



STAY
ALERT

CONTROL
THE VIRUS

SAVE
LIVES

Fire safety matters

Three upcoming initiatives aim to make our estate safer

1) Zero clutter

For some time now we have been warning residents of the need to keep the area immediately outside their flats completely free of clutter.

Now the Council has embarked on a programme of cross-borough checks to ensure no fire hazards are present in the communal areas of any of their residential properties.

First to be inspected were their high-rise blocks, and now they are moving on to properties such as ours here at BETRA.

Inspectors will be visiting the estate in the weeks ahead, so we must make sure all doorways, hallways, corridors and stairwells are free of clutter. This include bikes, prams, shopping trolleys, even doormats. There must be nothing left in these areas.

Your cooperation is much appreciated. Please take the necessary action now to avoid having items confiscated and disposed of.

2) Key boxes

Another fire safety measure now being enacted is the installation of fire boxes to the side of the security entrance doors to each of our blocks here at BETRA.

These key boxes will be for the use of emergency services only - and accessible only to them - allowing entry to our blocks whenever the need arises. The red dot symbolises the Fire Brigade.

Please remember that, other than when in use, these security doors should be closed at all times, for the safety of residents and their property. And just a reminder that if the security door in your block is faulty in any way, please report this to the BETRA office.

3) Safer sheds

From mid October, the Council begins a new programme of works affecting residents whose storage sheds have a tall blue cupboard door.

These sheds, a feature of most flats on the estate, are now used to store general household items, but originally they were coal sheds. The coal man would deliver from outside your flat, and the occupant then access the mucky stuff from inside the flat as required. How times change...

As a fire safety measure, these doorways are now to be blocked up, from within. While the doorways are blocked, the doors themselves will remain in place, so there will be no change in their to appearance inside the flats. Residents should not be inconvenienced by the work, though you will now only be able to access your shed from outside of your property. It is estimated the work on each doorway should take no more than about an hour.

The Council will be writing to all those affected in due course, giving you notice of the day when the work will be carried out, and asking you to remove all items from the cupboard until this work is completed.

Social update

We had hoped to hold some social events this autumn, now that the pandemic appears to be almost over, but given the continuing uncertainty, the sad loss of our former Chair Wendy, and our wish not to take any risks with our more vulnerable residents, we have decided against for the remainder of this year.

It's sad to think of our young families and old folk alike missing out on another Halloween do and Christmas get together, but we look forward to us all enjoying some good times together in 2022.



One of the new fire boxes



Storage shed interior showing doorway to be blocked



Storage shed door from inside the flat. This view will not change



On reflection

As you may or may not know, I actually went down with Covid during August and into September.

This meant I was not able to be at work for a while. It was an unpleasant experience, despite my being double jabbed. Losing my taste and sense of smell was the worst of it.

However, I have been back a few weeks now and am fully recovered. Having Covid brought home to me how real its threat is, alongside other illnesses, as winter approaches. We all need to continue being vigilant, taking sensible precautions where possible.

While I was off I also had time to reflect on the loved ones we have lost over the last year as a community, not just through Covid, but through various causes. Sadly, it was only last week we heard of the passing of a dear friend to our community, Joyce.

Joyce didn't live in a TMO property, but living nearby and she would always take the time to have a chat, say good morning, and see how all our staff members were. Joyce had many friends up and down her road as well as in the flats opposite her home. She had lived in the area for a long time and was always impressed with how it had improved over the years. She appreciated the grounds on our estate, and joined the community in making the most of them, especially in the summer.

Joyce will be sorely missed by all who knew her, not least we here at BETRA.

Regards,
Lloyd

Coronavirus: current Government advice

Coronavirus remains a serious health risk. You should stay cautious to help protect yourself and others.

- Let fresh air in if you meet indoors.
- Wear a face covering in crowded and enclosed spaces among people you do not normally meet.
- Get tested and self-isolate if required.
- If you haven't already, get vaccinated.

Jennie writes:

Did you know that Havering residents who have had BOTH doses of their COVID vaccinations BEFORE 10th April 2021 can now attend for a booster vaccine at: Raphael House, RM1 4HP 8.30am - 4.30pm. No need to book - just walk in

Everyone else will be offered a booster dose at least 6 months after they had their 2nd dose. The NHS will let you know when it's your turn to have a booster dose. It's important not to contact the NHS for one before then.

Most people will be invited to book an appointment at a larger vaccination centre, pharmacy, or local NHS service such as a GP surgery. Frontline health or social care workers can book a booster dose appointment online. They do not need to wait to be contacted by the NHS. And people who work for an NHS trust or a care home will usually get their booster dose through their employer.

Havering's coronavirus helpline

If you, or someone you know, have concerns around care or urgent issues around health and wellbeing please call our free helpline: 0800 368 5201
Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.
Saturday, Sunday and bank holidays 11am to 4pm for emergencies only.
covid19support@havering.gov.uk

Flu vaccine

The flu vaccine is free to people who are 50 and over, and those with certain health conditions, those who are pregnant, those who live in long-stay residential care, and those living with vulnerable people. You can have the flu vaccine at: your GP surgery; a pharmacy; midwifery service, or at your next hospital appointment.

BETRA's AGM

Following a second unavoidable cancellation, **BETRA's annual general meeting is now due to take place in November at the BETRA office.**

It will be the first time the Board has met in person since the pandemic started.

Acting Chair and Treasurer Jill Horsham will reside, and top of the agenda will be the election of a successor to Wendy Thomas, our former Chair, following her sad death earlier this year.

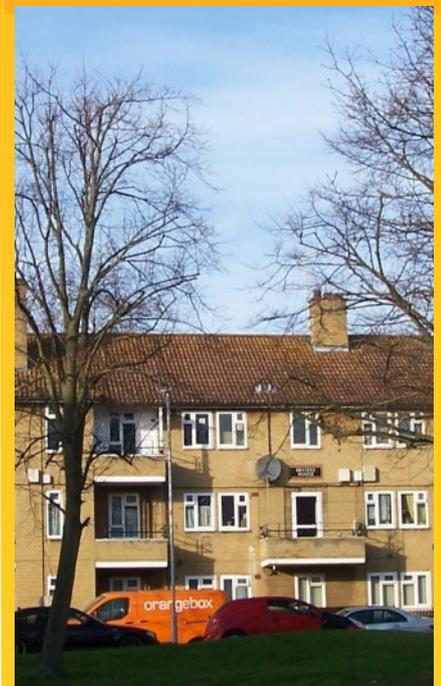
The election of other members, the protracted negotiations with Havering regarding our TMO management agreement going forward, and plans for the revival of our social activities and events in 2022 will also feature.

Winter fuel grants

With fuel bills increasing dramatically, it's all the more important that those eligible to do so take advantage of available grants:

- Winter fuel payment
- Cold weather payment
- Warm home discount scheme

For details, search these grants on the government website - www.gov.uk





Local hub

According to Havering's website, their flagship community hub at Harold Hill has just celebrated helping over 1,000 people since opening.

The hub is currently based in the old Housing Office at Chippenham Road, until the Harold Hill Library location is ready.

Well, we think of the BETRA office as a kind of community hub - but then again, you can never have too many hubs! So if you haven't been yet, Havering's one might be worth a visit.

Their website tells us that the hub offers:

- Career advice and help with applying for local jobs at Havering Council, Tesco, Greggs, Superdrug and many more.
- The opportunity to get your weekly essentials from the Community Food Shop receiving £15 worth of shopping for only £5.
- Recipe ideas from a local chef to create delicious, great-value meals.
- Advice from your local police about staying safe in your home – and pick up your free safety gadgets.
- Community health champions offering advice on how to improve your wellbeing.

Worth checking out, we suggest. The Council says plans are in development for further community hubs to be established across the borough.

Winter reminders

Your boiler

Let us know sooner rather than later if there are any problems. As Christmas approaches, the Council's plumbing service becomes stretched and delays are more likely, so you are advised to report boiler problems sooner rather later.

Blocked sinks

Same again, let us know sooner rather than later. As winter draws on, sink blockages become more frequent, so the Council's plumbing service becomes stretched resulting in delays.

Lobby lights

At the end of October the clocks go back, so the lobbies get darker sooner. The recently installed new lobby lights should all be working well and will be adjusted accordingly, but do let us know if any communal lights in your block are not working, or if they need adjusting.

Damp and mould

Havering offers to do a survey of properties affected by damp and mould. To register for this, you need to go online and complete a short questionnaire. Go to havering.gov.uk and search 'Problems with damp and mould'.

Dampness, condensation and mould growth in the home is a common problem, especially in older buildings. It can cause mould on walls and furniture and lead to rot in timber window frames and floors. It can encourage the growth of house dust mites and increase the risk of respiratory illness.

Dampness can be caused by condensation, penetrating damp - when rainwater gets in due to leaks in pipes, roofs, walls and windows - and rising damp, when moisture enters from the ground through the walls and floor.



If you have penetrating or rising damp, you may need the services of one of Havering's contractors. If the dampness is not caused by penetrating or rising damp, then it is most probably due to condensation.

You can prevent condensation in your home by producing less moisture (for example do not dry clothes on radiators, do not leave kettles boiling), by ventilate your home (for example keep your windows slightly open, close kitchen and bathroom doors when they are in use), by good insulation (draft proofing around external doors and windows), and by having your house at a constant temperature rather than high temperatures for short periods.

To kill and remove mould you should wipe down walls and window frames with either a weak bleach solution or a fungicidal wash, which is available from most DIY shops. After treatment, redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint. This helps prevent mould re-occurring.



Songs for life



If you care for someone with dementia, or know someone who does, this might be of interest to you.

Havering Singing For The Brain is a weekly music and social club that takes place every Wednesday between 10:30am and 12:30pm at St Michael's Church, Main Road, Gidea Park, Romford, RM2 5EL.

Run by the Alzheimer's Society, these sessions are a chance to meet with others facing the same challenges, to sing and to chat. Refreshments and advice are both on hand, and it costs £5 per couple to attend. New members are very welcome and their first session is free.

For further information contact Lisa on 01708 938432 or 07502 260099 Monday - Friday between 8am - 5.30pm. Or email: lisamarie28@hotmail.co.uk

Safe deliveries



With Christmas on the horizon, just a reminder that reminder if you are worried about delivery companies leaving parcels outside blocks, or leaving parcels outside your front door when you are out, 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. We will obviously endeavour to keep such items safe and residents would be able to collect from us at their convenience, during our office hours.

Home Swap

The borough's home swap bidding system is currently congested. There is a shortfall in properties available, which is making life very difficult for growing families as well as those looking to downsize now that their family have grown up. We have heard of people waiting for years to get a property that correct suits their family composition .

We often find the quickest way to move into a property is to complete a mutual exchange, and we look for ways to facilitate this. 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.

At the moment we have a few properties available for exchange:

- 1 Bed ground floor - looking for an upgrade
- 2 Bed ground floor - Looking for an upgrade
- 3 bed 1st floor - Looking to downgrade
- 3 bed 1st floor - looking for an upgrade

Obviously mutual exchanges have to be agreed by both parties. You may have what someone is looking for, but they may not want your property.

Visit the office if you are interested in exploring any of these options.

BETRA's Annual General Meeting



To be held in the BETRA office boardroom on Thursday 18th November 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

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Website: www.haverling.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.nationalDAhelpline.org.uk

Refuge

For women and children.
Against domestic violence.