

BETRA News

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Meet Jennie

Jennie Goddard, our new P/T Housing Assistant, writes:

“Well, I’ve been with BETRA for four month now - although it seems longer! I’m based at at the office and work all day Monday and in the mornings from Tuesday to Thursday.

“I previously worked for the Housing Department in the London Borough of Newham for many years, I left there in June 2017 due to a restructure taking place, I then worked as a GP receptionist from October last year until starting with BETRA in September last year.

“This job really appealed to me as I have worked within Social Housing for a long time. The main duties / priorities of my job are to deal with any day-to-day queries from residents, raise work sheets for repairs etc, and contacting the Council and other agencies as and when required.

“I’m really enjoying it so far, working here alongside some great people. I have met some residents and spoken to others on the phone, but have many more to meet - which I look forward to.”

New year, new era

Late last year, BETRA’s longest serving Chairman and founding member, Ken Howson, along with another BETRA stalwart, his wife Diane, retired and moved to Bristol.

Ken and Diane’s contribution to the formation and development of BETRA should not be underestimated. It was back in the early 2000s that Ken along with several other local residents began exploring the possibility of creating a tenant management organisation.



Thank you Ken - we wish you and Diane a happy retirement

They believed the estate could be better run by residents themselves, and that together they could help build the sense of community that is so important to every neighbourhood.

The dream was realised in 2004, and with it came the election of a committee of local residents to be know as the BETRA Board, a community-based BETRA office, and small dedicated staff team of admin and caretaking officers.

BETRA’s current estate manager, Lloyd Edward, paid this tribute to his old boss and his Missus.

“We have a great deal to thank Ken and Diane for. They have been at the heart of BETRA from the very beginning, with Ken’s calm and affable chairmanship accompanied by Diane’s selfless and ever-present help behind the scenes. We wish them well for a very happy retirement in Bristol, Diane’s home town.

Wendy steps up

As Ken and Diane’s departure neared, the Board chose Wendy Thomas as our new Acting Chair, to steer us through to our next AGM later in July.

Wendy has lived here for many years, and has been a highly valued member of the Board formats of that time. Most recently Wendy served as our events officer, overseeing the organisation of seasonal and holiday events and activities.

During her working life, Wendy managed a number of hairdressing salons. The management and organisational skills she gained then should prove really useful now.



**Estate Manager
Lloyd Edwards**

Lloyd's view

A happy new year from myself and all the team here at BETRA. I hope your festive period was great and you can look forward to a successful 2019.

Community ballot

This promises to be a big year for BETRA. 2019 sees the 15th anniversary of our formation, and this means we will soon need to hold our five-yearly community ballot.

The community ballot is a poll taken of all our residents (tenants & leaseholders), overseen by Havering, to vote on whether BETRA will continue the services we provide for the next five years. The ballot will be held in the summer. It will be a simple yes or no vote to determine whether or not BETRA can continue to run the estate. We will send out more information to you nearer the time.

This year also see's a lot of changes in Havering with the regeneration project kicking into action as well as lots of

other projects they have going on. I attend regular meetings, gathering information and passing on updates with Havering - before passing on as much knowledge as I can to our residents.

On the move?

Regarding the regeneration project, this means many people are on the move. Just remember, if you are needing help with a move then we are here to assist you. So whether you are looking to exchange off the estate, move onto the estate, or just to apply for the bidding system, we might be able to help. Pop in to the office to see myself or Jennie.

We will also have projects running ourselves - especially when looking to improve areas of our estate. We have a few things in the pipeline over the next three years, and are always open to other suggestions. If you can think of any works BETRA should look at in the long term, let us know about them. We have regular committee meetings where matters like this are discussed and your suggestions considered.

Your BETRA

If you would like to take your involvement with BETRA to a new level, why not think about joining our Board? Alternatively, we always need help with the organisation and running of our social events, such as the event we hope to organise this coming Easter. Again, if you would like to get involved, please pop by the office for a chat.

Finally, apologies that we didn't manage to produce a newsletter back in October, as scheduled. We start 2019 as we mean to go on - with this, our regular *quarterly* newsletter!

**Regards,
Lloyd**

Our local police

Estate Manager Lloyd recently met up with the police forces in the area, specifically the designated ward officers for the Gooshays neighbourhood, to discuss our concerns and share information.

Sharing local knowledge like this is valuable, and our police colleagues encourage local residents to tell them - in confidence - of any anti-social or criminal behaviour that you become aware of.

When you witness concerning behaviour, please call them on the following number at the earliest Opportunity.

• **The Gooshays police team**
Mobile number is : 07876391408

At the meeting, BETRA and our ward officers talked about the problem with groups of youths sometimes hanging around the estate. We also learned that there has been a reduction in house burglaries in the Harold Hill area, but a rise in key-less car thefts over the last year.

These car thieves use infrared signals, which means that they are able to access your car key's signal and open and drive away your car without having the key in their possession. The keys can be up to 30ft away at the time (eg, in your second floor flat), and one tip is to keep your keys in a metal tin. An old biscuit tin lined with metal or even in a Pringles pot would do.



Considerate parking

Lorries, including dustbin lorries, and other large vehicles sometimes struggle to get through the estate's narrow roads. That's why residents parking bays have been designed to straddle the pavement. Please be considerate when parking, positioning your car right up to (but not beyond) the line. Please also take similar care when parking in the multiple parking bays.



News in brief

Home swap

The mutual exchange scheme allows social housing tenants to advertise their property with a view to swapping their home with another social housing tenancy.

If you would like to advertise your flat for a mutual exchange, we can publish your home's details here. We will not publish names and addresses, just the key information.

Here are two local properties currently available for a home swap:

- **2nd floor 1-bed flat on the BETRA Estate. Tenant is looking for a 2-bed flat anywhere on any floor.**
- **1st Floor 2-bed flat on the BETRA estate. Tenant is looking for a ground floor 2-bed flat with garden if possible.**

If interested in either of these properties, or you would like to advertise your property in this newsletter, or if you have friends in the area that are looking to swap, please get in touch with the office.

Warm Weather Discount Scheme

Did you know that during the winter months the government can give up to £140 to households with a low income or dependent on benefits.

This is basically free electricity or gas in the winter months to help them through. We would encourage everyone to contact their suppliers of gas / electricity to see if they qualify at all. For more information, go to www.gov.uk/the-warm-homediscount-scheme

There are two ways to qualify for the **Warm Home Discount Scheme**:

- you get the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit - known as the 'core group'
- you're on a low income and meet your energy supplier's criteria for the scheme - known as the 'broader group'

If you are eligible, the money will not be paid to you; it's a one-off discount on your electricity bill between September and March. You may be able to get the discount on your gas bill instead if your supplier provides you with both gas and electricity. Contact your supplier to find out.

The discount will not affect your Cold Weather Payment or Winter Fuel Payment.

Begging in Havering

The Police have been in touch with advice on the issue of begging, which, sadly, seems to be a growing problem in Havering as elsewhere around London.

The Police tell us some of those who claim to be homeless are not homeless but simply wish to fund their drug habits. They know where they can go to sleep and eat, but choose to stay in and around our high streets.

The message from the Police is as follows:

- Begging is a criminal offence
- Giving money to beggars will not help them get off the street
- By giving money you may be inadvertently funding organised crime

- The money you give could be spent on drugs and alcohol
- You can help the homeless by donating to registered charities
- If the person begging claims to be homeless, contact the local authority outreach team who will be able to help them.

Clear lobbies please

For obvious reasons, councils like Havering will no longer tolerate anything they regard as a fire or health and safety risk in their residential properties.

This means that our lobbies and landings must be completely free of prams, bikes, items of furniture, or indeed rubbish bags. Even door mats are frowned upon these days and could be disposed of by Council workers, without warning, at any time.

Please remove any items you have been storing outside your flat, and let the office know if there are other items being left out. We can then take action to get it cleared.

Leave it out!

Some residents have been leaving food out for local foxes and cats. Roast chicken and all sorts has been spotted, all nicely plated up! This might seem harmless, but **mice and rats** also enjoy these treats. Encouraging vermin is never a good idea, so please do not leave food out.





Autumn leaves around the estate, 2018



Events

BETRA Bingo

The last Wednesday of each month, in the boardroom, from 5-7pm

Meet friends and neighbours for an easy-going chat over a few games of bingo, followed by an end of game buffet on the house. All residents welcome.

Next Board Meeting

Thursday 22nd January at 7pm in our office. If you would like to come along, please let the office know before that date.



- Wendy Thomas, Chair
- Lloyd Edwards, Estate Manager
- Jennie Goddard, Housing Officer
- Mark Richardson, Senior Caretaking and Repairs Maintenance Officer
- Steven Richardson, Caretaking and Repairs Maintenance Officer
- Brian Pratt, Caretaking and Grounds Maintenance Officer

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We need your details

BETRA needs to keep up-to-date contact details for all our households. Today residents change their mobile phones quite often and sometimes fail to notify us of their new number. We discover this only when, for example, there is an emergency or we are organising a repair on your behalf and find we cannot contact you.

Please make sure we have your current contact details. This information will be confidential and used only by our staff in circumstances such as the above.