

North East Local Housing Forum

June 2021 Highlights Report



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New Homes



Former Rotherhithe Civic Centre (Albion St) and rear of Albion Primary School (Renforth St) has started on site. Albion Street - Construction of part 4-storey, part 5-storey development consisting of commercial space at ground floor and 26 affordable residential units above. Re-landscaping of the public square to the east of the site. Renforth Street - Construction of a 6-storey building to provide 50 residential units.

Day Centre, 345 Southwark Park has started on site providing 46 new homes 22 (social), 24 (private) and commercial space.

Other on site schemes include Haddonfield Garages, Tenda Road, Welsford Street, Chilton Grove (rooftop scheme) and Regina & Columbia Point where two hidden homes are being delivered alongside the major works.

New Homes



Rennie Estate, Rotherhithe New Road 213-219, Tissington / Silverlock Estate underground garages, Thaxted Court / Damory House (Rooftop Homes), Penry Street New Homes (was petrol Stn. Old Kent Road), Cherry Gardens School - Macks Road all have planning permission for new homes that are expected to start in 2021/22.

Other schemes in the earlier stages of the programme include Slippers Estate, Abbeyfield Former Area Housing Office, Canada Estate, Ann Moss Way, Pynfolds Estate, Charles Mackenzie Estate, Eveline Lowe Estate Garage/Parking Court, Longfield Estate, Alscot Road Car Park, Vauban Estate Ph5, 1-36 Priter Road (hostels) Red Lion Boys Club Hawkstone Road and Rennie Estate Rooftop.

Asset Management



- Any outstanding internal works paused due to the pandemic are under review for a re-attendance date and are likely to resume in the summer. If you have any outstanding internal works the delivery team and contractors are aware of all of these and will contact you to arrange completion of any outstanding issues.
- QHIP major works schemes are now complete at Harbord House, Kirby Estate and Neckinger Estate. However we will be returning to Neckinger Estate to undertake some outstanding fire safety works in May 2021 for completion in early August 2021.
- The scheme at Coopers Road Estate is due to complete in June. Around 10 schemes are now in design and looking to start early in the next financial year.
- Silverlock Estate QHIP works is due to commence mid June 2021 and be completed in April 2022.
- Plant room renewals at Four Squares and Rouel Rd are due to complete this year.

Asset Management



- Bouygues UK have been appointed to carry out the pre-construction services for Maydew House and commenced this work on 22 February 2021. Construction works are due to start in October 2021.
- Roof top homes to Chilton House, Damory & Thaxted Court are imminent following sign off of the structural submissions by Building Control.

In line with government guidance, the Repairs Services is moving towards the resumption of a full service in a phased manner and hopes to be fully operational again from 21 June, subject to the progress of the pandemic and available resources.

- Communal / Emergency Lighting Installations for 21/22 are progressing at Wessex House and Cathay House.

Asset Management



Lift refurbishments at Tissingdon Lifts 5094 &5, Ritchie House 5039&40 and Breton & St Owen's lift 1083-4:

1. Tissingdon lifts gear replacement will commence August, completion September 2021.
1. Ritchie Refurbishment will commence 20th September and complete 24th December one unit at a time.
1. Breton and St Owens gear replacement between July 25th and 10th August 2021.

Resident Services



Arica House, Slippers Place- the existing cameras will be upgraded to improve the security of residents and tackle vandalism and anti-social behaviour

During lockdown the problem of fly-tipping has increased considerably and we are exploring ways to keep our estates free from this. We are currently piloting a scheme in Borough and Bankside in partnership with our colleagues in Cleaning to ensure all bulk is removed when seen without having to secure authorization from the back office first. This seamless approach will be reviewed and if successful, rolled out to the rest of the North Area.

Communities



Work continues implementing the new Resident Participation structure. Since March, this has included: developing the forward plan for resident participation (the business to be addressed by residents and the council); refining the new strategic bodies (Tenant Forum, Homeowner Forum and Joint Tenant and Homeowner Forum); and consulting with residents and other stakeholders in respect of independent advice contracts for residents (currently provided by the Southwark Group of Tenants organisations and the Citizens' Advice Bureau).

Approval has been given for a project to commence looking at the council's support offer to residents, in the light of financial challenges imposed by the Covi-19 pandemic. The council will be convening a working party of residents who – supported by officers from Exchequer Services, and serviced by the Smith Institute – will produce a report later in the year on ways in which the council can best support residents in relation to council income recovery measures.

Communities



Following successful completion of a Digital Innovation Fund project on the use of digital tools to engage younger and harder-to-reach residents, the council has consented to the Tenant and Homeowner Involvement team commissioning a project in the current financial year aimed at developing some specific tools in this regard. The aim of the project is to ensure that those residents who want to utilise digital technology for the purposes of making their voices heard can do so.

Anti social behaviour, grounds maintenance



Grounds Maintenance:

We are now reducing the amount of cutting we do in designated areas to twice a year protect and encourage insects and wildlife, this will also lower the co2 emissions. This is mainly on road vergers at the moment allow there are some areas on housing estates, we hoping to extend to larger areas on other estates.

We are also working alongside gardening groups with in Southwark's housing estates.

Anti social behaviour, grounds maintenance



ASB:

We saw significant demands on our service from the year of April 2020 to the end of March 2021. COVID was a main factor of this especially in relation to lockdowns during the year.

SASBU continued to manage increased levels of legal cases and across the borough we obtained, closure orders, injunctions, served Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and warning letters. We also issued Notices of Possession for the most serious of tenancy breaches when the law allowed us to do so given changes in legislation, again in respect of COVID.

Anti social behaviour, grounds maintenance



ASB cont:

We also saw an increase in Community Trigger requests. The Trigger is an application within the Anti-social behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 which enables an applicant to call a review on their reports to the partnership over a six month period.

Another key area for us was the Halloween and Bonfire period of which we saw an increase in disorder within the SE16 area. Working with communities and partners, we were able to identify those who were committing ASB with regards to firework misuse and all those identified were visited at their homes and appropriate actions and interventions were taken by the unit.

Anti social behaviour, grounds maintenance



ASB cont:

14 Notices of Possession

21 Injunctions

3 Court Undertakings against persons

19 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts

30 Community Triggers

31 Premises closed due to significant and serious behaviour

Exchequer Services



Homeowners

Leasehold building insurance contract – the council has extended the current contract with Zurich for a further twelve months from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. After assessing current insurance market conditions and a benchmarking exercise carried out with other local authorities, the Council decided to recommend a twelve-month extension with Zurich rather than procuring a new contract. Zurich offered to fix premiums at their 2021/22 rates and only apply the normal 4% uplift relating to building cost inflation (not including any changes to Insurance Premium Tax currently 12%). We think this is good news for homeowners. The proposal was put to the Leasehold Task and Finish group who supported the council's recommendation.

New Homeowner Loans Policy – the council has changed its discretionary loans policy for homeowners to bring it up-to-date with advances in technology and to allow more flexibility in the range of products available. It also allows for a regular review of the interest rates charged. The new policy also includes a new loan product for non-resident homeowners. The full report and decision can be found here

<https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=7301>

Exchequer Services



Homeowners continued

Improving Section 20 Notices - Many day-to-day repairs requiring section 20 consultation cannot be properly costed until the scaffolding is erected and an inspection carried out. This often leads to leaseholders receiving multiple section 20 notices for the same job. Homeownership Services will shortly begin trial issuing *a single notice* describing the work that is believed to be necessary with a budget estimate. The actual costs will be billed as part of the actual service charge as usual. We are interested to hear from homeowners participating in the trial about what they think about this change

Exchequer Services



Tenants

Paying Rent During COVID Although rent collection remained challenging during the pandemic, tenants had paid 97.58% of rent due for 2020/21 by the end of the year. We thank all those who paid their rent in what we know were difficult circumstances for many. But despite the efforts of tenants and the teams who collect rent, total council tenant rent arrears increased, rising by £3.8m to £16.8m by the end of the year.

Help to Claim Universal Credit Many more tenants claimed *Universal Credit* to help pay their rent during the pandemic. If you need to claim *Universal Credit* but face difficulties in doing so for whatever reason the Citizen Advice *Help to Claim* service can support you with your claim.

www.citizenadvicesouthwark.org.uk/helptoclaim

Exchequer Services



Tenants continued

New Rent Payment Options One positive change in a very difficult year was that many more tenants paid their rent by direct debit. About six thousand more tenants switched to direct debit - the easiest, least costly, and, during the pandemic, *safest* way to pay. From April we've added bar codes to rent letters – offering another simple and convenient option to pay rent.

A Supportive Landlord If you're a tenant and need help with paying your rent or are affected by COVID-19 please visit our website: www.southwark.gov.uk/coronavirus where you will find further information about how we can help you.

Modernise



Digital inclusion is about making sure our residents and community can take advantage of the opportunities the internet affords and we are working to ensure that “Nobody Is Left Offline”. As part of this programme, we are recruiting volunteer digital champions to support residents with their digital skills. Digital Champions will receive accredited training, support and more as part of this programme and can apply for the opportunity below:

https://forms.southwark.gov.uk/ShowForm.asp?fm_fid=1864

For any further queries please contact
Digital.Inclusion@southwark.gov.uk

Customer Experience



MySouthwark Homeowners Service

Residents told us they wanted more information on how your estates are managed so we have set up a new webpage on how we manage your estates which gives you a range of information from our cleaning schedules to how to join an estate inspection. You will find it at <https://www.southwark.gov.uk/homeowners-services/how-we-look-after-your-blocks-and-estates>

Our office at the Blue in Market Place still remains closed but we are now providing face to face verification meetings with tenants going through the right to buy process at our Service Point in Peckham.

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