

Ross Walk News

Spring 2021

Ross Walk Housing Cooperative
members' newsletter

Welcoming new residents

Tenant charter pledge

Rent rise

Home improvements

Help to get online



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Welcome to the spring edition of Ross Walk News. I know the last year has been tough on all of us, so I want to thank you for your patience and understanding during this difficult time.

We have worked hard to ensure we continue to deliver vital services to you while keeping everyone safe, so your cooperation has been very much appreciated.

In this newsletter, you can find out what we have been doing in recent months and our plans for the coming year. I am particularly delighted to report that we have completed the refurbishment of three new Ross Walk homes, which have now all been let.

Subject to the lifting of lockdown restrictions, we plan to re-launch our calendar of social activities soon.

I very much look forward to seeing you at these events as, hopefully, we can finally celebrate getting back to some kind of normality. I would also like to wish you a Happy Ramadan and Eid.

Kishor Jadavji
*Chairman of Ross Walk
Housing Cooperative*





Office opening

The PA Housing office, at 3 Bede Island Road, is still closed and our housing surgeries are currently suspended due to lockdown restrictions.

We will let you know as soon as the office re-opens and surgeries re-start.

Keep in touch

There are various ways you can get in touch with the co-op team, and we are always happy to hear from you.

- Call PA Housing on **0116 257 6800** – you will be asked to choose from three options (the repairs, housing or income hub) so we can deal with your enquiry as quickly as possible.
- Email **coops@pahousing.co.uk**
- Use the My PA app – the easiest way to contact us, report problems, make a payment or book a repair appointment. Find out more at **www.pahousing.co.uk**

What is My PA?

My PA is the fastest, easiest and cheapest way to manage your home online. It's available 24 hours a day, at any time convenient to you, so there's no more waiting in phone queues.

Many more repairs are being fixed first time thanks to its efficient reporting process.

It's secure and really simple, just like online banking or shopping. Use it on your computer or laptop, or download the app to your phone.

You will need:

- an email address that will double as your username
- your payment reference number
- ID's on your latest account statement
- a device that connects to the internet

To get started with My PA, visit **pahousing.co.uk/mypa**

Available on the **App Store** and **Google Play**

My PA is a **PA Housing** service

Listening to your feedback



We are keen to hear what you have to say about our services, so we can constantly improve.

As part of this commitment, we recently carried out a self-assessment of our complaints process to ensure we handle your concerns in the right way.

The assessment measured our approach against the Housing Ombudsman's new

Complaint Handling Code, which sets out good practice to ensure landlords respond to complaints effectively and fairly.

As a result, we are now updating our complaints policy, monitoring cases more closely and ensuring we learn from your feedback.

We are also introducing ways to record and report tenant members' satisfaction with how we deal with your complaints.

You can see our current complaints policy and details of our self-assessment on our website at www.rosswalkcoop.org.uk

Our pledge to you

Along with other social housing landlords across the country, we have signed up to a new charter which aims to strengthen the relationship between us and our tenant members.

This charter was drawn up by the government as part of a recent Social Housing White Paper, which outlined its response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

It sets out seven commitments you should expect from your landlord:

- 1) To be safe in your home – ensuring every home is safe and secure.
- 2) To know how your landlord is performing – including on repairs, complaints, safety and how we spend our money, so you can hold us to account.
- 3) To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly – with access to a strong Ombudsman who will respond swiftly and fairly.
- 4) To be treated with respect – backed by a strong consumer regulator and improved consumer standards for tenants.
- 5) To have your voice heard by your landlord – for example through regular meetings, scrutiny panels or being on the management committee.
- 6) To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in – with your landlord keeping your home in good repair.
- 7) To be supported to take your first step to home ownership – so it is a ladder to other opportunities, should your circumstances allow.



Welcoming new residents

Families have now moved in at our three newly revamped Ross Walk homes.

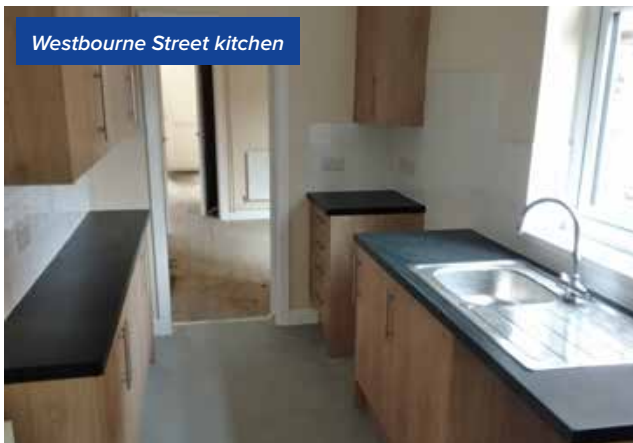
We bought the three-bedroom terraced houses in Burfield Street, Westbourne Street and Marjorie Street in late 2019 and early 2020.

Over the last year we have worked to refurbish the previously run-down properties, including new kitchens, bathrooms, boilers, windows and doors.

Now all three houses have been let to new Ross Walk tenant members.

Mrs Rimple Dirajjal, who has moved in at Westbourne Street, had been living in a one-bedroom flat with her son and daughter.

She said: *"I am really happy here. We all like the house – it feels so big, and we are so pleased that we each have our own bedroom at last."*



Dates for your diary

We have a number of events planned this year, but all are subject to the lifting of lockdown restrictions. We will keep you updated!

COMMITTEE MEETINGS 2021

Held at the Wolsey Building from 6.30pm or online, depending on restrictions.

- [Monday 14 June](#) – Development
- [Monday 2 August](#) – Strategy and Housing Services (including presentation of year-end accounts for AGM)
- [Monday 13 September](#) – Development and Finance
- [Monday 8 November](#) – Strategy and Housing Services
- [Monday 6 December](#) – Development and Finance (plus rent)

We hope to hold our AGM on [Friday 10 September](#), and will confirm the venue nearer the time.

TRIPS

We hope to organise a summer day trip this year, but this will be dependent on Covid-19 restrictions and lockdown rules.

Fire safety tips

Fire safety is a top priority for Ross Walk housing co-op so here are a few tips to help keep you and your family secure in your home.

- *Check smoke alarms regularly.*
- *Never leave cooking unattended.*
- *Don't overload plug sockets.*
- *Check for fire hazards, such as electrical items or hobs switched on, before you go to bed.*
- *Make sure candles are in a stable holder and kept away from curtains, fabrics and paper.*
- *Always stub out cigarettes properly and dispose of them carefully, and don't smoke in bed or anywhere you could fall asleep.*
- *Plan a route to escape if there is a fire, and make sure everyone in the house knows the plan.*





Rent rise

You will have recently been notified that we have had to increase our rents slightly for the coming year.

From April rents have risen by 1.5% but be assured that, as a social housing provider, we always strive to keep charges to a minimum.

Do remember that, if you pay by direct debit or standing order, you will need to change your regular payments to cover the increase.

Need a helping hand?

If you have been financially affected by the pandemic over the last year, we will do our best to help you – so please get in touch.

Our Housing Management Officer, Pankaj Rathod, can offer information and advice or he may refer you to the Tenancy Sustainment Team.

Ross Walk co-op also has a specific pot of funding to help people who are in real financial hardship. Applications are looked at on a case-by-case basis.

- To see how we may be able to help, call Pankaj on **0116 257 6800**.



Keeping you safe

We have a duty of care to our tenants, ensuring you are safe in your home.

We have also been carrying out electrical testing in Ross Walk properties over the last year.

Now all our homes, apart from one which we will be inspecting soon, have an up-to-date electrical safety certificate.

Periodic testing will continue over the coming years to ensure our homes are compliant with electrical safety standards. Inspections are conducted every five years or before a property is re-let.

We would like to thank all our tenant members for their understanding, flexibility and commitment in allowing us access to their homes for these important checks over the past 12 months.



This includes a legal obligation to:

- repair and maintain gas pipework, flues and appliances in a safe condition
- ensure an annual gas safety check on each appliance and flue
- keep a record of each safety check.

During the recent pandemic, we have had to balance the need to protect you from potentially fatal risks arising from carbon monoxide exposure or gas explosion with the need to protect people from catching Covid-19.

Our team has continued these annual gas safety checks throughout the last year. As a result, all our homes currently have an up-to-date gas safety certificate.

Gas fire replacement

If you have a gas fire in your home which is considered beyond repair, we will replace it with a new electric fire.

Pictured is an example of the type of wall-mounted electric heater we will install and continue to maintain for you.



For any reason, if you have had a gas fire removed from your home and not had an electric fire installed, then please let us know so we can arrange to fit one.



Improving your homes

The co-op team is gearing up to carry out a range of improvement work on your homes over the coming year.

As part of our ongoing rolling programme of maintenance and improvements, in 2021/2022 we will be:

- fitting new kitchens in six of our homes
- replacing 12 bathrooms
- installing new exterior doors where necessary
- putting in new boilers where needed.

We also plan to re-start inspections as part of our stock condition survey from June onwards, so we can assess what further work needs doing to Ross Walk homes.



Keeping on top of repairs

Ross Walk's repairs service is now back to normal, following last year's lockdown restrictions which limited us to emergency work only.

Our contract with PA Housing, which currently carries out day-to-day repairs for us, runs until July.

So we will soon be putting the repairs contract out for re-tender, to make sure we continue providing the best service we can.





How are we doing?

Here are our performance figures for March-December 2020.

Emergency Repairs



Target
99%
(within 24 hours)



Achieved
100%
(49 jobs)

Arrears



Target
3%



Achieved
1.73%

Routine Repairs



Target
95%
(within 21
calendar days)



Achieved
84.83%*
(145 jobs)

Rent collection



Target
100%



Achieved
100.22%

** Our performance in dealing with routine repairs was affected by last year's lockdown restrictions, but we are now back on target.*



Let's get digital

Would you like to get to grips with computers and explore the worldwide web, but don't know where to start?

We Are Digital can help. This national organisation provides free training for people with no or limited computer skills.

Its expert tutors offer tailored, personal computer training in the home as well as a range of group courses designed for people with varying levels of knowledge.

We Are Digital also works with housing associations and local authorities to provide bespoke courses for tenants.

- *Interested? Call We Are Digital on **03333 444019**, email info@we-are-digital.co.uk or check out www.we-are-digital.co.uk*

Time for change?

Tenant members looking for a move may want to consider swapping homes with another social housing tenant elsewhere in the country.

HomeSwapper is the UK's leading mutual exchange service, with over 500,000 tenants wanting to swap their council or housing association home.

You can now use this national service for free as Ross Walk housing co-op has signed up to it for a year, so we will pay your fee for registering to use it.

We will consider re-subscribing next year, depending on the level of interest from our tenant members..

- Find out more at www.homeswapper.co.uk



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