



newsletter

Summer 2017



THIS IS THE NEWSLETTER FOR TENANTS OF HARROW CHURCHES HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Mayor of Bicester welcomes tenants to Oxfordshire's first rent-to-buy homes

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PHOTOS: LUCY BAKER



Above: Tenants outside their new rent-to-buy apartments with the Mayor and staff of HCHA, Rentplus and Mulberry Developments. ↑

Harrow Churches Housing Association (HCHA) and Rentplus, an innovative business providing rent-to-buy homes, have welcomed the Mayor of Bicester to formally open their new rent-to-buy development in Stratton Park, Bicester. The event saw the first tenants come together to celebrate the completion of their new homes, and included speeches from Mayor Les Sibley, Chris Holley, CEO at HCHA and Richard Connolly, CEO at Rentplus, as well as a ribbon cutting ceremony to formally declare the new site open. The newly built affordable homes have been hotly anticipated as Oxford has recently been named the UK's most unaffordable city to live in, with the average house costing £385,372, nearly 11 times the average household salary in Oxfordshire. The ten newly built, two bedroom homes were constructed by regional developer, Mulberry Developments, and will form part of the 125 unit site. Through Rentplus' unique model, some of the tenants will have the opportunity to buy their new homes in just five years, and in the meantime will benefit from an affordable intermediate rent. When it comes to buying their home, Rentplus will give them the added bonus of a 10% deposit towards their purchase, making it easier to buy their home.

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Above left to right: Mayor Les Sibley, Chris Holley, CEO at HCHA, Richard Connolly, CEO at Rentplus and Cllr John Donaldson, Portfolio Holder for Housing, Cherwell Council. ↑

Below tenants left to right: Dimitry, Alex, Tracy, Natalia, Zoe & Jason. ↓



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Zoe Blomer (pictured right) is one of the new tenants, who will be moving in with her partner Jason and four month old baby. Zoe said: 'Before owning our new Rentplus home we were living in a two bedroom bungalow with my partner's father. With so many of us in the home it was getting way too cramped and we really wanted a space of our own. To date, we've just not been able to afford getting onto the property ladder in the traditional way.

I first heard about these rent-to-buy homes through the council. The location is what attracted me the most - it is so close to town and we have good schools right on our doorstep, which means that we won't have to rely on public transport.

We are aiming to buy our new home after 5 years. The affordable rent means that we are able to save at the same time - something we were not able to do when we were privately renting.'

Richard Connolly, Rentplus CEO, said: 'We are thrilled to be able to help Zoe and Jason, and other families just like them. As one of the UK's least affordable areas to live in, we are delighted to be working with Cherwell District Council to bring more affordable housing to the local community.

Our innovative model gives families who are just about managing the opportunity to fulfil their dreams of home ownership while offering them the safety and security of long-term tenure.

The success of schemes like this will allow us to expand our presence in Oxfordshire, delivering more affordable homes to hard-working families.'

Chris Holley, HCHA Chief Executive, said: 'It is great to see the collaboration between Cherwell District Council,



PHOTO: LUCY BAKER

Above: Zoe and Jason with Baby JJ. ↑

HCHA and Rentplus finally come to light. These new affordable homes will support working families in Oxfordshire who aspire to own their own home but cannot currently do so. It was great to take time to celebrate the new tenants taking their first crucial steps onto the property ladder.'

It was a real pleasure to meet so many of the first tenants to have moved into our new rent-to-buy homes in Bicester and a great chance for them to meet each other. We even managed to bring along some sunshine with us from Harrow. We were also delighted to hear one of our tenants on BBC Radio Oxford explaining how

the Rentplus model offers them the chance of home ownership; something they had not before thought possible.

Our existing tenants remain a priority at HCHA of course, and we continue to invest in your future. We have plans to redevelop our sheltered housing at Wolstenholme. I would like to thank all of the tenants

who came to our recent consultation meeting and discussed the exciting plans to provide them with new, modern homes with us. We look forward to giving you all more news about the development soon.

Christopher Holley, Chief Executive.



Audio newsletter success

In the spring edition of the HCHA tenants' newsletter we asked older tenants whether they were struggling to read print and would prefer an audio version of this newsletter, and a dozen tenants took up the offer. The project has been delivered with our partner Harrow Talking Newspaper, (HTN) a local charity that supports people with visual impairment to access the local news.



PHOTO: SONI SHAH

Barbara Turner (above left) from HTN demonstrates how easy it is to operate the USB player to listen to audio versions of the local weekly news and the HCHA quarterly tenants' newsletter.

Tenant **Delores Bradberry** (left) said, 'I like to know what's happening but my eyesight makes it hard to read the newsletter, so I'm really happy to have this recording.'

If you live in one of our sheltered schemes and would like an audio version of this newsletter please ask your Intensive Housing Coordinator to add your name to our mailing list.



Joyce Hixon celebrates her 100th birthday

Ewart House extra care scheme was decked out in pink decorations - the favourite colour of resident **Joyce Hixon** who celebrated her 100th birthday with family, friends and staff.

The Bishop of Willesden, Pete Broadbent, blessed the day with a prayer and celebrated her life and Christian worship. The party had a distinctly Caribbean flavour with a steel band playing to the fifty guests who were served a lunch of rice and peas, chicken and beef curry.

Also in attendance were **Rev Barry Hingston** and curate **Marj Mott** of St John's Church, and **Rev Rita King** of Joyce's Kenton Methodist Church. Rev King said, 'I have known Joyce for the past 5 years and she is kind, understanding and tells me what she thinks! She loves Jesus and takes Holy Communion. We all wish her joy and health. I pray to God to bless all of you who contribute to keeping her well.'



Above left: Doreen Sandiford with Joyce Hixon. ↑



Left: Joyce pictured with Rev King and some of her carers (left) and her friend from Monserrat, Franklin Margetson. ←



Right (Left to right): Tracey Baldwin of HCHA, Curate Marj Mott, Joyce Hixon, The Bishop of Willesden, Pete Broadbent and Rev Barry Hingston. →

Joyce Hixon was born Joyce Goldson in Kingston Jamaica on 12th April 1917. One of three children, she grew up in Jamaica. She moved to England in 1964 and married her second husband John Baptist Hixon. He was a machinist in a factory and Joyce worked as an orderly in three London hospitals including St Mary's Praed Street. She retired when she was 60.

Joyce lived with her niece until Harrow social services found Ewart House extra care scheme for her 4 years ago. When asked about her home and care in Ewart House Joyce said, 'I just like the place, everybody loves me here!'

Grace Ogunjinmi, Intensive Housing Coordinator at HCHA said, 'Joyce is a ray of sunshine. Everyone marvels at her energy. It's a pleasure to have her living here.'

The team of carers from **Hales Group** provide care and support for Joyce and help her with her daily routine. She continues to lead an active life and goes out three times a week to Milmans Day Centre where she participates in their programme, joining in the exercise classes and social activities.

When asked about the secret to her long life Joyce replied, 'God keeps me well. I spent good days in my youth living with no regrets. I keep happy and enjoy my life every day.'

Staff news

We have to say goodbye to **Edith Saituru**, Operations Manager, she will be sorely missed by not only HCHA staff and Board Members but also by our tenants. Edith joined us six years ago as scheme manager for the

newly opened Ewart House, and was promoted to Older Persons' Service Manager and then to Operations Manager. She has been unwaveringly committed to delivering the best quality services to our tenants and supporting our staff. We are in the process of recruiting a new Operations Manager.



Above: Edith Saituru. ↑

Goodbye to **Suzanne Smith**, Housing Manager at Woodforde Court and St Pauls Close in Harlington. After two years in post Suzanne is taking time off to downsize and relocate. We thank Suzanne for her commitment in supporting our tenants living in general needs and sheltered housing.

Barry Ingate

Chair of HCHA Board steps down

PHOTOS: LUCY BAKER



Barry Ingate, Chair of the Board of Harrow Churches Housing Association stepped down at the annual general meeting in March, after 33 years of volunteering service to housing associations. Here Barry reflects upon his service.

How did you first get involved in volunteering for a housing association?

Most of my working years were spent in the construction industry although mainly on the finance side, nevertheless working on project sites both in the UK and in the Middle East. I first got involved back in about 1979, when I was approached by the then Chair of Stanmore Christian Housing Association (SCHA) to become their auditor. In 1984 I was then asked to help with various financial and business matters regarding the association. So I agreed to become part of their management committee, and after about 5 years when the Chair retired and moved away, I got roped into being Chair - a position I retained until SCHA merged with Harrow Churches Housing Association in 2008. As part of our merger arrangements, two of the Board of SCHA became members of the Board of HCHA and so both myself and my son Paul, were elected to the Board. I have served for nearly 9 years on HCHA's Board. Paul had to step down after about 3 years due to having a young family and business pressures.

How have you found the experience at HCHA?

I have really enjoyed the experience of working as part of a small yet dynamic organisation and have been so encouraged by the dedication and hard work of the

previous Chair, John Newby, as well as the very diverse members of the Board over this whole period.

Looking back, what have been the most satisfying achievements as Chair of HCHA?

There have been two main satisfying things in my time as Chair; the first has been the development at Paxfold and seeing the dream of SCHA fulfilled. The second, was the exciting way that HCHA has grown over the past few years, this includes the merger with Harlington Rectory, the start of Rentplus rent-to buy project, and the purchase of the Rectory site in Stanmore for further new development.

After stepping down how do you plan to spend your free time?

I hope to spend more time with my wife Jean, she has always been so supportive over the years and I am very grateful for all that she has done. I will also be able to spend time playing golf as well as helping with my local Scout Group and our local church.



Right: Barry and Jean Ingate.→

PHOTO: SONI SHAH

Christopher Holley, CEO of HCHA said, 'It has been a pleasure and a privilege to work with Barry Ingate. He has always been a positive person to talk with about the many housing issues we encounter and to help us find solutions to challenges. Barry has always been an inspiration, and I hope that after the 15 years we've closely worked together that he considers me to be a friend as I do of him.'

Board News

Right: Petra Gratton & Michael Shelton.→

We would like to congratulate **Michael Shelton** on his election as the new Chair of HCHA, and **Petra Gratton** as our new Vice-Chair. We are also pleased to announce that **Andrew Hall** was re-elected onto the Board.

HCHA would like to thank **Ray Green**, **Philip Dean** and **Rev Karlene Kerr** who stood down this year, for their dedication to HCHA and their hard work over the years and we wish them well in the future.



PHOTO: SONI SHAH

Heathrow runway update

On 15th May the HCHA management team invited staff from Heathrow Airport, **Jonathan Deegan**, Head of Land Acquisition & Compensation and **Kaimi Ithia**, Senior Community Relations Manager, to meet our tenants living at Woodforde Court and St Pauls Close in Harlington. The purpose of the meeting was for Heathrow Airport staff to discuss and answer any questions our tenants had about the third runway expansion and how it might affect them.

Chris Holley, CEO HCHA said, 'I would encourage everyone to get involved in the consultation process that starts later in the year. HCHA has been talking to other stakeholders such as the National Housing Federation

about how best to influence the outcome of any decisions that impact on the wellbeing of our tenants.'

More information: Heathrow Airport has a dedicated website for local residents where you can find the latest information about the plans at: www.heathrow.com/localcommunity

Our tenants living in Harlington and Hounslow can also attend 'Heathrow surgery' sessions. These surgeries provide the opportunity to meet one-to-one with a member of the Heathrow team to ask any questions you have about the plans. To arrange an appointment you can call them on **0800 307 7996** or email them at communityrelations@heathrow.com

Safer Neighbourhoods

PHOTOS: SONI SHAH



Above: PC Philip West and PSO Wes Best listening to residents. ↑

PC Philip West and **PSO Wes Best** from the Harrow Weald Safer Neighbourhoods team visited Gillian House to have a chat with residents over a cup of tea. The discussion focussed on community safety. PC West said the main crime reported by older residents in Stanmore was ‘*dipping*’ at supermarkets, which is when money is stolen out of a pocket or handbag. Sometimes this involves distraction techniques and often at the time, the victim doesn’t realise their money has gone. Two residents had actually recently been victims of ‘*dipping*’ and they were kind enough to share their experiences.



Left: Tenants share their cautionary tales of petty crime. ←

The police advised that being very vigilant when out and about and especially when shopping would help as would being careful never to leave belongings unattended. The police were also able to share information about telephone and internet crime. Both police and tenants really appreciated sharing their experiences and advice.

fake friends? ?

Most friends are real friends but sometimes people only pretend to be nice to you to get something from you. It can happen to any of us at any age. Fake friends steal money or belongings and they might also harm you. Their aim is always to get something from you that they want. They have no interest in your happiness or wellbeing. Genuine friends never use you in this way. fake friends exploit you. They may act alone or in a gang. A fake friend for example:

- borrows your phone and uses up all the credit
- never returns borrowed money, uses your bank cards and/or steals your belongings
- helps themselves to your possessions, food or drink
- has parcels and post delivered to your home
- may bring other people you do not know into your home and use it as their own

- appears when they know you have money or something else that they want
- may get angry with you or threaten you if you do not do what they want
- tries to get you to agree to do things that you know are wrong or illegal, or anything that you do not want to do.

If you are worried about a possible fake friend you can let our staff know. They will support you to get advice and help.

Some people can also contact:
Action on Elder Abuse Helpline
080 8808 8141

The Mix (up to 25 years of age)
www.themix.org.uk

Couple reunited in new home



Thomas and Irene Bonner were finally reunited when they were offered a new home at Paxfold, after having to live separately for 14 months due to limited wheelchair access in their rented home, and a shortage of local care facilities where they could live together.

Thomas Bonner (age 84) a retired RAF non-commissioned officer (NCO) and Irene (age 83) also ex-RAF, had lived for the past 24 years in a privately rented flat with a narrow, raised step entrance. In June 2015 Thomas suffered a rare spinal cord injury which paralysed him from the waist down and left him wheelchair bound. After four months of recovery and rehabilitation in hospital Thomas was ready for discharge, but he was unable to return to his home due to its lack of wheelchair access. From October onwards Thomas could not leave hospital, unable to go home or into suitable care and was stuck.

Just before Christmas, Thomas was moved into a care home but Irene could not move with him. Irene would visit him regularly but was not permitted to stay with him. Eight months later, in August 2016, the couple were finally offered a wheelchair accessible

flat in HCHA's Paxfold sheltered scheme. Thomas beams as he recalls his first viewing at Paxfold, 'I could get into it easily with my wheelchair, it had a fantastic shower wet room and an open plan kitchen and lounge. I thought it was heaven!'

Moving into Paxfold, meant that the couple could be reunited after 14 months of separation. This year they celebrate their sixty-second wedding anniversary and are delighted to be living together again in their wheelchair adapted flat. Thomas says, 'Since moving here we've settled down very well and we come and go as we please.' Irene adds, 'The flat is absolutely great. I especially like my little patio garden and Thomas loves to cook in our new kitchen.'



Above and top: Thomas and Irene Bonner in the new flat in Paxfold.↑



PHOTOS: LUCY BAKER

Right: Thomas loves cooking. His special wheelchair (donated by the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund) allows him to change height and to reach his cooking pots and see into them.→

A walk on the wild side

During May and June, Ekky Archibong, HCHA Activities Coordinator, organised a programme of garden themed events across our sheltered schemes. Activities included four sessions, ranging from a ramble in each scheme garden, through to herb planting and pot painting. Ekky said, 'It was interesting to see the varied skill levels, knowledge of plants and views amongst all those who attended.'

The project will end in July with a half day visit to Wiseworks, a Harrow based garden charity, where tenants will be treated to a planting demonstration, a walk around the garden and lunch.

Below: Ekky with tenants Brian, Anne and Una taking a closer look at some of the plants in the wildflower meadow at Paxfold.↓



PHOTOS: LUCY BAKER

What's on this summer There are lots of activities planned at our sheltered schemes throughout the summer such as Carnival Antics including food, dance and costume making, and the return of young volunteers from the National Citizenship Service (NCS). Please check your scheme's monthly Activity Bulletin for a complete listing for what's on where you live.

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