

## Your tenant and leaseholder newsletter






## Aldriche Way Mural a welcome addition

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Pictured: Lee Bofkin and Auberon Hall

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# Welcome



Welcome to the first edition of Resident News for 2021. Despite being in lockdown the Housing team have been busy working to ensure that every resident has a safe and decent roof over their head. I know this past year has been hard for so many of us so would like to share these wellbeing resources which you might find useful [bit.ly/WFwellbeing](https://bit.ly/WFwellbeing)

I'd like to celebrate a huge achievement of the team, working in partnership with Aston Group, having consistently achieved 100 per cent gas safety across more than 8,000 residential properties a year for ten consecutive years – that's 3650 days (plus a few more for leap years), wow!

It's been a true partnership to get to this point. There are so many teams involved that, if any one link in the chain broke, the whole process would fail. From the Aston Group team, which delivers the gas inspections and the correspondence, to the Legal Team and the Housing Management team, everyone has really pulled together to achieve this incredible milestone.

We are determined that our residents have a decent roof over their heads and can live safe and healthy lives. This is at the heart of our housing strategy.

We've recently restructured our Housing Services department to help ensure our teams can deliver the best possible service to you – now and in the future. The familiar faces will still be there to support you and you can continue to access our services via all the existing methods.

As we start to emerge from lockdown, the team are carrying on with important work programmes that we either had to delay or slow down, and doing so safely. In council housing that is undergoing building works our contractors are working within the Safe Systems of Work guidelines, remaining COVID secure at all times and undertaking testing twice a week. At times contractors will be required to enter your home to perform checks such as gas safety checks, I want you to be assured that we and our housing contractors are doing their utmost to keep everyone safe while they carry out essential maintenance.

It's really important to us that residents are at the heart of how we design and deliver our services. We want YOU to have a voice and be heard and we want the homes and neighbourhoods in which you live to be safe and of a standard that we can all be proud of. So please do fill in our Resident Involvement Strategy and have your say.

This is a bumper issue full of valuable information for our Council tenants and leaseholders. I hope that when I write to you next we are in a summer where we can meet up, and share good times with families and friends once more.

## Thank you

**Councillor Louise Mitchell**

Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness Prevention



# How to get in touch with us

Our Housing Teams have an online reception service designed to better serve our residents.

This means we can be more flexible, agile and it enables us to quickly adapt to meet your future demands and challenges.

## When a resident has a housing query

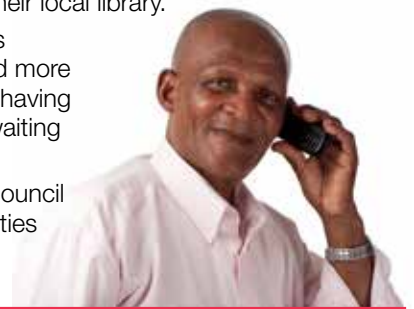
- Resident calls our Customer Resolution Centre (CRC) on **020 8496 4197**.
- The first person they speak to will ask them a set of questions to help determine the level of housing assistance and/or advice required.
- If the issue is urgent, the adviser will have the option of giving the resident a same-day appointment with a Duty Officer to progress their query. This can be over the phone or by video conference.

- If the situation is less urgent the advisor will schedule an appointment and advise what documents may be needed before the meeting.
- Supplying those documents ahead of the appointment will help housing officers deal with the query more efficiently and faster.
- If residents need a scanner or support to supply documents, they will be able to access an assisted self-service facility at any one of our libraries..

Our most vulnerable residents will also be able to have interviews with a Duty Officer via a video link or conference in a private room from their local library.

Our aim is that residents receive an improved and more efficient service without having to leave their home or waiting for hours to be seen.

This is part of a cross-Council review of reception facilities across all departments.



## Need help with your rent?

We know the last year has been difficult and as a result some Council tenants may have fallen into rent arrears.

The Council is here to support our residents and make sure they stay on top of their rent. Tenants should continue to pay rent and keep to all other terms of their tenancy agreement to the best of their ability.

The government has made a strong package of financial support available to tenants, and where you can pay the rent as normal, you should do. If your ability to pay rent is affected, it's important to have an early conversation with us.

Rent levels agreed in your tenancy agreement remain legally due and you should contact the Housing Rents service on **020 8496 4197** or email [rents@walthamforest.gov.uk](mailto:rents@walthamforest.gov.uk) if you are in difficulty.

An early conversation with the Housing Rents service can help both parties to agree a plan if you are struggling to pay your rent.

This can include reaching a temporary agreement not to seek possession action for a period of time and instead agree a payment plan. If you receive a notice seeking possession for rent arrears or have done so already, we can discuss and agree a way forward to support you.

We are committed to offering support and our understanding to tenants who may experience changing income levels.

More information: [walthamforest.gov.uk/content/paying-your-rent](http://walthamforest.gov.uk/content/paying-your-rent)

## Resident Engagement Update

### Strategic Tenants & Resident (STAR) Panel

It's been three years since our STAR Panel held its very first meeting and it is now time for a refresh. Although the current resident members three year term has come to an end, we have agreed to a staggered step-down approach.

This will allow the current experienced resident members to stay on for a period of time to mentor newly recruited members providing continuity and ensuring that the STAR Panel remains as effective as ever.

### Resident Building Safety Task Force

Over the past year, the Building Safety Task Force has worked with TPAS to develop a Building Safety Resident Engagement Strategy which will define how Waltham Forest engages with residents on building safety matters going forward.

If you would like to get involved in building safety matters for your block/estate please email [engagement@walthamforest.gov.uk](mailto:engagement@walthamforest.gov.uk) or call **0208 496 4839**.

### Resident-led Scrutiny Update

The leasehold satisfaction scrutiny review is well underway. The resident scrutiny team are currently reviewing documents provided by the Home Ownership Team and will be carrying out a reality check including potential interviews, focus groups and surveys.

If you would like to get involved in resident scrutiny, or our other engagement opportunities please email [engagement@walthamforest.gov.uk](mailto:engagement@walthamforest.gov.uk) or call **0208 496 4839**.

# Get a Covid-19 test

We all must stay at home as much as possible at the moment, however you can leave home to get a Covid-19 test. This is especially important if you work away from your home or regularly leave home for essential reasons.


**Get tested to help protect our communities.**

## Got symptoms?

Open every day between 8am – 8pm


 Church Lane car park,  
Leytonstone, E11 1HG

Open every day between 7am – 9pm

 Stanley Road car park,  
Leyton E10 7EQ


Open every day between 7.30am – 8.30pm


 Linford Road car park,  
Walthamstow E17 3LS


 Homebase, Walthamstow E17 4EE  
Walk-in via Forest Rd, drive-through via  
Fulbourne Rd, 9am to 3pm  
Please check  
[www.walthamforest.gov.uk/testing](http://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/testing)  
for the days it is open.

## Not got symptoms?

Open every day between 10am – 7pm


 Chingford Assembly Hall,  
Station Road, E4 7EN

 One Hoe Street,  
Walthamstow E17 4SD

 Jubilee Centre, Cathall Rd,  
Leytonstone, E11 4LA

 Aldriche Way Community Room,  
below 118-132 Aldriche Way E4 9LZ

 Leyton Cricket Ground, 2 Crawley Road,  
Leyton, E10 6RJ

 Methodist Church, 5 New Road,  
Chingford Mount, E4 9EU  
Open every day 8am-5pm



These opening times were correct at the time of print.

For up to date information, visit [www.walthamforest.gov.uk/testing](http://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/testing)



# Tackling anti-social behaviour

**Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) has not taken a break due to the current pandemic and neither have we. We continue to investigate and address ASB whilst following the Government guidelines on COVID-19. ASB has no place in our borough, and we will continue to use all the resources we have to eradicate it.**



## Some example of ASB include:

- verbal abuse/harassment/threats
- vandalism/damage to property
- noise nuisance (e.g. loud music, excessive shouting)
- drugs/substance misuse/drug dealing
- alcohol-related nuisance
- Cuckooing (criminal(s) befriends an individual who lives on their own. The criminal then moves in and uses to property to operate unlawful activity. Victims are often lonely, isolated and vulnerable)
- litter/rubbish/fly-tipping
- misuse of communal areas/public spaces/loitering
- running illegal businesses
- other criminal behaviour/crimes.

**Waltham Forest Council are dedicated to tackling ASB. As part of the Housing Service redesign we have created Place Officers who are responsible for undertaking visits to properties and estates, carrying out estate inspections and holding meetings virtually with partners to raise ASB issues in areas and/or come up with action plans to stop any ASB in a particular area.**

We continue to sit on several different panels with professional partners to raise, discuss and action plan about the areas we have been told have ASB issues. We use an array of tools to help us investigate and prevent ASB, such as:

- working with our partners in the ASB Team to secure a closure order for a property or estate which is causing high levels of ASB
- refer parties to mediation, so both parties can talk through the issues they are experiencing and come to a satisfactory outcome
- provide our residents with the noise app, which allows residents who are experiencing noise issues to record the noise nuisance and send it directly to their Tenancy Officer to review and action.

We are aware that ASB affects everyone differently, we therefore aim to support residents in ways which suit and benefit them. We can refer residents to Victim Support if they want additional support regarding the ASB they are experiencing, or if a resident requires support with domestic violence/ abuse, we can help them get in touch with Solace Women's Aid as well as do safeguarding referrals to Adult Social Care and Children Social Care if required.

Everyone has the right to enjoy their lives, their homes, and the environment around them without suffering from ASB. If you are experiencing ASB either from residents or non-residents, please get in contact with your Tenancy Officer who will be able to provide you with support and advice, as well as safeguard you and your family and take action against the ASB.

Please do not suffer in silence, together we can tackle any kind of ASB. Please get in touch with your Tenancy Officer for further information or contact **020 8496 3000** email: [wfdirect@walthamforest.gov.uk](mailto:wfdirect@walthamforest.gov.uk)



# New Allocation Scheme 2021

We are pleased to announce that Housing Services launched the Council's new Housing Allocation Scheme on 4 February 2021. This replaced the earlier policy that had been in place since September 2013.

**A number of vacant Council and housing association properties have since been advertised and allocated to applicants who have been re-assessed and prioritised for accommodation, in line with the new allocation scheme.**

The Council had been working on the framework for the new scheme for many months and this included a large consultation exercise with residents and stakeholders before the final details were approved.

The new scheme is fully compliant with all relevant legislation introduced since the implementation of the earlier 2013 policy. In addition, the Council have simplified the priority system so that applicants may have a better understanding of their priority levels and possible waiting times for social housing. This will enable them

to make informed choices about other housing options.

The scheme features numerous updates which include five new priority bands, revised eligibility criteria, and changes to bedroom assessments for households.

Full details of the new housing allocation scheme can be found online at [walthamforest.gov.uk/content/housing-policies-and-guidance](http://walthamforest.gov.uk/content/housing-policies-and-guidance).

As part of the Council's implementation of the new policy, all existing housing applicants were contacted with a request that they update their applications via the online housing registration form.

The Council are aware that some applicants have not yet completed necessary updates to their applications as requested and would encourage all customers to ensure that their details are

fully updated as a matter of urgency.

This is to ensure that Housing Services have their correct information and household details on file for rehousing.

Over the coming weeks, the Council will start to cancel housing applications for those customers who have failed to update their details as requested.

This may result in the loss of any previously awarded priority for housing and associated waiting time on the housing register.

If you have been asked to update your application for housing and require some advice or assistance around this process, please contact the Waltham Forest Customer Services Team on **020 8496 4197** or via email at [wfdirect@walthamforest.gov.uk](mailto:wfdirect@walthamforest.gov.uk)

## Housing Services restructure

**We've recently restructured our Housing Services department to help ensure our teams can deliver the best possible service to you – now and in the future. You can continue to access our services via all the existing methods.**

### Key changes include:

- Creation of a Housing Insight and Service improvement team; designed to use service performance insight and data to continuously improve our services to you.
- Introduction of more roles within the team working on mechanical and electrical works and maintenance, to better support the partnership we have with our contractors, and help the implementation of new building safety requirements.

- Expanding teams within our Homelessness service, to help prevent homelessness and rough sleeping.
- Re-organisation of the team of Housing Officers that support our tenants.
- Boosting the team that works with our Housing Associations, to better identify opportunities for joint working and support the delivery of new housing.

Over the coming months we'll be looking to continually learn from best practice across the housing sector, provide further training to our employees, engage with our resident panels and understand how the data we collect can drive further improvements to help increase your satisfaction with our services.

## New Service Areas

There are three new service areas within the Housing Service:

### Housing Assets

The Housing Assets division is responsible for the repair, maintenance, and safety of our Council homes.

- Building Works (including empty Council properties)
- Compliance & Assurance (including building safety)
- Mechanical & Electrical Services (including gas, digital, and environmental energy)
- Commercial & Contract Management

### Housing Operations

The Housing Operations division is responsible for managing the relationship with our residents and communities that live in Council homes and on Council estates.

- People Services (including tenancy management, rent collection and welfare reform, and independent living/sheltered housing)
- Place Services (including estate management and home ownership)
- Engagement & Insight (including resident engagement and the management of community facilities)

### Housing Strategy & Options

The Housing Strategy & Options team is responsible for our non-landlord functions, such as the management of the housing register and homelessness.

- Housing Strategy & Improvement (including investment and partnerships)
- Temporary Accommodation
- Income & Lettings (including rehousing)
- Prevention & Assessment (including homelessness, housing options and rough sleeping)
- Accommodation Options (including placements and temporary accommodation reduction)
- Housing Systems



# Rent Portal update

It is just over a year since the Housing portal was launched, and we now have over 3,200 residents who have signed up to manage their accounts online.



Tenancy Officer - Damian Okonkwo

**We want to make it easier for you to manage your rent account which is why we recently added a new function so you can do more online. If you are in arrears, you can now use the online form to ask for an arrangement to pay by instalments. Your proposal would then be reviewed by your Rent Officer. If this is accepted, you will receive confirmation by email.**

If you are a new resident, you may have noticed our Housing Officers filling forms on their tablets and phones. We are in the process of digitising our sign-ups and other tasks, including Estate Inspections, Tenancy Audits, and the new Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans.

Finally, we are currently working on bringing repairs online. You will be able to view your property repair history and raise a repair request in the first release. New functions will be added over the following months, including being able to manage your gas or electrical services, viewing planned works and dealing with defects in new properties.

If you haven't already registered, please visit <https://portal.walthamforest.gov.uk> and click register. Registration is easy. You will need a few personal details, your payment reference and application reference if you are currently on a waiting list.

# Contest winners

Some of our independent living scheme residents have spent the summer turning their flats and outdoor areas into the gardens of Babylon.

Back in June, the Council joined up with local food growing collective OrganicLea to supply free seeds, plants and compost to any interested resident in the independent living schemes and residents supported by our Community Independent Living Officers and Local Area Coordinators in the community.

We also set up a Whatsapp group where residents could share pictures, get advice from the professional gardeners and OrganicLea and support each other. We've had over 100 pictures and videos sent to us by the proud new gardeners and we've given out gift vouchers for our monthly prize draws.

Three lucky winners also won a polaroid camera, a personalised trowel and fork set and a Tablet and tablet stand as part of our end of summer competition for biggest vegetable, tallest plant and best series of pictures.



## Rent changes in the new financial year

On 23 February 2021 the Council agreed next years' rent increase. Rents for social housing are to be increased by 1.5% from Monday 5 April 2021 in line with the Rent Standard for registered providers of social housing.

Social rent levels remain lower than the Local Housing Allowance and market rent equivalents in the borough.

Service charges are based on the actual costs of providing services and are set on the basis of full cost recovery. Councils are entitled to recover the costs of these services from all users (tenants and leaseholders). The cost of providing the services is reviewed annually as part of the budget setting process, and the charges set accordingly.

Housing Scrutiny had oversight of these proposals at the December 2020 meeting. Consultation with tenants at the Strategic Tenant and Residents (STAR) panel took place during January 2021. Both groups were in support of the proposals.

All tenants should have now received a letter confirming their rent increase. If you are struggling to pay your rent, email [rents@walthamforest.gov.uk](mailto:rents@walthamforest.gov.uk) to see how we can support you.

## Estate Bikehangars



**Finding somewhere to store your bike can prove challenging, particularly if you live in a flat or don't have your own outside space. Waltham Forest has introduced the 'Estate Bikehanger Programme' that specially looks to provide secure residential cycle parking at Estates run by Waltham Forest Council.**

If you're tired of struggling in the stairwell or want to free up some space in your flat why not apply for a space by visiting <http://bit.ly/estatebikehanger>

Annual membership is just £30 a year and includes a BikeRegister Membership Plus Kit worth £12.99!

## Parking Policy

A big thank you to all of you that took the time to respond to our parking policy consultation which closed on 22 January 2021.

We received 352 responses and are in the process of undertaking a detailed analysis of the findings which will help inform the recommendations made.

A report is going to Cabinet on 22 April recommending the adoption of the Housing parking policy. We have updated the estate parking webpage to advise residents of this, this can be viewed at [walthamforest.gov.uk/content/housing-estate-parking](http://walthamforest.gov.uk/content/housing-estate-parking)

### Emergency Access

We previously informed residents of the emergency access road marking and signage works we are carrying out on all our estates. This work has started to gather pace and several estates have already had this works completed. This work is essential to ensure emergency service vehicles can access our blocks via routes that are clear of vehicles, for the safety of all residents.

## Bringing the festive cheer directly to their homes



**This Christmas was very different for everyone across the UK including our sheltered housing residents.**

We wanted to make sure that even though residents could not celebrate with friends and family, we could still bring the festive cheer directly to their homes.

We provided Christmas meals and giftbags to every resident who wanted one across the 14 sheltered schemes as well as vulnerable people we support in the community. Our Independent Living Team danced around the schemes with their speaker, belting out Christmas tunes and putting smiles on residents faces.

A big thanks to our repairs contractors Morgan Sindall Property Services and Aston Group who donated a hamper full of prizes for each scheme as well as a number of special prizes including tablets and fitness monitors. They also helped us deliver the meals and giftbags to residents in the community.



# Council spends £40 million on Building Safety scheme to modernise and improve homes

Building safety has always been a priority for Waltham Forest Council.

**The Council has a £40 million investment programme of housing building safety improvements, with many works already underway, including new safety measures such as sprinkler systems and communal alarm systems.**

The Council is developing detailed plans for remedial work to bring its buildings up to the most modern building safety standards. In some of our high-rise blocks, the plans will involve making some interim safety precautions, such as changing the fire strategy from Stay Put to Simultaneous Evacuation and introducing Waking Watch and Fire Detection Alarms for resident safety, while a programme of modernisation works take place.

The Council is communicating the new changes to every one of the council's tenants affected to ensure they all understand the new changes and how it affects them and make sure they are safe, and feel safe, in their home.

**Cllr Louise Mitchell, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness Prevention said,** "As part of our new Corporate Strategy, our Safe and Healthy Lives priority includes a commitment to high quality homes. To deliver this, we have carried out extensive examinations of all Council high-rise buildings in Waltham Forest to ensure that every one of them is safe for the residents that call them home.

Introducing Waking Watch and changing the fire strategy to Simultaneous Evacuation as a short-term measure in our high-rise blocks will ensure our residents feel confident that their homes are safe, while

longer term modernisation works take place. We are working closely with the London Fire Brigade and every tenant so they are reassured and informed of what is happening and what it means to them."

**London Fire Brigade's Borough Commander for Waltham Forest, Nick Newman, said,**

"We have been working closely with Waltham Forest Council while they were considering their approach to building safety in high-rise buildings. Their proactive approach should be commended. Introducing Waking Watch and simultaneous evacuation as a precautionary measure means residents in these buildings feel safe and can have peace of mind while the remedial works are undertaken."

For more information: [walthamforest.gov.uk/content/building-safety](https://walthamforest.gov.uk/content/building-safety)

Keeping your home fire safe at the London Fire Brigade website: [www.london-fire.gov.uk/safety/the-home/](https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/safety/the-home/)



# Avenue Road Estate Ballot Result

The Council appointed Civica Electoral Service (CES) the Independent Body who carried out the Residents Ballot on the Avenue Road Estate.

**All Eligible residents were contacted directly by Civica Election Services (CES) at the beginning of December 2020. CES are managed the registration and ballot process.**

CES posted the ballot papers to eligible residents January 8th, 2021, with all packs containing voting instructions, a ballot paper, and a pre-paid reply envelope.

The results of the ballot are as follows

**Are you in favour of the proposals for the regeneration of Avenue Road Estate?**

**YES 91.5%**

**NO 8.5%**

## What happens next?

Following the successful result of the Residents Ballot, the Council are moving forward with progressing the results through Cabinet, seeking to:

- Approve the decision, following the positive result in the Resident Ballot, to proceed with the regeneration option at Avenue Road Estate.
- Agree the scheme budget to progress the regeneration

Residents will be aware we have not held face to face meetings or workshops following the announcement of the lockdown in March 2020. Instead, we have engaged and consulted residents using virtual platforms.

As we are in our third lockdown, the council will need to continue engaging and consulting residents virtually. The Council are collaborating with its project team to agree the next phase of key workshops and will inform residents of the programme of workshops in due course.

Please visit [www.avenue-road-estate-regeneration.co.uk](http://www.avenue-road-estate-regeneration.co.uk)

## Council house building programme

**The Council House Building Programme began in 2017 and involved the Council building 130 units on 20 sites across the borough providing social housing for local people.**

The schemes were delivered using the Councils' framework partner contractor Engie Regeneration Ltd and multi disciplinary partner consultants NPS Ltd.

The properties are environmentally friendly contributing to the reduction of carbon emissions and cost in use for the residents. Completed in November 2020, the programme has contributed significantly to the

reduction of homelessness and housing need within the borough and has demonstrated the Council's commitment to ensure its residents have a safe and decent roof over their head.

The programme was funded by a combination of Greater London Authority (GLA) grant, right to buy receipts and HRA funds.

This programme laid a solid foundation for the delivery of the current GLA funded housing programme of 400 units being delivered in conjunction with 60 Bricks Ltd, the Council's wholly owned development company.



Hungderdown, St Egberts Way.

# Cooking up good meals at home

**Being at home more means cooking at home more – whether you cook for necessity or fun, alone or for the whole family, new simple ideas in the kitchen that taste great are always welcome.**

Now some of our favourite recipes from residents who live in Council community and independent living schemes have now been brought together in a booklet, led by resident chefs and area coordinators at St Gabriel's Church Wednesday Hub in Walthamstow.

Cllr Louise Mitchell, Cabinet Member for Housing and

Homelessness Prevention said: "These recipes are a gift from residents who reach out and support their neighbours through the joy of cooking. Love for food and brings people of all backgrounds and generations together. Great food reminds us of great times and healthy, easy-to-follow cooking inspiration is something we all welcome at home.

Thanks to everyone who contributed, we hope it will spread joy - and some great new ideas to try - across the community."

For info on the local area coordination network email: **local.areacoordination@walthamforest.gov.uk**

## Some ideas from the booklet...

### Carribbean Johnny cakes by Maud

Maud says: "Johnny cakes are a breakfast favourite for my grown-up children – plus the grandchildren love them as well."

#### Ingredients:

Four cups plain flour  
Two tsp baking powder  
One and a half tbsp margarine  
Pinch of salt  
Vegetable oil

#### Method:

Sift flour and baking powder into a bowl. Cut in marg and rub in flour, until mix is breadcrumbs. Slowly add cold water and bring together to form a ball of dough. Place on a floured board and knead. Roll out dough and cut into rounds. Deep fry until golden brown and cooked through.

### Phat potato snacks by Angeli

Angeli said: "I started making these as an alternative to my daughter snacking on crisps. They are cheap, fun quick and easy to make!"

#### Ingredients:

Two or three medium sized potatoes  
One tsp dried rosemary  
One tsp dried thyme  
Two tbs oil  
Three tbs water  
One tsp salt

#### Method:

Pre-heat oven 200C/180 fan/Gas Mark six. Cut potatoes into slices and mix with herbs and oil. Place on baking tray and cover with foil. Bake, remove foil after twenty minutes and bake for a further ten. Enjoy on their own or as a side dish with your meal.

### Quick Hummus by Marlene

"As a grandmother and former foster mother, I love trying new recipes. As I don't like wasting food (or money!), I always use up extra cooked chickpeas by making my own hummus."

#### Ingredients:

200g canned drained chickpeas  
Juice of half a lemon  
One garlic clove  
Pinch salt  
One tbsp tahini paste  
Five tbs water  
Half one tbs of olive oil

#### Method:

Blend all of the ingredients. Dress with paprika and a drop of olive oil (optional) Eat with warm pitta bread or as a dip for celery and carrot sticks



Quick hummus



Johnny cakes

# Aldriche Way gets a makeover

**Last October we commissioned Global Street Art to design a mural celebrating Black history as part of Black History Month. We spent the month consulting residents on potential designs.**

There were so many suggestions on what the mural

should feature but ultimately, residents were keen that the mural was inspiring and celebrated a black British person. The final design features a quote from Zadie Smith, a black British author which states "All that matters is kindness and the capacity to recognise the people other than you".

**"All that matters is kindness and the capacity to recognise the existence of people other than you."**  
Zadie Smith



# Leasehold Update

**This is a busy time of year for Home Ownership Services. The team are currently preparing the statements of estimated service charge expenditure and shared ownership rents for 2021 – 2022.**

In recent years we have been shrinking the difference between estimated and actual charges. This has made it easier for leaseholders to predict how much they should set aside to meet their actual costs at the end of the year and make it easier for them to budget for their outgoings.

The annual service charge includes services such as caretaking, day-to-day repairs, building insurance premiums and ground rent. We continue to carry out audits of services to ensure that the estimates issued reflect the level and cost of services provided.

The estimates and accompanying breakdown of charges provide an opportunity for leaseholders to raise any queries they may have. The team manage over 2,100 leasehold and shared ownership

properties, so sending out this many statements generates a lot of correspondence and calls. At this peak time of demand this can mean that customers may sometimes have to wait longer than normal for their reply.

Leaseholders can now access their service charge account online via the housing portal. You can find this by clicking 'my account' button at the top of the home page of the Council's website **walthamforest.gov.uk**.

If you have any queries regarding your leasehold/shared ownership account or if you are struggling to pay your charges, please contact the Home Ownership Team:

**E mail:** [Rtb.lease@walthamforest.gov.uk](mailto:Rtb.lease@walthamforest.gov.uk)

**Phone:** 0208 496 5204 / 5206 / 5207

**You can also write:**

Home Ownership Team, Cedar Wood House,  
2d Fulbourne Road, Walthamstow, London, E17 4GG

## Housing Service's Support Offer for Survivors of Domestic Abuse

**During lockdown people can move homes if fleeing domestic violence. You are not alone; please call 0808 2000 247 to access a free 24/7 domestic abuse helpline.**

The recent lockdown restrictions have increased the opportunities for perpetrators of domestic abuse to inflict harm. However, Domestic Abuse is not acceptable and not inevitable. We have recently committed to transform our housing-based support offer for survivors of domestic abuse. This will involve;

1. Training every housing service staff member to ensure that they can identify abuse and support a victim in an empathetic way.
2. Introducing new policies and procedures to ensure support options are coordinated across the Housing Service and are tailored to the victim's needs.

3. Working with our housing association partners to ensure there is a consistent housing support offer throughout the borough.

This work was launched in November alongside the 16 days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence Campaign, where we arranged training workshops for staff and put up posters on community noticeboards throughout our estates detailing the local support available to victims of domestic abuse.

This work will be supported by the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) which is a partnership between housing providers and the domestic violence charity, Standing Together. The partnership aims to improve the housing sector's response to domestic abuse, and more information can be found at **[DAHAalliance.org.uk](http://DAHAalliance.org.uk)**

# Home Contents Insurance designed for London Borough of Waltham Forest tenants

## Would you like peace of mind knowing if the worst was to happen you would be able to replace your belongings?

London Borough of Waltham Forest brings you a home contents insurance scheme which offers all our tenants the chance to insure the contents of your home in an **easy and affordable way**.

Fire, theft, storm & flood damage, vandalism, water & oil leaks are all covered as Standard\*, see overleaf for more benefits.

Premiums start from as little as £1.37 a week (for tenants aged under 60), for a £9,000 sum insured, and just 61p a week (for

tenants aged 60 and over or those in receipt of Housing Benefit), for a £4,000 sum insured for standard cover.

There are many benefits and it's so easy to apply. For an information pack contact **London Borough of Waltham Forest on 020 8496 4197**

*\*terms, conditions and inner limits apply, please see the policy wording for full information.*

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## Always safety first

In order to protect both our residents and engineers as much as possible during this COVID 19 period, engineers carrying out landlord safety checks will not be handing over their hand-held devices to residents to capture signatures. Engineers will instead log the name of the person present on the hand held device themselves on completion.



## Free online courses and career help at Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service

**Accounting, art, ceramics, childcare, English, hair and beauty, gardening, maths ... the Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service has hundreds of courses to help you get a new job or improve your wellbeing.**

Job hunting? Our courses and free job clubs will help boost your self-confidence and job skills.

Most of our courses are free or up to 70 per cent off depending on your circumstances. We also offer free course assessments to help you find the right course to meet your goals.

Find out more and enrol: call us on **020 8496 2974** or visit [https://bit.ly/WFALS\\_enrol2020-21](https://bit.ly/WFALS_enrol2020-21)

# Money management

Money is the last thing we want to talk about to strangers. By the time we do, it's often because we've reached breaking point. Here at Clean Slate, we run a free, Money Health-Check service. It can help, whether you feel you are struggling or not, to uncover ways to become better off.



**Our friendly support workers will take you through an online quiz (during lockdown will do this over the phone).**

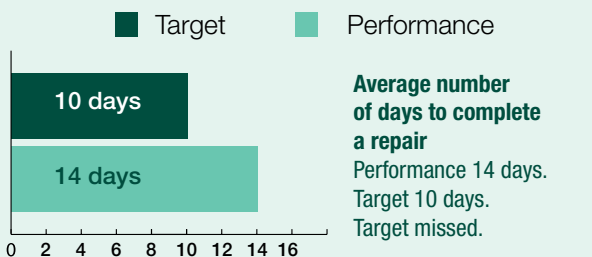
We don't pry into your financial circumstances, the idea is for you to get more control of your money. You will learn some quick wins to help you save cash, as well as longer-term solutions.

The quiz also helps to improve people's digital skills and confidence, with links to self-help digital tools. Our team will guide you through learning how to make use of them. You can also talk to us about employment, skills and training.

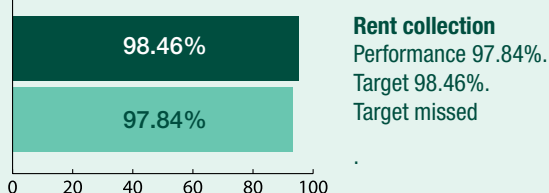
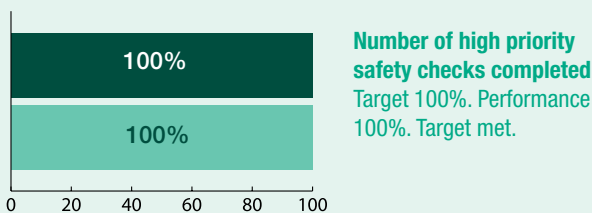
To get in touch, you can call us on **020 3540 7421** or email **london@cleanslateltd.co.uk**

Clean Slate Training & Employment is a social enterprise. Quids in! is our publishing arm and money skills programme. Visit **www.quidsinmagazine.com** for more details.

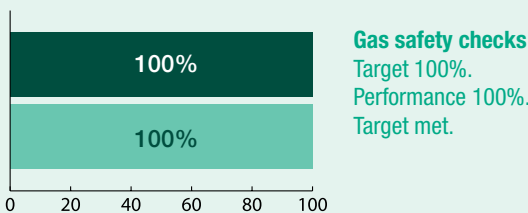
## Performance on key parts of our services to residents as of December 2020



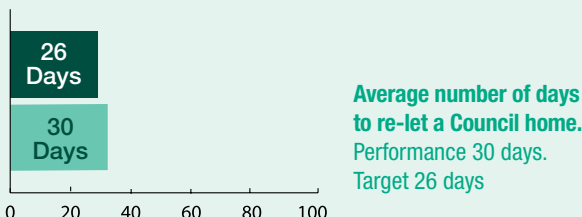
Performance was impacted by the current lockdown and the first lockdown earlier this year. We would ask you to bear with us as much as you can until we are able to safely carry out routine repairs



Rent recovery performance deteriorated during the first Lock Down as people began to lose their jobs and were furloughed. Covid restrictions have also meant that the Council has not been able to take court action to recover the debt. The debt recovery level is now close to target but it will need to be monitored closely as if levels of unemployment rise and restrictions on court action continue this is likely to make debt recovery more difficult.



The Covid-19 crisis had an impact on the programme but we are seeing improvements as we move out of lockdown.



Performance was impacted by the first lockdown, but performance improved during the year, and was at the level that we would expect to see in November and December



## New Resident Involvement Strategy

Here in the Housing team we are committed to putting residents at the heart of service design and delivery. We want YOU to have a voice and be heard and we want the homes and neighbourhoods in which you live to be safe and of a standard that we can all be proud of.

**By completing this short survey, you will be helping us to develop our Resident Involvement Strategy 2022-25, through which we will set out how we will involve you in the decisions which impact on your homes and communities.**

This is your opportunity to tell us which services you are interested in influencing, how much time you can spare and the ways in which you want to be involved.

**All entries that are received by 12 April 2021 will be entered into a raffle to win £50 shopping vouchers.**

If you are unable to complete the survey online or would like help to complete your questionnaire, please email the engagement team;

**engagement**  
[@walthamforest.gov.uk](mailto:@walthamforest.gov.uk)  
or phone **020 8496 4839**.

Please log on to [bit.ly/WFRISstrategy](https://bit.ly/WFRISstrategy) or scan the QR code to access the survey.



## Looking for a job and need some extra advice?

Need help with what to say and do in an interview?

???

Join us for a **FREE** online session packed with guidance



Need advice updating your CV?

## Come along to our **FREE**

### CV Writing Webinar

Tuesday 30th March 10am-12pm

### Interview Skills/Job Search Webinar

Thursday 1st April 10am-12pm

**How do I apply? Visit this link for an enrolment form:**  
<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/wfemployment>  
or email [Kyla.Fry@morgansindall.com](mailto:Kyla.Fry@morgansindall.com)



## You Said We Did

**Clock House estate was encountering issues with the bin areas where the areas were looking unsightly, waste bin bags were being left on the side of the bins or overflowing.**

Also, flytipping was also occurring here due to this area not having a clear bulky waste area.

Residents said that they wanted this area to be improved so the area looked cleaner and well maintained.

The new Metrostor units have certainly made this happen and made this area a prouder place to live not only for our residents but for the local community. See how much of an improvement they've made!



**BEFORE**



**AFTER**

# Talking to residents challenging 'hate' in the community



Waltham Forest Council recently launched its No Space for Hate programme.

**A new hate crime and incident reporting helpline with Stop Hate UK has been set up to make it easy for victims and witnesses to report it, and access support.**

The Council also formally supported broadening the definition of hate to

include misogyny as a hate crime nationally and the meantime have adopted definition locally for reporting purposes.

They've also started practical training to empower residents to stop hate when they see it. This is known as 'Bystander Intervention' training. It is a way of teaching

people how to safely intervene in real-time when a hate incident or crime is happening and support victims. Due to Coronavirus, the training is being delivered online.

We caught up with two training participants to find out what inspired them to take part.

## Farah, from Leytonstone:

"Over the past few years, I've wanted to be more of a part of where I live and have a positive impact. Hate is such a real human issue and it's important that we open our eyes to it. It's not just about acknowledging that this is happening, it's about realising what we can do to stop it.

"I know why people with the best of intentions don't get involved when they see a hate incident or crime. In big cities we tend to mind our own business, but sometimes we shouldn't.

"The training will teach me how I can influence and support the people I know on how they can safely intervene when they see it happening. By doing so we can all play a part in stopping people from becoming victims."



## Ewan is a 20-year-old from Walthamstow:

"As someone who is gay and genderfluid and likes to express that through what I wear and how I look, there is always a certain risk when I'm out and about, particularly when I'm with my boyfriend. This is unfortunately something I've had to get used to.

"Just last week I was out for a walk and a person cycled past shouting 'batty boy' at me. Although I can initially brush incidents like this off, they build up over time and can have a detrimental effect on my mental health. I would hate for other people to have to go through this and worse, which is why I'm engaging with the programme.

"People aren't always aware of what the true impact of hate in nature is. They don't know how to recognise it and help. We should take pride in being a welcoming place and work hard to foster that."

### Want to stop hate happening in the first place?

Register your interest to participate in free Bystander Intervention training by emailing [janet@communitiesinc.org.uk](mailto:janet@communitiesinc.org.uk). Visit [walthamforest.gov.uk/nospaceforhate](http://walthamforest.gov.uk/nospaceforhate) for more details.

## Contact Us

### Waltham Forest Council Housing, Resident Services

Cedar Wood House  
2d Fulbourne Road  
Walthamstow  
E17 4GG

### Waltham Forest Council Housing, Resident Services Billericay Office

16a Morris Avenue  
Billericay  
Essex  
CM11 2JR

**Please contact our housing teams via phone or email.**

Sign up to get news about Waltham Forest housing by email at [walthamforest.gov.uk/StayConnected](http://walthamforest.gov.uk/StayConnected)

For general enquiries, reporting anti-social behaviour and repairs:

☎ 020 8496 4197

✉ [wfdirect@walthamforest.gov.uk](mailto:wfdirect@walthamforest.gov.uk)

📍 [www.walthamforest.gov.uk/housing](http://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/housing)

Phone lines are open from 9am–5pm Monday to Friday.

For help and advice on paying your rent:

☎ 020 8496 4197

For feedback and comments on the newsletter:

Please email [engagement@walthamforest.gov.uk](mailto:engagement@walthamforest.gov.uk)