

# Newsletter

August 2024

For Runnymede Borough Council tenants

## Grant will help cut bills

Council-owned homes across Runnymede are due to get a £2.5million energy efficiency boost, in a move which is expected to help tenants cut their bills by up to £750 a year.

A total of 169 homes will benefit from measures such as external wall insulation, cavity wall insulation and solar panels installed.

The improvement works are possible thanks to a £1.25million grant secured by the Council from the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.

The Government grant will be matched by £1.28m, put aside by the Council from rent income to pay for upgrades and modernisation.

Simon Allen, Head of Technical Services, said: *"This grant funding success is very welcome as it means we can deliver a really substantial programme to improve people's homes, cut the cost of their bills and reduce the impact of our social housing on the environment all at the same time."*

In its bid to the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, the Council said that the average saving per household would be £473 a year.

## Tenancy Agreement feedback

Thank you to the tenants who gave their valuable feedback on the proposed Tenancy Agreement changes.

All social landlords periodically review their Tenancy Agreement, so they remain relevant and effective.

Before making changes, the Council must consult with all tenants. Between January and March we wrote to all tenants, sent emails, shared social media posts and held drop in sessions around the Borough.



Fun at the newly improved Garfield Road play area!

See page three for more information

The project will take two years to complete, and a contractor for the works will be appointed in the coming weeks. This is one of a number of initiatives as we try to update as many properties for tenants whose homes are identified as likely to benefit from improvements. Those tenants will be contacted to make individual arrangements when the work begins.

After considering all the feedback, we are inviting tenants to help us ensure the new Tenancy Agreement is clear and easy to understand before it is presented to the Housing Committee in November, for approval.

If you would be interested in taking part in the focus group, or have any comments on the Tenancy Agreement please email us on:

[listening@runnymede.gov.uk](mailto:listening@runnymede.gov.uk)

Once the new Tenancy Agreement is approved, we will write to all tenants to confirm the start date.

# Launch of new tenant groups

We are serious about listening to tenants views so in April, we launched new tenant groups!

We want you to hold us to account and help us improve.

## Repairs and Maintenance Group

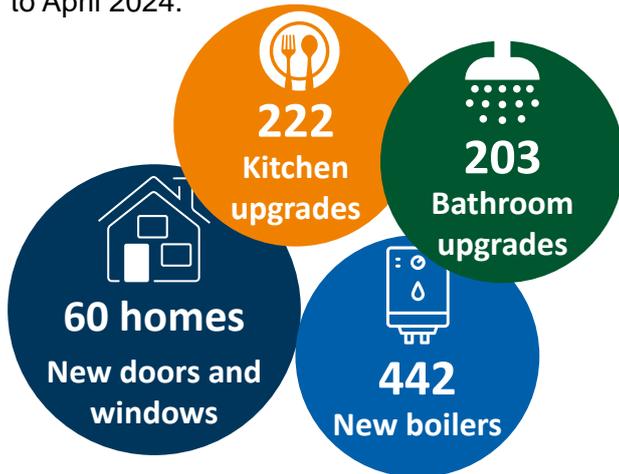
You might be looking at our day-to-day repairs service, monitoring our kitchen and bathroom replacements, or reviewing contracts and suggesting changes to policies.

## Neighbourhood and Communities Group

Review estate improvement proposals, give feedback on community issues, and check on the progress we are making in tackling issues such as

## Upgrades to homes

We carried out the following works from April 2023 to April 2024.



We are expecting to replace a similar number of upgrades to kitchens, bathrooms and boilers by April 2025.

Additionally, we hope to install 300 properties with new windows and doors, and 300 properties with new fire doors.

We expect new contracts to start in September this year for roofing and external decoration.

## Happy tenants...

“Just to say thank you very much for getting the door installation going!

They were installed on Easter Monday and are absolutely fantastic! They have changed the house! It is significantly warmer, soundproofed, safer and they look beautiful - what a difference!!

Thank you again for your help”

JF, Englefield Green

antisocial behaviour and how we are helping people with financial difficulties.

## Communications

Help us be clear and compassionate in our writing by working with us to create information for our website, leaflets, and newsletters.

For more information about these groups, or to register your interest, visit:

[www.runnymede.gov.uk/get-involved-1](http://www.runnymede.gov.uk/get-involved-1)

Alternatively, contact our Engagement and Inclusion Officer, Kate, on 01932 838383 or

[listening@runnymede.gov.uk](mailto:listening@runnymede.gov.uk)

## Neighbourhood issues, mediation and ASB reviews

Every person has the right to enjoy their home in peace, quiet and safety. If you are experiencing antisocial behaviour from neighbours, the first step should be to discuss the issues, informally.



We understand that face to face discussion may not always be possible. In these cases, you may wish to consider writing your neighbour a polite letter explaining the impact of their behaviour.

If you need to report the problem and the person causing the nuisance is a Council tenant, our Tenancy Management Team can explain the next steps. This might involve logging when incidents occur.

Should this be unsuccessful in resolving the issues, you can access Mediation Surrey, which is free to use for those living in Runnymede. The service gives you and your neighbour a chance to discuss issues in a safe, neutral environment with an impartial third party. More details on the services provided can be found via:

[www.mediationsurrey.org](http://www.mediationsurrey.org)

If you feel that the antisocial behaviour is persisting and you have reported three or more incidents in the last six months, without a resolution reached, you can submit a request for an ‘ASB Case Review’ via:

[www.runnymede.gov.uk/ct](http://www.runnymede.gov.uk/ct)

## New Corporate Head of Housing



Congratulations to Maggie Ward, the new Corporate Head of Housing. Maggie has worked at Runnymede for over 20 years and now leads the service. She has worked in roles across the Housing

Service and is looking forward to supporting the team to continuously improve our services and ensure residents get value for money. She previously worked in London, managing large housing estates.

Maggie said "I am proud that Runnymede has retained management of its own housing stock and that we can still offer a locally based service but we still want more residents to get involved to ensure our services are in line with tenants' needs and aspirations".

## Who's who? Meet our Housing senior managers



### Head of Technical Services – Simon Allen

Simon is in charge of our day-to-day repairs service and planned maintenance. He and his team ensure that homes are safe and well maintained.



### Business Development & Policy Manager – Angela Horsey

Angela and her team use feedback to drive continuous improvement, make sure we are following policy and procedure and report performance to the Regulator of Social Housing



### Development Manager – Mark Bawden

Mark leads on finding development opportunities around the Borough so we can build more homes, that are affordable, modern and energy efficient.



### Compliance Manager – Stephan Scheiner

The Compliance Manager is responsible for properties being safe and compliant. This includes fire safety and gas servicing.

## Daniel leading our Tenancies Team



In April we welcomed our new Head of Tenancy Services, Daniel Lloyd. Daniel is leading the team to provide tenancy management, estate services and support to our residents.

Daniel said, "Since arriving in April, I have enjoyed being out and about meeting colleagues and residents. I have seen first-hand the dedication and commitment that the team has to supporting our residents and providing a service that puts them at the heart of what we do.

I am currently working with the team to review how we deliver services. We are constantly challenging ourselves to improve our services to be as efficient and effective as possible.

## Improving local play areas

Play area improvements are underway around the Borough, and one of the locations that benefited from a refresh included Garfield Road play area in Addlestone.

We are thrilled to be able to deliver these results



after speaking with residents who told us the facilities were poor and not age appropriate.

All previous equipment has been replaced, and we have also installed cradle swings, a spinning bowl, multi-play toddler unit, play panels and see-saw.

To see a full list of the play areas which have been improved please visit:

<https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/parks-open-spaces-1/play-area-improvements>

## Online newsletter - August 2024

### This months online newsletter:

- ▶ Great Big Green Week
- ▶ Survey results on housing concerns
- ▶ Information on Universal Credit
- ▶ Runnymede Community Safety Partnership Consultation



Go to: [www.runnymede.gov.uk/tenants-news](http://www.runnymede.gov.uk/tenants-news)

## When things go wrong

We listened to feedback in the Tenants Satisfaction survey and have made it easier for residents to make a complaint and track the response.

If you need to make a complaint or to read our Complaints Policy, please visit:

[www.runnymede.gov.uk/housing-complaints](http://www.runnymede.gov.uk/housing-complaints)

or contact us.

The Housing Ombudsman Service

[www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

oversees how social landlords handle complaints from their tenants.

We have completed a self-assessment against the statutory Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. You can see how we did at:

<https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/housing/housing-complaints/4>

### We identified that we need to:

- ▶ Strengthen our Complaints Policy to reflect that we consider all complaints on a case-by-case basis.
- ▶ Appoint a councillor responsible for Housing complaints.
- ▶ Continue to tell tenants how they can complain if they need to.

You can be part of reviewing how we handle complaints by joining our Tenant Groups (see page 2).

[listening@runnymede.gov.uk](mailto:listening@runnymede.gov.uk)

Remember: you can take your complaint about the Council to the Housing Ombudsman for investigation if your issue has not been resolved properly.

## New Consumer Standards

The Regulator of Social Housing aims to protect tenants and improve the services they receive. The new Consumer Standards are mandatory and are part of wider changes by Government intended to strengthen the accountability of social landlords for providing safe homes, quality services, and treating tenants with respect.

All social landlords, including Runnymede Borough Council, have to evidence how we comply with the regulations and be ready for an inspection a bit like Ofsted inspecting schools.

### The Council will continue to:

- ▶ ensure tenants are safe in their homes for

example through fire, gas and electrical safety compliance,

- ▶ listen to tenants' complaints and respond promptly to put things right,
- ▶ be accountable to tenants and treat them with fairness and respect, and
- ▶ know more about the condition of every home and the needs of the people who live in them.

For more information on the new Consumer Standards, visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/regulator-of-social-housing>

## Tenant Satisfaction Measures

 Last year, we conducted a Tenant Satisfaction Survey, asking tenants what they thought of the Council's housing services.

The results were published in our last newsletter. There is also a video on our website. This survey shows you how well we are doing as a landlord and helps you to hold us to account.

You can watch the video at:

<https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/housing/tenant-satisfaction-survey-results-2023>

As a social landlord, we have reported these results to the Regulator of Social Housing.

Look out for this year's satisfaction survey and the prize draw this Autumn.

## HomeSwapper



A mutual exchange can be a great way to move. The Council is keen to help tenants use this option so has signed up for

an enhanced service from HomeSwapper - the UK's biggest mutual exchange service, with over 400,000 users. Tenants interested in swapping can search for homes, use instant messaging, online permission forms and a Multiswap tool to help you find the swap that's right for you.

For more information and to register, visit:

[www.homeswapper.co.uk](http://www.homeswapper.co.uk)