

BETRA News

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Covid: the latest
In the most recent weekly Government figures 1,704 new COVID-19 cases were reported in Havering.

This is equivalent to an infection rate of 654 per 100,000 people, the same as the London average, but lower than the average across the whole of England.

So please continue to take care, keep washing your hands, wearing a face covering in crowded spaces, and testing if you think you have caught coronavirus.

A further push on vaccinations has now begun

If you haven't been vaccinated yet, or received your booster dose, it's not too late.

A further push on vaccinations has now begun. Over-75s and the clinically vulnerable will be offered a fourth shot, or a fifth in the case of people with severely weakened immune systems.

For further advice and information on all things Covid, visit the government's website at www.gov.uk/coronavirus



At the heart of any TMO is its main committee, or board, made up of residents of the estate.

Due to the recent retirement of several members, we now have up to six vacancies to fill on our Board.

The BETRA Board is made up of both tenants and leaseholder representatives, and we want to encourage residents old and young, and from all backgrounds, to consider taking on this valuable role on behalf of our community.

Some Board members arrive with useful skills and experience, others soon pick these things up. Everyone enjoys the satisfaction of meeting neighbours and making friends, and knowing they are making a difference.

Lloyd and Jennie are always on hand to give advice and encouragement

The Board enjoys the support of estate manager Lloyd Edwards at all times, especially new members, for whom Lloyd and

Jennie are always on hand to give advice and encouragement.

Being a Board member looks great on a CV, and is bound to boost your chances the next time you apply for a new job. Active participation in the running of your community says something about you. It says you are mature in outlook, conscientious and caring.

TMOs are only ever as good as the residents who volunteer to run them

Remember, TMOs are only ever as good as the residents who volunteer to run them: this is YOUR committee. We hold regular meetings, usually every couple of months, at our office, taking care to ensure everyone can express their views and ideas.

“Come to our next meeting and see what it's all about”

Find out more about this opportunity by visiting the office and talking to Lloyd. He will be delighted to arrange for you to attend the next meeting, as an observer.



Bills to pay, things to do

I have never seen bills this high before. It's affecting everyone across the country as prices shoot up, and our incomes aren't rising at anywhere near the same rate.

It is a worry for everyone and if you ever need help budgeting, planning your spend, or just want to discuss how you are feeling about finances as its getting you down, our office is always open.

If we can't get you the help you need or advice - we will always endeavour to get you in touch with external sources like the Citizens Advice, financial advisory boards etc - you only have to ask.

In this edition, I'd like to touch on, in particular, the new financial year. As you will be well aware, rents, service charges, council tax and suchlike are now set for the year. You should have received letters for each individual cost.

If any of our residents need help understanding these new bills, or even setting up payment plans, direct debits etc, then as above please do get in touch as we can assist with that.

Also, those who are on universal credit and in particular housing benefit - please note, the benefits agencies need to be informed of the increases. Especially when it comes to a change in your rent. Don't lose out by not telling them.

You must confirm what your new costs are, so that they can adjust your benefits accordingly.

**Happy Easter everyone,
Lloyd**



Warm weather worries

We all welcome the warmer weather, but there are drawbacks.

For example, in the summer months, when people leave bags on the floor by the bins when bins are not actually full, the smell is soon awful, and rodents and other animals (mainly foxes and cats) have a field day! So please use the bins as they are intended.

Residents also sometimes leave rubbish outside their front doors in the lobby. This may not attract the same litter and animal issues but does make the stairwells extremely smelly, which again gets worse as the summer and hot weather arrives. This also leaves the lobbies more difficult to clean properly, with spilt and leaking liquids creating hazardous and unpleasant walkways.

This is one of the reasons for our zero-tolerance policy towards clutter left in the lobbies. Let's work together to keep our estate clean and tidy, inside and out.

Playtime

The warm weather also brings the children out, which is good to see. With our grounds, we have a large communal garden, so finding somewhere to play shouldn't be difficult.

Despite this, children still find other places to play, including on top waste bins and even some of the more accessible roofs around the place! Please can parents make sure their children restrict their play to the safe spaces usually covered in grass: our lawns.



News in brief

'MMA' finally signed!

BETRA TMO is managed by its Board to provide general estate management under an agreement with the Council known as a Modular Management Agreement (MMA).

This is important because, for as long as a TMO enjoys the support of the majority of its residents (as decided by a five-yearly ballot), this agreement determines the amount of funding BETRA receives.

This agreement hands BETRA certain key responsibilities, including:

- day-to-day repair services
- grounds maintenance
- signing up of new tenancies
- dealing with anti-social behaviour
- and void turn around actions

For years now we, in liaison with Havering's other two TMOs, PETRA and DELTA, have been trying to agree a new MMA with the Council. This has proven very difficult, but we have at last been successful.

This means we clarity about our funding in the medium term, and are therefore better able plan ahead. The agreement reached has inevitably involved some decrease in our grant, but Estate Manager Lloyd concluded, "Considering the difficult economic conditions, this agreement is a good one".

Better than Breyer?

The Council has just terminated its contract with repairs contractor, The Breyer Group.

From April, they were replaced by the housing repairs giant, Mears, whose vehicles you will no doubt spot around the estate from time to time.



Mears has been awarded a 10-year contract thought to be worth £58m. Will residents see a noticeable improvement in the repairs service? We can but hope.

Local election



We all enjoy moaning about local and national government, but are you registered to vote? And if not, do you really have any right to complain?

Remember, we are lucky enough to be living in a functioning democracy, and as the old saying goes, "Use it, or lose it!".

The local elections will take place on **Thursday 5 May**. This is your chance to vote for a local Council representative for the next four years.

All Havering residents who are registered to vote in local

government elections can take part, including European Union citizens.

There is still time to register to vote if you haven't already, but hurry - if you want to vote in these elections, the deadline (14 April) is fast approaching.

Lighting the way

Since the clocks went forward an hour a couple of weeks ago, have you noticed landing and lobby lights needing to be adjusted?

Or any of the pathway lights around the BETRA grounds being on when they needn't be, or off when they are needed? If so, please let us know and one of our team will come and adjust them.

The timings for the tradesmen's entrance button may also have been affected. These visitors should be able to gain automatic entry between the hours of 6am and 1pm. Again, please let us know if those timings differ where you live.

Tidy job



As part of our ongoing maintenance programme, BETRA's team have been at work.

Fencing has been repaired, new bins installed, and fresh bark chippings laid in some of the walkway beds. Please let us know if you spot a corner of the estate in need of a little TLC.

Green waste



Havering provides BETRA with green waste bins, and it is important that we use them correctly.

What can I put in a garden waste bin?

- Flowers and plants
- Garden weeds
- Grass cuttings
- Hedge trimmings
- Leaves
- Small twigs and branches

What can't I put in a garden waste bin?

- Food waste
- General household waste
- Stones or plant pots
- Plastic bags or containers
- Soil

Not sure which bin your rubbish should go in? Ask a BETRA member of staff or consult the Havering website.

Useful info

To help residents find the key contact details they need, we will shortly be displaying details of local emergency and other helpful services in the lobby areas of each block.

These notices will include contact numbers for the Police, Havering Streetcare, its Benefit and Money Matters team, and Age UK. You will also find this information on the BETRA website.



Events

Home Swap



When circumstances change, people sometimes look to move on from their present home, and often the quickest way to move into a property is to complete a mutual exchange via the home swap system.

A suitable property might be on this estate or elsewhere across the borough, but we as a TMO can only deal with exchanges on our estate, though we may be able to advise you on properties elsewhere.

Currently on offer on the estate there are one, two and three bedroom flats looking for moves to larger or smaller properties.

If interested in a possible home swap, there are several ways you can research the possibility. You can contact people on a specially dedicated Facebook group, and there is also a website: www.homeswapper.co.uk

You can log all your details onto this website and search for your ideal swap before waiting to see if your offer attracts interest.

If you would like more information on the 'Homeswapper' website, or help with advertising your tenancy on it, book an appointment with Lloyd and he will get you on there and talk you through the process.

Remember there are no guarantees that you will find your ideal swap, or that it will be agreed by both sides.

Safe deliveries

If you are worried about deliveries being left outside your home, we may be able to help.

While we cannot take responsibility for any parcels left with us, residents may, if they wish, put our office address down as a secondary delivery option, for you to collect from us at your convenience, during office hours.

Did you know?

Havering Antique and Collectors Club meet on the third Friday of each month. The Club usually meet at the Harold Wood Neighbourhood Centre, Gubbins Lane. Find out more on the Club's Facebook page.

Harold Wood Reading Friends Knit and Natter meet every Friday from 10.30am to 12.30pm at Harold Wood Library in Arundel Road. Bring your knitting and join the chat.

Also on Fridays at Harold Wood Library between 2.30pm and 3pm you can join **Baby Bounce Sessions** for children up to two years old.

Singing nursery rhymes helps children develop their language and pre-literacy skills. By using rhythmic language and repetition, children learn how words are formed, supporting the early stages of language development. It's also great fun, and a lovely way for parents and carers to meet up.

Visit the library on Friday afternoons or call 01708 434975 to find out more.

Free parking



Havering Council is to provide free parking in all council car parks across the Easter Bank Holiday weekend. Parking fees will be suspended between Good Friday, 15 April, and Monday 18 April inclusive.

Free swimming



For school-aged children from Easter through to the summer holidays. Sessions available for booking at Sapphire Ice and Leisure, Central Park and Harrow Lodge Leisure Centres. Book your kids' free sessions on the Havering website.

BETRA Board Meetings



The date of the next Board meeting, and the Annual General Meeting, are yet to be confirmed. See notice boards for details.

BETRA

Jill Horsham, Acting Chair
Lloyd Edwards, Estate Manager
Jennie Goddard, Housing Officer
Mark Richardson, Senior Caretaking and Repairs Maintenance Officer
Steven Richardson, Caretaking and Repairs Maintenance Officer
Naomi Cooper, Bookkeeper

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