Runnymede BOROUGH COUNCIL

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.



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.

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.

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

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 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:

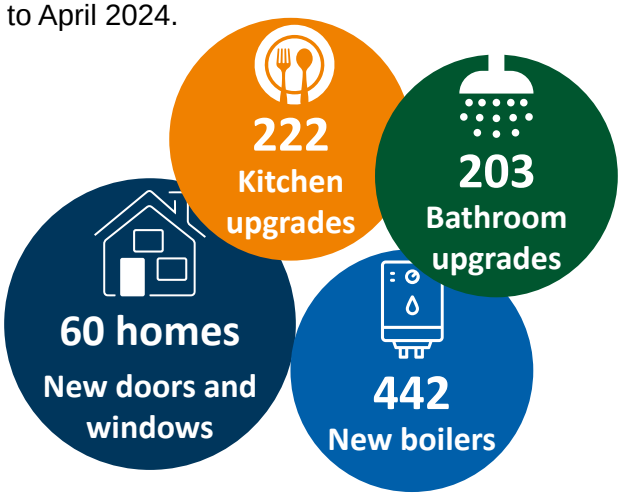
www.runnymede.gov.uk/get-involved-1

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

listening@runnymede.gov.uk

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

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

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

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

SCAN ME

Go to: 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

or contact us.

The Housing Ombudsman Service

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

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

acuity making sense of housing

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.

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March 2024 For Runnymede Borough Council tenants

Remember the housing survey you filled out?

Overall 67 per cent of tenants who took our survey last year were satisfied with the housing service we provide.

The survey was carried out by an independent company and was completed by 782 people. The findings will inform the Council's future planning.

Around two-thirds of tenants were satisfied that their home was well maintained. Half of tenants living in homes with communal areas were satisfied that they were kept clean and well maintained.

Seven out of 10 tenants were satisfied that Runnymede Borough Council provides them with a home that is safe.

Thank you to everyone who took time to complete the survey online, by post or over the phone.

Turn to page 3 to read more about what you said, and how you can get involved to help us improve.



Congratulations to Leanne Williams from Addlestone who won one of the gift **vouchers for taking part in the survey!**

Your feedback: Our action plan

- Better information using automated texts and system-driven updates to queries and transactions.
- Improved management of antisocial behaviour incidents and feedback to complainants.
- Helpful information on the web and One Account.
- New contract for cleaning of communal areas.

Views wanted on important changes to Tenancy Agreements

All social landlords review their tenancy agreements every so often, so they remain relevant and effective, and the Council is doing so now.

Before we finalise the new agreement, we want to hear what you think about the proposed changes, which include clarity on succession rights, responsibilities on preventing damp and mould, plus explanations on lodgers and subletting.

All tenants should have received a letter which sets out the formal process for altering your Agreement.

Please share your views, which we will consider before finalising the new Tenancy Agreement. Feedback will also influence the new Tenants' Handbook. **Here's how to have your say**

Drop in sessions with our staff:

The Hub, 57 Larchwood Drive, Englefield Green - 7 March 10am - 12pm ■ The Village Centre, Victoria **Street, Englefield Green - 11 March, 10.30am - 12.30pm** ■ Civic Centre, Station Road, Addlestone **- 12 March - 2.30pm - 4.30pm** ■ Hope Cafe, Manor **Farm Lane, Egham - 13 March, 11.30am - 1.30pm** ■ **All Saints Church, 98 Woodham Lane, New Haw - 14 March - 10.30am - 12.30pm** ■ Revive Coffee Shop, **99 Guildford Road, Chertsey - 15 March - 10am - 12pm**

Email our housing team: listening@runnymede.gov.uk

www.runnymede.gov.uk/agreement-review

Energy bills bid

The Council is doing all it can to help tenants reduce the cost of energy bills and usage, and help the environment.

This year, we have bid for Government funding to insulate over 150 homes. If our bid is successful, we expect the tenants involved will save an average of £473.25 per year on their heating bills.

Every home will also receive a solar panel allowing the property to generate low Carbon, low cost energy. Many homes will also benefit from low energy lighting.

Community litter picking

Meet local volunteers and help make your community a cleaner, safer and wilder place for all to enjoy!

Council staff will be joining volunteers from 11am - 1pm on Saturday 16 March, meeting at Victoria Street Car Park, Englefield Green. Come and join us!

If you would like to organise your own litter pick email listening@runnymede.gov.uk.

We can provide bin bags, litter picks, gloves and even refreshments!

ACE YOUTH PROJECT

SPORT4KIDS

KICKX

achieve lifestyle

All sessions are £2

Aged between 11-18 years?

Starting Monday 19 February 2024 during term-time come along and enjoy sports and other activities, whilst making new friends and having fun!

Monday, 4-6pm Kick X Football Arena, Addlestone

Indoor hybrid football with football formats including Padbol, Jorkyball, Teqball, Panna, KickX Goal, KickX Wall and KickX VR.

Tuesday, 5-7pm Egham Orbit, Egham

Delivered by Sport4Kids, activities such as tennis, football, basketball, fitness classes, and more.

Friday, 6-8pm Gogmore Farm Park, Chertsey

Delivered by Sports4kids, activities such as pool, tennis, football, table tennis, basketball and more.

No need to book, just turn up!
All activities are delivered by DBS checked staff.

enquiries@sport4kids.biz, 0300 303 3866

Hello@kickxfootball.com, 01932 821610

Runnymede BOROUGH COUNCIL

Warm packs may help to reduce costs



During the winter, we carried out a pilot project providing warm home packs to a small number of tenants. They included energy saving items to help save on household bills.

We have also worked with DraughtBusters, a voluntary organisation which can assess your home and do minor works to draught proof it.

We are committed to helping tenants save on energy costs, and this winter will be rolling out to more tenants with EPC rating of D and lower, who are on Universal Credit, and have been gas capped.

If you have an idea on how the Council can help tenants save on energy usage in the winter months, contact us on listening@runnymede.gov.uk

How all tenants can get involved in helping us to improve

We are keen to work with and listen to our tenants and we have developed a menu of involvement, so you can get involved in a way that suits you.

To volunteer and improve our services you can

- Join a repair, communications, or community group.
- Become a resident reader, tenant voice or resident inspector.
- Take part in Be Heard from Home surveys, focus groups, or a Digital Champion.

To find out more, contact us on listening@runnymede.gov.uk call, 01932 838383 or visit our website, www.runnymede.gov.uk/tenant-engagement-1

Satisfaction survey results

61% satisfied they are kept informed about things that matter to them.

49% of tenants were satisfied with the Council's approach to handling antisocial behaviour.

65% agree the Council treats them fairly and with respect.

67% of people who had a repair carried out in the past year were satisfied with the repairs service. Slightly less people were satisfied with the time taken to complete their most recent repair after reporting it.

49% of tenants were satisfied the Council makes a positive contribution to their neighbourhood.

47% satisfied that the Council listens to their views and acts on them.

574 comments on what tenants said was important for the Council to do, including:

- General comments about repairs, and timescales to complete repairs and outstanding or missed repairs.
- Improvements to homes and the customer service received.
- Neighbourhood problems, such as issues with car parking.

You said, we did: Improving how we handle complaints

In the satisfaction survey you told us we should improve how we listen to and handle complaints:

"Let people know when they put in a complaint in whether the Council is going to follow through"

"Listen to the tenant's complaints and take them seriously"

"Improve the time it takes to get back to you from a complaint."

"Take more responsibility for complaints from residents."

"Should get back to you when you put in any complaint about the maintenance of the property."

To address this we are:

- Completing extra staff training.
- Improving the numbers of complaints resolved at first point of contact.
- Including tenants in checking how we perform against the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code.

To help review how we handle complaints please contact us on listening@runnymede.gov.uk.

We are offering shopping vouchers to all tenants who contribute!

Making a complaint

Search for 'housing complaints' on www.runnymede.gov.uk.

Email us with your complaint at listening@runnymede.gov.uk.

Write to / visit the Civic Centre, Station Road, Addlestone, KT15 2AH.

Phone the Council to talk through your concern on 01932 838383.

If you are not satisfied with the Council's response, you can go to the Housing Ombudsman. Contact them on 0300 111 3000 or visit www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Thank you for paying your rent

The vast majority of tenants pay their rent by Direct Debit so they do not get behind with their rent.

We recognise the pressures from the rising cost of living in day-to-day life so we want to thank people for ensuring accounts are kept up to date.

As a social landlord all the rent collected goes into running our services and maintaining homes. Prompt payment means we do not have to spend money in chasing rent arrears.

If you are struggling with your rent payments, contact your Area Housing Manager by email on Tenancy.Management@runnymede.gov.uk or call us on 01932 838383. Alternatively, see the support available by visiting our website www.runnymede.gov.uk/cost-living or via One Account.

It's easy to swap your home

Homeswapper is the UK's biggest mutual exchange service, with over 400,000 users.

Tenants can use it and search for homes if they want to swap. There is 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

We have paid the membership cost for all tenants.

Introducing our contractors

We partner with a number of contractors to provide our services:

NEO Property Solution is currently upgrading new fire doors over the next three years, for those living in flats and maisonettes.

Anglian Windows is installing new windows and doors over the next five years, for those living in houses.

MCP completes day-to-day repairs. You can raise repairs directly to their staff over the phone or online.

K&T Heating is our gas service and boiler maintenance contractor, carrying out annual gas safety checks.

Kincraig Construction is replacing kitchen and bathrooms.

Clairglow Heating is installing new boilers and carrying out electrical works, such as rewiring.

Please respond if you hear from our contractors. If in doubt, contact the Council.

Good, affordable housing for local people

Council contractors are forging ahead with the planned investment in our social housing, installing new kitchens, bathrooms, boilers and electrics.

The most recent area of work is to install new windows and doors and this started in January.

These upgrades, costing £34million over five years, will benefit tenants and bring more properties up to the government's Decent Homes standard.



Council staff demonstrate a new boiler to a tenant.

New homes

Consultants are looking into the number of new homes that could be built if the Parkside estate in New Haw is re-developed.

Factors include any flood risk, soil conditions, ecology and of course, the cost.

During the spring and summer we will be able to update local residents on the proposals and we will be keen to listen to feedback.

It is hoped that the scheme will include a mix of property types and opportunities for low-cost home ownership.

To register for a transfer visit RBC Living & Homes (rbc-homes.org) or contact us.