

Autumn/Winter 2025

# voice

**Informative news and advice** from Watford Community Housing

**Your home,  
your voice:**

have your say on  
our proposed merger  
with Thrive Homes  
- see inside

## In this issue:

- How to get help with damp and mould
- What is a Neighbourhood Champion?
- Introducing our new GMT Chair
- And more!



**watford**  
community  
housing

# Your home, your voice

We're consulting residents about a possible merger with Thrive Homes. Read on to find out more about why this is being proposed and how you can have your say.



Watford Community Housing and Thrive Homes are exploring a potential merger that could create a new, stronger organisation – one that builds on both our strengths and ensures even better homes and services for our residents.

Our aim is simple: to combine our resources and expertise so we can invest more in your homes, deliver excellent customer service, and

build more affordable housing for local people.

**Listening to residents**

We have now launched a **resident consultation**, which will run until **1 February 2026**, giving every resident the chance to share their views and help shape what happens next.

To make sure the process is **fair, transparent and inclusive**, we are

partnering with **Tpas – The Tenant Engagement Experts**.

Tpas is an independent tenant engagement specialist with over 30 years of experience helping residents to have a meaningful voice in decisions that affect their homes and communities. Tpas will act as your independent advisers throughout the consultation process and will be there to provide up-to-date and impartial information.

Your feedback will play a vital role in shaping the Boards' final decision on whether to move forward with the merger. To ensure that this process is confidential, we will always ensure the feedback that you provide via the online survey and drop-in sessions will be kept completely anonymous unless you state otherwise.

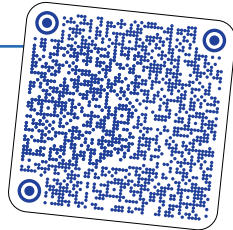
**Find out more about the proposal at [www.wcht.org.uk/merger](http://www.wcht.org.uk/merger)**

**Find out more about Tpas by visiting [www.tpas.org.uk](http://www.tpas.org.uk)**

## How to have your say

You can take part in several ways:

- **Complete our online survey** at [www.wcht.org.uk/merger](http://www.wcht.org.uk/merger)  
Scan the QR code to access the survey now. A print version is also available on request.
- **Attend one of our drop-in sessions** – see below for details.
- **Call Tpas on 0800 731 1619** for a free confidential chat. All calls go through to voicemail so you can leave a message and they will call you back within one working day.
- **Email Tpas** at [merger-consultation@tpas.org.uk](mailto:merger-consultation@tpas.org.uk)  
The inbox is monitored and they will respond within two working days.



## Drop-in events

DEC 9	<b>Tuesday 9 December – 6pm – online</b> Visit <a href="http://www.wcht.org.uk/merger">www.wcht.org.uk/merger</a> for the link
DEC 16	<b>Tuesday 16 December – 1.30pm to 4pm – in person</b> Watford Community Housing, Gateway House, 59 Clarendon Road, WD17 1LA
JAN 10	<b>Saturday 10 January 2026 – 10am to 1.30pm – in person</b> Watford Rural Parish Council Offices, Oxhey Drive, South Oxhey, WD19 7TX
JAN 15	<b>Thursday 15 January 2026 – 4.30pm to 6.30pm – in person</b> Thrive Homes Office (next to shop) 180 St Hugh's Avenue, High Wycombe, BUCKS, HP13 7TX
JAN 22	<b>Thursday 22 January 2026 – 1pm to 3pm – online</b> Visit <a href="http://www.wcht.org.uk/merger">www.wcht.org.uk/merger</a> for the link
JAN 24	<b>Saturday 24 January 2026 – 11am to 1pm – in person</b> Leavesden Green Community Hub, Clarke Way, Watford, WD25 0BW

No booking required – just drop in at a time that suits you

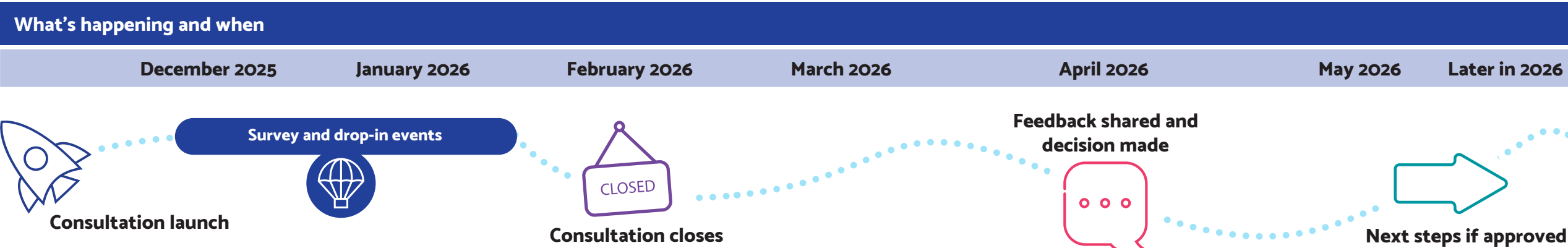
## Hi there...



**El Melbourne (They/Them)**  
**National Consultancy Manager, Tpas**

El is a community engagement and co-production specialist who manages Tpas consultancy in the South of England.

El will be on hand to provide impartial support to residents throughout the consultation process.





Concerned about damp and mould?

Following the introduction of Awaab's Law in October 2025, we remain committed to tackling any issues with damp and mould quickly and effectively.

We fully support the aims of the new law, which sets out specific timeframes for social landlords to meet, including:

- investigating potential emergency hazards within 24 hours
- investigating potential damp and mould hazards within 10 working days
- beginning remedial work within five working days if a significant hazard is identified

We take damp and mould extremely seriously and we work hard to ensure that our homes are safe and healthy places to live.

If you have any concerns about damp or mould in your home, contact us straight away.

Find out more by visiting [www.wcht.org.uk/mould](http://www.wcht.org.uk/mould) or scanning the QR code.



Financial support is here if you need it

Don't suffer in silence – our Financial Inclusion team are here to help you with any money worries.

We know that over the winter money can get a little tight – if you have any money worries, we have a team of dedicated Financial Inclusion Officers to give you support and advice.

How can we support you?

- Making sure you are getting the benefits you're entitled to, such as Pension Credit or the Winter Fuel Payment
- Advising you on budgeting and managing your bills

- Providing you with foodbank vouchers
- Helping you complete forms
- Referring you to other services, if necessary

This is a free, confidential support service for all of our customers.

We are here to help. You can call us on **0800 218 2247**, email [enquiries@wcht.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@wcht.org.uk), or scan the QR code for more information.



Carrying out vital repairs

Did you know you can check the current wait times for repairs on our website?

The winter weather can lead to more problems in the home, so please bear in mind that it might take us a little longer to complete your repair, as we have more jobs to deal with.

It can take up to five working days to complete repairs to heating and hot water systems, so please report any problems as quickly as possible so that we can get to work on them.

How long will my repair take?

You can see the current average waiting times for different types of repair by scanning the QR code. Please be assured that we will carry

out your repair as quickly as possible.

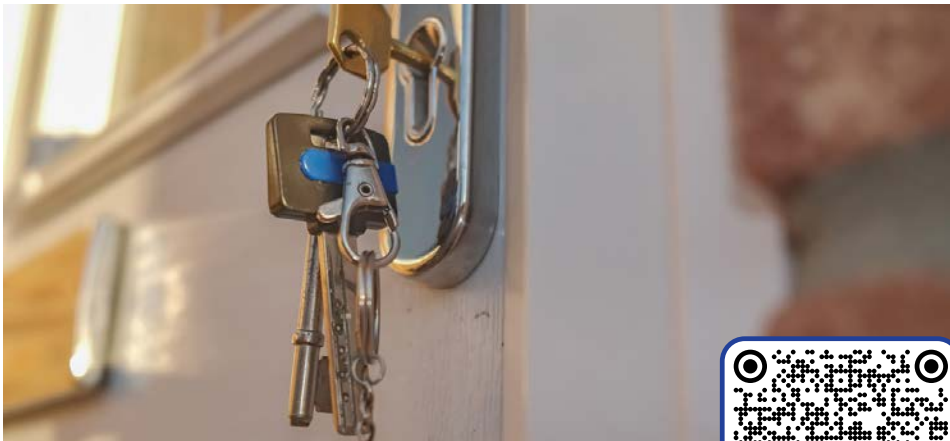
How do I report a repair?

The easiest way to request repairs is through your online account. You can also report problems by calling **0800 218 2247** or emailing us at [enquiries@wcht.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@wcht.org.uk).



Tackling tenancy fraud

We've been working to tackle tenancy fraud, so we can make sure our homes go to people who are genuinely eligible and in need of them.



Social and affordable housing is truly a lifeline for many people, and we have to ensure it is provided to those who need it most.

Throughout November we took part in a key amnesty event, meaning anyone committing tenancy fraud can hand back the keys to their home without fear of prosecution.

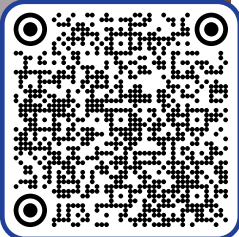
Tenancy fraud is when someone uses false information to get a home they aren't entitled to, or they don't use

their home in line with the terms of their tenancy.

If you know anyone who may be committing tenancy fraud, we encourage you to get in touch.

Visit [www.wcht.org.uk/keyamnesty](http://www.wcht.org.uk/keyamnesty) or scan the QR code for more information.

You can help us make a real difference and recover a home that could go to someone who needs it.



Finding you the perfect home

Have your children grown up and left home, and you no longer need the extra bedroom?

Are you finding stairs too difficult?

Have your heating bills gone up and you are finding it harder to heat your home?

We are here to help – let's find a home that is right for you!

Visit [www.wcht.org.uk/right-sizing](http://www.wcht.org.uk/right-sizing) or scan the QR code



Making homes warm for winter

We are continuing to upgrade homes with external wall insulation to make them warmer, cheaper to heat and more modern.

One of our homes in North Watford recently received energy efficiency works, finishing off the look of the house with a beautiful grey brick slip. The resident loved it so much that he redid the ramp outside his home to match the new aesthetic.



The resident said: "The overall look is lovely – the grey brick looks really modern and a real improvement on what it looked like before!"

"The process was really good and I 100% would recommend it to other residents – we had a few issues along the way but these were sorted very quickly by the team."

"I look forward to seeing the effect it has on my energy bills as the weather gets cooler."

Learn more about how we improve the energy efficiency of our homes at [www.wcht.org.uk/EWI](http://www.wcht.org.uk/EWI)



**WATFORD COMMUNITY HOUSING PRESENTS...**

**WHAT IS A  
NEIGHBOURHOOD CHAMPION?**

READ ON TO  
FIND OUT  
MORE ABOUT  
TONY, OUR  
NEIGHBOURHOOD  
CHAMPION, AND  
THE WORK HE  
DOES WITH US!

**TONY KEEPS AN EYE ON HIS LOCAL AREA AND HELPS TO MAKE SURE WE'RE AWARE OF ANY ISSUES...**

**FROM WINDOWS IN NEED OF REPLACING...**

**...TO GRAFFITI, FLY-TIPPING, ANY SAFETY CONCERNS, OR ANYTHING ELSE HE THINKS WE SHOULD BE AWARE OF.**

**HE DOCUMENTS EVERYTHING AND REPORTS BACK TO US...**

**THANKS TO TONY'S HARD WORK AND DEDICATION TO HELPING US IMPROVE OUR COMMUNITIES....**

**WE'VE BEGUN INSTALLING NEW WINDOWS AND ELECTRICAL CUPBOARD DOORS...**

**WE'VE MADE SURE THE AREA IS CLEAR OF ANY FLY-TIPPING...**

**AND HAVE MORE WORKS PLANNED TO KEEP OUR COMMUNITIES CLEAN, SAFE AND HAPPY PLACES TO LIVE**

**THANK YOU, TONY!**

**WANT TO GET INVOLVED...?**

IF YOU'D LIKE TO BECOME A NEIGHBOURHOOD CHAMPION AND HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE LIKE TONY, GET IN TOUCH WITH OUR COMMUNITIES TEAM BY EMAILING [COMMUNITY@WCHT.ORG.UK](mailto:COMMUNITY@WCHT.ORG.UK) OR CALLING 0800 218 2247

**Fresh lines for Longcroft**

During a recent visit to Longcroft, a member of our team noticed that many of the washing lines across the scheme were old, damaged or not in use.

Working with building materials supplier Travis Perkins, we secured grant funding from their Social Pot for community enhancements – allowing us to install 20 new washing lines.

Although it may seem like just a small improvement, this will help around 70 residents reduce the risk of damp and mould in their homes by providing them a designated area to dry clothes outside.

Drying clothes inside the house with no ventilation is one of the leading causes of damp and mould, so it is important that we reduce the risk of condensation in our properties as much as we can.

Tony Lankester, who is a member of the Gateway Membership Team and lives in Longcroft, said:

“The two Watford Community Housing operatives worked methodically and tidily throughout the week to take down the old washing lines and install the new ones on the estate.

“They have completed a first-class job, and I do believe in identifying praise where it is due.

“A big thanks to you for your initiative in replacing our tired, old washing lines.”





# Rewarding great gardeners

This summer, we ran a gardening competition as part of our ‘Love your neighbourhood’ campaign - well done to all of our winners!



Susan Wilson, with her husband Clive, and representatives from Accuro

Earlier this year, we held a gardening competition to reward local people who are helping to make our neighbourhoods brighter and more attractive.

There were prizes in three categories:

- Best-kept front garden
- Best-kept communal garden
- Best floral display e.g. pots, baskets or balconies

Our green-fingered winners were **Peter Clark, Sandra Burke, George Piper and Susan Wilson**, who each received a certificate and shopping vouchers,

generously donated by our grounds maintenance contractor, Accuro. Well done to our winners and thank you to everyone who got involved!

**Want to get involved next time?**

Keep an eye out for our next gardening competition for your chance to showcase your garden, connect with neighbours, and win exciting prizes.

You can scan this QR code to find out more about the ‘Love your neighbourhood’ campaign:



Sandra Burke, who won the communal garden award for Hollytree House



Peter Clark

## Breathing new life into local parks

The ‘Love your neighbourhood’ campaign is all about helping people feel proud of where they live, so we’ve been working with residents to deliver improvements.

Resident feedback told us that some of our communal parks needed a bit of a refresh, so staff volunteered their time to bring new life to Gadswell Park on the Meriden and Croxley View playground.

We have already had residents telling us how pleased they are with how the parks look and that they love the vibrant colours.

Thank you to Travis Perkins for providing us with all the painting supplies we needed.



# Improving our phone system

We have launched a new phone system which will help make sure you get through to the right person the first time you call.

At the beginning of November, we launched our new phone system, improving the customer experience when using our call centre.

**How does this benefit me?**

- More menu options available – more likely to resolve your issue on the first call
- More people will be available to take the calls, significantly reducing the wait time in the call queue
- You will still be able to request a callback so you don’t have to stay in the queue and can get on with your day

The number to contact us is still the same but the voice and the menu have changed, so please listen carefully to all the options!



**You said, we did!**  
Making improvements based on your feedback

**0800 218 2247**



We work hard to champion diversity, inclusivity and wellbeing within our communities. Here are just a few of our projects from the last few months.



We were a proud sponsor of Herts Pride - celebrating the LGBT+ community in Hertfordshire.



We hosted a bake sale and raised £170 for Crohn’s and Colitis UK.

We celebrated the diversity at Watford Community Housing by trying food from around the world – and donating food to Watford Foodbank.



In honour of Black History Month we invited prominent leaders in the community to speak to our staff about this year’s theme - ‘Standing firm in power and pride’.



## Our newest homes in Watford Riverwell

Block 10 of the Watford Riverwell scheme has been completed – and we were there to celebrate and take a look around!

The homes, built in partnership with Kier Property and Watford Borough Council, were handed over to us in September 2025.

The block includes our 12 high-quality, three-bedroom homes for social rent, and marks the completion of the Avenues Phase 1 – just one of a series of residential phases in this project delivering much-needed social housing near Watford General Hospital.

Once complete, the 70-acre development will include almost 1,000 new homes, commercial space, a hotel, retail units and leisure facilities – regenerating West Watford into a vibrant, sustainable neighbourhood.

We look forward to welcoming our new residents.



## A helping hand

We supported one of our residents who was struggling to maintain her home due to mobility issues.

We want all our residents to live in a comfortable home that they can take pride in, so when we found out that one of our residents was struggling to maintain their home, we offered to help.

A group of volunteers spent the afternoon cleaning and clearing the home and the resident was very grateful. She said:

“I find it hard asking for and accepting help, so it means a lot that someone would do this for me.”

If you are struggling to maintain your home, we are here to help. Contact your housing officer and we can work with you to make your house feel like a home again.



## Kickstart your career in housing!

We are pleased to be offering our residents the chance to complete a housing qualification – for free!

- Level 2 Certificate in Housing Practice – fully funded
- Gives a basic understanding of housing and the skills and knowledge necessary to participate in housing-related activities
- An online course – learn at your own pace, and at a time that is convenient for you
- Volunteer with us for a minimum of 12 hours and use your skills in a real housing environment.



Interested?

Visit [www.wcht.org.uk/CIH-Course](http://www.wcht.org.uk/CIH-Course) for more information.

## your voice

As a community gateway housing association, we put people at the heart of our work.

To find out more about membership and getting involved, visit: [www.wcht.org.uk/your-gateway](http://www.wcht.org.uk/your-gateway)

**The latest news from the Gateway Membership Team – which represents you!**

## Our new GMT Chair... Hind El Khoumssi!

At our Annual General Meeting in September, Hind El Khoumssi formally took over the role of Chair of the Gateway Membership Team from Chris Blackett, who served as Chair for a decade.

As we thank Chris for all her hard work, it's also time we got to know our new Chair!

**When did you first join the GMT and what made you want to join?**

“In 2019 I was very lucky to be given the opportunity to do a Level 2 Certificate in Housing Practice, fully funded by Watford Community Housing. The qualifications I studied for in Morocco are not recognised here – but this course gave me the qualifications I needed to start my dream career.

“It helped me to build my knowledge on the housing sector and its challenges, so that once I had joined the GMT in 2023, I realised I could be a voice for the wider social housing community.”

**Why do you think becoming a member of Watford Community Housing is so important, and why should others do it?**

“Having been a Watford Community Housing tenant since 2016, I understand the importance of engaging with others to get things done.

“As it is a Community Gateway organisation, residents are given a rare opportunity to speak directly to staff and share their experiences to make positive

change, for example during scrutiny sessions. I would recommend everyone to engage or participate in one way or another.”

**As Chair, what would you like the GMT to influence and improve next?**

“My professional background is teaching, so I understand vulnerabilities when it comes to children – for example, the impact of a stable home on education.

“I am passionate about fairness, and so want to make sure we are investing in the community and older homes as well as building new homes for those that need them. Chris was a great mentor – I look forward to following in her footsteps and inspiring positive change for residents.”



## Get involved and help give residents a voice!

Are you passionate about your community?

Do you want to help us make sure that the most vulnerable people in your community get the support they need?

Do you want to influence the future of your housing services?

Email [community@wcht.org.uk](mailto:community@wcht.org.uk) and we can have an informal chat about how you can get involved!





## Become a member and get hundreds of discounts!

As a member of Watford Community Housing you can attend our AGM, influence our policies and ensure that residents' voices are heard.

Not only that, but you can get hundreds of exclusive daily discounts from your favourite retailers and charity shops, and save money on the essentials that you use every day!

All you need to do is visit our website at [www.wcht.org.uk/membership](http://www.wcht.org.uk/membership) to become a member, and once you've been approved you can download the free Housing Perks app, put in your tenancy number and start saving!



## Our Christmas opening hours

Over the holiday period we'll be operating slightly different hours to normal. We'll be open as follows:

Wednesday 24 December – 8.30am to 1pm

Thursday 25 December – CLOSED

Friday 26 December – CLOSED

Monday 29 December – 8.30am to 5.30pm

Tuesday 30 December – 8.30am to 5.30pm

Wednesday 31 December – 8.30am to 4pm

Thursday 1 January 2026 – CLOSED

Friday 2 January 2026 – CLOSED



### Dates for your diary

**Lighthouse Café Christmas carol service** – 11 December – 6:30pm to 8pm at Leavesden Green Community Hub – free tickets are available now

**Jimmy's Jackets Christmas lunch** – 17 December – 11am to 2pm – must be booked, limited spaces available

**Shared ownership session: our services** – 10 January 2026 from 6.30pm to 8pm online via Zoom

**Leaseholder session: our services** – 12 January from 6.30pm to 8pm online via Zoom

**Tenant Question Time: lift maintenance** – 14 January from 6.30pm to 8.30pm at Gateway House and online via Zoom

**Scrutiny session with GMT: lift maintenance** – 28 January from 10am to 2.30pm at Gateway House and online via Zoom

**Would you like to take part in any of the sessions?**

Email the Communities team at [community@wcht.org.uk](mailto:community@wcht.org.uk) to find out how you can get involved.

