

Homes & Gateway Services

Cabinet Member Bulletin

Councillor Alison Butler

October 2020

LATEST NEWS

New council homes milestone

A topping-out ceremony was held on 10th September at a new 100% affordable block that will become council homes at council rents for 90 Croydon families when it is completed. The block is to be called Malcolm Wicks House in honour of Malcolm Wicks the late MP for Croydon North who served that community for over 20 years. As a new MP, Malcolm said, he saw his challenge as being to "bridge the gap between the pomp and circumstance of parliament and the poverty and pain in many of our communities". He remained committed to this endeavour for the rest of his life.

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

The new council homes are part of the Queens Quarter development and are in one of four residential blocks ranging from 13-35 storeys being built on the site.

The overall development 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. Providing more genuinely affordable homes for people in need is one of the council's top priorities, and this excellent development will achieve that by delivering great council homes at council rents for many Croydon families.



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Longheath Gardens

A further 39 homes built by Brick By Brick on Longheath Gardens – 25 one-bed and 14 two-bed apartments. 1 beds x25 and 2 beds x14 have been handed over to Croydon residents on the council's housing waiting list.

The council purchased 24 homes as a part of the Affordable Rent programme in which the council receives £2.4m funding from the GLA's Building Council Homes for Londoners grant (BCHFL) and 15 were purchased under the council's ETA3 programme a scheme to acquire additional housing stock to meet the demand for social housing.

The first 24 homes in blocks A, B and C were handed over to the council from the developer on 4 June 2020, and all of these properties have now occupied by residents who had been on the council housing waiting in priority housing need.

The council took handover of block F on 27 August, which consists of five homes, and on 22 September block D, which has 10 homes. All of the properties in block F have been allocated to suitable households and the council's housing allocations team is in the process of selecting tenants for the homes in block F.

The new properties at Longheath were advertised on the Choice-Based Lettings site which allows residents on the council's housing waiting list to bid for advertised council and housing association properties.

In order to achieve social sustainability the council has implemented a local letting plan for this development by giving priority to council housing waiting list applicants who were already living on Longheath Gardens.

Sustainable heating initiative

A new trial heating system being installed in Croydon council flats that saves tenants money and helps the environment is set to expand this autumn.

In November, ground source pump systems will begin to pipe natural heat from 200 metres underground into around 40 council flats at Chertsey Crescent in New Addington, saving each household up to £300 per year on heating bills, cutting carbon emissions and helping to improve air quality.

The scheme will also involve removing existing electric storage heaters and cut enough carbon emissions per property that are equivalent to a 4,150-mile car journey. Residents will also receive new double-glazed windows and insulation.

A further 80 households at two blocks with gas heating in Broad Green and Upper Norwood are now set to receive the new renewable heating system, delivered by

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specialists Kensa Contracting. Work on installing the individual ground source heat pumps into each flat will start at Dartmouth House in Elmwood Road in late September, and in College Green in October. The new system will go live in these blocks next spring.

Fuel poverty is an issue for people across London, including Croydon, so it's a real positive the council can offer more Croydon households this heating system with significant financial benefits.

Council applies to renew landlord licensing scheme

The council has now submitted its application for government approval to renew the borough's landlord licensing scheme that makes sure privately-let properties meet key housing standards.

Over 48,500 properties are covered by the council's current borough-wide scheme - launched in October 2015 to ensure private landlords meet a range of housing, environmental and safety standards.

It requires all private landlords to hold a Croydon property licence and to meet certain requirements, including landlord inspections every six months, safety measures such as fire alarms, and giving tenants a proper tenancy agreement.

Under the scheme the council has resolved thousands of incidents with landlords without needing further action, inspected over 13,000 properties, served over 1,000 enforcement notices, issued 75 prohibition orders, and fined or prosecuted over 40 landlords. Successful court cases include action against a couple who let a home [without working smoke alarms](#) to a family whose son later died after a fire.

The council carried out formal public consultation between December and March on three options for a renewed scheme. The option now submitted to government would see the scheme cover the whole borough, targeting antisocial behaviour in six wards in the south and poor housing conditions in 22 wards mainly in the north and centre of the borough.

Under legislation introduced since Croydon's existing scheme came into force, final government permission is now needed for any new licensing scheme if it covers more than 20% of the private rented sector or 20% of the geographical area of a borough.

The new scheme would include an improved support service for landlords and tenants, including a tenants' welcome pack and template documents so it is easier to do inspections and safety checks.

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Our landlord licensing scheme has made a positive difference to the lives of thousands of private tenants across the borough, and the proposals we've now submitted to government are about building on this crucial work for another five years. The importance of having a decent, safe and secure home has become even clearer since the pandemic lockdown, and it underlines why we need the government to approve our scheme so we can continue to raise living standards in Croydon.

Rough sleeping update

Croydon has been successful in securing £635,000 from the government's Next Steps Accommodation Programme. This funding will fund a range of interventions until March 2021 to: secure ongoing accommodation for rough sleepers accommodated during "Everyone In", provide accommodation for rough sleepers who would have ordinarily been accommodated in shared sleeping sites during the winter period, address their health needs, and, provide continued support to move onto longer term accommodation.

The Croydon Reach outreach service and a range of partner agencies continue to work with new rough sleepers to assist them from the street.

Support payments for Covid-19 self-isolating workers

Croydon residents who are struggling financially because they cannot work after being told to self-isolate can now apply for a new support fund provided by government and run by councils.

In response to a rise in Covid-19 numbers across the country, the government has made it compulsory for people to self-isolate if the NHS has told them to. This applies either because they have tested positive for Covid-19 or because they have been in close contact with someone who has.

To support those who are self-isolating and are struggling financially as a result, the new Test and Trace Support Payment scheme is for people on low incomes who are unable to work from home.

The Test and Trace support payments are a one-off, lump sum of £500 per person if they have been asked to self-isolate, and can prove they cannot work from home and are on a related benefit.

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For information on how to apply, visit the council webpage or call 020 8726 7000 option 2.

To be eligible for the Test and Trace Support Payment, you must:

- Have been asked to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace
- Be employed or self-employed;
- Be unable to work from home and will lose income as a result; and
- Be currently receiving Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-based Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit.
- Provide a notification from NHS Test and Trace and a unique ID number
- Provide a bank statement; and
- Proof of employment, or evidence of self-assessment returns and income
- Proof you cannot work without social contact

The scheme is set to run until January 2021 and a claim can be made for each period of self-isolation required. Payments can be backdated from 28 September.

The council is also awaiting from government details of a discretionary fund for Croydon residents who do not qualify for the Test and Trace Support Payment but need financial support to self-isolate.

If you are a Croydon resident who has been told to self-isolate but cannot work from home and will struggle financially as a result, apply either online or by phone and we will process your application as soon as possible.