

Community Together College Bank and Lower Falinge Newsletter (text only version). May 2022 edition.

A message from Gareth Swarbrick, RBH Chief Executive.

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

This newsletter is another busy one, full of updates from across RBH as we continue to work to provide new housing for residents and make improvements around our existing homes.

We know that people from outside the area have been knocking on doors on College Bank. We made a clear promise that residents would be the first to hear about any news - this remains the case. Our website FAQ is regularly updated with any questions raised by residents - please do not hesitate to get in touch.

At Lower Falinge our first residents have been moving into new homes at the Abbeydale scheme, some of whom have moved from nearby blocks that are due for demolition and we hear from one about the impact it has had on them.

You can read about the improvement works and refurbishments that are taking place at Lower Falinge and College Bank and some important updates on fire safety at College Bank.

It's always inspiring to read about the latest events and achievements of our New Pioneers and you can read about Jennifer and Brian's stories and the incredible progress they have made with the help of our team.

Another important update included here is our new strategy. If you attended one of our recent drop-in or online sessions, thank you! We've got some more great opportunities to get involved as part of our Big Conversation - visit www.rbh.org.uk/thebigconversation to find out more.

Elsewhere in this newsletter you can find out about Rochdale RSPCA's new home, news on the free Wi-Fi network for College Bank, and the Rochdale Feel Good Festival.

Residents move into new homes at Lower Falinge.

We're delighted to see our first residents moving into their new homes at Abbeydale - the third phase of new homes at Lower Falinge and a crucial part of the wider regeneration of the town centre.

In past issues we've told you about the work we're doing to increase the quality, mix and number of homes in Rochdale town centre, designed around community and connectivity, delivering affordable, modern, energy efficient housing and amenities based on the needs of today's residents and those of future generations.

All of the new homes at Abbeydale are social housing with genuinely affordable rents, with a mix of 19 two-bedroom houses, three houses with three bedrooms, together with 20 one-bedroom apartments and 13 two-bedroom apartments. At the heart of the development is a new open green community space.

Some people have moved in from nearby blocks that are due for demolition, with one telling us: "I moved from a flat to a house here and the move went very well, the house is really good. It's much better now, the house is bigger and there's a garden too. I'm very happy with everything."

Clare Tostevin, said:

Being able to live in a good quality home has never been more important and we're really pleased to see our first residents move in.

"Abbeydale has been designed around community and connectivity, with the public open green space featuring a brand new play area and communal garden.

"This is all about providing the right mix of good quality homes for local people, offering more choice for the existing community in central Rochdale as well as for future generations.

Investment works in Lower Falinge.

We have been busy working to make improvements in and around our properties in Lower Falinge recently and thought you would like to know exactly what has been taking place.

On the Abbeydale block, we've carried out a pilot scheme installing a new drain into the walkway to try and solve the long-standing problem of puddles of standing water. This was cut into the walkway carefully so as to avoid creating a trip hazard and is already proving to be a great success in helping the water to drain away.

We are in the process of installing another four of these per block at each concrete pillar and these works are taking place with a minimum of disruption for residents.

Another crucial job has been taking place on Samuel Ashworth Street.

Hopwood Electrical and J Greenwoods Ltd have been installing the last four lights in a new scheme designed to improve the lighting for both security and aesthetic reasons in the area as a result of consultation with residents.

College Bank Fire and Evacuation Alarm Systems now live.

We're pleased to update you that the new alarm systems are now live.

There is no additional risk of fire in College Bank, but the new systems will help us to keep you safe in the unlikely event of an incident.

From now on, any alarm you hear in your flat should be treated as a fire alarm, even if there is no smoke in your flat.

If you hear the alarm, please exit the building using the stairs (not the lift), ensure your flat entrance door closes behind you, and make your way to the green fire assembly points away from your block.

At the assembly point you will be told by the Fire Service, RBH Community Guardians, or Waking Watch team when it is safe to return.

If you have a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan, then you will be assisted by the Waking Watch team. If you think you may have difficulty evacuating via the stairs without help and you need a new or updated evacuation plan, please contact us as soon as possible.

The Waking Watch team will remain on site to assist with any evacuation, but with the alarm systems now active you will not see them on patrol as regularly as you will have done over the past 18 months.

Other fire safety updates

- Our replacement programme for flat entrance doors is also making good progress, with work currently underway in Underwood.
- Asbestos removal work continues ahead of door replacements at Tentercroft. We are very thankful to all residents for their patience and appreciate their understanding while we carry out this essential safety work. We really appreciate everyone keeping their appointments but if you do need to rearrange then please get in touch.
- If you spot firefighters at Mitchell Hey it's because Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service uses the building to conduct training sessions for new recruits.
- If you have any fire or building safety questions or want to know more about the work we are doing, please contact us on 0800 277769.

Fire Safety Poster.

This building is designed to contain a fire within the flat or area where it starts.

Fire doors save lives

Do not leave a fire door wedged or propped open, and never disconnect an automatic closer.

If a fire breaks out in your flat:

1. Leave the room where the fire is and close the door.
2. Alert anyone in your flat and leave. When leaving the flat, close the door behind you. Do not stay to put the fire out.
3. Use the staircase to exit the building and wait at one of the Fire assembly points.
4. Dial 999 and wait for the fire service to arrive. Do not re-enter the building until told.

If you hear the Fire alarm or evacuation alarm in your flat:

1. Alert anyone in your flat and leave immediately, closing the door behind you.
2. Do not check for false alarms.
3. If you have a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) in place, the Waking watch will assist you as per your plan.
4. Use the staircase to exit the building and wait at one of the fire assembly points. Do not use the lift.

If you hear the fire alarm sounding somewhere in the building:

You can remain in your flat if you wish, but be prepared to evacuate if the fire alarm sounds in your flat.

If you notice any fire doors within the building that are damaged or wedged open, please call us on Freephone 0800 027 7769.

The Latest from Our New Pioneers.

Since the beginning of the new cohort starting in November, New Pioneers is currently supporting 90 new referrals and have supported 15 people into work.

One of the success stories we're most proud of so far this year is that of Jennifer, who joined in December because she was having issues with her confidence and social anxiety. She's a single mum of three and spent all her time caring for her family with little time for herself.

Jennifer worked with her New Pioneer broker Nicola and started doing wellbeing activities and attending several New Pioneers events, packing Christmas hampers and attending a jobs fair.

Together with Nicola, she started exploring the possibilities of a career working with children, identifying schools as an ideal option so she could look after her children during holidays. Since then, she has gone from strength to strength, completing a 10-week level 2 Teaching Assistant course with Rochdale Training with financial support from New Pioneers.

She applied for an apprenticeship working at her children's school and was successful, starting after the Easter holidays. She's shown huge courage and positivity on her journey and we're so proud of her.

Another New Pioneer to have made great strides is Brian who was referred to us to help him get back into employment after several years unemployed. We're delighted that Brian has started a new position with Frank Blakeley and Son Ltd.

He told us: "I value being given a chance and having someone to talk to through the New Pioneers. Since starting employment, I feel more confident and valued that I have something to offer others.

"The team at Frank Blakeley and Son Ltd have been supportive and helpful. It's a lovely place to work with a friendly team. I appreciate the opportunity they have given me and I'm looking forward to the future."

Public Living Room Open at Spotland

In our last newsletter we mentioned that we were collaborating with Camerados on a Public Living Room and this is now open for everyone at Spotland Community Centre, Monday and Tuesday, 10am to noon.

Why not call in for a coffee and a chat with our lovely Pioneer Tom Barlow, who will also be managing a new Music Lab for anyone who loves to sing or plays an instrument and wants to jam together.

On 8th March, the Public Living Room held an International Woman's Day Event, which was attended by many female Pioneers and brokers, spreading positivity and sharing their stories about feeling empowered as a woman. We now have a women's group every Wednesday at the centre, from 10am to noon.

Other New Pioneer Updates

On 16th March, the Pioneers and Brokers were invited by YourTrust to attend Touchstones Museum for a private tour of the Football Art Prize exhibition which was a very enjoyable afternoon, and we very much look forward to going back to Touchstones for the next exhibition.

We run a drop-in clinic based at Heywood Works and Skills Hub, which is open Monday to Thursday 9.30am to 4.30pm. Why not drop in? We hosted a four-week wellbeing workshop in March which was attended by 15 Pioneers.

We also run a sewing group on Tuesdays between 10am and noon at Spotland Community Centre. This is currently fully booked so please contact Sharon Dunn on sharon.dunn@rochdale.gov.uk to check for upcoming availability.

An Update for Residents in Underwood.

Our colleagues are calling all residents living in Underwood to talk through the next steps for refurbishment work and what support you might need with the temporary move and as this extensive refurbishment is carried out.

The calls are to help explain in more detail what the planned refurbishment and modernisation work could mean for you and to understand if you have any specific housing needs.

Once we have spoken with everyone living at Underwood, someone from our regeneration team will be in touch again to talk through next steps.

Recap on the proposed plans:

- We are planning to start the £12m refurbishment and modernisation work at Underwood in 2023.
- As you may know from our letter last year, the refurbishment will be extensive and will require everyone to move out temporarily while the work takes place.
- Residents from Underwood can be temporarily rehoused in Mardyke and Holland Rise for around a year while the work is carried out.
- Underwood tenants will be able to return to a home within the block, should they wish to, following the refurbishment work.

Get Involved: Your Views Matter

It's really important to us that we design the detail of the refurbishment and modernisation work together with the people who actually live in Underwood - and we'd love for you to get involved.

We expect this could be through small group meetings or giving us feedback to ideas online.

Lots of the tenants in Underwood have already told us they would like to be involved in this. If you're interested and would like to find out more, or if you have any questions about the refurbishment work, please email the regeneration team towncentre.regen@rbh.org.uk or phone 0800 027 7769 (option 6).

Free High-Speed Internet in College Bank.

We're really proud that our new free high-speed internet is now available to all residents in College Bank.

Feel free to use this network as you would your home broadband and connect it to as many devices as you want. The WiFi network is called “Co-operative Rochdale Open Wifi”.

We know that many local people are currently feeling the impact of rises in the cost of living, and we hope that this network will both help residents to meet these challenges, as well as give digital access to residents who otherwise would not be able to get online.

This new internet is known as a “Mesh Network” and has been provided by a partnership between RBH, Rochdale Borough Council, and the Co-operative Heritage Trust, with funding support from the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. We hope to extend this scheme to Lower Falinge in the near future.

Councillor John Blundell, Rochdale Borough Council Portfolio Holder for Economy and Communications, said:

“Working in partnership with RBH and the Co-operative Heritage Trust the Mesh network has enabled us to provide free broadband to everyone living in College Bank that will then be expanded to Lower Falinge and other neighbourhoods.

“This is a much cheaper way of providing a large number of people with access to the internet that then enables us to provide the support needed to help reduce the digital inequalities that have been highlighted during the pandemic and support people to fulfil their potential.”

Liz Mclvor, Co-operative Heritage Trust Manager, added:

“Over 175 years ago, the Rochdale Pioneers started a co-operative society to provide their community with safe, affordable food and a voice for change. Participation in the Mesh Network project allows their original building on Toad Lane (now a museum) to be used as part of the physical infrastructure to address digital inequalities which have widened since the Covid-19 pandemic.

“We believe the unique history of Rochdale still has a part to play in solving modern problems and helping residents to feel invested in their local assets. We feel that the Pioneers themselves would have supported their co-op store being used to help communities and we are proud to be a partner in this exciting pilot.”

RBH Introduces New Corporate Strategy – Succeeding Together, Our Mutual Way.

Over the past year, we’ve held the biggest conversation we’ve ever had with our tenants and employees about what RBH’s priorities should be.

In February, our elected tenants and employees on our Representative Body approved our new priorities in a document which they have named “Succeeding Together”.

These new priorities will apply from 1st April – 10 years after we first became an independent mutual housing society.

Our priorities are:

Core Priority: Pride in Quality Homes and Good Services

Providing great places to live for people and communities to succeed is at the core of what we do.

Supporting Priority: Pride in our People and Communities

We have a significant role in developing Rochdale Borough as a great place to grow up, grow a career, and grow older.

Enabling Priority: Pride in our Society

We want to write a new chapter in Rochdale’s co-operative story - and write it together with our members.

Our vision, combined with our values shapes everything we do.

Our Vision is:

People succeeding together to offer great services and great places to live and work.

As part of this conversation, our Representatives have also refreshed and reviewed our values.

Our Values are:

Collaboration - We are stronger together.

Democracy - We are democratic.

Equity - We seek fairness and equality.

Pioneering - We innovate.

Responsibility - We build mutual respect.

We launched our new strategy with a series of informal chats in late March and early April, which saw tenants and employees chat together with our Executive Team, our Board and our Representatives.

We are planning a larger event in the summer to bring all tenant and employee members together, to celebrate achievements and plan how we can work together to meet our new goals. Watch this space for more details.

Visit www.rbh.org.uk/succeedingtogether to view the full document.

Great things happen when we work together.

A Smashing Move.

As more residents who have been rehoused as part of the town centre regeneration have been settling into their new homes, we heard from one lady who has moved from a flat to a bungalow in Heywood.

Initially, she was very reluctant to move as she had lived in her flat for a long time but with support along the way from family, friends and RBH, she is delighted that she has done it and is really happy with her new home.

If you would like to discuss your options and find out what is right for you, please get in touch with us by email: towncentre.regen@rbh.org.uk or call: 0800 027 7769 (opt 6).

She said: "I wasn't looking forward to moving one bit, but it's worked out smashing for me now that I've done it!"

New Home for RSPCA Animal Centre at Hollingworth Lake Takes Shape

Work on a new state of the art home for Rochdale RSPCA's Animal Centre at Hollingworth Lake is well underway.

We're proud to be part of the partnership with Rochdale RSPCA, Rochdale Borough Council, and Your Trust (formerly Link4Life), working together to deliver a new modern facility providing excellent animal care and facilities.

The former Hollingworth Lake visitors' centre is being refurbished and extended to become the new home for the animal centre.

It will include a new, larger café (with a dog-friendly seating area); improved toilets; a meeting room for community activities, and new premises for the country park rangers.

The new centre is expected to open in the next few months and will help the RSPCA to rehabilitate more wildlife than at its town centre location on Redcross Street.

David Canavan, vice-chair of trustees for the RSPCA's Rochdale branch, said: "We really appreciate the support we get from people in the community and from our donors.

"More than a third of the facilities will be for the public including a new public café with a dog-friendly section, a meeting room, reception desk for information and renovated toilets.

"I hope visitors to Hollingworth Lake will value the new café, public meeting room and new facilities."

The Rochdale branch of the RSPCA was established in 1890 on Redcross Street. As part of the partnership working, we have purchased the Animal Centre's Redcross Street site, which will be part of our delivery of new, genuinely affordable homes in Rochdale town centre.

Rochdale Feel Good Festival.

Main Stage moves to Hopwood Hall

Ongoing refurbishment of Rochdale Town Hall and major improvement works around the town hall square will mean a change for this summer's Rochdale Feel Good Festival, which we wanted to update you on.

The main stage will move 400 metres, to Hopwood Hall College on St Mary's Gate and capacity for the main stage area will be reduced to around 5,000. Indoor stages in town centre venues will remain the same.

While entry to indoor stages in venues will be free, entry to the main stage, headlined by The Fratellis is ticketed. With £7 tickets on sale, festival goers are being advised to book early.

We know that the college car park is quite close to some flats at College Bank and residents are being reassured by the organisers that robust plans will be in place to reduce noise levels. Music on the main stage will start at the later time of 4pm and finish earlier than in previous years - at approximately 9.40pm.

If you have any questions about the festival and would like to contact the organisers, please email events@rochdale.gov.uk

Mark Widdup, director of neighbourhoods at Rochdale Borough Council, said: "We wanted to make sure the festival returns this year but obviously with the town hall work underway we've had to find a new home for the main stage.

For festival updates:

www.facebook.com/feelgoodfestival

<https://twitter.com/FeelGoodFest>

"Hopwood Hall College have been a supporter of this event for a number of years and we look forward to working with them, the site is close to the town centre and within a short walk of our other festival venues."

Julia Heap, the college's principal and CEO said: "We're delighted to be supporting this summer's Rochdale Feel Good Festival. We're really looking forward to welcoming what looks to be a brilliant line-up of acts that everyone can enjoy."

On Saturday 13 August headliners The Fratellis will be joined by northern soul band The Northern Soultrain, Manchester singer/songwriter Abbie Ozard, rock band HAiG,

multi-talented musician Aziz Ibrahim, alternative dance band ENTT, indie/folk duo Firewoodisland, DJ Dave Sweetmore and a local battle of the bands winner, a full programme of entertainment across indoor venues to be announced plus quality food and drink.

Tickets (£7, excluding booking fee) are available at www.rochdalefeelgoodfestival.co.uk or you can book in person at Touchstones Rochdale, Heywood Civic Centre and Middleton Arena.

Jobs in Central Rochdale Residents' Forum

Central Rochdale Residents' forum is now able to meet face to face again and holding regular meetings at Spotland Community Centre.

We'll update you on what's happening with the town centre regeneration and it's an opportunity for you to give us your thoughts and feedback on proposals as they progress so we can work together to develop the details.

Anyone living in College Bank or Lower Falinge neighbourhoods who would like to get involved, have a chat and a bite to eat should contact the Community Investment Team at community.partnership@rbh.org.uk or call 01706 273977.

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

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