



Winter 2024 In this issue

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Community hubs – here to help

Making access to services easier, quicker, more accessible, and improving support for residents have always been top priorities for the council. We have now developed a network of community hubs across the city, to complement our online service offer and the Call Centre on (01482) 300 300, which means that services are available on your doorstep.

These hubs are local, welcoming, and inclusive, offering an informal and comfortable place where people can talk to council advisors about the services they receive and help which may be available, including the cost-of-living. The advisors on hand are representatives from our Customer Services team who can support you with access to a wide range of council services including, Neighbourhoods and Housing, Adult Social Care, and Children and Young People's Services. You don't have to make

appointments – you can just drop in.

Changing our approach, putting advice services into the community means that you are not restricted to travelling to the three large Customer Service Centres to see us, saving you time, money and effort. There are 12 hubs in the city, six in east, four in central, and two in west Hull, and more hubs are in the pipeline. The venues vary from Hull Minster and community centres to Pearson Park Mosque and church halls. The individual hubs have varying opening times and are not open all day and every day. To find out all the locations and opening times, go to the council's website



hull.gov.uk and search "community hubs" or look out for local publicity.



Chat with the Chair

I hope you all had a good Christmas and are ready to face whatever 2025 brings us.

First, I must say that I'm very excited about the new community hubs (see front page) which are being set up across the city to complement the council's online service and the call centre on (01482) 300 300. It means that council services will be much closer to residents. Help and support can be more immediate and tailored to people's individual needs.

myHousing app

I was delighted to learn that almost two thirds of our 23,000 tenants have signed up for the myHousing app, with nearly everyone looking for a council home choosing to place their bids via the app.

Lots of tenants tell us how pleased they are with the app. That they can access their rent account, report, and track a

repair from anywhere at any time is a huge benefit – much more convenient and saves time and effort. In fact, nothing used to frustrate me more than having to dial the call centre during working hours and then hang on for what seemed an eternity. Now it's so easy, and I have the peace of mind that the technology gets me to the right department, instantly and first time.

However, it seems that some people are having problems connecting the app to their accounts, and those who have are finding it difficult to use it to make repairs requests. How can we help you?

Have you seen the YouTube video on using the myHousing app? It gives you a step-by-step guide to registering and using it. Log on to YouTube and search Hull City Council myHousing app.

Are your online skills a bit rusty? Whether you are using a laptop or desktop computer, a tablet or smart phone – help is available. There are free refresher courses from Hull Training.

If there is something else that is causing you a problem accessing the app and its functions, please email tenant.resident@hullcc.co.uk. Your enquiry will be answered as soon as possible.

I understand too that with more people using the app call waiting times to (01482) 300 300 have reduced substantially. This means that the council can respond much quicker to people with an emergency call.

Until the next time.

Maureen.

Right to Buy

You may have heard in the Government's Budget in November that the rules on the Right to Buy your council home have changed.

You can still apply to buy it, but the discounts available have been reduced. The principle of how discount is calculated hasn't changed – it depends on how long you have been a tenant in your council home. However, reduced discount means that you will have to pay more towards the purchase price.

If you are interested in buying your home, go to the Government's website Gov.uk and search Your right to buy your home: a guide.

Damp and mould

It's the season when damp and mould in our homes can be the scourge of modern living.

They thrive in winter, and when they take hold can cause a real threat to our health and wellbeing as well as damaging the fabric of our homes. Regardless of house type and tenure, all homes can be at risk because of a structural fault or just breathing can cause condensation which encourages mould spores.

If you are concerned about your home, we need to

know. Either report it using the myHousing app or call us on (01482) 300 300 and we'll get someone out to look at it as soon as possible.

We also offer advice on how you can prevent and deal with damp and mould. Go to YouTube and search Hull City Council and look for the video on damp and mould.

Or go to the council's website hull.gov.uk and search "damp and mould".

Ask Mark

This time, the question is from Paul who asks, “The Government has pledged to “Get Britain Building Again and allocated a £500 million top up fund to the Affordable Homes Programme. What does this mean for Hull?”

The £500 million top up fund contributes to building 5,000 social housing homes nationwide by 2026. This has been welcomed by landlords like Hull City Council because it will support communities, especially where there is significant demand for quality, sustainable homes.

The announcement comes at an opportune time because we have recently published our Housing Strategy 2023 – 2030 and are preparing a “growth strategy” to go alongside it which focusses on delivering new housing across the city. Although funding will still be tight, the additional investment means that there will be more opportunities to bid for money to build more homes to rent.



For rental homes from the council, our current projections are to build just under 800 homes from now until 2030. In the pipeline are 99 homes at Dane Park and 34 at nearby Isledene; both are brownfield sites, and the newbuilds and landscaping will improve the look of the area. Dane Park will complete in early 2026 and Isledene in autumn 2025. Work is already underway at Hopewell and Hollywell Roads where 18 homes are under construction.

Over the last few years, the council has maintained an ambitious newbuild programme across the city providing much needed social and market housing. Working with the council’s long term development partnership, KSHP, which comprises Keepmoat Homes, Strata, Home Group, and Priority Places, areas of the city have been transformed from rundown estates and derelict land to attractive new

neighbourhoods where people want to live and work. We’ve also worked with smaller housebuilders involving a number of innovative projects such as building bungalows on the site of redundant garages.

The council’s new homes building programme delivers more than new homes. There is a commitment by our housebuilder partners to providing training and jobs for local people which is making a significant contribution to the city’s Community Plan and the sustainability of our neighbourhoods.

In the quest to improve our offer to current tenants and people looking for homes to rent from us, our strategy goes beyond the new build programme. Improving existing homes and ensuring they meet the Decent Homes Standard is a top priority along with identifying new opportunities which can increase our rental stock. For example, where we have the funds to do so, we buy properties that then transfer to become council homes. We will also be re-establishing our Empty Homes Programme, whereby we bring long term unoccupied properties back into use. Empty homes can blight an area and encourage anti-social behaviour, so restoring them for people to rent meets both the housing supply challenge and improving the look and feel of the street scene.

You said ...

...Having installed bollards at the top of a ten foot to prevent it being blocked by poor parking, you said you were concerned about emergency vehicles not having access.

We did

...We have removed the bollards and are working with residents to find a mutually acceptable solution.

Performance Focus: vote of confidence from Regulator

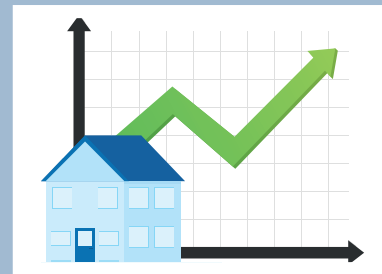
One area where we have performance challenges is meeting the Decent Homes Standard for all our homes. The Regulator of Social Housing expects all social landlords like us to meet this standard for 100% of our homes. However, as we have said in recent editions of Hull Housing News, our figure for non-decency is 14.4%. This is one of the reasons we “self-referred” to the Regulator, back in June.

Since our referral, we’ve had a number of positive meetings and conversations with the Regulator about the improvement plans already in place, which are specifically designed to improve our

performance and reach full compliance across the Consumer Standards for all our services and homes as quickly as possible.

The Regulator has informed us, we have demonstrated enough assurance in terms of our capability, capacity and grip on our services meaning they have decided not to make a regulatory requirement at this time. This is a “vote of confidence,” in the plans we have in place but there’s a great deal of work ahead, ensuring we deliver these plans in full.

We have kept members of the Tenants Forum up to date with developments over recent months and were delighted that the Forum



invited the Regulator to attend its November meeting at the Guildhall.

“Time flies,” as they say, and soon it will be time to provide the Regulator with another set of 22 annual “Tenant Satisfaction Measures”. Half of these measures come from the “STAR” survey shared with five percent of our tenants (selected randomly), which was sent in September.

These measures will help the Regulator form a view on how well we deliver our services.

A big thank-you to those of you who received the survey and took time to complete it for us. We will have the results to share with you ready for the spring issue of Hull Housing News.

Little Amal's visit to Hull

After the hostility shown to refugees during the civil unrest in the city during summer, it was terrific to see the warm welcome from the crowds which turned out to greet Little Amal when she came to Pearson Park.

Little Amal herself is a giant puppet representing a ten-year-old Syrian girl who’s forced to flee her home. Her visit was part of her walk across the world to remind people about the plight and resilience of refugees; and especially child refugees, who often must make the perilous journey alone. She toured the park pausing to hug people on the way, visit stalls hosted by community organisations and join in many of the activities and displays.

Cultural diversity is an important part of Hull’s heritage. As a maritime city it has welcomed refugees and migrants for hundreds of years, from Saxons and Vikings, Eastern Europeans fleeing the pogroms, people from Sierra Leone

and more recently Iraq and Afghanistan, to name but a few races who’ve made Hull their home. There’s no wonder Hull is proud to be a designated City of Sanctuary.

Ria Toutountzi, Head of Service for Access and Wellbeing says, “Our multicultural society plays an import role in enriching and sustaining the city. It helps define who we are, encourages inclusion, drives creativity and economic growth, and contributes to an environment where people can express themselves freely without fear of prejudice.”

To watch the film of Little Amal’s visit, go on YouTube, search Hull City Council, Little Amal.



Top tips to save money



Money is still tight, and the cost-of-living crisis continues to bite. To try and ease the situation, we've compiled a few tips that may help your money go further.

- if you are a pensioner or have a disability, you are entitled to a bus pass. These give you free journeys on busses throughout Hull every day, including bank holidays, between 9.30am and 11pm. You need to apply at your local HCC library to get a free bus pass. Go to the council's website hull.co.uk and search senior bus pass or disability bus pass
- there are savings to be made with discounted bus tickets with Hull Card and Kat Card (under 19s). You can buy one for a day or a week and travel free, on both Stagecoach East Midlands and East Yorkshire Buses services, around the city and some surrounding areas. For more information, go to travelhull.co.uk and search KAT Card or Hull Card
- have you checked whether you are eligible for Pension Credit? You could be eligible if your weekly income is below £218.15. Pension Credit doesn't just bring extra money, it also entitles you to other benefits such as help with rent and Council Tax, NHS costs including glasses and transport costs to hospital, and free TV licences for over 75s
- thanks to money from the council's Household Fund, there are various warm places across our city. There you can enjoy a comfortable, warm spot with a welcoming cuppa and friendly company. Get advice and support about warm spaces at hull.gov.uk and search 'cost-of-living' or call (01482) 300 303
- when you renew your house or car insurance, broadband or phone contract, water, electricity, or gas tariff – don't just accept an automatic renewal. Shop around. Also, challenge your existing providers about what better deal they can offer
- if you are of pension age some shops offer discounts, so long as you have proof of your age. For example, shop at Iceland on a Tuesday to get 10 per cent off. Check out websites which list pensioner discounts
- supermarket cafes and shops such as Dunelm's Pausa cafes offer special meal deals for children. At ASDA children can eat for £1 without having to buy an adult meal. In Morrisons kids can eat free with any adult meal. (Information correct at time of going to press.). For the latest information go online and search children's food schemes.
- wonky vegetables! Odd-shaped fruit and veg or produce that's just past its best before dates are often on sale in supermarkets at substantially reduced prices. Some shops offer boxes with a mixed variety.
- minimise your food waste. Think about bulk preparation and freezing some meals. It saves waste and time.

You said ...

... You told us there was a house in east Hull which was a centre for drug dealing and other serious criminal activity.

We did

...Working with Humberside Police, we supported residents during the investigation and afterwards with target hardening work to their properties. We were granted a closure order, and the perpetrators placed on remand until legal proceeding progressed.

Rogue callers



Sadly, there are people out there who look to take advantage of others by fraud and theft. Particularly active in the current climate are bogus callers who knock on your door and scammers who contact you by phone and the internet. We don't want you to fall prey to them, so we have put together some guidance on what to do if you are suspicious about who's contacting you and why.

Cold calling

A cold caller is an uninvited visitor to your home whose intention is to sell goods or services. Cold calling isn't illegal and doesn't require a licence. However, the law states that a trader who ignores a resident's request to leave and not return commits a criminal offence under Trading Standards regulations. If the trader won't go away, tell them that you will call Trading Standards. If you feel uncomfortable, you should

contact the Police on 101 or if it is an emergency dial 999.

Bogus callers

Some criminals impersonate others to carry out crimes. These bogus callers can be quite convincing and will try and talk their way into your home. If you believe you have had a bogus caller, call the police non-emergency number 101 to report the incident.

There are a number of steps you can take to prevent being duped by a bogus caller.

- check to see who is at your door by looking through your front window or by using a door viewer if you have one.
- only open the door when you have put the chain or door bar restrictor on. Remember that emergency situations can arise, so do not leave the chain or door bar restrictor on all the time as this may cause a delay if access were needed in an emergency. Only put these on before answering the door.
- always make sure the back door is locked before opening the front door.

Bogus callers often work in pairs – one at the front door, the other at the back.

- always make sure that visitors are who they say they are. All Hull City Council, KWL, and our other council contractors' staff wear identification badges. So, do police officers and representatives from telecoms, gas, electricity, and water companies. Always ask to see this before you let them in and close the door while you check their badge or card. Genuine callers will be happy to wait while you do so.
- if you are in any doubt, suggest that the caller returns later. You can then check their story by phoning the organisation or company they claim to represent. Check any phone number they give you in your own phone directory. Do not rely on the number on their card.
- let the Police and your neighbours know if you have had a suspicious caller at your door.

Important

Neither Hull City Council, KWL nor any other council contractor will not turn up at your door regarding a repair or an inspection without having made an appointment in advance. All work people have ID badges and will show them on arrival. If you have any doubts as to whether they are genuine, telephone the council's call centre on (01482) 300 300 to check that it is a real appointment.

Consider a smart doorbell

Smart doorbells incorporate a camera which lets you speak to a caller without opening the door. You will need a smart phone to do this. You can also connect your smart doorbell to a family member's or friend's smart device so that they know when you have a caller, which may be useful if you are home alone.

Lifeline

If you use our Lifeline emergency call service, you can subscribe to the bogus caller button. If you are unhappy about an unexpected caller accessing your door

entry phone, there's a discreet button you can press which connects silently to the call centre. A member of staff can listen discreetly to the conversation and intervene if necessary. For information about Kingston Care Lifeline, go to hull.gov.uk and search Lifelines or email sheltered.housing@hullcc.gov.uk

Don't get scammed

Be alert for suspicious phone calls claiming to be from your bank or credit card company. Sometimes they will be an automated call claiming there has been a suspicious transaction on your account which needs to be verified. When this happens, you are usually prompted to press a number on your keypad to speak to an agent. DON'T – you will most likely be connected to a fraudster. Also be wary of calls, texts, and emails supposedly from Hull City Council, the police, your bank, or credit card company, or from utilities such as water, gas, telecoms, and electricity providers. Often fraudsters hide behind such companies to ask for personal financial details, including

your four-digit pin number, or for you to transfer money. If they give you a telephone number to call, don't phone it because this will most likely be a fake number. If you think something is suspicious or feel vulnerable, don't respond. Get in touch with your usual supplier or organisation on their genuine number to check whether they have been trying to get in touch. If not, report the fraudulent approach.

Remember

- a genuine bank will never call you unexpectedly to ask for your full password, full password, to transfer money, or move money to another account.
- a common tactic is that the caller doesn't give you time to think and tries to stop you speaking to someone else in your home or is insistent and makes you feel uncomfortable.
- sometimes they say that you have been a victim of fraud and offer to send a courier to your home to pick up your PIN number, collect your cash, payment card or cheque book.

Stock condition surveys

We are currently carrying out Stock Condition surveys on council housing and the surveyor will door knock to complete your survey. However, you will already have received a letter from the council's Contracting and Compliance team explaining the requirement of the survey and that a surveyor will be in touch. Our authorised surveyors may also knock on your door if they are investigating a repair. They will always carry identity cards. If they can't get hold of you, they may try phoning, sending a text or leaving a card.

Spotlight on Publicity Project Group

Enabling you to have your say about how Neighbourhoods and Housing delivers its services is a vital part of everything we do.

Critical to achieving this, by making sure we are on-track and inclusive, is the Publicity Project Group (PPG). Formerly affectionately known as "Comms and Pubs," this is a tenant-led group which gives us a reality check that we are delivering what you want and need to know in a comprehensive and timely manner. PPG advises on:

- communications as a two-way process. Have we got the channels right whereby people feel comfortable about using them to let us know their views? Do we have a wide enough range of communication

channels that they can use at a time and place which is convenient for them

- tone and style of all communications materials for tenants about housing services. These range from posters, leaflets, letters, brochures, newsletters to video and social media
- are the language and pictures we use right? Can we identify new channels in our communities and channels that are accessed by our diverse communities and will enable us to reach people whose voices are seldom heard

- 23,000+ tenants, we embrace a wide very diverse range of people, so how can improve what we produce to enable our communications more inclusive?

PPG usually meets during the day. However, to help us engage with a wider range of people we are happy to adapt the times we meet and the channels we use to encourage more people to be involved. If you are interested in learning more about and/or getting involved with PPG, please email tenant.resident@hullcc.gov.uk



Tenants' Forum Meetings

Date	Time	Guest Speaker / Agenda
23 January	10am – 12 noon	Business Plan against Housing Performance
18 February	1 – 3pm	Community Managers Neighbourhoods and Communities
18 March	10am – 12 noon	Operation Manager – Rents and Rent Arrears

All Tenants' Forum meetings take place in The Guildhall, HU1 2AA. If you would like to attend, please let a member of the Tenants Participation Team know by emailing tenant.resident@hullcc.gov.uk or phone (01482) 612 010.

This document can be made available in other formats (large print, audio, digital copy) and different languages. Email: tenant.resident@hullcc.gov.uk



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