

BETRA News

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STAY
ALERT

CONTROL
THE VIRUS

SAVE
LIVES

Thank you, Wendy



In May, just as things were beginning to brighten and lockdown was coming to an end, we heard the saddest of news: the death of our Chairman, Wendy Thomas.

Wendy, who had been Chair since 2016, died suddenly while at home. Although her death came as a shock to us, Wendy had been struggling with poor health for the last couple of years. This exceptionally difficult last year took its toll on her.

On page two, Lloyd pays tribute to Wendy. Her contribution to the work of BETRA, especially on the social side, will be sorely missed. It is only thanks to people like Wendy that communities like ours are able to thrive.

Board member and current Treasurer, Jill Horsham, has kindly agreed to take over as Acting Chair until elect Wendy's successor at the annual general meeting, due soon.

Getting back on track

The success of the vaccine programme means we can now get back to living life the way we used to. But with Covid still around, rebuilding community spirit could be a challenge.

Lockdown has ended, and all remaining restrictions are being lifted. Social distancing and face coverings will no longer be required - though of course some may choose to continue with these precautions.

Realistically, Covid is still going to cause problems, even if severe illness becomes a rarity. Individuals and families will be affected, and this may impact on BETRA. We will just have to 'ride with it', taking sensible precautions along the way.

Therefore, along with all other businesses and services, BETRA is getting back to normal. Lloyd, Jennie and the guys have returned to their regular working patterns and hour of duties, and the office is open to visitors.

And yes, we look forward to hosting actual meetings of the Board soon! Perhaps even... social gatherings! Remember those?

Get together?

This might prove more difficult than you would think. Have people lost their appetite for meeting up with others beyond their 'bubble'? Have we all settled for watching a never-ending succession of box sets? We hope not!

As you are probably aware, we pride ourselves on running events for the community. However, the last year has been a wash-out for obvious reasons. But soon we can start planning such things, and not just because residents enjoy these social events - so do the staff!

However, for now we do feel it is best to 'err' on the side of caution, so we will wait to see what the winter brings before hosting any big 'do's. Rest assured, we will have events again, and we will let you know as soon as we have plans in place.

Annual General Meeting

We have, however, finalised a date for our AGM this year. Providing all remains steady and under control regarding coronavirus, we intend to host our AGM in our office, in person, on Thursday 9th September 2021 at 7pm.

This meeting is open to all and any member of our estate can attend. At the meeting, we will discuss how the company operated last year, and what we plan to do in the year ahead.

We will also vote in our new Board members, as well as offering the chance for residents to become 'shareholders' (a symbolic gesture) in the company.

Please see the enclosed forms to express your interest in becoming a board member for the next year. On the night we will elect up to 12 members to oversee the next year's operations at BETRA TMO.

If interested in standing for the Board, please return your form to the office ASAP.





An Ode To our Chairman, Wendy Thomas

As some of you may already be aware, we recently lost not only our chairman but dear friend Wendy Thomas.

Wendy had been a long-time resident on the BETRA estate, and she was also a member of our board for many years, eventually becoming Chair in 2018.

Wendy was always at the forefront of what we were doing and always took a keen interest in the events we run for our community. She was the driving force behind our events for many a year, including the fantastic Halloween and Christmas celebrations. She will be hugely missed and the BETRA family was deeply saddened by her loss.

Wendy lived here for a number of years, and I'm sure many people on the 'Hill' also knew her. The funeral was a lovely service, but due to Covid only a few could attend. As she was well known across the community, it seemed a shame that not everyone got to pay their respects, so in her honour we are looking to install a small memorial for her on the estate - possibly the planting of a colourful tree as Wendy loved the different colours of nature. Once planted we will hold a vigil where anyone that wasn't able to pay their respects will be able to do so.

We will keep you posted once we have a plan and a date. For now, we hope that Wendy is at peace with her loving father who she held in such high esteem, and she is looking down on the estate with a big smile knowing that she helped improve our little patch of Harold Hill for all of our residents.

The Government's roadmap to easing lockdown: from 19 July

All adults can now book a COVID-19 vaccination.

'Freedom Day' has come

• **From 16 August**, if you're fully vaccinated or under 18, you will not need to self-isolate following close contact with someone who has COVID-19. You'll still need to take a PCR test and if it is positive you will need to self-isolate.

• Masks will become voluntary in all settings, including shops, hospitality and public transport. You should exercise your personal judgement.

• A requirement to self-isolate after testing positive or after coming into contact with an infected person will remain in place for those who are not fully vaccinated.

• But those who are double-jabbed - as well as under 18s in England - will no longer have to self isolate **from 16 August**.

• All businesses that remain closed - including nightclubs - will be able to reopen, with no caps on capacity.

• The requirement for people to work from home if possible will be dropped.

• The school bubble system will be scrapped in England **from 16 August**.

Havering resident coronavirus helpline

If you, or someone you know, have concerns around care, urgent health and wellbeing or lack of access to supplies including food and medicine please call our free to use helpline: 0800 368 5201 Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. Saturday, Sunday and bank holidays 11am to 4pm **for emergencies only**.
Email: covid19support@haverling.gov.uk

Note from Jennie

Have you received a survey to complete from the London Borough of Havering, asking for your views on how to improve services?

You need to return the survey by Friday 27th August 2021. Do so and you will be entered in to a prize draw where you could win a £50 supermarket voucher! You can remain anonymous, but then you will not be entered into the prize draw.

If you have any questions about the survey or would like help completing it, contact the Community Engagement Team on 01708 433136. Good luck!

Fly-tipping

One of the issues we have faced over Covid is fly-tipping. Over the last year our bins and compounds have been increasingly misused.

We have made contact with Havering Council and there are ongoing investigations by them to find out who is doing this. Please note: fines will be issued in due course.

We believe a lot of fly-tipping is done by people off the estate, and we know this from addresses found on some of the litter they have left behind. If you see anyone driving up to a bin compound that you do not recognise, please contact our office with a date / time and as much information as you can. We can then forward this to Havering for action to be taken.

Any information provided is of course anonymous. And if *you* have large items that you are looking to get rid of, please just call - our maintenance guys will be happy to help out where they can.

Leaseholder portal

We have some 60 leaseholders on the estate, out of a total of some 200 households.

There is a special leaseholder section of the Havering website providing a wealth of information and advice relevant to you.

Included in this section are details of your lease, your rights and responsibilities, information on building and communal repairs, the service charge, and a leaseholder forum. You can view a breakdown of the work that has been carried out on your behalf, and your annual charge.

To explore the portal visit the Housing section the Havering website and click on the Council leaseholders button.

Farewell Brian

We will shortly be losing one of our longest-serving employees, Brian Pratt. Brian has been with us nearly 12 years, and will soon be moving on to pastures new. If you do see him out and about on the estate, please do say cheerio and wish him well. We certainly want to take this opportunity to thank Brian for all his work over the years, and to wish him well on his next adventures. He will be sorely missed by the BETRA family.



Bidding for a new home

With family sizes increasing or decreasing, families often need a helping hand understanding, applying for, and successfully being able to bid on a new home across the borough.

We at BETRA are here to help. We may not have the final say, but we can guide all our residents through their options and the process. Please feel free to ask if you need some help.

Havering Council currently has a backlog of new applicants, so the process is taking a little longer than expected, so if you have applied already and are waiting to hear back, please allow a longer time than normal to hear back. Equally if you want to know where your application is at, what stage you are in of the process, or anything else, remember you can see all of this on your Havering 'See My Data' page, about you and your property.

If you're not sure if you have a 'See My Data' account set up, or you are interested in logging on, then again please ask for an appointment with us and we can guide you through the process of setting you up online.

There isn't just the bidding system available to you. Remember if you would like to swap your home there is a government website called HomeSwapper.com where you can see all homes across the borough and further afield that are also wishing to swap. Remember if you do find a swap, all parties must not only agree to the swap but also fall into the eligible category for the size of that home. If unsure of the criteria your family (or a potential swap family) would fall into, then please ask.



Winter fuel grants

This may seem a strange time of year to be bringing this up, but there are three major schemes residents should know about ahead of the autumn. In the months ahead, you may be eligible for one of more of these grants.

Winter Fuel Payment

A Winter Fuel payment is a one-off, tax-free payment of between £100 and £300 made during the winter to help with heating costs, it is made to households with someone over Pension Credit age.

Most people born on or before 26 September 1955 will usually qualify for a payment in 2020/21.

For details on how to apply go to: www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment

If you're claiming for the first time, call the Winter Fuel Payment helpline on **0800 731 0160**. You'll need to know your National Insurance number and your bank or building society details.

If you have claimed before, don't worry, you only need to claim once. After this, you should automatically receive a payment every year, as long as your circumstances don't change.

Cold Weather Payment

You may get a Cold Weather Payment if you're getting certain benefits or support for mortgage interest.

Cold Weather Payments are different to Winter Fuel Payments. You'll get a payment if the average temperature in your area is recorded as, or forecast to be, zero degrees celsius or below for 7 consecutive days. You'll get something in the region of £25 for each 7 day period of very cold weather between 1 November and 31 March.

This year's scheme is due to start in November 2021. You'll be able to check if

your area is due a payment in November 2021. For more details, visit: www.gov.uk/coldweather-payment/whatyoullget

Warm home discount scheme

Did you know you might be eligible for a saving of up to £140 off your electricity bill for winter 2021/22 under the Government's Warm Home Discount Scheme?

The money is not 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.

Eligibility

The scheme opens on the 18 October. 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'.

How you apply for the Warm Home Discount Scheme depends on how you qualify for the discount. For more details, including how to apply, go to: www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discountscheme

Alternatively, for help in applying for any of the above, drop into the BETRA office where Lloyd or Jenny can advise you.

Autumn leaves

Autumn will soon be on its way, and with it will come our busiest season on the grounds, with grass cutting, hedges to trim, as well as picking up all the dropping leaves from our beautiful trees. As ever we will focus on pathways and entrances, but over the next few months if there is an area you want us to focus on then get in touch and we will get our guys to give that area some attention.

Savouring Havering



Havering Council's Hidden Gems is a campaign to highlight everything that makes our borough special and unique, from our parks, green spaces and wildlife to our unique history, local businesses and community champions.

So, if you on Twitter, why not respond to Havering's request that we all tweet our favourite local place or hidden gem. Send a picture or video and some details to communications@havering.gov.uk. Or just tweet your favourite with the hashtags #Havering #HiddenGems

Mum's Guide @mgtromford

Have you heard of the website 'Mum's Guide To Romford'?

This website provides information 'from bumps to teens' for parents and carers in and around Romford, with people sharing their ideas regarding the best parks to visit and favourite activities for parents and families in the locality. With the summer holidays coming, check out their website at:

www.Londonmumsguideto.co.uk/romford

Reading Friends

Did you know that Havering libraries are part of the nationwide Reading Friends initiative?

Library staff can contact anyone requesting a weekly call to chat about favourite books, authors, radio news or newspapers.

The scheme is especially targeted at those who may be living alone or are otherwise isolated or housebound. Residents can sign up to the scheme on their own behalf, or on behalf of someone they know.

Once signed up, you will be connected via telephone with one of their lovely, specially trained befrienders, whether for a weekly chat to discuss varied topics or simply to share memories, thoughts and perhaps even read some great books together.

READING FRIENDS

It is hoped these conversations will foster friendly companionship and lessen the impact of social isolation and loneliness.

There is also a **Reading Friends Poetry group** (via Zoom) held on the first Wednesday of every month from 4:30pm till 6pm, running until 1st December 2021

To take part in either of these befriending services please email:
libraryevents@havering.gov.uk

BETRA's Annual General Meeting



To be held in the
**BETRA office
boardroom on
Thursday 9th
September 2021,
at 7pm**

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
Brian Pratt, Caretaking and Grounds Maintenance Officer

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Homes and Housing
Havering Council.
Tel: 01708 434000
Email:
homes@havering.gov.uk
Website: www.havering.gov.uk

Scared of your partner or ex?

Talk to us any time, day or night.

Freephone 24 hour National
Domestic Abuse Helpline

0808 2000 247

Confidential
non-judgmental support

Or reach us online:
www.nationalDAHeline.org.uk

Refuge

For women and children.
Against domestic violence.