



# OPENHOUSE

The newsletter for Croydon Council tenants and leaseholders

AUTUMN 2020

# BUILDING BACK

THE CROYDON RESIDENTS LOOKING FORWARD TO A BRIGHTER FUTURE

## 90 NEW COUNCIL HOMES

A topping-out ceremony took place in September for a new 100% affordable block that will become council homes for ninety Croydon families when it is completed.

Next spring, local people on the borough's housing waiting list will move into the new town centre apartments being built as part of the 513-home regeneration of the old Taberner House council offices and Queen's Gardens being built by developer HUB.

The new council homes are part of the Queen's Quarter development and are in one of four residential blocks ranging from 13-35 storeys being built on the site.  
(Continued on p8 in Open House e-xtra)



ADVICE: HOW TO AVOID GETTING INTO DEBT ON YOUR WATER BILLS. PAGE 5

Delivering for Croydon

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# PUTTING DOWN ROOTS

## FRESH LEASE OF LIFE FOR CROYDON FAMILY MOVING INTO INVENTIVE NEW HOUSING SCHEME

In May this year, Croydon resident and mother of two, Susan collected the keys to her new tenancy in New Addington. The new development of eight three bedroom houses in New Addington is part of an innovative scheme in Chertsey Crescent, built as part of the new leisure centre development which has transformed the community facilities opposite the shopping parade.

Programme manager Clive Kershaw explained, "The project was part of the regeneration of the Chertsey Crescent area which includes the new leisure centre. We wanted to

I was concerned by the lack of a garden, the roof terrace is great for the children as there is outdoor space for them to enjoy."

Susan is now looking forward to the family laying down roots in the area and the children settling into their new schools. In September her son started at the local secondary and her daughter at the nearby primary school.

Susan, who admits to being more of a country girl than a 'townie,' admits that she is more content with the pace of life in her new surroundings and much happier in an area where they are surrounded by countryside.

**"It doesn't feel real.**

**Living here is**

**a different world"**

keep the residential character of the street so residents would not feel dominated by the new leisure facility.

The solution was to provide new and robust council housing as part of the new building, suitable for family living with the necessary space and a good standard of finish."

Although the houses, designed by constructors Willmott Dixon do not have gardens, they do have roof terraces, an inventive solution to the houses being part of the leisure centre building.

"I'm delighted with the house. It is so different to our previous home. It has a lovely big kitchen and good sized bedrooms and although

"It's great living in New Addington as it has everything we need as a family. There is a real sense of community. Everyone says hello and the children can go outside to play. It's so much nicer here, there's so much for the kids to do. They can have more freedom, they can ride their bikes without having to worry.

The shops are on the doorstep, the kids schools are a fifteen minute walk and there are lots of parks and fields. Even the air feels cleaner. It still doesn't feel real, it doesn't feel like it's our home, we can't believe it."

Susan is also pleased at being so close to the leisure centre, "It's so handy, I can just put my swimsuit on go to the centre in my dressing gown," she laughed.

Has a recent move into a council home changed your life for the better? If so we would love to share your story in Open House. Contact us by emailing: [daniel.powell@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:daniel.powell@croydon.gov.uk)



ROOM AT THE TOP: The roof terrace provides valuable outdoor space for the whole family.

### PLANT APPEAL

Are you able to support elderly residents in our extra care homes?

Our repairs team is organising an autumn garden planting event for some of our more vulnerable residents, providing a welcome day of social and outdoor activity after an extended period of shielding, many will have found difficult, and for some a challenge to their health and wellbeing.

So we need your help. We are looking for donations of bulbs, plants, shrubs and compost to bring out the best in the garden. We would also appreciate contributions of refreshments to keep everyone going on the day.

For information or to donate please contact: [alistair.shervington@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:alistair.shervington@croydon.gov.uk)

### SEEDS OF CHANGE

A project for adult offenders in Fieldway, New Addington is bringing extra enjoyment of gardens to some residents by building high quality, hand made wooden planters for Croydon extra care homes.

The community payback scheme offers the chance for those who have been convicted of an offence to give back to the community by making good their crimes, meeting their victims to understand the harm they have done or taking part in an activity that be of positive benefit to the community.

The planters have been delivered to care homes across the borough and are a part of a joint project between the council repairs and maintenance; youth offending teams and sponsors, Axis.

(Read article 'Plant Appeal' on page 2 for more details).

### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!!

#### ARE YOU...

- 18 years or older?
- A Croydon Council resident or leaseholder?

#### CAN YOU...

- Spare a few hours each month?
- Work independently or as part of a team?
- Understand and analyse reports and information?
- Come up with new ideas?
- Represent the viws of others?
- Communicate with a wide range of people?

#### WOULD YOU LIKE TO...

- Help to review and improve housing services in your area?
- Improve your knowledge and develop new skills?

#### IF SO, THEN WHY NOT...

- Volunteer for one of our housing panels or groups:
  - Housing scrutiny panel
  - Housing complaints panel
  - Leaseholder panel
  - Mystery shopping group
  - Croydon adult sevices user panel (CASSUP)

If you are interested in getting involved, contact the resident involvement team, by phone on 020 8726 6100 Ext 47350, or by email at [residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk) and we will send you details of each panel and how to apply.



# IN MEMORY OF ASHISH, JOHN & SHEILA



Ashish Patel



John Piper



Sheila Howard

It is with great sadness we report three long-standing resident representatives recently passed away.

In July we lost John Piper, a tenant from Albury Court, South Croydon. John had represented the residents in his area and across the borough for over twenty years. He participated on numerous panels and had chaired the Complaints Panel. He used to organise meetings for local residents outside his block of flats under a marquee as it was the only local place to meet. John was passionate about working with the council to effort to attend meetings

improve housing services for everyone, ensuring that the needs of young people were not overlooked. He was popular amongst other residents and officers alike. Despite some ongoing health issues John always made a big effort to attend meetings to ensure his voice was heard.

Sheila Howard had also been involved for many years. A tenant on the Shrublands estate, she was involved in the running of her local residents' association. Sheila was proud of her estate. She wanted to ensure that it was maintained to a high standard by

the council. She also joined other panels where she worked with residents from across the borough to improve services.

In August we lost Ashish Patel, a tenant at Freeman Court, Norbury. Ashish was passionate about ensuring that the needs of tenants with disabilities were considered when designing housing policies and procedures.

He made light of serious disability and travelled far and wide to watch his favourite football team, Spurs. Ashish will always be remembered for his smiling face and sense of humour.

## MAY THEY REST IN PEACE

For the latest news and updates about council services, please visit [www.croydon.gov.uk](http://www.croydon.gov.uk). If you are not online yet and need a full eight page printed edition of our newsletter, please let us know so we can add you to our mailing list.

Alternatively, if you would like to know more about getting online then please contact our digital inclusion and engagement officer, Dan on 07742 405244; email [daniel.powell@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:daniel.powell@croydon.gov.uk); or pick up one of our new digital learning guides from your local library.

# MANAGE YOUR BILLS

### HOUSING ROUND UP SPECIAL

Due to Covid-19, many Croydon households will have spent far more time at home this year, than they would in any other year, using considerably more gas and electricity. A Citizens Advice Bureau study estimates that 2.8 Million UK households are now in debt to their energy suppliers, with many struggling to pay back the debt.

If you are struggling with debt it is really important to speak to your energy supplier as soon as possible. Historically some energy suppliers have tried to fit prepayment meters (key and card meters), when a resident is struggling with debt. However, with meters you would usually pay higher energy tariffs than if you pay by direct debit or by bill. An energy tariff is the amount you pay for every kWh of gas or electricity you use. Under their licence conditions energy companies must offer you a range of other options:

If you cannot afford to pay off your debt, tell your supplier that you want to pay in instalments as part of a payment plan. You'll then pay fixed amounts over a set period of time, meaning you'll pay what you can afford. The payment plan will cover what you owe plus an amount for your current use.

Your supplier must take into account:

- how much you can afford to pay - give them details about your income and outgoings, debts and personal circumstances.
- how much energy you'll use in future - they'll estimate this based on your past usage, but give them regular meter readings to make this more accurate.

If you receive means tested financial benefits, you may also be able to pay



off debt directly through your benefits, through a scheme called Fuel Direct. Ask your energy supplier for more information about this. It is really important you are on the best energy tariffs and receive all the support you can from your energy suppliers. In November, the council launches an advice service called Croydon Healthy Homes. Please visit [www.croydon.gov.uk/healthyhomes](http://www.croydon.gov.uk/healthyhomes) or call Freephone 0800 2922529 for more information.

**Whether you pay for your water directly to a water company or to the council with your rent, you may be entitled to discounted bills and additional support from your water company.**

There are two companies which provide water to Croydon residents. Thames Water provide water to homes in the north, centre, east and south-east of the borough, and SES Water to homes in Purley, Sanderstead, Selsdon and Coulsdon. If you still pay for your water with your rent you will be a SES Water customer.

#### 50% discount through social tariffs

If your gross household income is less than £19,565 you may qualify for a discount of up to 50% on your water bill. To calculate your gross household income, include all income, pensions and benefits (except any disability benefits).

Thames Water call this scheme Water Help, and SES Water call it Water Support Scheme.

#### Water Sure

If you are a high water user due to a medical need, or because you have a large family (three or more children under nineteen living with you), this scheme can cap your water bills. To be eligible you must have a water meter, and receive a means tested financial benefit (such as Universal Credit, Pension Guarantee Credit, or Housing Benefit). Your bills will be capped to under £400 although this varies each year.

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# GETTING IN SHAPE

Croydon Council has a number of exciting plans for working with the local community in Thornton Heath to shape the development of the area.

Shaping Thornton Heath is an opportunity for the local community to contribute to a plan for the future of the high street and wider area. The plan is intended to create a vision which will be used to influence the development of key sites that are expected to come forward in the coming years. The council is keen to hear as many voices as possible on this so, following an online survey in September, residents are now invited to take part in focus groups to further develop the plans. If you would like to take part email [thorntonheath@themean.co.uk](mailto:thorntonheath@themean.co.uk) or visit [www.shapingthorntonheath.com](http://www.shapingthorntonheath.com) for more information.

While Shaping Thornton Heath is an important opportunity to consider the longer-term future of the area, the council has installed a new community garden at the heart of Thornton Heath on Ambassador House forecourt. This new space will include new lighting, planters and artwork by local artists. This is the final stage in the council's regeneration programme that began in 2016 and forms part of the Nature Needs Heroes campaign led by local rapper Loyle Carner. Local residents are now being invited to participate in the gardening club to maintain the new urban green. It's an opportunity to meet new people, take ownership of a local project in the area and learn new skills, with monthly gardening lessons run by Urban Growth.

Please register on Eventbrite for the gardening club sessions that Urban Growth will be running on the forecourt from 1-4pm every first Saturday of the month: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/thornton-heath-gardening-club-tickets-115887010167>.



# FREE TIME

## NEW WiFi LAUNCHES IN CROYDON COMMUNAL LOUNGES

**The installation of fast fibre broadband for residents in council blocks has now taken place in New Addington, with more to follow across the borough, as the council continues its drive for digital inclusion.**

As part of the agreement between Croydon Council and the broadband supplier, Community Fibre, a number of communal lounges in our sheltered blocks will have free gigabit fast Wi-Fi available for the residents. This arrangement between Croydon Council and Community Fibre will enable these residents to connect to fibre broadband for free, and benefit from accessing the many different services available online.

A number of communal lounges in New Addington have been the first to have free Wi-Fi installed and a pilot project to deliver digital inclusion training to residents is still ongoing. A number of residents received individual training and support, with feedback extremely positive. One resident said, "It's been fantastic. The Wi-Fi is so quick and I have been able to learn together with other residents so it's been great fun too. I never dreamed that I would be able to use computers but now I am even able to have video calls with friends."



**SAFER SURFING:** Residents on council pilot scheme learn together while practising social distancing in their lounge.

Community Fibre have also agreed to install free gigabit fast Wi-Fi in some of our Community Centres so that resident groups and community organisations can benefit from a reliable, fast and free internet connection. Further details will be available in upcoming editions of Open House.

**GET ONLINE OUT NOW**

New digital guides are now available to collect for free from your local library as well as a number of other outlets throughout Croydon.

There are three guides in total and they have been designed especially to help those who are completely new to digital technology with clear information in an easy to read format. Each guide provides a simple introduction to different aspects of digital technology including help with getting online; an introduction to software applications and another that introduces online communications.

We want everyone to benefit from the full range of digital services available today so get in touch with us or pick them up at your local library and get started on your digital journey.



To get your free Get Online guide or for help and assistance getting online please contact our digital inclusion and engagement, officer Dan on 07742 405244 or email [daniel.powell@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:daniel.powell@croydon.gov.uk).

## 90 NEW COUNCIL HOMES

(Continued from front cover)

The site will provide 513 homes, of which at least 51% will be affordable either at council rents, through shared ownership or with rents set at 80% of the market rate under the London Living Rent incentive launched by the Mayor of London. Once the development is completed, the 90 council homes will receive £100,000 per unit – or £9m in total – in funding from the Greater London Authority's Building Council Homes for Londoners initiative.

The scheme will also include retail units, commercial space and major improvements to the gardens, including landscaping and a café.

## MANAGE YOUR BILLS

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### Priority Service Register

It's worth knowing that if you join your water company's Priority Services Register, you can receive additional support if your water supply is ever interrupted

To apply for any of the schemes, or to find out more you will need to contact your water company directly, even if you pay your water bill to the council.

### Thames Water customers:

Online: <https://www.thameswater.co.uk/help/extra-care>

By phone: 0800 980 8800 (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm)

Email: [ecs@thameswater.co.uk](mailto:ecs@thameswater.co.uk)

### SES Water customers:

Online: [www.eswater.co.uk/hereforyou](http://www.eswater.co.uk/hereforyou)

By phone: 01737772000 (Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm)

Email: [hereforyou@seswater.co.uk](mailto:hereforyou@seswater.co.uk)

## OPEN HOUSE

## YOUR PASSPORT TO READING

### Libraries Week

5-10  
OCTOBER  
2020

#librariesweek



## CROYDON LIBRARIES UPDATE

**Ashburton, Central, New Addington, Selsdon and Thornton Heath are now offering in-person browsing and IT access.**

With everyone's safety as a top priority, we are introducing several safety precautions. When visiting, customers will be asked to sign in and sanitise their hands. Masks will be required, unless otherwise exempt. To maintain social distancing, there may be queues outside. Please also note that visits will be time-limited, and there is no seating available for reading and studying.

To keep customers safe, scheduled appointments will be required for computer sessions, and will last for 45 minutes to give time for cleaning. You can book your session at the library.

Nine libraries are offering Select & Collect service, allowing customers to choose desired titles online and pick them up at one of these branches.

Additionally, you can join the hundreds of people who have taken advantage of our digital library, with access to ebooks, audio books, magazines, comics – and so much more.

For more information, including opening times, a list of Select & Collect branches, and to sign up for a free library card if you don't already have one, visit our website <https://www.croydon.gov.uk/leisure/libraries/library-updates-coronaviruscovid-19>.

## CELEBRATE LIBRARIES WEEK 5-10 OCTOBER

Libraries week (5-10 October) is a national celebration of books and reading. If you're not a member of Croydon Libraries, sign up to get your FREE library card and discover a world of reading! Look out for our special online events, including performer John Kirk, who will be taking families on a story hunt, and storyteller Richard Neville hold a creative writing workshop.

### To book visit:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/croydon-libraries-25532894849>

### To find out more visit:

**Web:** [www.librariesweek.org.uk](http://www.librariesweek.org.uk)

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/croydonlibraries](http://www.facebook.com/croydonlibraries)

**Instagram:** [www.instagram.com/croydonlibraries](http://www.instagram.com/croydonlibraries)