

Ross Walk News

Winter 2021

Ross Walk Housing Cooperative
members' newsletter

30-year anniversary
Search for new homes
Rule change plans
Energy-saving tips
Dates for your diary



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Welcome to the winter edition of Ross Walk News.

During recent months our team has resumed work to upgrade Ross Walk homes, started searching for more properties to help us meet local affordable housing need and celebrated a 30-year partnership with our managing agent PA Housing.

In this newsletter we report on what your co-op has been doing and what's in store for 2022, plus some money-saving energy efficiency tips and information about how to complain if you are not happy with our services.

We also want to urge you, our tenant members, to please report any repairs that need doing in your homes so we can get up to date with outstanding work.

I am delighted that we can now reveal details of our planned programme of social activities for the coming year, subject of course to lockdown restrictions.

We look forward to seeing you at these events next year but, in the meantime, I would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year – and I hope you enjoyed a good Eid and Diwali.

Kishor Jadavji
*Chairman of Ross Walk
Housing Cooperative*





Holiday office closing

The PA Housing office, at 3 Bede Island Road, will close at 2pm on Friday 24 December and be closed on:

- **Monday 27 December**
- **Tuesday 28 December**
- **Monday 3 January.**

To get in touch with the co-op team, please call our Customer Contact Centre on **0116 257 6800** or e-mail us on coops@pahousing.co.uk

Report your repairs!

If you need to report a repair to us, please get in touch – don't wait until a member of our team visits you for some other reason.

Following the upheaval of lockdown, we are now carrying out repairs as normal so we want to hear about any jobs that need doing.

You can book repairs at any time to suit you by using the MyPA app. You can also check your rent account, make a payment, report pests and much more. Just go to www.pahousing.co.uk to download the app.

Alternatively, you can ring us on **0116 257 6800** and choose from three options – the repairs, housing or income hub. Our friendly team is here to help, so just give us a call.

Dates for your diary

We will be posting out our usual picturesque landscapes wall calendar to all our tenant members, so you can mark up important dates for next year.

Our recent meetings have been virtual due to lockdown restrictions, but we hope to be able to enjoy in-person activities again in 2022.

Committee meetings 2022

Held at the Wolsey Building, from 6.30pm – subject to the latest lockdown restrictions:

- **January – no meeting**
- **Monday 7 February – Strategy and Housing Services**
- **Monday 7 March – Development and Finance**
- **April – no meeting**
- **Monday 9 May – Strategy and Housing Services**
- **Monday 6 June – Development**
- **July – no meeting**
- **Monday 8 August – Strategy and Housing Services (including presentation of year-end accounts for AGM)**
- **Monday 12 September – Development and Finance**
- **October – no meeting**
- **Monday 7 November – Strategy and Housing Services**
- **Monday 12 December – Development and Finance (plus rent)**

Other key dates:

- **Friday 4 March – Special General Meeting (rules change) – 7pm at the Sapphire Suite**
- **Wednesday 6 July – Tenant Members Conference**
- **Summer trip – date to be confirmed**
- **Friday 9 September – Annual General Meeting (including nomination of management committee) – at the Sapphire Suite**

Housing surgeries re-open

We are pleased to have re-opened our housing surgeries, so you can pop in to discuss any issues or concerns with your local Housing Management Officer.

Surgeries take place at the Wolsey Building, Abbey Mills, Abbey Park Lane, Leicester, LE5 5AF, every Wednesday between 2pm and 4.30pm.

Social distancing guidelines must be observed and you will need to make an appointment to attend by emailing coops@pahousing.co.uk or calling **0116 257 6800**.

A successful partnership

Ross Walk residents have been celebrating a landmark anniversary this year – our co-op's 30-year partnership with PA Housing.

Since 1991 the locally based housing association has been RWHC's managing agent, helping us to look after our homes and communities.

Mr Abhilash Gupta, a Ross Walk tenant member for 39 years, said: *"They say 'necessity is the mother of invention' and that is what you see in the formation of the housing co-ops and the way they are managed.*

"PA and the co-op committee work towards continuous improvement and make sure they respond proactively to the needs of the community. It's important to feel heard and have a sense that the things that are troubling you are going to be tackled. We get that here."

Mrs Indu Gupta added: *"We are incredibly happy here. There is a feeling of family with the other members of the co-op, and safety within the local community as a whole."*

Co-ops Service Manager Imtiaz Vohra said: *"Ross Walk co-op is important to PA Housing because it is an alternative way of living that is personal and tailored to the communities.*

"Also, the history of this particular co-op sees black and minority ethnic communities seeking safe spaces and finding empowerment to lead their own living arrangements, which chimes with the values of our organisation and colleagues."

Over the last three decades PA Housing has worked with Ross Walk co-op on financial management, home repairs and community safety. It is also continuing to adapt services to cater for changing needs, such as providing more support for older residents.

Although lockdown restrictions prevented us holding an event to mark the 30th anniversary this year, we hope to be able to organise a face-to-face celebration in 2022.



Taking care of business

This year's virtual annual general meeting went well, so a big thank-you to everyone who came online to join us.

During the event, we elected existing committee member Mr Lathia as the co-op's new secretary.

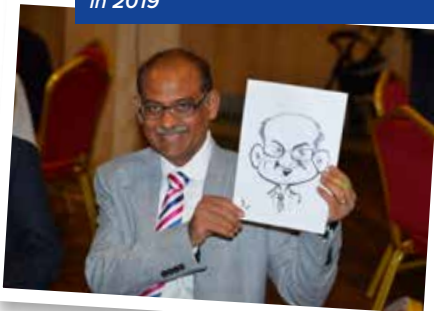
We also carried out our usual prize draw, with a number of tenant members winning high street shopping vouchers.

This year's winners were:

- 1st prize of £100 – Mr and Mrs Lathia
- 2nd prize of £75 – Mr and Mrs Jadavji
- 3rd prize of £50 – Mrs Pandya
- 4th prize of £25 – Mrs Anand



Ross Walk co-op's 40th anniversary celebrations at our last in-person AGM, in 2019



Interested in joining our management committee? We welcome new members, so please get in touch to find out more.

Moving with the times

Tenant members are urged to come along to a special meeting next spring when we plan to update the rules that govern our housing co-op.

Our current rules, drawn up in 1981, are out of date so we want to replace them with new ones drafted by the Confederation of Co-operative Housing (the national representative body for housing co-ops).

As well as being clearer and more detailed, the rule changes cover:

- **electronic communication with committee and tenant members**
- **a commitment to diversity, equality and respect**
- **committee size, election and nominations**
- **disputes.**

At the meeting we will explain the changes, then tenant members will be able to vote on whether we should adopt them.

You can find out more about the proposed new rules by emailing us at

coops@pahousing.co.uk

Please join us for our Special General Meeting on Friday 4 March 2022, at The Sapphire Suite from 7pm (subject to government guidance).



Making safety a priority

Independent auditors recently completed an assessment of how well Ross Walk housing co-op is complying with national health and safety regulations.

TIAA carried out the audit which covered the management of gas safety, asbestos and electrical checks on our homes.

We were assessed as having an adequate system of internal controls which operates effectively, but some improvements were recommended to ensure risks are managed more efficiently.

Assessors highlighted where we are performing particularly well:

- **Health and safety reports are regularly presented to our management**

committee meetings, relating to gas servicing, electrical testing and asbestos surveys.

- **Apart from some asbestos inspections, our compliance in these areas has been maintained throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.**

They recommended these improvements:

- **To review and update our policies covering such compliance processes.**
- **To ensure accurate recording of electrical testing dates.**

Marjorie Street



Boosting our stock

Ross Walk Housing Co-operative is continually seeking to increase its stock to meet the need for affordable housing in the Belgrave area of Leicester.

Over the past 18 months we bought and refurbished three terraced houses, growing our stock to 119 homes.

Next year we hope to acquire three more properties, having secured 30% funding from Leicester City Council, and are actively looking for suitable homes to buy.

Modernising homes

We are pleased to have resumed our rolling programme of work to constantly upgrade our homes.

This has included starting to fit new kitchens and bathrooms again, after lockdown restrictions temporarily suspended such non-emergency projects.

Our management committee budgeted £166,000 to carry out various upgrades in 2021/22, including installing five kitchens.

We are now also bidding for government funding to help pay for work to improve insulation in our properties, to make them warmer and more energy efficient.

New kitchen (fitted by Impart Links)



Planning ahead

Our Area Surveyor Jan Wolloff has been visiting Ross Walk homes in recent months to conduct our stock condition survey, which was also suspended during lockdown.

This will help us see what work needs doing in our properties and plan future modernisation and improvement work.



Keeping up to date

All our tenant members are being asked to fill in our **Housing Details Form**, to ensure we are providing you with the best service we can.

By completing this form you will be helping us to keep our records up to date and make sure we have the right information about you, your household and any specific needs or requirements you may have.

You can fill in the form online at

<https://www.cognitoforms.com/PAHousing1/HousingDetailsForm>



Learning lessons

When we get things wrong, we want to hear about it and make sure we put things right as soon as possible.

So, if you have a problem, get in touch and we will do our best to resolve it.

How to complain

Call us on **0116 257 6800** and talk to the relevant team – the repairs, housing or income hub. Or you can make a complaint in person, by letter, email (to info@rosswalkcoop.org.uk), via our website (www.rosswalkcoop.org.uk) or by filling in a customer feedback form (available from our office).



What happens next?

- 1) Stage 1 – our managing agent, PA Housing, will look into the complaint and respond within 10 working days.
- 2) Stage 2 – if you are not happy with our response, RWHC's management committee will investigate further and work with you to resolve the matter within 10 working days.
- 3) If you are still not satisfied with how we have dealt with the issue, you can contact the Housing Ombudsman by calling **0300 111 3000**, filling in the online complaint form at www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk, emailing info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk or writing to Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool, L33 7WQ.

For full details of our complaints policy, go to the home page of our website at www.rosswalkcoop.org.uk



How are we doing?

Here are our performance figures for April-September 2021.

Emergency Repairs



Target

99%
(within 24 hours)



Achieved

100%
(24 jobs)

Routine Repairs



Target

95%
(within 21
calendar days)



Achieved

97.95%
(146 jobs)

Arrears



Target
3%



Achieved
0.74%

Rent collection



Target
100%



Achieved
101.09%

Here to help

With energy prices on the rise and the £20-a-week Universal Credit uplift coming to an end, many people may struggle to make ends meet this winter.

If you are facing financial difficulties, please call us on **0116 257 6800** to see what we can do to help.

Our Housing Management Officer, Pankaj Rathod (pictured right), or Tenancy Sustainment Team can support you with benefits advice. You can also see what you are entitled to by using the free benefits calculator on the MyPA app.



Energy-saving tips

Here are a few top tips to help you save energy, water and money this winter.

- 1) Switch off lights in rooms that are not being used. This easy step could save up to £15 a year on your energy bills.**
- 2) Set your heating thermostat to the lowest comfortable temperature (usually between 18 and 21 degrees Celsius), to keep a constant warmth in your home. Turning down your thermostat by just one degree could save you £60 a year.**
- 3) Turn off electrical appliances (apart from any 'smart' technology you may have) at the socket, to avoid their standby mode and save around £35 a year.**
- 4) Switch to energy efficient lightbulbs, saving up to £40 a year.**



- 5) Take short showers instead of baths.**
- 6) Only use your washing machine when fully loaded.**
- 7) Turn off the tap when brushing your teeth.**
- 8) Use a washing up bowl to reduce the water needed to clean your dishes.**



Job-seeking support

We know the pandemic has created challenges for many of you, with lots of people losing their jobs or being put in a position where finding work has become more difficult.

Although this is not a situation that can necessarily be resolved quickly or easily, we want to support you where we can – whether you have recently lost your job, been out of work for some time, are looking to change careers or just seeking a different job.

There is lots of help available depending on what works best for you, including face-to-face or group training, advice to start your own business and on-demand online support.

One resident who attended a project which helped her start her own business said: *“I really don’t know how I can ever thank the trainers enough for their advice, help and kind words.*



“I haven’t even finished the course and it has already made a huge impact on me and a change in how I see myself. It has boosted my confidence so much, especially with sales and selling, that I know I can do this.

“I can’t thank PA Housing enough, either. I know you’ve been offering this course for some years now, but, for me, it came at the right time in my life.”

- If you are looking for help getting job ready, please email your details to PA Housing’s Community Investment Team at interested@pahousing.co.uk

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Email: info@rosswalkcoop.org.uk
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