word Search

Try and find the 10 words below in the wordsearch puzzle! The clue is '10 of the most popular foods worldwide'.

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

Your name.....

Your address.....

Your phone no.....



### TO ENTER

For your chance to win £30 Love2shop vouchers, send your 10 words with your contact details by 8 April 2024 to:  
 📍 Anthea Watkins, London Borough of Harrow, Housing Services, PO Box 1367, Forward Drive, Harrow, HA3 3QT  
 ✉ [anthea.watkins@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:anthea.watkins@harrow.gov.uk)

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

**WINNER** Congratulations to Ms Zara Niazi, Edgware who won £30 shopping vouchers for winning the November 2023 Wordsearch Puzzle.

# RESIDENTS' WALL



Thanks to the sponsors for supporting a wonderful children's Christmas party on Grange Farm estate in December 2023 – Redloft, One Enterprise, MyYard, Roxeth Christchurch and the Council



Children from St Joseph's School, Belmont, sang carols at Goddard Court Sheltered Scheme



Zeba Arif, a resident at John Lamb Court, meets King Charles III on his birthday

The event was organised in honour of 400 nurses and midwives, at Buckingham Palace on 14 November 2023.

Zeba said, "I had a lovely evening. I met so many inspiring nurses, and we exchanged our stories. The Ballroom buzzed with so much animated conversation. The sparkling elderflower flowed and the canapés were delicious. Of course, meeting His Majesty was a pleasure. It was obvious he was enjoying himself, chatting to the overseas nurses. He complimented many on their national costumes. We sang Happy Birthday for King Charles. I, too, received a handshake and a broad smile".



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.