

Kingston Churches Housing Association



Summer 2019

Housing Services Manager Update

It's hard to believe we are half way through the year and we are already seeing warmer days. I hope you have managed to enjoy the good weather so far and that this continues throughout the summer. It's been lovely to see the flowers blooming as the weather has been getting better.

It has been very busy for the Housing team and I will update you on some of the key issues that we have been working on since the last newsletter.

Fire and Gas Safety

Fire and Gas Safety is a priority and everyone has a duty to themselves and others to make sure they are safe. Over the year you will all need to provide access at least once to our Gas Safety engineers S&S Burners. We have a new procedure that is working very well and the majority of tenants are contacting us to arrange their appointment before their gas safety check is due. Part of our new procedure is that your gas safety checks can be carried out up to 2 months before the due date. Please make your appointment to have your gas checked before your current certificate expires.

All office staff attended fire safety training in June. This was to update us on current legislation, and we were given some very useful tips about fires and how we can protect ourselves and others in the event of a fire. We have a stay put policy but were advised if you are able to exit safely then do so without putting others at risk.

If you are unable to exit safely you must not open the door where the fire is. As soon as you discover a fire keep the door closed and call 999 to report it. If the fire is in your property and there is no way for you to exit safely, keep yourself low to reduce breathing in smoke toxins.

Do not try to tackle the fire yourself unless it is reasonably safe to do so, as you may cause yourself an injury. If in doubt, always call 999 and keep yourself safe until the fire brigade arrives.

Bathroom Refurbishment Programme

The bathroom programme is coming along nicely and I am pleased that the programme is running well. Our contractors ABM are working with tenants and will update you with the progress of the work. Please remember that when your bathroom has been finished I will be arranging a visit to inspect that works have been completed satisfactorily. We are continuing to receive good feedback from tenants on their new bathrooms and the contractors working in your home are very nice and polite. Thank you for the feedback.

If you have any queries regarding the contractors or wish to discuss your bathrooms please contact me.

Brighton Trip



In June we went to Brighton with some of our sheltered tenants. Sharon Lock, Accounts Assistant, and I joined our tenants for a really nice day and transport and lunch was provided by KCHA. During our coach trip everyone completed a small questionnaire and received a free pen as a thank you.

On arrival we went for lunch at Harry Ramsdens Fish and Chip Restaurant which was situated opposite Brighton Pier. Everyone received fish and chips, tea or coffee and a dessert of ice cream or bread and butter pudding as a treat from the association.

When we finished our meal everyone had approximately 3 hours to explore Brighton. Some went shopping and others walked along the pier. Everyone enjoyed the seaside and the weather was on our side as the sun came out and it was a glorious day. We held a raffle for everyone on the return journey and the winner was Mrs Kulendran who received a Marks and Spencer voucher for £25 and she was delighted with her win.



staff and people were so friendly and approachable. Organisation was great — sweets and surprise raffle on bus. This rounded off a superb day off glorious sunshine and incredible turquoise sea in Brighton. Thank you everyone”.



I wish to thank all who attended and made the day a huge success and I hope all future events are as enjoyable as our Trip to Brighton was and many more of you would be able to join us in the future.

Sharon Lock, Accounts Assistant gave us her views of the day. She said *“It was a pleasure for me to be involved in the very first Tenant Engagement trip to Brighton. As I am usually office based it was great to get out and meet our Tenants. The sun was shining and that set the tone for the day. I think I can speak for everyone when I say how much we all enjoyed it and there were certainly lots of smiles on the return journey. Back at the office we are already planning the next trips and I am looking forward to when it will be my turn to go again”.*



Please look out for our next trip which is a family day out at Chessington on 24th July.



Then on Friday 9th August we're organising a trip on a River Boat leaving Kingston Bridge with lunch included and music whilst on the boat.

As spaces are limited please could you contact Sophie Mselle, Housing Assistant, to register your interest.

Finally I would like to wish everyone a great summer, and those of you that manage to get a holiday have a wonderful time.

I also received a comment from one of our tenants, who said *“Sending a big thank you to everyone at KCHA for the wonderful day in Brighton and lunch in Harry Ramsdens. All the*

Karen Hart
Housing Services Manager

Chief Executives Update

The past 12 months have been a really exciting time for Kingston Churches Housing Association (KCHA). At the end of May this year we delivered three excellent new affordable family homes to rent. Progress Mews (the development) was KCHA's first development managed by ourselves and funded without grant or subsidy.

This new development was carried out on our own land, which also happened to be the site of the first properties ever purchased by the association in 1967. We have come a long way since 1967 and today KCHA now owns and manages 275 homes, but it is important to remember our humble beginnings and core values as we aim to grow for the future.

Honorary Alderman Dennis Doe writes about the early days of KCHA and the ownership of 22 to 24 The Avenue in Surbiton:



KCHA was formed in 1964. It was one of many similar Associations in the London area and was the inspiration of the British Council of Churches. There was concern over the lack of affordable housing.

Could the churches become a third arm of provision, as well as the private and public providers? The opportunity was picked up by Kingston's churches, led by the then Minister at Surbiton Hill Methodist Church, the Revd. Harold Colbeck. But the willing and older supporters (retired architects, builders, civil engineers etc) needed a young businessman to volunteer to do the secretarial leg-work in getting the ideas off the ground. That was me! I was 26 and I felt that this would be good Christian outreach work. I had no experience in setting up a company, but I was greatly helped by local professionals who volunteered their services. They included a Mr Brett-Holt (solicitor), a Mr Stimpson (housing manager), Mr Alan Beanland (enabling officer), and later Mr Doug Bryan (retired bank manager).

With Mr. Brett-Holt's help we inaugurated the Association in 1966 with the Registrar of Friendly Societies. Next year we bought our first property, 22/24 The Avenue in Surbiton. 8 x 1 bed units, it was bought through a mortgage with Kingston Council. We then went up a steep learning curve! We had no experience in managing a communal property. Who would look after the garden? St. Mark's Church's young people volunteered. Who would do the odd repair jobs? An elderly member of St. Mark's took on the role of odd-job man. Who would collect rents? They were collected free of charge by Mr. Stimpson. We knew we needed a Housing Manager, but we had to grow to be able to afford such a paid appointment. Eventually we did!

Much later I became a Kingston Councillor and in 2003/04 was Mayor of the Royal Borough and I became much involved with Kingston's Housing issues. I look back with pride to the 1960s when our small bunch of eager but elderly amateurs had the faith and the vision to start Kingston Churches Housing. I think I may be the only one still alive, but my colleagues, and those who helped us, would be amazed and overjoyed that the organisation they helped found nearly 60 years ago is still alive and growing, helping to provide affordable housing for local residents.



Thank you Dennis for that brief look back to where it all began. KCHA has come a long way since those early days and we will continue to grow further, but we could not have done it without Dennis and his colleagues and the local Churches.



The past 12 months have been a really exciting time for KCHA. At the end of May this year we delivered three new affordable family homes to rent on the very site it all began. Our tenants remain the top priority and each decision taken will be in the interests of ensuring that we can continue to improve and evolve whilst maintaining the same personal and friendly legacy services.



We were delighted that our Local MP for Kingston & Surbiton, Sir Ed Davey, was able to join us and officially open our new development, Progress Mews.

Sir Ed, remarked that KCHA was "setting new standards in delivering affordable social housing" and everyone who attended was equally impressed with the design, quality and overall look.

Ross Brown
Chief Executive

Our Working Garden

I'd like to introduce you to our garden, and the residents responsible for all the good work.

It can be quite strenuous, but we all get so much out of it. It helps us mentally, physically and even financially.

Here's who and how:



Gill single-handedly cleared our dumping ground and made herself a vegetable allotment and a flower bed.



Sue has worked on her allotment for a couple of years now. She loves cooking and is able to grow all her own herbs.



Hazel's plot is a work in progress, but she's getting there!



Josie is a godsend. She has established a plot with lots of plants that mean a lot to her and are full of memories. And she helps others as well. She's currently helping to turn some overgrown forgotten areas into bee-friendly corners, pictured above. We're using rocks and stones we've found lying around to make lovely rock gardens.



Suzie is the newest member of the group and was eager to join in. As there wasn't any space, with permission from Kingston Churches, we started her allotment area from scratch. In her words "come rain or shine my veg will grow". Another fun day at the allotments!



Last but not least, for our special lady, Olive, at 90 years old doing the garden isn't really possible. But with the help of her son an ugly hedge was removed from outside her flat. This was replaced with some pots that she is able to maintain. As you can see, the smile says it all.

Hopefully everything will grow, but none of us are experts so it's all trial and error.

Look out for some more photos in the Autumn Newsletter so you can see how we got on!

Rent Statements

Your rent statement showing the balance at 5th July 2019 is enclosed. **Please check that it is correct and let us know if you think there are any discrepancies.**

If you need a rent statement that goes back further we will be glad to send you the information. Just let us know.

Fire Safety Visits in July 2019

Those tenants due fire safety checks will find enclosed a letter about the quarterly visits due on:

Wednesday 24th, Thursday 25th and Friday 26th July 2019.