

# **Community Together College Bank and Lower Falinge Newsletter (text only version). Autumn 2021 edition.**

## **A message from Gareth Swarbrick, RBH Chief Executive**

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

Since our last update, we've experienced further easing of restrictions with some semblance of normality restored to our everyday lives and I hope you've been able to make the most of the summer.

Our New Pioneers enjoyed success with their Picnic in the Park and their work continues to go from strength to strength. They've now welcomed their 43rd member and a huge well done to Amanda and Hussein who have started new jobs.

I was really moved by the daughter of one of our Pioneers, a brilliant little girl called Magdalena. With the help of our Assistant Career Broker Aggy, Magdalena donated 16 inches of her hair to a charity that helps children and young people who suffer from hair loss.

There's also lots on at Spotland – from help with maths and English to games, knitting and healthy eating.

I am also excited that work to develop the new Pioneer Park in Lower Falinge is moving forward. Read all about our plans for Pioneer Park - it's going to be a special space for all the community.

Work is also progressing well on the new homes around Pioneer Park, and the retained blocks in Lower Falinge are also undergoing a thorough clean.

Thanks for all those who responded to the survey on the plans for the retained homes in Lower Falinge. We used this feedback to shape the proposals and have now submitted a planning application for refurbishment on the first phase of these homes.

At College Bank our essential fire safety work continues – thanks to all our residents for their patience while this work takes place in and around their homes.

We are still working hard on providing the quality of homes that residents deserve, and we know that you may have questions around the next phases of development - find out the latest.

Despite the challenges over the last 18 months, we've maintained our commitment in our apprenticeship programme, and we're delighted to extend a big welcome to our new trade apprentices.

We know that the pandemic has had an impact on many of our tenants. We are now able to support more residents to move again including those all-important face to face conversations where needed. I would again like to remind you that we are here to help you as much as possible - you'll find all our contact details on page 16.

## **Work Well Underway on New RBH Houses and Apartments.**

New images show work progressing well on 55 new homes in Lower Falinge.

ENGIE have been on site since March 2020, building a mix of 19 two-bedroom houses, three houses with three bedrooms, alongside 20 one-bed apartments and 13 two-bed apartments.

The modern homes are a key part of our wider masterplan, developed together with the community, to deliver the right quality and mix of homes for residents in Rochdale town centre.

All of the homes will be available for genuinely affordable rent and work is anticipated to complete next year.

## **More Details Unveiled: Lower Falinge's New Green Lungs.**

A new planned park and play area for Lower Falinge will be called Pioneer Park.

Work, as residents know, is already well underway on building 55 new homes in the area. RBH has been busy developing its vision for the park which will be central to the new housing development.

Pioneer Park will expand upon the green space that was there previously, with a special area for residents to grow vegetables, fruits and plants.

This community growing site will be managed by RBH and a number of New Pioneers will be visiting a similar area at Q Gardens in Kirkholt over the coming months to see how it is run and learn gardening skills.

RBH's community investment advisor Davina is keen for as many residents to get involved as possible in the new growing area.

She said: "We are hoping to get together a group of volunteers for Pioneer Park, ready for when it opens.

"This will be an area for the community and, it doesn't matter if you're green fingered or not, we'd love your help.

"Gardening is a great way to improve your own wellbeing and mental health. Come along and learn from what we do at Q Gardens – there's no pressure, call in for a brew, the kettle's always on!"

If you would like to get involved, please contact [davina.unsworth@rbh.org.uk](mailto:davina.unsworth@rbh.org.uk) or [suzan.wilson@rochdale.gov.uk](mailto:suzan.wilson@rochdale.gov.uk)

The new park will feature a variety of trees and plants to attract wildlife as well as new seating areas.

Pioneer Park will also include a play area for children with different pieces of play equipment and there are hopes that a part of the land could be used to host monthly market stalls.

It is hoped that the new park, play area and community growing site will be open by summer 2022.

## **Six New Trade Apprentices join RBH.**

Last month RBH welcomed six new trade apprentices, all living in RBH communities, and they have already made a great impression!

We're delighted that Piotr and Daniel (Apprentice Electricians), Belinda and Nick (Apprentice Joiners), and Brian and Jo (Apprentice Plasterers) have joined us.

Piotr is also part of the New Pioneers programme and all six are settling well into their new roles.

This is our second group of apprentices to start this year, joining our business apprentices Jodie, Tinneke, Nafeesa, and Sophie who are making a huge contribution to RBH.

We've also been able to offer four placements through the Kickstart scheme and welcomed apprentices Adil, Antonia, Lewis, and Kurtis.

The apprenticeship programme helps us to meet our ongoing need for a skilled workforce, delivering a great route into RBH and the housing sector alongside a valued professional qualification. In line with our wider commitments, all our apprenticeships pay the real Living Wage.

Despite recent challenges, we've maintained our commitment to and investment in our apprenticeship programme. The decision by our elected Representative Body to ringfence our apprenticeship roles to those living in RBH homes is a clear demonstration of the wider commitment we have to our tenants and to our communities.

We are very proud of both our apprentices and our teams who help to support our apprentices as they start their career with us.

## **RBH Helps E.R. Williams Move to New Premises.**

Local painters and decorators E.R. Williams will be well-known to many of our residents for the fantastic service they have provided over the years.

A family business based in Rochdale for more than 50 years, they were previously located at a site on Toad Lane, which has been acquired by RBH as part of our wider plans to deliver the homes that current and future residents in central Rochdale need and expect.

We've helped E.R. Williams with moving to their nearby new home on Buckley Road as part of this process.

RBH Head of Development and Regeneration Gemma Wood said:

"I'm delighted that we've helped the E.R. Williams team move into their fantastic new premises and look forward to continue our working relationship for the benefit of our communities.

"By acquiring this site on Toad Lane, we'll be able to deliver even more new high-quality homes in central Rochdale."

E.R. Williams' Company Secretary Ruth Walton said:

"When we first became aware of the need to relocate, it was a daunting prospect, having been situated in the town centre with the historic address of Toad Lane since 1987.

However, Gemma and her team have supported us throughout the move, and we are now delighted to be settled into our new premises on Buckley Road Industrial Estate. We look forward to seeing the new homes built and the regeneration it will bring to the area."

## **What will happen to Toad Lane?**

We'll share our exciting plans for the site on Toad Lane in the near future.

## **New Pioneers Round-up.**

Our New Pioneers have had a busy few months and were very pleased to welcome their 43rd member.

New Pioneers is for anyone aged over 18, either out of work or working part time, and living in College Bank or Lower Falinge.

Have a read of what our team has been up to and how you can get involved.

## **Picnic in the Park is a Hit**

The 'Picnic in the Park' event at Falinge Park was a big success, with lots of New Pioneers coming out to support the team and local people coming over for a chat to find out more.

The treasure hunt activities and 'grow your own' bags were very popular with families!

### **New Pioneers Job Success**

We are also really pleased to report that two of our New Pioneers have found jobs.

Amanda has started a full-time teaching assistant apprenticeship at Spotland Primary School.

She joined New Pioneers last year and with the help of New Pioneers Career Broker Daisy, gained the confidence to do a teaching assistant course.

Amanda then volunteered for a 10-week placement at Spotland Primary School and loved it so much, she volunteered for another term.

Before the Summer holidays, the school invited her in for an interview for a paid apprenticeship.

Amanda said: "I was jumping up and down when I passed the interview and they asked me if I would like to join the team. It's a lovely school and all my family and friends are so proud and chuffed for me.

"I can't thank Daisy enough and it's down to her help - 18 months ago I could never have imagined this!"

Amanda will complete a level 3 teaching assistant course while working at the school.

New Pioneer Hussein has also recently started a job as a security guard. His long-term aspiration is to become a Maths teacher.

Hussein is studying hard for a Maths degree through Open University and working at the same time.

Congratulations to both Amanda and Hussein - we are so proud of everything you have achieved!

### **Kind Little Princess Magdalena is a Cut Above!**

Caring seven-year-old Magdalena has cut 16 inches off her hair for a national charity – with support from New Pioneers!

She braved the chop with the help of Assistant Career Broker, Aggy, who also enjoys hairdressing as a hobby.

Magdalena donated her long locks to the Little Princess Trust, which provides free real hair wigs to children and young people experiencing the devastating effects of hair loss due to cancer or other conditions.

Her mum, Marzena, joined New Pioneers earlier this year and heard about the work of the Little Princess Trust from Aggy.

Aggy said: “Magdalena had really long hair and when her mum said she was thinking of getting her hair cut, I offered to do it.

“When I told them about the work of the Little Princess Trust, they thought it was great and wanted to do their bit.

“I did two years of technical school as a hairdresser when I was in Poland. I have a professional kit and I enjoy cutting hair.

“It was great to put my hairdressing skills to use for such a worthy cause and we are all really proud of Magdalena.”

Magdalena added: “I felt really nice and awesome after my hair cut – I am happy that my hair will be used for a wig to make someone just as happy as me.

“When my hair got cut I felt light, like a cloud.”

The Little Princess Trust, established in 2006, have supplied more than 8000 wigs to children and young people, and invested around £5 million into ground-breaking childhood cancer research.

## **What’s on: New Pioneers Activities At Spotland Community Centre**

Maths - Mondays, 10am to noon

English - Tuesday, 10am to noon

IT - Wednesday, 10am to noon

Do you want to improve your everyday maths, literacy and IT skills and need some help? This group could be the perfect place to start. Tutors will help you to improve your confidence and support you with your learning at your own pace. When you’re ready, they will help you to sit Functional Skills exams which are essential qualifications for work, education and day to day life.

Places are limited and you need to register – contact New Pioneers Career Broker Daisy Silva on [Daisy.silva2@rochdale.gov.uk](mailto:Daisy.silva2@rochdale.gov.uk) or call **07866 143 999**.

### **Healthy Eating - Tuesdays, noon to 2pm**

Ready to make some changes but don’t know where to start? If you want to improve your health, lose a bit of weight and get more active, come along to this group. Health trainers from the Big Life group are on hand to offer friendly advice and info.

### **Craft Shack Knitting Club - Tuesdays, 10am to noon**

Pick up your knitting needles and have a natter! If you would like to have a go at knitting, sewing, crochet or cross stitch, then this is the club for you. Learn from New Pioneer Lisa – she is passionate about knitting and is helping others learn how to knit.

### **The Board Room - Tuesdays, 2pm to 4pm**

Calling all games lovers! A great selection of games to choose from to suit all ages, including Monopoly, chess, cards, and jigsaws and much more. Have a brew and get your game on.

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## **What's Coming Up.**

### **Animal Welfare And Wellbeing Course**

Thursdays 10am to noon, 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th October - online

Do you love animals? If you 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 7th October, taking place weekly between 10am and 12pm.

To book your place contact [suzan.wilson@rochdale.gov.uk](mailto:suzan.wilson@rochdale.gov.uk) or call **07971 797 778**.

### **College Bank Fire Safety Work.**

The fire safety work at College Bank is ongoing, with the contractor working their way through Mardyke.

They have fitted a number of electric cupboard doors so far and have also been busy sealing up cables and services in areas above doors to ensure good compartmentation. Meanwhile, asbestos removal work continues ahead of the door replacements.

We are very thankful to all residents for their patience and appreciate their understanding while we carry out this essential safety work. It is very important that this is completed ahead of the door replacements.

While we are aware of some of the ground floor levels receiving some damage to tiles during the sample installations, we will be working to look at options to refresh these areas once the doors have been installed.

The fire alarm and emergency evacuation alarms are almost complete with the next phase of installation - the siting and fitting of detectors and sounders to individual flats - underway.

We anticipate completion by late September, but this is dependent on residents helping by letting us into their home for the work. We will contact you with an appointment time and if you cannot make this for any reason please contact us to rearrange a suitable time to complete this work so that we can help keep everybody safe.

The systems have not been fully commissioned yet, and we ask that residents bear with us while we work through this phase.

Once the alarm systems are fully commissioned, we will be able to reduce the number of people in the waking watch team. There will still be a waking watch presence at College Bank but this will be to support evacuation if needed not to act as an alarm.

## **The Best Move Ever! Rehousing Case Study.**

As more residents who have been rehoused as part of the town centre regeneration have been settling into their new homes over the summer, we spoke to one lady who has moved from College Bank to a more suitable adapted flat.

“It’s lovely! It’s been the best move ever!” she told us. “It’s very quiet and peaceful, ideal for me and my daughter. We feel totally safe and happy.

“The process of getting here was easy to be honest. Once I’d filled the housing form in and started to do some bidding online, I got a phone call and got offered this place. It was absolutely brilliant, and I was so grateful.”

Her sentiments were echoed by a leaseholder who recently took the opportunity to sell their flat in College Bank Back to RBH and said: “Dealing with you has been excellent. I like the way you work – prompt replies and very much to the point.”

## **Update on Cleaning Work to Retained Blocks in Lower Falinge.**

Work is underway to brighten up the appearance of the retained blocks in Lower Falinge – and what a difference it’s made!

Our contractors are busy working their way through the blocks, giving them a high pressure clean, repairing the concrete where needed and cleaning the gutters.

We know from all our conversations with residents that this work was a priority, and we want to assure you that the exterior of every retained block will be cleaned.

### **Later this year...**

We will also be undertaking improvements (including drainage and resurfacing work) to the upper walkways of all the retained blocks.

## **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](http://www.rbh.org.uk/vip) now and complete our short form!

The deadline for nominations is Friday 1st October.

## **Save the date - Falinge Park “Festival of Light” Saturday 27th November.**

This is a night-time parade of light around the park, with fun for all the family. If you'd like to get involved with the festival of light, please call Suzan on **07971 797778**.

## **Myth-Busting College Bank and Lower Falinge**

We want to make sure you have up-to-date information around the proposals for College Bank and Lower Falinge. Here are answers to some of the most common questions

Please also have a look at our website [www.collegebankandlowerfalinge.org.uk/faqs](http://www.collegebankandlowerfalinge.org.uk/faqs) for more FAQs.

### **When will the College Bank refurbishment start?**

We are still working through the technical detail of the refurbishment and potential remodelling of the blocks at College Bank. We have commissioned a number of detailed technical surveys that you may have seen being carried out on site.

When we have this detailed information, we will share it with the community and carry out further consultation so everyone can help develop the plans.

We also let residents in Mardyke, Holland Rise and Underwood know that from the information we have to date, we now know that the level of work required in each block means households will need to move out for at least a year whilst this work is carried out.

As soon as we have more details on blocks and dates we will let residents know first.

**As an RBH tenant, would I receive any compensation if I had to move home due to demolition?**

RBH tenants that need to move home would be entitled to compensation of £7,100 (from 1st October 2021), an amount set by the government for tenants of social rented homes and paid by RBH. This figure is the total for all tenants living at an address and payable to those on the tenancy agreement.

In addition, we would pay residents a disturbance payment of £500 plus £250 towards the costs of removals. If a RBH tenant has any rent, service charge or recharge arrears these would be deducted from the compensation.

**Has planning permission been granted for the demolition of College Bank blocks?**

We are supporting residents to move due to the extremely high investment needs affecting the blocks at College Bank. These issues are common to many high-rise buildings of a similar age and construction type across the country. These moves are needed because there is no prospect of RBH being able to access the ~£12m costs per block we know would be needed to meet these investment needs. Without this investment over the coming years the blocks would no longer be able to provide safe and decent homes.

We are therefore not yet at the point where we would apply for planning permission for demolition or any future development in the College Bank area. Any planning application will be submitted at the appropriate time.

Our dedicated team continues to work closely with residents to support them to find a new home that meets their needs and is in their area of choice.

We promised residents at least one year's notice of any requirement for them to move, and we have contacted everyone whose homes are affected by demolition to provide clarity on the rehousing timeline.

**When will the Lower Falinge refurbishment be completed?**

Following detailed feedback from the community we have applied for planning permission for the first phase of refurbishment to blocks in Lower Falinge. This will be for the blocks at Hinton, Edington, Bromfield, Glastonbury, Dunstable and Atherstone. We hope to be able to look at detailed plans for the next phase with residents of Pershore, Thetford and Stavordale soon.

**What would happen if I have to move home?**

We will continue to let residents know at least a year in advance if they need to move and offer tailored support throughout this time, ensuring they have enough time to prepare and find a new home.

We know that each household will have different re-housing needs and that this could be a stressful time. The teams at RBH are very experienced in supporting residents through times of change, but we will also work with specialist partner agencies, where appropriate, to ensure that you receive the support that is right for you.

### **As a homeowner, what would happen if I had to move?**

If you live in your home our offer is to purchase your home and support you to either buy or rent a new home. This offer would be based on an independent valuation plus an extra 10%. RBH would also cover all reasonable expenses incurred in the sale plus the purchase of a new home, for example solicitors, mortgage or survey fees.

If you own a home, but do not live in it or rent it out, the same applies although the offer would be based on an independent valuation plus an extra 7.5%.

The Land Compensation Act ensures that you will be no worse off financially if your home is acquired to support regeneration.

For more information about selling your property back to RBH and to discuss how we can help you find a new home, including through our equity assistance scheme, please contact us on [towncentre.regen@rbh.org.uk](mailto:towncentre.regen@rbh.org.uk) or by calling Freephone **0800 027 7769 (option 7)**.

### **Could I still live in the town centre if I wanted to?**

Yes, we can guarantee that any residents who would like to stay in the town centre area will be able to do so if they need to be rehoused as part of our proposals.

We have been meeting this guarantee during the rehousing for residents in Lower Falinge and College Bank and we will continue to do so for future phases of rehousing.

### **When will I need to move?**

In May 2021 we confirmed with residents in College Bank and Lower Falinge the timeline for rehousing for residents whose home is affected by demolition.

In College Bank, rehousing of residents from Mitchell Hey started in 2019 and most residents have already been able to move. The rehousing for residents in Town Mill Brow started in June 2021 and this will be followed by Tentercroft residents in Summer 2022 and Dunkirk Rise in early 2024.

In Lower Falinge, the rehousing for residents in Waverley and Zedburgh also started in June 2021.

We are still working through the details of future phases of rehousing in Lower Falinge, but we expect this to start in 2022. We have told residents in these phases that we will confirm with them, directly, letting them know at least a year in advance of when they would need to move.

## **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.

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**

**0800 027 7769**

## **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)**.