

Check out our  
new online  
news pages!  
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# Newsletter

July 2022

For Runnymede Borough Council tenants

## Party time for Pets in the Park!

Thank you to all our tenants and your furry companions who joined us at our Pets in the Park event!

We are committed to promoting responsible pet ownership and we took to Victory Park with a Pup Up Café, the RSPCA, Cats Protection, and Company of Animals, to get your opinions on what should be included when granting permission for pets.

By listening to your views, we hope to successfully balance the needs of people wanting pets, neighbours, and the wider community when deciding each request to keep a pet.

Head to our online newsletter to find how we used your feedback to amend our Pet Policy.



## Recharges: your views count

We asked for your views on recharging, which is when we reclaim money from tenants in certain circumstances, such as when someone has neglected or damaged their home.

The results of our research showed very strong support for the use of recharges. However, people were concerned recharges should be proportionate, flexible and the individual circumstances of tenants should be taken into consideration.

We are now developing a process to ensure those tenants who may be vulnerable or in difficult

circumstances are not unfairly treated or worse off when we have to recover costs and also takes into account if the tenant has an excellent tenancy history.

Go to our website to see the full feedback results, and videos with Maggie Ward, our Head of Housing Services and Business Planning, who wrote the draft Recharge Policy, discussing some of the concerns raised and the suggestions put forward.

► [www.runnymede.gov.uk/tenant-engagement-1/recharge-policy-feedback](http://www.runnymede.gov.uk/tenant-engagement-1/recharge-policy-feedback)

### Keeping IRL tenants up to date on £1.7m improvements

Runnymede Borough Council is investing £1.7m in our Independent Retirement Living schemes and we're keen to keep residents informed from the early stages of the refurbishment programme.

In May we held four virtual workshops, giving residents a chance to talk to contractors Faithful and Gould which will carry out the work.

Residents were shown early architectural plans for each

scheme. Our next step will consist of the mechanical and fire safety works.

We are planning more detailed consultation events to look at colour schemes, materials, and designs in upcoming months.



## Off the Housing waiting list and into new homes!

In May we welcomed nine families to our newly-built apartments at St George's Road in Addlestone.

We held a small celebration for them to meet their neighbours, their Area Housing Officer, and councillors. We want to improve the relationship we have with our tenants, and one way to do this is by being more visible to people (see picture left).

We built these homes to support local people, by reducing the numbers on our Housing Register, and to enhance the local environment.

Speaking at the celebration, Cllr Jacqui Gracey, Chair of Runnymede Borough Council's Housing Committee, said: "It was fantastic to hear what a difference these properties are already making to the lives of our tenants. I am proud we are delivering on our commitment to provide both new and improved housing for even more local residents."

The development has been given a Safer By Design Award by Runnymede Beat to recognise the safety factors planned into the building to support security.

# You can make changes happen

## Audley House

Council staff met with residents of Audley House who brought several issues to our attention. We worked together to discuss solutions and have done the following:

- ▶ As a goodwill gesture, organised a fly tip collection (disposal of bulky waste is tenants' responsibility).
- ▶ Resolved the long-standing car park light issue.
- ▶ The Estate Services Team cleared moss and litter, removed dumped items, swept and cleaned the bin store, and gave a general tidy up to the communal areas.
- ▶ Spoke with neighbouring landlords to encourage garden maintenance and work to address their overgrown shrubs and trees.
- ▶ Started preparatory work to clear back some of the brambles in the rear area.
- ▶ Started work to install fencing and securing the communal garden to stop antisocial behaviour from non-residents.



## Stoneylands Court

Residents invited us to see some of the issues they were experiencing in their community.



- ▶ We've put in place a new large 'residents parking' notice at the entrance to stop non-residents from taking up the parking spaces.
- ▶ Increased litter picking in the closed alleyway until a new bin can be put in.
- ▶ Arranged for various items of rubbish to be cleared from the rear communal gardens.
- ▶ Replaced fencing in one of the communal gardens.
- ▶ Installed a new catch for the communal door.

*Resident meetings and walkabouts are a great way to suggest and inform us of the improvements you would like to see in your community. Please get in touch if you would like a visit from one of our team on [listening@runnymede.gov.uk](mailto:listening@runnymede.gov.uk)*

# Estate area walkabouts

## Heathervale Way

Residents joined Council staff and the Runnymede Council Residents' Association (RCRA) for a walkabout to talk about improving the area.



- ▶ We have fixed potholes and are looking at improving signs.
- ▶ We have increased time allocated to the site by our Estates Services Team so it is well maintained and free from rubbish.
- ▶ To improve the look of our temporary accommodation, we fitted curtains in all homes and will provide lockable outdoor storage so residents can keep items safe, and the area tidy.
- ▶ We will also be installing permanent drying areas at each home to reduce condensation indoors and help residents better manage their home.



## Garfield Road

We asked residents of Garfield Road what changes they thought would improve their area and would tackle antisocial behaviour.

- ▶ We used tenants' views to inform our next steps which include installing CCTV in blind spots, and we are installing a second fob entry door and fob entry lift to stop non-residents from loitering in the Surrey Towers stairwells.
- ▶ Staff also took part in an evening walkabout to see if lighting needed improving. We will install lighting between the back of the properties to the rear car park to improve safety. We will also be re-laying the pathway behind Hampshire Court, painting the communal hallways in Surrey Towers and relaying the flooring.
- ▶ More suggestions were made which we are considering, for example outside storage for deliveries.

## Resident-focused approach to dealing with complaints

We've not been handling complaints as effectively as we would like to, so we are working with tenants to understand how we can do this better.

This means providing easy access to the complaints procedure and ensuring tenants are aware of how to make a complaint.

We will be training our staff to ensure complaints are handled in a resident-focused way.

If you would like to be involved to help us improve our processes even more, email us on [listening@runnymede.gov.uk](mailto:listening@runnymede.gov.uk)

- ▶ To make a complaint, visit our website at: [www.runnymede.gov.uk/say/complaints](http://www.runnymede.gov.uk/say/complaints)
- ▶ Find out about The Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code at [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

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

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

### \*Read more housing news on our website\*

- ✓ WATCH staff explain our Recharge Policy.
- ✓ MEET Abi Travers, our new Head of Tenancy Services.
- ✓ SEE how we're introducing tenant satisfaction measures.
- ✓ FIND out how your views influenced our Pets Policy.
- ✓ READ consultations we need your views on.

Scan with your phone



# Energy rebate: key information

1

By now many residents will have received their £150 Council Tax energy rebate following the Government's announcement earlier in the year.

2

Payments have been made to everyone who pays their Council Tax by Direct Debit as we already hold their bank account details.

3

We are currently writing to households who do not pay by Direct Debit, to ask them to send their account information so we can make a payment.

4

People who do not provide account details will have the money credited to their Council Tax account, once we have carried out the checks we need to.

5

Even if you do not pay Council Tax because you receive full Council Tax support, you will still be eligible for the rebate.

6

You can find out more via our website: [www.runnymede.gov.uk/council-tax/council-tax-150-energy-rebate](http://www.runnymede.gov.uk/council-tax/council-tax-150-energy-rebate)

## Help with your finances - survey feedback

People's finances can be tight, so we're increasing the work we do to help.

We asked tenants experiencing financial hardship what would be most useful to them, so the support we could offer is in areas that matter most.

After listening to people's views, we will provide individual support plans that could include budgeting tools, help accessing benefits, or advice on utility bills.

To see our survey results and next steps, go to [www.runnymede.gov.uk/housing/financial-wellbeing-strategy](http://www.runnymede.gov.uk/housing/financial-wellbeing-strategy)

## Grant bid to cut energy bills

We're bidding for Government funding in August to make homes more energy efficient.

If successful, up to 1,000 properties will benefit from improved insulation. This will run alongside the work already taking place to improve homes.

We hope that this will improve the heat retention in your home and reduce your energy bills.

This will also help the Council towards its target to be a net zero borough by 2030.

## Work with us to get your home's improvements done

We use the rent money you pay us in several ways, including spending it on home improvements.

This helps improve your quality of life, and keep properties in good order.

We have begun rolling out home improvements, but we can only do this with your co-operation.

In 2021-22, we installed 110 kitchen and 110 bathrooms to the homes we own.

However, 90 properties that were due to have upgraded kitchens and bathrooms couldn't have them installed because the tenants refused.

We understand health issues can mean timing is an issue, but in other cases, tenants did not want to be disturbed, didn't respond, or would not grant access.

This is the plan for works over the next two years:

**2022-23:** Aiming to install 225 kitchens/bathrooms.

**2022-23:** Aiming to upgrade heating in 400 homes.

**2022-23:** Planning 100 electrical wiring updates

**Summer 2022:** We will begin the replacements of fire doors and flat doors in the communal areas.

**Winter 2022:** Start roof and window renewals.

## Housing Online system update

Housing Online will be launching shortly. Initially you will be able to see your rent payments, rent account balance, repair history, repairs raised, plus details of reports of anti-social behaviour.

We had hoped to have the system working in March 2022 when we sent out our last newsletter.

Unfortunately it is not yet ready to go live. We are working to get it live as soon as possible – please bear with us, we will give you a further update in our next newsletter. In the meantime, you can visit our website [www.runnymede.gov.uk/housing](http://www.runnymede.gov.uk/housing) to find out about our services and to ask for help.