

Check out our
new online
news pages!
See p2



Newsletter

February 2023

For Council housing tenants

Improvements to repairs and maintenance coming soon

Runnymede Council have signed a new contract with our partner MCP.

They will carry out day-to-day repairs and maintenance in tenants homes, and works in empty Council owned properties from April.

The Council understands the importance of delivering a good repairs service to our tenants so we are investing in excess of £13 million on the contract over the next 10 years.

Tenants will be able to easily report many repairs online, including mobile devices, schedule their own appointments at a convenient time and track the repairs.

As a Council, we are committed to delivering an excellent repairs service. To ensure we are meeting expectations, we will be asking tenants for their feedback on the works we carry out. Rather than a letter, tenants will receive a short and quick satisfaction survey via text message.

We will be hosting a meet and greet on 15 May,



from 10am to midday at Chertsey Hall, where tenants can speak to their new contractor.

► MCP is recruiting! For more information on the roles available, please visit www.mcp.community or email your CV to recruitment@mcp.community

MCP is an equal opportunities employer and encourages people from all backgrounds to apply.

Hundreds of new kitchens and bathrooms installed!

Since May 2022 we've replaced around 180 kitchens, 180 bathrooms, 200 boilers and rewired 15 homes. Feedback from tenants who have had work carried out has been very positive, with around 99 per cent satisfaction rate.

Next year, as well as replacing kitchens, bath rooms, boilers and rewiring works, we are starting roof, external door, window, and replacement fire doors. This will take three to five years to complete and we will be replacing around 800 roofs, 1,500 doors, 4,000 windows and 700 fire doors.

Unfortunately we have not been able to complete

upgrades in as many homes as intended. If tenants decline the works, this causes delays, results in the housing stock deteriorating and increases costs for everyone.

If you are worried about the disruption such work might cause, please talk to us about the support we can offer and options available.

When it is time for your home to get a new kitchen, bathroom, or boiler, we will contact you by letter, email or phone. By allowing our surveyors into your home, we can carry out the upgrades to as many properties as possible.

Help with rising cost of living

We are aware of the impact the rising cost of living is having on people's living standards.

Details of the support available from Runnymede Borough Council is on our website at www.runnymede.gov.uk/cost-living

Examples of support include:

- ▶ British Gas Trust Fund. Everyone can make an application for the grant regardless of their gas supplier. www.britishgasenergytrust.org.uk/who-can-apply
- ▶ Turn2us. A benefits calculator that ensures users are receiving benefits they are entitled to. www.benefits-calculator.turn2us.org.uk
- ▶ Help is available if you have difficulty paying

your Council Tax. Search our website for Council Tax Support.

- ▶ If you have difficulties with your utility bills, we have advice from British Gas on funds they have available.
- ▶ There's also advice about where to go for help if you are feeling the pressure over day to day living costs.

As well as help offered for all residents of the Borough via the website, additional support is available for Council tenants.

If you are struggling with your rent payments, please speak to your Area Housing Manager at 01932 838383 or email tenancy.management@runnymede.gov.uk

Go to: www.runnymede.gov.uk/tenants-news

Our new online news pages have loads of extra information about what the Council is doing.

Read more housing news on our website

- ✓ Help us improve how we deal with Anti-Social Behaviour.
- ✓ IRL refurbishment update.
- ✓ Feedback from the support with moving policy consultation.
- ✓ More upcoming chances to have your say.

Scan with your phone



Please ask our permission

As a tenant of the Council, you'll need to ask permission before doing a number of things involving your home. This is in line with your Tenancy Agreement, which is your legal contract with the Council. Written permission is needed to:

- install CCTV (including video doorbells),
- store a mobility scooter, or
- own a pet.

We would also like to remind you that your tenancy agreement includes requesting permission to:

- Use your home to run a business.
- Take in a lodger.
- Transfer your tenancy.
- Exchange your home.
- Carry out improvements, alterations, or adaptations to your home.
- Remove, alter, replace, or plant any hedge, fence or tree in your garden.
- Erect a shed or any structure in your garden.
- Dig a pond.
- Install laminate flooring.
- Park any motor home, caravan, business vehicle or boat at the property or on Council land such as residential car parks.

Permission for the above is a requirement for all tenants. To request permission, please contact your Area Housing Manager, or visit our website www.runnymede.gov.uk/council-home/i-need-permission

If you are not sure that you have the necessary written permission please contact your Area Housing Manager on 01932 838383 or email tenancy.management@runnymede.gov.uk.

Thanks for sharing your views in our satisfaction survey

Many thanks everyone who responded to our first digital satisfaction survey that asked: Runnymede Council tenants – what do you think? We are thrilled that around 35% of all tenants took the time to answer.

We know that all social landlords have seen their satisfaction rates fall (on average) in recent years, and that online surveys tend to lead to lower scores. However the results gave us plenty to think about.

Full results here: www.runnymede.gov.uk/tenant-engagement-1/tenant-satisfaction-survey

In response to the feedback from tenants, we are committed to keeping you informed of the improvements planned. We will also carry out further surveys to see how you think we are doing.

The improvements action plan for the next 12 months includes:

- ▶ bring in new repairs contractor - see our front page article.
- ▶ Create a dedicated customer contact centre for repairs.
- ▶ Offer easier online repairs reporting, scheduling and tracking.
- ▶ Review our anti-social behaviour policy and procedure, including creating a customer guide.
- ▶ Create an online tenant portal for transactions and real time information.
- ▶ Investment in IT to track requests through to completion
- ▶ Review of the estate caretaking service.

We are committed to improving our services and to keeping you informed on how we're doing. Visit: www.runnymede.gov.uk/housing.

Regenerating Parkside homes

You might have heard that we're considering some major works in the Parkside and Braeside area of New Haw.

If we get permission, and can put the finances in place we want to redevelop the 'temporary' homes that were built in the 1950s, and replace with new, energy efficient, modern homes.

Initial feasibility work is underway, and if the project proceeds and permission is granted, more detailed work will take place to create detailed plans for the area.

This work will take into account resident views and feedback, and regular updates on progress will be available to residents directly and on our website. You can sign up to receive these here: www.runnymede.gov.uk/housing/stay-informed-parkside-regeneration

There are still many questions we can't answer, as until we have explored the options and costs further, we will not know what can actually be achieved.

We've already written to and held meetings for every household directly affected, but there is more information which you can read on our website at www.runnymede.gov.uk/parkside-regeneration



The overall aim of the plan is to deliver better housing, while also investing in wider improvements for the community.

We would like to:

- ▶ Replace some of the current properties with new homes.
- ▶ Develop a new retirement living scheme and a community building.
- ▶ Improve energy efficiency so our housing meets our target of at least C rated by 2030, with all new build properties having an EPC A rating.

Why it's needed:

- ▶ To deliver new and better quality homes for local families.
- ▶ To increase options for tenants who are under-occupying their current home, and enable those needing to move to stay within their community.
- ▶ The 'prefabricated' houses built after the war were intended to have a life of approximately 30 years.

Picture shows one of the oldest homes in Parkside, which is currently not in use.

Checking in on our performance

The way the Council manages its homes and relations with tenants is monitored by the national Regulator of Social Housing.

In October 2019 the regulator served us a notice saying we were not compliant with one of its regulatory standards, the Home Standard.

The good news is all the issues identified have now been addressed. As a result of the actions we have taken, the Regulator of Social Housing contacted us in January 2023 to inform us that we are now compliant with the Home Standard – and therefore as a result their notice will now be withdrawn.

In their most recent letter, the Regulator has said to us: “I wanted to record my sincere thanks to the Council...for the positive and constructive engagement we have had throughout the period of our engagement and for their transparency and openness.”

100

One hundred per cent of our properties now have an electrical safety certificate in place.

76

76 per cent of our properties as of January 2023 have now reached the government’s Decent Homes Standard.

100

One hundred per cent of our homes have current gas safety certificates.

Working to cut your fuel bills

We’ve applied for over £1.2m grant funding to insulate homes, as part of a £4m programme.

If we’re successful, 255 tenants will benefit from more energy efficient homes. This is part of our commitment to reduce emissions from our housing stock, meet the Council’s Net Zero target, and support residents to reduce their energy bills.

The work is due to start in August. We’ve selected properties with the lowest energy performance certificate, meaning they produce more carbon dioxide

which is damaging to the environment.

Affected tenants will be contacted directly.

Get involved in improving your area

We’re making it easier for residents to influence improvements in their community, with a budget for upgrades suggested by tenants.

This could be a community garden, pathways, parking improvements, and more.

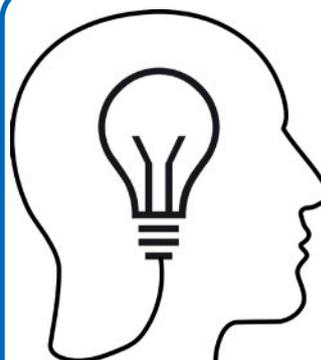
We are currently working on a programme of regular estate inspections, which tenants are invited to take part in. We’re consulting tenants on a new Estate Improvements Budget Policy.

Find out more and share your views at www.runnymede.gov.uk/tenant-engagement-1/draft-estate-improvement-policy

Watch out for mould or damp during the winter season

Condensation and stale air can build up in your home if you don’t allow enough fresh air to move around. Here are a few tips on avoiding damp and mould in your home:

- ▶ Keep your home heated as best as you can given the price of energy.
- ▶ Ventilate by opening windows to allow natural air flow.
- ▶ Wipe away condensation around windows and sills as soon as you see it.
- ▶ Air dry your clothes outside and avoid hanging them on radiators. If you don’t have an outside space, put them in the bathroom with the door closed and bathroom fan on or leave the window open.
- ▶ If you think your kitchen or bathroom fan is broken, or you have problems sticking to these steps, report it to the Council.



What would you like to read about in the next newsletter?

If you would like us to explain an aspect of the Council’s work contact us on listening@runnymede.gov.uk