



# OPEN HOUSE

The newsletter for Croydon Council tenants and leaseholders

SUMMER 2022

## OPEN HOUSE GOES ON TOUR TO CELEBRATE PLATINUM JUBILEE WITH RESIDENTS



On February 6, 2022, Her Majesty the Queen became the first British Monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee, marking 70 years of service to the people of the United Kingdom, the Realms and the Commonwealth.

Roll on four months to see red, white and blue bunting and flags adorning many of our blocks and estates as residents had a right royal knees up at events and community activities across the borough to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, over the four-day bank holiday weekend in June.

Kuala Gardens newly formed Residents' Association (find out more on page 7) enjoyed a mouth-watering buffet in the communal lounge at their Jubilee get together, ending the day with traditional party games and music.

Resident involvement officer Jacqui Duffus celebrates Jubilee with Kuala Gardens residents



Community development officer Zoe Gaffney at the over 50's Monks Hill bash



Well done to everyone who worked so hard to give their neighbours a chance to meet one another and share some celebration time. Our community development team provided funding for a number of these events and invited resident involvement officer Jacqui Duffus and community development officer Zoe Gaffney to join the celebrations. Join them on their whistle-stop Jubilee tour of the borough.

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# WELCOME BY MAYOR JASON PERRY

## EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF CROYDON

A very warm welcome to the summer edition of Open House – my first opportunity to reach out to you via this means. As Croydon's first Executive Mayor, I want to assure you that I am committed to providing serious improvements to your housing services. I want to ensure you are not just listened to but that you are heard.

The decline in our housing service has gone on for too long and it must stop. At June's Cabinet meeting, my administration formally committed to adopting a Residents' Charter as well as proposals for a new and improved repairs service. The Residents' Charter - developed by residents on our Tenant and Leaseholder Panel - sets out clear expectations that the council will treat all tenants and leaseholders with respect, respond quickly to complaints, involve you in decisions that affect you and provide you with safe, warm and dry homes which you are proud to live in.

I am grateful to residents for the work that has been put into the Charter so far, but to make sure we have it right we want to hear from more of our residents. We will be contacting you later this year to get your views on what has been developed so far, what might be missing, and your ideas for how it can be best delivered and monitored.

In addition, we have been finding out what is important to residents in relation to a repairs service through surveys, roadshows, and focus groups. We have invited a number of residents to scrutinise the proposals for the procurement of a new and improved housing repairs service and I remain committed to involving residents in the development of these important contracts and the selection of future providers.

I know that there is still much more that we need to do until you are receiving the housing services you need and deserve, and that it is only by listening to you and - most importantly - acting on your feedback or concerns - that we will be able to rebuild your trust.

We have a big job ahead, but I hope that you will find a way to get involved in the big decisions ahead and bear with us as we work through these important tasks. I am really looking forward to meeting and working with many of you over the coming weeks and months.



*Jason Perry*

**Mayor Jason Perry**  
**Executive Mayor of Croydon**

# COUNCILLOR LYNNE HALE

## DEPUTY MAYOR AND CABINET MEMBER FOR HOMES

I am honoured to have been appointed Deputy Executive Mayor and Cabinet Member for Homes for the London Borough of Croydon.

There is no getting away from the fact that the council's housing department in Croydon is not in a good place and hasn't been for some time. The service which you, as our residents, have been receiving has been unacceptable and that is why Mayor Perry has made the housing service one of his key priorities.

Since stepping into office, Mayor Perry and I have visited housing estates across the borough and met with residents as well as the Chair and members of the Housing Improvement Board. We've been keen to listen to their experiences and ideas about what changes are required to improve our housing service.

Listening to you and demonstrating how we are acting on your feedback is an absolute priority for us. I want to assure you that we will continue working closely with the Housing Improvement Board to strengthen and gain pace on the changes set out in the Housing Improvement Plan. As you will have seen in Mayor Perry's opening statement, we acknowledge that we have a lot of work to do but are committed to doing so as quickly as practicable. I certainly hope that it won't be too long before you see some improvements coming through such as grass cutting and deep cleans in communal areas.

On another note, I know that some families and households across Croydon are really struggling more each day to make ends meet during the current cost of living challenges. That is why the council is providing our most vulnerable residents with financial help. The Household Support Fund (HSF) is a one-off cash grant which can be used to buy food, gas or electricity top-ups and other essentials items. If you are struggling financially, please get in touch using the contact details provided on page 12 so that we can support you.

Finally, please feel able to contact either Mayor Perry or myself by emailing the Mayor's office at [mayor@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:mayor@croydon.gov.uk) or me at [lynne.hale@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:lynne.hale@croydon.gov.uk). We look forward to hearing from you.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lynne Hale', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Cllr Lynne Hale**  
Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Homes

# GET INVOLVED

HAVE YOUR SAY  
AND HELP US....



## FIND OUR NEW REPAIRS CONTRACTOR

**Residents across the borough are helping Croydon to choose its new repairs and gas servicing contractor. Earlier this year tenants, leaseholders and freeholders joined our newly formed resident repairs procurement working group.**

They met in February, March and June 2022, shared their experiences of the current service and told us what's important and how things need to change for a better service in the future.

We've also been getting feedback through surveys, roadshows, and focus groups and over 50 residents were invited to a meeting where they scrutinised proposals for the procurement of a new and improved housing repairs and gas servicing provider in June. Residents have produced a draft set of customer service standards and prospective contractors will be asked to demonstrate how they will deliver a service that meets these standards.

### **A big thank you to residents for the time they have dedicated to this project so far.**

We would like your feedback on these standards – that have been created by residents – and to tell us if you think something is missing. We also want your ideas about how a new contractor can support Croydon's communities. This could be anything from offering mentoring and apprenticeships, supporting community projects, improving green spaces or reducing carbon emissions. You can have your say by completing a quick 5-10 minute survey here: [www.getinvolved.croydon.gov.uk/repairs-standards](http://www.getinvolved.croydon.gov.uk/repairs-standards) or if you would like us to send you a printed copy of the service standards or give your feedback over the phone, call 07881 677489. **The survey closes on 10 August 2022.**



### **GET INVOLVED!**

Tenants and leaseholders across the borough - especially those from diverse backgrounds – are invited to get involved to help us:

- **Review** tender documents received from prospective contractors
- **Evaluate** how well they meet the service standards - set by residents
- **Monitor** the contract once in place.

There are many ways to get involved, from simple surveys to face to face or online meetings, depending on the time you have available.

**Contact [residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk) or call 07881 677489 to register your interest.**



# OPEN HOUSE MEETS SUSMITA SEN

## - CROYDON'S NEW CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF HOUSING -

Dear resident,

I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself as your new corporate director for housing. I've worked in housing for over 30 years in London at Ealing, Hackney and Hillingdon. Before Croydon I was chief executive for Tower Hamlets Homes for six years, responsible for 22,000 council homes across the borough.

I joined Croydon because I am passionate about providing homes and housing services for residents to the very same standards we'd want for ourselves and our loved ones. I've worked in organisations before with similar issues to those at Croydon and have, by listening to residents and involving them in shaping services, been able to turn things around to deliver truly outstanding services..

It's clear that your experience of our housing services has left you feeling been badly let down and that we have a big job to do to rebuild your trust and confidence. I'm also fully aware that you need to see action and experience the improvements which have been promised to you. I assure you that my focus will be on delivering the kind of services we will all be proud to receive. Mayor Perry has made a commitment to adopt the Residents' Charter which sets out clear expectations about the level of service residents can expect from our services. Residents will be consulted on an initial draft which has been developed by residents on our Tenant and Leaseholder Panel over the coming months. **You can read the draft here: [www.croydon.gov.uk/adopting-residents-charter](http://www.croydon.gov.uk/adopting-residents-charter)**, but this is just one aspect of a plan to turnaround the services and we need your help in doing so.

No housing provider can deliver services that are right for its residents without genuinely co-creating those services in equal partnership with them. To this end, we will be engaging with residents to

develop a picture of the future for Croydon housing services in a series of vision workshops in August 2022. We want to speak to as many residents as we can so if you would like to attend a workshop and take part in the conversation, please **email [residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk) or call 07881 677489.**

Don't worry if you are unable to attend a workshop – we will be reaching out to all residents for their feedback and views following these initial conversations. This is just the start of a new journey for us all, it won't be quick and it's definitely not going to be easy but my promise to you is that we will be upfront, we will be respectful, and we will work together to deliver better services.

I also want you to have the opportunity to contact me directly at **[talktosusmita@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:talktosusmita@croydon.gov.uk)** if an issue you've raised with housing colleagues isn't getting resolved as it should be. Equally if you have a positive experience, I'd love to hear about that too! My job isn't one that can be done from behind a desk and I'm keen to meet as many residents as possible over the coming weeks and months.

**Susmita Sen**  
Corporate Director of housing



# QUEEN'S JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS ON TOUR



## Parson Pightle Jubilee gathering

On Friday 3 June in the far south of the borough, Parsons Pightle residents opened their summer house and garden to share food (including this amazing strawberry Eton Mess made by resident Debbie photo on left), and catch up about old times.

## Monks Hill Jubilee get together

On Saturday 4 June residents flocked to the Jubilee 'bring and share' at the Lighthouse, St Francis Church on Monks Hill estate. It was organised by the Monks Hill Residents' Association and the church. The local Safer Neighbourhoods Team also dropped by to support the event.

For young people there was a bouncy castle, a special Jubilee chalk competition, face-painting, and games. The elders (over 18s) enjoyed an



array of cultural culinary delights which residents brought along to share. Everyone enjoyed the vibrant atmosphere and much-missed community spirit, making this Jubilee one to remember. Rev Peter Wyatt, Minister-in-charge, St Francis Church told us,



Monks Hill resident Kim Wakely (bottom left), (right) tables set for a Queen.

*"It was a fantastic day with over one hundred residents eating diverse food and enjoying each other's company on a sunny day. Thanks to her Majesty for an excuse to get together!"*



## Allington Court sheltered Jubilee party

Residents of Allington Court sheltered scheme (joined by some visitors from Creed Court) in Addiscombe, held their Jubilee party on Saturday 4 June.



Residents all pitched in and laid out a feast fit for a queen, including a fantastic Corgi cake and a large Union Jack cake. Residents also rallied round Allington Court's Tina (pictured) in recognition of the many years she has organised social events such as BBQs, fish and chip nights, day trips, for residents until limited by ill health.



## Over 50's club celebrate at Monks Hill

The last of stop on our tour of the borough's Jubilee celebrations was on Wednesday 15 June when more than 20 residents and members of the over 50's Club at Monks Hill went all out and decked the hall with balloons, bunting, and flags. There were even some chocolate Jubilee mementos and a trio of red, white and blue roses on each table!



After a fish and chips lunch, the party quickly got underway with bingo, a raffle and a few brave residents got up to have a dance. A cream tea of scones and sandwiches brought the afternoon to a close. Margaret Sharp, secretary of the over 50's Club and a Monks Hill resident for over 40 years, said, *"Over the last couple of years there hasn't been a chance for residents to all come together, so the Jubilee was a great opportunity to do just that, and to celebrate our lovely Queen of course!"* Margaret also went on to thank the residents for their support and contributions and the council's community development team, which provided some funding for this event.

Jacquie and Zoe said, *"It was great to see so many residents celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee together, which just goes shows that the community spirit is alive and well in the borough. A big thank you to everyone who worked so hard and made such a huge effort to support and celebrate this special occasion"*.





# STAR SURVEY RESULTS ARE IN

Our Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) is carried out by an organisation called Acuity, on our behalf, helping us to understand how satisfied or dissatisfied you are with the housing services you receive from us. Since last Autumn, they have spoken to 1000 of you and the results are in. Here's what you told us.



## SATISFACTION WITH THE REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE SERVICE

20/21: 64%  
21/22: 57%

You told us that your main concerns relating to repairs and maintenance were about the day-to-day service, such as dealing with outstanding repairs and the time taken to do work.



## SATISFACTION WITH THE QUALITY OF YOUR HOME

20/21: 70%  
21/22: 70%

Many of your responses about the quality of your home related to day-to-day repairs, dealing with outstanding/forgotten repairs, time it takes to complete them, the condition of your home, and reporting issues such as damp and mould. Home improvements, such as new kitchens/bathrooms and doors/windows were also requested.



## PROVIDING A HOME THAT IS SAFE AND SECURE

20/21: 79%  
21/22: 75%

Whilst three quarters of you were satisfied, a significant minority were not. The most common reasons given for not feeling safe/secure were door and window security, repairs/property condition and problems such as unauthorised people on estates.



## SATISFACTION THAT WE ARE EASY TO DEAL WITH

20/21: 64%  
21/22: 54%

You told us the most important thing is getting the basics right - answering the phone, returning calls and replying to emails. You told us finding out the progress of a repair is hard, and that communications and getting information generally can be difficult.





## LISTENS TO VIEWS AND ACTS UPON THEM

20/21: 56%

21/22: 54%

It's clear that we need to do far more to involve you and give you a far louder voice and influence in shaping your housing services. We also need to demonstrate and evidence how we are using your feedback to improve services, checking whether these changes are actually improving things on the ground.



## SATISFACTION WITH THE HOUSING SERVICE OVERALL

20/21: 70%

21/22: 58%

The results from the end of 21/22 compared with the year before are very disappointing and tell us loudly and clearly that our housing services are not where they need to be. We are sorry that your experience has been so poor and determined that your feedback will lead to service improvements. We have set out below ways you can get involved and get your voice heard! While there is much more to do, we hope we can start to re-build your trust and confidence that we're listening to you and are taking action as a result.

- + A commitment by the Mayor to adopt and consult with residents on a Residents' Charter (Find out more on page 2)
- + Resident-driven customer standards at the heart of a new repairs service and involve residents in monitoring their performance – more on page 4.
- + A new resident group to co-create a strategy for how we manage, maintain, and invest in our homes and housing (Get involved! page 11)
- + New telephony system during Summer 22, which should reduce waiting times and help residents to get through to the correct teams
- + A new housing management system from the end of this year to improve communication between housing services
- + Gaining pace on the improvements we set out in the Housing Improvement Plan and consulting with residents on a vision for Croydon housing services (see page 5)

**We will share the results of STAR surveys in future issues of Open House. If you receive a phone call asking you to take part in the survey, please do!**

# BRINGING THE COMMUNITY BACK TOGETHER AT KUALA GARDENS

The pandemic left many residents at Kuala Gardens sheltered block in Norbury feeling isolated, so they decided to set up a residents' association to bring the community back together.

They wanted to take part in activities to socialise, meet new people, and support each other to make the estate a nice and safe place to live.

Resident involvement officers Jacqui Duffus and Gary Fantie have been helping residents to get things up and running. Chair Barry Briant told us the story so far.

*"We looked at the council's website and found contact details and information on how to start up a resident's association. We contacted the council's resident involvement team, as we felt that we needed more one-to-one help and advice. Resident involvement officers Gary and Jacqui visited us the following week to help and support us through the process. Within a month we were officially up and running as the Kuala Gardens Residents' Association!"*

*We currently have 12 members, and hope this will increase by the end of the year. Over the next six months we're planning summer trips, quiz and bingo nights and a Christmas party. Next year, we hope to get further funding from the council's community development team (CDT) to introduce other activities such as weekly chair-based exercise for our residents. We recently had a successful Queen's Platinum Jubilee party, funded by CDT...with Jacqui's support -*

*read all about this on the front cover of Open House! A few months on and we're still getting regular support from Jacqui and Gary, who attend our Thursday coffee mornings to talk to residents about any concerns we may have in the block or on the estate, which we really appreciate and thank them for all their time and continued support."*



Resident involvement officer Jacqui Duffus (right) and the newly formed Kuala Gardens Residents' Association

**If you'd like help or advice to set up a residents' association for your block or estate, get in touch:**

**E: [residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk)**

**T: 07881 677489**

**W: [croydon.gov.uk/residentinvolvement](http://croydon.gov.uk/residentinvolvement)**

# GET INVOLVED

## CALLING ALL RESIDENTS!

We're looking for tenants and leaseholders with an interest in housing to help us shape the council's future asset management strategy. Asset management is how we manage, maintain, and invest in our homes and housing. It also includes how we plan responsive repair programmes, in a sustainable way. We can offer many ways for residents to get involved, from face to face and online meetings, to surveys or a simple telephone call for those with busy lives or without access to the internet.

We're especially keen to hear from residents who have not been involved before. So the group represents as many views, people and ways of living as possible. This will help to create a strategy that fits for everyone and shapes our asset investment for years to come.

**To get involved or find out more about the asset management resident working group, contact [residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk) or call 07881 677489.**

## HAVE YOU CLAIMED YOUR £150 COUNCIL TAX REBATE?

We've been making one-off payments of £150 to eligible Croydon households in council tax bands A to D, to help with current cost of living pressures.

Residents who haven't yet received their payment are asked to complete a form on [www.croydon.gov.uk/council-tax-energy-rebate](http://www.croydon.gov.uk/council-tax-energy-rebate) to process this as quickly as possible. We will apply a £150 credit to council tax accounts we haven't heard from by the end of September.

We have a range of support for residents who struggle to access online services, including options for family or carers to complete the form on their behalf. Further details are available on our website or through the council tax contact centre – **020 8726 7000**.



**Please remember we will never call unannounced to ask for your bank details and you should stay vigilant of scams which ask you for personal and financial information.**

## EXTENSION TO HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND FOR CROYDON RESIDENTS

More funding has been announced for the Household Support Fund, an emergency support grant set up to help Croydon's most vulnerable residents in need to pay for food, gas, electricity, and other essentials items. The scheme – which is funded by the government – has been extended from March 2022 to September 2022 and includes support specifically for vulnerable households in emergency or temporary accommodation. **Find out more at [www.croydon.gov.uk/benefits/household-support-fund-hsf](http://www.croydon.gov.uk/benefits/household-support-fund-hsf).**

To apply, email [dhp2@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:dhp2@croydon.gov.uk) with details of what you are applying for, why you need the emergency support and when you will receive your next Universal Credit/wages. Email applications to discretionary support team at [dhp2@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:dhp2@croydon.gov.uk).



## TOO MANY ROOMS? GET £2,000 FOR EACH ROOM YOU DOWNSIZE!

Like many other London boroughs, Croydon has a high demand for properties. If you live in a home that's larger than what you need, why not downsize? Eligible tenants get £2,000 for each room they downsize. In the last year over 60 people have moved into smaller accommodation.

If you do like to 'be beside the seaside' and are 55 or over, you may be eligible to join our fantastic Seaside and Country home scheme. The more bedrooms you downsize, the higher priority you are given to rehouse you. If you're a Housing Association tenant, contact your landlord to approve you for this scheme.

For more information, email [downsizing@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:downsizing@croydon.gov.uk) or speak to the team on 020 8726 6100, extension 10006.

## love clean streets

The **Love Clean Streets** smartphone app is the fastest way to report fly-tipping, graffiti, abandoned cars and many other issues on Croydon's streets. Help us keep our streets clean and download the app on any smartphone (ios/Apple or Android), at [www.croydon.gov.uk/environment/dont-mess-croydon/love-clean-streets-app](http://www.croydon.gov.uk/environment/dont-mess-croydon/love-clean-streets-app).

Or you can report it online at <https://croydon-beta.lovecleanstreets.com>.

# love croydon

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