

JANUARY 2025

# H*in*oming

The magazine for London Borough of Harrow's tenants and leaseholders

**RESIDENT PRIORITIES FOR  
INVESTING IN SERVICES P4-5**

## Resident consultation

Join the Housing  
Matters webinar

**Wednesday  
12 March 2025  
at 6pm**

**CATCHING FRAUDSTERS P6**

**PERMISSION TO MAKE ALTERATIONS P7**



LONDON BOROUGH OF  
**HARROW**



# Photo CORNER

Meghan said "Rocket enjoying a festive view"

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## HELLO FROM CLLR MINA PARMAR



I would like to wish everyone a very happy new year. At the February cabinet meeting budget plans for 2025/26 will be proposed, also our proposal for the rent increase, which is set in line with government guidelines.

In the proposed budget we plan to invest approximately £12 million in planned improvement works and £7 million on repairs and maintenance in the forthcoming financial year.

For the priorities coming out of the tenant and leasehold 'Your Voice, Your Views' Workshop and MyTalk online survey – see pages 4-5. This has fed into our spending plans for 2025/26.

We carried out over 530 online and telephone surveys as part of the annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey during November and December 2024. We will be publishing the results in our Spring 2025 edition of Homing In. You will be receiving a printed copy of the 2023/24 Annual Housing Report shortly, which shows how the London Borough of Harrow is performing against other London Boroughs.

Please don't forget to register for the Housing Online Account which you can access 24/7, report repairs and seeing their status, identify who your Housing Officer is and check your rent account.

To register for the portal go to:  
[www.harrow.gov.uk/housing](http://www.harrow.gov.uk/housing)

**Cllr Mina Parmar**  
**Portfolio Holder for Housing**  
 ✉ [mina.parmar@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:mina.parmar@harrow.gov.uk)

Lucy Nembaware from Cadent giving a talk about gas safety in the home at the African Cultural Association's Warm Hub, at Canons Community Centre in Stanmore



### Ask us about:

- Priority Services Register
- Carbon monoxide safety
- Energy efficiency
- Income maximisation
- Free gas appliance service\*

\*Subject to eligibility



## Cadent Gas has generously funded ten warm hubs in Harrow to keep residents safe and warm this winter

Thanks to funding from Cadent Gas, ten community organisations in Harrow are running Warm Hubs for local residents this winter, providing not just a warm, welcoming space but raising awareness about gas safety and keeping well.

Cadent's Centres for Warmth support people who enjoy the warmth and company provided by community groups, such as the African Cultural Association's Warm Hub. The funding means there is financial support for 18 months; it pays for resources and training to expand services and trusted advice to households about health, safety and finance.

To find out which hubs are running, search by date or location and see what's on offer.  
[www.harrowgiving.org.uk/hubs](http://www.harrowgiving.org.uk/hubs)

# The value of social value

## YOUR STORIES, YOUR MAG



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## HOUSING MATTERS WEBINAR

Please join us at the Housing Matters Webinar on Wednesday 12 March 2025 at 6pm – 7.30pm via MS Teams. Please note that we are unable to address individual cases in this public forum. The aim is to keep you informed and provide an opportunity to ask questions about the information presented.

To get meeting details, please contact:  
 ✉ [rinvolve@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:rinvolve@harrow.gov.uk)



Resident consultation event on 8 November 2024 about resident priorities, held at Harrow Baptist Church



Thank you United Living Property Services for the staff donation of chocolate and toys for residents living in South Harrow and given away to local residents at My Yard's Christmas party at Northolt Road Community Centre on 16 December





# Your voice, Your views



We were delighted that over 100 tenants and leaseholders responded to the invitation in the Autumn edition of Homing In to tell us their priorities for investing housing income going forward

Consultation results

Understanding your priorities helps guide us in allocating resources for 2025/26. Although many different priorities were chosen, there were some clear themes that have emerged:

1. To feel safer in my home/neighbourhood
2. Make council homes more energy efficient/ leading to lower energy bills (emphasis on replacing windows)
3. Shorten the phone waiting time (Access Harrow)
4. A more joined up approach to dealing with fly tipping and bulk waste removal
5. Better communication around repairs appointments/ follow up work

**Based on the above priorities and knowledge of the service, we have identified budget to fund the following activities in 2025:**

- Additional mobile CCTV that can be located in various hot spots
- Ability for us to book a flexible security service to tactically deal with severe anti-social behaviour for short periods of time  
(Note: we funded a security guard over the Christmas break to patrol 5 estates overnight)
- Create an estate improvement fund to support specific estate improvements
- A £12 million capital investment programme for the whole of 2025/26 and part of this has been earmarked for a replacement window programme as well as investment in reducing our carbon footprint.
- We plan to increase the number of drop-in sessions across the borough to make it easier for you to access services and to continue to promote the take up of the 24/7 housing online account  
(📍 [www.harrow.gov.uk/housing](http://www.harrow.gov.uk/housing))
- Clarify and monitor our key performance indicators (KPI's) with United Living
- Complete our service level agreement with the Customer Service team (Access Harrow).



Thank you to the tenants and leaseholders who contributed to the discussion about their priorities for improving services, on 8 November at Harrow Baptist Church







# Help us take action against fraudsters

**Joint work between the council's Corporate Anti-Fraud and Housing teams during 2024/25 resulted in us recovering 9 tenancies and stopping 1 Right to Buy, following concerns around fraud and misuse of the properties. As a result, savings have been identified just short of £1 million (the savings per recovered property are defined by the Cabinet Office).**



In one case, a data matching exercise identified the tenant had links to a property in Somerset from late 2023 onwards. The investigation showed that they were liable for Council Tax in Somerset and had their bank accounts registered there. When challenged, the tenant admitted they had moved in with a partner and had left the Harrow address. They terminated the tenancy voluntarily and it has now been allocated to a family on the waiting list.

In another case referred by the housing officer, the investigation revealed almost zero energy consumption at the property; neighbours also confirmed no one had resided at the address for some time. When challenged, the tenant and their partner admitted they were living with a family member in Southall and they had only retained the tenancy for the purposes of exercising the Right to Buy at a later date. The tenancy was terminated voluntarily and vacant possession obtained by the Council.

In our final example, a Right to Buy investigation uncovered that the applicant had concealed the true source of their purchase funds. More in-depth financial enquires traced back to the tenants original housing application made 3 years previous and concerns about accuracy of information declared at that time. The Right to Buy application has been refused and the investigation is continuing.



Please help us catch fraudsters. Inform your Housing Officer

To report any unusual activity, contact:

[www.harrow.gov.uk/fraud](http://www.harrow.gov.uk/fraud)

[fraud@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:fraud@harrow.gov.uk)



Making alterations in your home without prior council permission can have large financial implications for the tenant or leaseholder



## Making home alterations

Council tenants can make alterations to their home beyond decorating subject to council permission.

Examples of common alterations might include:

- altering the layout of a property
  - refitting kitchens or bathrooms
  - installing laminate flooring (with thick underlay)
  - adding conservatories or sheds
- Prior to starting any work, you need to ensure that you have written permission from the Housing Department.

### Why is permission necessary?

We need to ensure:

- Structural integrity and safety
- Compliance with building regulations
- Protection of neighbouring properties

- Maintenance of our property assets.

**If you do not have council permission, this may result in:**

- Reversal of alterations at your expense
- Potential breach of tenancy agreement
- Loss of your home.

We are currently dealing with an unauthorised alteration to a property, and it has cost the Housing Department over £20,000 to make things right. The Housing Department is now pursuing legal options to recover this cost from

**It is important to seek permission prior to carrying out alterations**

the tenant who undertook the unauthorised alteration.

So, it is important to seek permission prior to carrying out alterations. You can do this by completing the form online at [www.harrow.gov.uk/housing-property/home-alterations-council-tenants](http://www.harrow.gov.uk/housing-property/home-alterations-council-tenants).

Some alterations may require planning permission or building control permission. Please be aware that in addition you will also need permission from the Housing Department prior to starting any work.

**You are responsible for maintaining the alterations. Our officers may need to inspect your home and they may do this before, during and after you have carried out any improvements.**

[www.harrow.gov.uk/alterations](http://www.harrow.gov.uk/alterations)  
020 8901 2630



# Help with remaining in your home through adaptations



For a directory of community organisations and activities to promote your health and wellbeing, visit the Joy App. [www.services.thejoyapp.com](http://www.services.thejoyapp.com)



London Borough of Harrow operates an Aids and Adaptations service for Harrow residents who live in all tenures across the borough, who are experiencing difficulties managing in or outside of the property and who would benefit from the property being adapted, to aid independent living.

## The process

Call Access Harrow on 020 8901 2680 and request an Occupational Therapy Assessment (OTA) to determine needs for both adaptation and equipment if required. Once the assessment is completed, a referral will then be forwarded to the Council Adaptations Team who will arrange for the property to be adapted to meet the needs of the disabled person in the household, if this is deemed beneficial and necessary.

Examples of adaptations provided are level access showers, stairlifts and ramps. These simple adaptations are not means tested. Any adaptation identified by the OT as complex, will be subject to a means test.

## Universal Credit migration

### Please do not ignore a Migration Letter

Managed Migration is the name DWP has given to the process of moving claimants off their old benefit and onto Universal Credit. As the migration notice explains, claimants have three months from receiving their notice to make a claim for Universal Credit before their old benefit ends. Once you have received a Migration Notice, it is important you follow the instructions on the letter or your benefit payments may stop. Your letter will include a deadline date to start your claim for Universal Credit.

## Rent increase

You will be informed about the 2025/26 rent and service charge increase due from 1st April 2025 in a few weeks' time. The government limits annual rent increase to the consumer price index (CPI) at the preceding September plus 1%.



# Residents' engagement

## Tips to keep your home safe

We have heard of a spate of burglaries affecting Harrow tenants and have been asked by some tenants to include tips on how to make your home more secure.

### Suggestions

- Check all windows and doors are locked
- Do not store valuables in obvious places
- Lock your door when you're at home as well as when you go out
- Consider installing extra security measures such as CCTV or outside security lights to deter potential burglars, subject to council permission
- If you're out all day, then it's advisable to use a timer device to automatically turn lights and a radio on
- Mark or etch your property with your postcode, house or flat number or the first three letters of your address with a special marker ink or paint
- Take photographs and keep documents and receipts related to your property so you can prove ownership
- Take out home contents insurance. See [www.harrow.gov.uk/homecontents](http://www.harrow.gov.uk/homecontents)



## Resident meetings

### Regular resident drop in sessions

Come and talk face to face with Housing Officers and Repairs staff at resident drop-in sessions – open to all council tenants and leaseholders, no appointment is needed

Northolt Road Hall, Northolt Road, South Harrow, HA2 0LS  
10am-12.30am

- Wednesday 12 February
- Wednesday 9 April

Julie Cook Hall, Augustine Road, Harrow, HA3 5NW  
4pm-6.30pm

- Wednesday 7 May

Pinner Hill Community Hall, Welch Place, Pinner, HA5 3TA  
10am-12.30pm

- Thursday 6 March
- Thursday 5 June



Residents' Board meetings  
6.30pm-8.30pm

- Thursday 20 February
- Thursday 20 March
- Thursday 17 April



### Online Resident Group Meetings

Housing Matters webinars  
6pm-7.30pm

- Open to all tenants and leaseholders
- Wednesday 12 March
- Wednesday 14 May



Leasehold Improvement Group  
6pm-7.30pm

- Tuesday 25 March
- Tuesday 28 May

Estate Champions Meetings  
6pm-7.30pm

- Thursday 6 February
- Thursday 3 April





# RESIDENTS' WALL

Nikhil from Alma Court said, "I took this photo of the lions on my recent visit to the Gir National Park, Sasan Gir, India"



**Congratulations to the winner of the Autumn 2024 Homing In Wordsearch Puzzle**

David Coleman from Hartington Close, who has won £30 shopping vouchers.

The correct 10 answers for words found in that issue were: solar, puzzle, photo, safety, energy, survey, cat, trick, money, budget.

Nikhil showing the owl he has photographed in Gir National Park



Christmas meal at Meadfield House sheltered scheme, thank you to Monika, Karen and Wendy for organising it

**PLEASE SEND ANY NEWS ARTICLES, PHOTOS, OR JOKES TO**  
 ✉ ANTHEA.WATKINS@HARROW.GOV.UK  
**AND IF IT IS PRINTED, WE'LL SEND YOU A £10 SHOPPING VOUCHER.**

Major building improvements underway at Mountside in Stanmore



# Investing in warmer, safer housing

**A**t Mountside, in Stanmore, a comprehensive external enveloping project is underway. The programme of works includes new roofing, communal doors and windows, communal decorations, lateral mains and level access paving throughout the estate plus perimeter fencing.

Residents will be benefiting from new double-glazed windows to their homes and door entry video handset, improving security to the estate. Having secured a grant from Greater London Authority (GLA), a new bicycle hanger will be installed on the estate replacing a redundant pond area.

## Social value by the contractor, Greyline

Greyline has recruited 2 local Harrow residents as an Apprentice Assistant Site Supervisor and a Residents Liaison Officer, ensuring site operations run smoothly and that we engage with residents. Greyline is supporting local schools in Harrow with careers events and workshops, including mock

interviews and CV design, supporting up to 700 pupils. And working in partnership with Voluntary Action Harrow, Greyline is supporting local charities and groups by creating a training plan aimed at community organisations recruiting their first member of staff, which is being co-delivered by Greyline's Human Resources Adviser.

A view of the new perimeter fence at Mountside





# Café

Conversation Café is a welcoming and safe drop-in session. It is an opportunity for Harrow residents to meet face-to-face with friendly staff from the London Borough of Harrow and community partners. All Harrow residents are welcome to come along for a chat. We especially encourage people who feel vulnerable, as well as those living with a disability or who are unpaid carers.



[www.harrow.gov.uk/conversationcafe](http://www.harrow.gov.uk/conversationcafe)

## When can I attend a Conversation Café event?

### St Peter's Church

every Tuesday 10.00am – 3.00pm  
Colbeck Road, West Harrow,  
HA1 4BX.

■ Get support from our partner voluntary organisations and charities.

Open to all Harrow residents

### North Harrow Community Library

every Wednesday 2.00pm – 5.00pm.  
Pinner Road, North Harrow HA1 4HN.

#### Digital Assistance

■ Assistance to access information online  
■ Support to create your My Harrow Account which can help you manage your council tax and housing.

Open for people with disabilities, vulnerabilities and unpaid carers

### Red Brick Café

every Wednesday  
10.30am – 1.30pm  
38 – 40 High Street,  
Wealdstone, HA3 7AE.

Open to all Harrow residents

## 14 new Safe Havens open their doors to help protect women

London Borough of Harrow launched 14 Safe Havens across the borough last Autumn, in our new initiative to support women's safety.

■ Safe Havens offer temporary refuge to people who are at risk or vulnerable. The locations (which include cafés, Harrow libraries, fire stations and more) will welcome individuals requesting help and offer a secure environment until they feel ready to move on.

■ The scheme is primarily aimed at women and girls, although these locations are open to anyone who feels harassed, vulnerable, or threatened.

■ The locations may assist with: helping organise safe transport home, allowing an individual to charge their phone, contacting family/friends, or, if required, making a phone call to the emergency services.

■ Staff have been trained to support anyone feeling vulnerable and each location will display a sticker on their window confirming they are part of the scheme.



[www.harrow.gov.uk/safehavens](http://www.harrow.gov.uk/safehavens)



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