

Spring 2025

voice

Informative news and advice from Watford Community Housing

- It's gardening competition time!
- Take a virtual tour of our hubs
- Helping residents manage their finances
- Listening to your feedback
- And more!



watford
community
housing

Ready, steady... cook!

Each year we carry out improvement works to our properties to make sure they are in good shape – here is one of our more recent projects.

Mrs Abbas's kitchen was due an upgrade and was causing her to feel anxious when cooking and having people over.

Our contractor, NJL, completed the works – which included new flooring, ceilings, lighting, plastering, tiling and installing new appliances – in about two weeks, just in time for the Christmas holidays.

Now Mrs Abbas is excited to get back in the kitchen and cook for her family and friends!

Here is what Mrs Abbas had to say: "From start to finish, the team did an excellent job revamping my old kitchen. They were polite and tidy, and the attention to detail and speed of installation was amazing!

"I'm over the moon with my new kitchen – it's turned out far better than we imagined."



Scan the QR code to see the 'before and after' shots!

Kooka transforms our Harebreaks Community Hub

Our hub provides a space for a variety of different events including exercise classes, parties and art classes, so it has experienced its fair share of wear and tear over the years!

The hub is currently home to Zumba Gold, Watford Deaf Club, and The Dan Tien, and hosts regular fitness classes, events and parties. It's been well used over the years and we thought it was time to give it a revamp.

Back in December 2024, Kooka, our insulation contractors, very kindly repaired any damage, prepped the

walls, and then gave them a new lick of paint – fully transforming a space that is much-loved by our communities.

Read the full story, and see the 'before and after' shots, by scanning the QR code:



Special celebrations with Jimmy's Jackets!

Our weekly lunch club at Leavesden Green Community Hub continues to be a safe haven for people to mingle and form new friendships.

What started out as a project with just six attendees that was only intended to last six weeks, has grown into a fantastic group with over 35 attendees each week and over a year's worth of sessions under its belt.

Jimmy's Jackets has hosted a variety of themed sessions - including Halloween, Christmas, Valentine's Day and most recently Pancake Day - with more planned for the future, such as an Easter event and an International Friendship Day event!



Are you looking to fund an event?

Are you part of a local club or group that supports the community or environment?

Are you in need of a little cash boost for an upcoming event?

We can support you with the funding to make it happen!

By applying for our Community Chest Fund, you can receive up to £500.

Recently, our Community Chest Fund has supported:

- A local school with funding towards their breakfast club
- A theatre club with funding towards their Christmas production
- A running club who needed new signage and route markings
- A children's charity for items to go in their sensory room



Take a virtual tour of our community hubs!

Are you interested in booking one of our halls for your next party, exercise class or meeting? Why not see what features the hub has to offer first?

Take a look at our hubs from the comfort of your own home by scanning the QR code.

To apply, simply visit our website and fill in our new, easy-to-use form - or scan this QR code:





'Love your neighbourhood' is our new campaign focused on working with our residents to create cleaner, greener neighbourhoods that we can all be proud of!

It's competition time!

As the date of our gardening competition grows nearer, here is everything you need to know in order to get involved. No matter whether your garden is big or small – all of our residents can take part!



On **17 June 2025** we will be holding a gardening competition, which will be broken down into three categories.

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

You can submit more than one entry, and we're very excited to announce that we will be joined by green flag judge Barry Joyce!

The top three entries in each category will win a shopping voucher, which have been kindly donated by our contractors, Accuro.

First place – £50

Second place – £30

Third place – £20



How do I get involved?

To take part in our competition, you can apply as an individual or as part of a group. If you are part of a group, please nominate one individual to contact us on behalf of the group.

Simply email your name, address and which category you want to apply for to jane.pursesey@wcht.org.uk by **Monday 12 May**.

We will get back to you letting you know whether our judging panel will visit you in the morning or afternoon on **Tuesday 17 June**. Good luck!



Foxhill playground gets an upgrade!

We have upgraded our play space in Foxhill thanks to a generous grant of £12,500 from Watford Borough Council's Neighbourhood Grant programme!

We asked residents what they thought the playground should include to make sure we were meeting the preferences of the local community.

Foxhill now includes more modern and inclusive equipment, and has had some landscaping enhancements. The improvements have helped to create a

welcoming environment where families can gather, children can play safely, and neighbours can socialise!

Read more by scanning the QR code here:



The mini Big Door Knock

On 13 February we hosted a mini version of our annual Big Door Knock for our new residents who transferred over from Hendon Christian Housing Association last year.

By going door-to-door to talk to our residents, we found that 86% of residents we engaged with were satisfied with our services, and we gathered important information on resident contact preferences and disabilities, allowing us to tailor our communications to suit our residents' needs.

This year, our annual Big Door Knock will be on **Thursday 26 June** – save the date and keep an eye out for more information nearer the time!

Want to give your area a spring clean?

We are running a few litter-picking and skip days to help clean up our estates and give residents the chance to get rid of any unwanted items.

3 April – litter-picking

- 10am - 12pm – Meriden
- 1pm - 2pm – Woodside
- 2pm - 3pm – Boundary Way

22 May – skip day

- 10am - 12pm – Foxhill, Brush Rise and Yeatman Court

8 July – coffee and conversations

- 11am at Leavesden Green Community Hub

This is a chance for our Neighbourhood Champions to discuss cleaning and grounds maintenance with our staff and contractors.

Find out how to become a Neighbourhood Champion at wcht.org.uk/NeighbourhoodChampions

24 July – skip day

- 10am - 12pm – Coates Dell

Scan the QR code for more information, including meeting points.



Could you spot a scammer?

We were recently made aware of scammers operating in the Watford area who pose as BT/EE salespeople and go door-to-door.

Here are some tips on how to protect yourself against doorstep scams.

Signs of a doorstep scam can include:

- Asking for money before providing any goods
- Pressuring you into making a quick decision
- A lack of ID or proof of where they work

If you are in any doubt, you should stop the interaction and close the door.

If they claim to represent Watford Community Housing, please check their official ID, which we provide to all operatives and contractors.

Scan the QR code for more information on staying safe from scams or to report any incidents.



Donating food boxes to people in need

Our staff recently spent the day making up food parcels packed full of ingredients to make delicious and healthy meals for local families.



We put together 219 food parcels which were donated to Laurance Haines School on the Holywell, to be handed out to their pupils.

The school currently has a number of students whose families are experiencing the worst of the cost-of-living crisis, and being able to afford a meal is not always possible.

Nicola Furey, the school's Pastoral Support Team Leader, said: "Thank you to all the staff on behalf of the Laurance Haines families for your generous donations of the food recipe boxes. We delivered out all 219 boxes across our Trust. We truly value your support and the boxes have made a real difference to local people."

Improving the energy efficiency of our homes

We have now made energy efficiency improvements to over 600 homes through our improvement programme, keeping residents' homes warmer in the winter, and saving them money on their heating costs.

Read more about the works here:



Our newest homes

The Watford Riverwell scheme recently reached an important milestone – and we were there to celebrate.



The Watford Riverwell regeneration project achieved a significant milestone on Valentine's Day!

Block 10, the tallest building within the first phase of the scheme, 'topped out' – which means construction has reached its highest point.

Representatives from Kier Group, Watford Community Housing and Watford Borough Council, including Elected Mayor Peter Taylor, gathered to lay a brick at the top of the building.

Block 10, which consists of our 12 three-bedroom homes for social rent, sits within Watford Borough Council's wider Riverwell scheme of more than 1,000 sustainable, high-quality homes.

Derelict garages become new affordable homes for the people of Hertsmere.



The former site of two derelict garage blocks in Borehamwood is now home to 11 beautiful, new-build apartments.

Following completion by Parrott Construction in January 2025, Hertsmere Developments – the wholly-owned subsidiary of Hertsmere Borough Council – handed the development over to Hertsmere

Living, which is our joint venture with Hertsmere Borough Council.

On 13 February, we met with representatives from Hertsmere Developments and Hertsmere Borough Council, including local councillors, to tour the new homes. We look forward to seeing the residents of Hertsmere move in and enjoy their new homes!



How long will my repair take?

If you request a repair, we'll carry it out as quickly as we can.

How long it takes will depend on the type of repair you have requested and how much demand there is for that type of job at the moment, as your repair will need to be allocated to an operative with the right skills.

Visit wcht.org.uk/repairs to see the current average waiting times for the different types of repairs we offer.



Helping you with your finances

We know that money worries can be really stressful, so we'll do everything we can to support you.

We offer a free, confidential money support and information service to all of our customers. Whether you're looking for practical support, advice on budgeting or more information about how to manage your bills, our Financial Inclusion Officers are there for you.

Get in touch by calling us on **0800 218 2247** and start feeling better about your finances!

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

Making improvements that matter to you



Tenants are at the heart of all we do. To make sure we are always listening and making improvements that matter to you, the Gateway Membership Team (GMT) hold regular sessions to get your feedback.

The theme of our first Tenant Question Time and Scrutiny sessions of the year was 'improving our communication with customers' - something that we know we don't always get right.

By reviewing examples of resident feedback and times when things haven't run smoothly for customers, we have ensured that our new Service Standards align with what residents expect. The new Service Standards will be launched alongside our 2025-2030 Business Plan in April.

We also held dedicated sessions for our leaseholders and shared owners. The main topics brought up at these sessions were contractor management for our estate services, and communal

block investment and repairs.

Keep an eye on our website - we upload action trackers so you can see what improvements will be made.

In January, the GMT also held additional sessions with our Customer Engagement Committee.

The sessions included discussions around rent-setting and our Welfare Fund, to review the impact the funding has had, supporting residents who are in need.

Do you fancy getting involved in these important conversations?

You could join the GMT and have your say.

Join our fantastic group of residents, or find out more, here: wcht.org.uk/join-the-gmt



Dates for your diary

Shared owner session: Our services - 3 June 2025 from 6.30pm to 8pm online via Zoom

Leaseholder session: Our services - 5 June 2025 from 6.30pm to 8pm online via Zoom

The Big Door Knock 2025 - 26 June 2025

Coffee and conversations (see page 4) - 8 July - 11am at Leavesden Green Community Hub

Tenant Question Time - 16 July 2025 from 6.30pm to 8.30pm at Gateway House and online via Zoom

Scrutiny session with GMT - 23 July 2025 from 10am to 2.30pm at Gateway House and online via Zoom

Gardening competition (see page 3) - judging takes place on 17 June 2025

Clean-up days (see page 4) - various dates, times and locations

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

Email the Community team at community@wcht.org.uk to find out how you can get involved.

