

Community Together College Bank and Lower Falinge Newsletter (text only version). Summer 2021 Edition.

A message from Gareth Swarbrick, RBH Chief Executive

Welcome to the latest edition of Community Together, your dedicated town centre newsletter.

Hopefully, with better weather, lighter evenings and the vaccination programme progressing we are able to look forward to a Summer we can all enjoy. Please still continue to take care, get tested regularly and follow the guidance on hands, face, and space particularly when meeting people outside of your household.

We know outdoor spaces are safer and taking advantage of this together with the (hopefully!) sunny weather, Rochdale Council has organised outdoor pop-up events in our town centres and parks over the summer months. Later this year our borough will also welcome cycling events and races.

We are still working hard on providing the quality of homes that residents in Rochdale town centre deserve. Find out more about the next steps for College Bank and Lower Falinge. We would also love to hear your views on our plans to build new homes at the corner of Regent Street and Taylor Street.

One of our commitments was to invest to improve the retained homes in the area, this has taken a big step forward for Lower Falinge and we would love you to take a look at new artist impressions and a video which show what improvements to the retained Lower Falinge blocks could look like. Please do let us know what you think.

We are also really pleased to introduce you to our new Community Guardians. You may have spotted the team of six out and about in your area - please do say hello and have a chat – they're here to help and support you.

Our New Pioneers have been busy again and there's some more great stories of how the project is helping local residents on their journey into good work. We're really proud of our New Pioneers and all their work.

I know that this continues to be a challenging time for many residents, and our team remains on hand to provide support and advice. Don't forget, you can always register online at www.myrbh.org.uk to access services and access up-to-date information on our website at www.rbh.org.uk.

Investing in a Brighter Future for Lower Falinge

New artist impressions and a short video showing what improvements to the retained blocks in Lower Falinge could look like have been released by RBH in partnership with BTP Architects.

Following consultations with residents, we have been working for some time now with BTP Architects together with two tenant representatives from Lower Falinge, to look at options for significant investment across the area.

In 2019, we visited every home in the blocks to be retained to talk to residents about what changes they wanted to see in the neighbourhood, which was followed up with a community workshop to discuss ideas from the visits. Following the feedback, improvements to upgrading the lights on walkways and stairwells, using more efficient LED lighting, took place earlier this year.

Other clear priorities were improvements to the appearance of the blocks and issues with the walkways. Work started earlier this month to clean the exterior of every block, including repairs to the concrete where necessary and cleaning the gutters. We are also in the process of appointing a contractor to improve walkways in the retained blocks, which will include resurfacing and improving the drainage from the walkways.

We are proposing additional improvements, which will now be undertaken in phases, to make it easier to deliver the specific work to different blocks.

Atherstone; Bromfield; Dunstable; Edington; Glastonbury and Hinton will form the first phase and we have written to residents in these blocks to get their views on the proposed improvements, including colour options for window openings, changes to bring more daylight to the first floor walkways, options for creating private space at the front, as well as secure stair access to the upper floor and a new approach to bins and refuse.

We are now working through the comments we have received from the six blocks in the first phase and we want to give the wider community the chance to give us their thoughts.

You can view a video of the proposed improvements by scanning the QR code below (or typing in www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/fvideo to your internet browser) and following the links after it to give your feedback.

As our plans progress, we will work up detailed plans for the next phase and contact residents in Pershore, Stavordale and Thetford to seek their feedback on the proposed improvements to their block.

Syed Hussain, Regeneration Project Manager, said: "These works will modernise the appearance of the buildings and have a real positive impact on the community.

“The short video shows what the improvements could look like and we’d encourage everyone to have a look.

“We are now reviewing all the feedback we have received and will be updating residents as plans progress. Thank you to everyone that took part in the consultation.

“We also want to reassure residents in the remaining three blocks that we will share proposals for their feedback once these are developed”

We will continue to keep you updated on the plans to invest in existing homes in our future newsletters but if you have any queries, please email our team on towncentre.regen@rbh.org.uk



Have Your Say: New affordable homes on Regent Street

We’d love to hear your views about [our proposals for 27 new quality, affordable three-bedroom family homes](#) that could be built on the corner of Regent Street and Taylor Street, close to Rochdale town centre.

These homes would provide much-needed housing for genuinely affordable rent with easy access to local services and facilities. They are intended to enhance the local area for existing residents, fitting in with the local landscape and making the most of an unused brownfield site.

We’d like to hear what you think about the proposal prior to submitting the planning application to Rochdale Borough Council. To protect the health and wellbeing of residents and our team, we’re unable to hold an in-person consultation event, so please contact us via e-mail with comments or queries development.team@rbh.org.uk.

Regeneration Plans Update

We wrote to you recently to outline our proposals for the next phases of development in College Bank and Lower Falinge, providing the quality of homes that residents in Rochdale town centre deserve for decades to come. Here’s a reminder of the key information:

College Bank

We started to work with residents in Mitchell Hey in Spring 2019 to support them to move to new homes which meet their needs and are in the area of their choice. Every resident who wished to stay in the town centre area has been able to do so.

More than three-quarters of residents have now completed their move and we continue to support the remaining tenants and leaseholders in their moves to new homes.

We have recently written to all of our residents in Town Mill Brow advising them that this block is in our next rehousing phase and setting out that we will be contacting each household individually in the coming weeks to discuss their rehousing options and support needs.

This will be followed by Tentercroft residents in Summer 2022 and Dunkirk Rise in early 2024.

As we have set out for residents these blocks need a huge amount of investment work which is beyond what RBH could ever afford across all the blocks and we are supporting people to move over the next few years before this work becomes urgent. We continue with our detailed work to look at the options and details for refurbishment at Mardyke, Underwood and Holland Rise blocks and we have let residents in these blocks know that the level of works will mean we will be unable to carry these out with residents living in their homes and this means residents will need to move for the duration of the work.

Lower Falinge

Work continues on our latest phase of new homes, which are due to be completed in Summer 2022. Our team has been providing support to residents in Abbeydale, Exbury, and Yarwell blocks to help them to find new homes and every resident who wished to stay in the town centre area has been able to do so.

We have also recently written to our residents in Zedburgh and Waverley advising them that these are the blocks in the next phase of rehousing and advising them that we will be contacting each household individually to discuss their rehousing options and support needs.

Getting Support

We know that these changes can make this a challenging and uncertain time for residents, and our team is here to offer support and advice to individuals and families who need it.

Contact us on:

towncentre.regen@rbh.org.uk or by calling us on Freephone **0800 027 7769** or complete the contact form at **www.collegebankandlowerfalinge.org.uk**.

Free Debt and Money Advice

Having problems with debt or need helping managing your money? Our free Money Advice Service is here to help you.

Last year we supported hundreds of tenants struggling to pay their bills to claim extra money and manage their debt.

We can help you with your council tax; electricity and gas bills; rent; catalogue or credit card debts; water charges and pay day loans. We can even help you change your gas and electric supplier.

Contact us now on **0800 027 7769** or visit www.rbh.org.uk/how-we-can-help-you/advice.

“I couldn’t have chosen anything better” - Rehousing case Study

Several of the residents who have been rehoused as part of our buyback scheme have been settling into their new homes and enjoying the nice weather and relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions.

We caught up with one gentleman who has moved from a flat to a bungalow and is making the most of his outside space.

“I was in a one-bedroom flat before and they asked me what I wanted, so I said I really wanted to live in a bungalow. And that’s what they got for me. I didn’t want anything with stairs because of my health and it’s much easier for me now, I’m glad of the move.”

“Everything went fine, everything that needed sorting was sorted. They’ve done it up nicely and the home loss compensation money was a bonus too.”

“They’ve given me what I needed and I couldn’t have chosen anything better.”

“I had been a bit down before, like everyone else, because of lockdown but now I’ve got a garden so I’ve been able to enjoy the weather and the move has just made me feel better.”

New Pioneers Update

There’s plenty going on with our New Pioneers project at the moment, including a very successful Employment Club at Rochdale Football Club as well as taking advantage of the lovely weather and reduced Covid restrictions to get out for group walks.

Our main updates this month focus on some fantastic stories of people's accessing new opportunities that have come to them through New Pioneers, which have given them a huge confidence boost to have an positive impact on their quality of life.

One of these is Lisa who was referred to us by her GP because of issues around social isolation. She hadn't been able to get out and about in a long time, but we met with her and found out not only that knitting was one of her favourite hobbies but also that she had a passion for teaching others to do it.

This led to the creation of our New Pioneers Craft Shack knitting club, which begins at Spotland Community Centre on 23rd June. Lisa will be volunteering there and helping others learn how to knit and has already been energised by this opportunity and the preparations for the club.

New Pioneers Career Broker Suzan Wilson said: "I met her this morning at the Community Centre and she was completely transformed. She'd sent me a flyer that she'd designed for it and some patterns she'd come up with and told me this was something she'd always wanted to do. She's absolutely blossomed from that little spark we saw inside her and I'm sure this knitting club will be a huge success."

Another New Pioneers member success is James, who has started working as a cleaner with Engie after a referral to us by Lee Munro from Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust.

Lee has seen the change in James, telling us that: "I first had contact with the New Pioneers project when I had a frustrating time trying to get one of my clients a job with another job service which I had worked with for over 7 months and not had one result.

"Since working with New Pioneers for a short time my client – with the help of Suzan - has had interview skills tuition and now has successfully started a new job that he loves doing."

James hadn't worked for over 12 years until he came to New Pioneers and has since told us of his immense pride in wearing his new uniform.

Congratulations to both Lisa and James!

In other news, we have two new people joining our team through the Government's Kickstart Scheme, one Engagement Worker who will work alongside Suzan, and one Admin Support Worker.

The Kickstart Scheme provides funding to create new jobs for 16 to 24 year olds on Universal Credit who are at risk of long term unemployment.

Our new Engagement Worker Sophie Wild told us: "I applied for Kickstart to get into something new, I think the New Pioneers project is a great start and something

different to my usual work choices. I think the experience will broaden my horizons and give me experience in different areas of work.”

Meanwhile our popular Understanding Animal Welfare and Wellbeing course returns this month. If you love animals, want to learn more about them and find out why they can be good for your mental health, this is the course for you.

All conducted online, there are four sessions starting on **Thursday 24th June** and taking place weekly between **10am and 12pm**. It's a great opportunity so to book your place contact **suzan.wilson@rochdale.gov.uk** or call **07971 797778**.

Events Listings

Family Fun: Free Pop-up Events

- Dates:
 - 31st July - Middleton town centre;
 - 7th August - Queens Park, Hopwood Park and Heywood;
 - 14th August - Rochdale town centre;
 - 21st August - Hare Hill Park, Littleborough
- Times: to be confirmed
- Price: free
- Suitable for: all the family

Enjoy walkabout street theatre, live music and performances in Rochdale and Middleton town centres and the borough's green spaces.

Keep an eye on **rochdale.gov.uk/events** for more information as details are confirmed.

Blood, Sweat and Gears: Tour de Manc returns to Rochdale

- Date: Sunday, 5th September 2021
- Times: 7.30am - 5.45pm
- Price: £36 + booking fee
- Address: Greater Manchester
- Suitable for: adults

The gruelling Tour de Manc returns to Rochdale and the Greater Manchester region this September. Four routes are on offer for cyclists - the 100-mile 'Full Manc'; the 200km 'Mad Manc'; 100km 'Half Manc', and, new for 2021, 50km 'Quarter Manc'.

An epic ride all about blood, sweat and tears, the Tour de Manc isn't just about the fastest rider. Tour de Manc will issue on the spot prizes to riders who showcase grit and determination.

Want to enter a race? For more information and to register visit www.tourdemanc.co.uk

Ready, Set, Run!

Williams BMW Rochdale Half Marathon, 10K and 1-mile Fun Run

- Date: Sunday, 3rd October 2021
- Times: 10am - 1.30pm
- Price:
 - Fun run - £7
 - Half marathon - £31.40 for club-runners, £33.40 non-club runners
 - 10K - £20.60 for club runners, £22.60 for non-club runners
- Address: The Esplanade, Rochdale OL16 1AB
- Suitable for: adults, teenagers, children

Organised by: The event is coordinated by Rochdale Harriers, Middleton Harriers and Rochdale Triathlon Club supported by Rochdale Borough Council.

Williams BMW Rochdale Half Marathon, 10K and 1-mile Fun Run return for their 6th year this October – and there's still time to join in.

Hundreds have already signed up for the races, which take place around Rochdale and online entries are open until 27th September.

The Fun Run is suitable for all the family - you can walk, jog, skip, wear fancy dress - and entrants receive a great quality medal. Everyone gets a medal and t-shirt for completing the half marathon and 10K.

A prize fund of more than £3,000 is also on offer for the half marathon and 10K. All the races will be marshalled, traffic free and start and finish on The Esplanade in Rochdale town centre.

Want to enter a race? To enter or find out more, visit www.rochdale.gov.uk/run

MyRBH is convenient for you! No waiting around. Accessible 24/7. Available on any device.

Tenants are being encouraged to register online at www.myrbh.org.uk to access services quickly at a time convenient for them.

Signing up for a MyRBH account means you can report repairs, choose your appointment, check your account balance, make payments, update your contact details, and get in touch with us easily.

Residents living in and around College Bank and Lower Falinge will soon be able to use a free WiFi network to access MyRBH online, thanks to the Mesh Network project.

Funded by Rochdale Borough Council and installed by RBH, the network will be rolled out over the coming weeks and months.

RBH Digital Marketing Lead, Zack, said: “MyRBH works on any device and the beauty of it is you can use it when it’s convenient for you, without having to pick up the phone.

“As the free WiFi network is rolled out it will really help our tenants to make the most of online services like the MyRBH portal.”

To register for MyRBH all you need is an email address and your Customer Reference Number. Register today by visiting our website www.myrbh.org.uk.

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Fast Testing

Get free in-person Covid tests

Rapid coronavirus testing is now available in Rochdale for those showing no symptoms. The Find And Stop Transmission (FAST) testing programme is being used to help detect and fight COVID-19.

Getting tested regularly means you will be playing your part in helping to stop the spread of the virus, as vaccinations are rolled out.

FAST uses rapid lateral flow tests, there is no need to book, and it’s quick and easy to do.

Simply turn up to one of the five sites across the borough:

- Nye Bevan House, Maclure Road, Rochdale
- York House Surgery, 19 York Street, Heywood
- Bowlee Park Sports Centre and Alkington Community Centre in Middleton
- Hare Hill Bowling Club in Littleborough

Opening times vary. For full details visit www.rochdale.gov.uk/fasttesting.

You must not turn up to be tested if you have any symptoms.

If you have symptoms, you must book for a COVID-19 test through the NHS or by ringing 119.

Eyes and Ears to help College Bank, Lower Falinge and Freehold Residents

A team of six 'Community Guardians' has been in place for the last few months to provide "visible" reassurance and help residents in College Bank, Lower Falinge and Freehold.

We spoke to Neighbourhood Operations Manager Lee Cardwell, who oversees the work of the Guardians – Jake; Daniel; Darren; Michael; Shaun, Waheed - to find out more.

"Our new team of Guardians are the eyes and ears of our town centre neighbourhoods. The feedback we've had has been really positive," said Lee, who has worked for RBH for 22 years."

"They are easy to spot in their distinctive high-vis Community Guardian jackets and we want people to approach them if they are experiencing any issues."

"Our six Guardians are here to provide a visible, active presence for our communities and they are here to help you."

Previously, RBH had a team working in a control room, monitoring CCTV. Now, CCTV footage is still recorded but to help residents feel safer RBH created the new Community Guardians team to have a greater visible presence.

The six Guardians are split into two teams. One trio works from 6am to 2pm and the second team take over from 2pm until 10pm.

They carry out regular safety and fire checks throughout the day and night in Lower Falinge and College Bank as well as Freehold.

The Guardians are also on hand to help with issues including flytipping. They actively tackle flytipping by working with residents who are struggling to manage their waste.

They signpost RBH tenants to the right teams who can help them with any queries regarding their tenancies.

The Guardians also carry out concierge duties on College Bank, helping with things like deliveries and sorting out parking passes.

Lee added: *"All the Guardians live in the Greater Manchester area and they get a buzz from helping people."*

"They are here for the safety and wellbeing of residents and, in particular, those who are vulnerable and may need additional support."

"We understand sometimes people just need some help and someone to talk to - the Guardians are here to provide just that, which can make such a difference."

Who are you rooting for? RBH Representative Body Elections 2021

Nominations open: 16th June – 14th July

Voting period: 2nd August – 6th September

For more information about nominations and the elections:

Visit www.rbh.org.uk/elections or talk to us on **0800 027 7769**.

Your News and Views

We're always keen for College Bank and Lower Falinge residents to send us their news, events and suggestions to help us shape this community newsletter's future.

If you have any ideas for a better way to receive updates - through the post, by email, or in some other way – please let us know and we'll enter you into a free draw for a fantastic prize.

Please do contact us at towncentre.regen@rbh.org.uk with any ideas for our next editions.

Nominations are now open for our 2021 Values in Practice (VIP) awards!

Our annual Values in Practice (VIP) awards say thank you to Members, tenants, employees, and residents who make a real difference in our communities.

We want to hear about those special people who go above and beyond to help their communities and the people around them. Do you know someone who deserves to be recognised as a VIP? If so, the nomination process couldn't be simpler – visit www.rbh.org.uk/vip now and complete our short form!

Drop-in sessions remain suspended

Our top priority during the coronavirus outbreak is the health and safety of our tenants and employees. For this reason, our drop-in sessions at College Bank and Lower Falinge remain suspended until further notice. We are sorry for any inconvenience and thank you for your patience and understanding. You can still contact our team by e-mail on towncentre.regen@rbh.org.uk or by phone on Freephone **0800 027 7769** (use option 7).

If you need this report in a different format or language, please contact us to ask how we can help.

towncentre.regen@rbh.org.uk

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