

OpenHouse

The newsletter for Croydon Council tenants and leaseholders



Croydon finishes retrofitting fire sprinklers into its first of 26 blocks

Croydon Council has completed work to retrospectively fit sprinklers in the first of 26 of its tower blocks, with support from London Fire Brigade.

A week after the Grenfell Tower tragedy last June, Croydon was the first council to announce it would retrofit sprinklers in its high-rise blocks. A £10m programme in its 25 tallest blocks of 10 to 12 storeys, plus an eight-storey sheltered block, was approved.

In College Green, Upper Norwood, the first building's sprinkler system became operational in mid-February. Council contractors have begun work on a neighbouring council block, with work on another three high-rises starting in the coming weeks.

The council decided to invest in sprinklers without waiting for help from Government, which pledged, in a letter to councils on 31 July, that it would help fund essential works on advice from local fire brigades.

Councillor Alison Butler, deputy leader and cabinet member for homes, regeneration and planning, said: "We invested in our sprinkler programme



Life saver: one of the newly fitted fire sprinklers

because we feel it's essential to our residents' safety in response to the Grenfell tragedy, so it's a real boost to have finished the first of 26 Croydon Council blocks."

Kevin McKenzie, London Fire Brigade borough commander for Croydon, visited the first College Green block during testing, and praised the council's 26-block sprinkler programme.

He said: "Sprinklers play a significant role as part of an appropriate package of fire safety measures in reducing the impact of fire on people, property and the environment, so we welcome this because it gives residents reassurance.

"London Fire Brigade has long been campaigning about the benefits of sprinklers, which save lives and property, and also improve firefighter safety.

"Croydon Council proves it's possible to retrofit sprinklers, and more boroughs and housing owners should follow its lead to protect their most vulnerable residents, including those with mobility issues."

Each flat getting the upgrade has around six sprinklers hidden high on walls, near ceilings, behind a flat white disc. These pop off when the room temperature hits 57 degrees Celsius, then, at 67 degrees, they spray a fine water mist at a wide angle.

The sprinkler will be triggered only in the room affected by fire. This kind of targeted sprinkler reduces the risk

Resident Teresa Cox (centre) with Councillor Alison Butler and Kevin McKenzie, fire brigade borough commander.



of false alarms and water damage, coupled with fire breaks in place that limit spread between neighbouring flats and floors.

Teresa Cox, a College Green resident who lives in one of the first flats to be retrofitted with sprinklers, said: "Anything that saves people's lives has got to be worth the hassle. They were very quick, efficient and polite people, and they did it really well."

As with the first and second blocks, residents in the next blocks due to get sprinklers are being sent update letters and an invitation to coffee mornings so they can view sprinklers already installed and talk with the project team.

Residents wanting to know more about the project can view a frequently-asked-questions page on the council website, and a time-lapse video of the sprinklers being installed – both are available at www.croydon.gov.uk/housing/firesafety.



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'Like' the resident involvement in Croydon Facebook page to keep up to date with the latest news and views.

Visit www.facebook.com/croydonresidentinvolvement

**Would you like
to contribute
to Open House?**

getinvolved@croydon.gov.uk



Contact the editor

I hope you enjoy reading *Open House*.
If you have any comments to make please email:
communications@croydon.gov.uk

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Victorious Mighty Men of Valour in family safety challenge

The Mighty Men of Valour team walked away winners at Croydon's sixth annual All Ages Family Safety Challenge finals on Wednesday 14 February in the Town Hall.

The challenge makes learning about all aspects of safety both interesting and fun, and covers a wide variety of topics on everything from fire escape plans and the recovery position, to internet and water safety and staying healthy.

Alongside the quiz, there was a race to see who could be the fastest-dressed firefighter, with competitors working against the clock to get into protective clothing as quickly as possible, as if they were responding to a fire "shout".

A further test by the St John Ambulance crew challenged teams to show how they knew the correct way of dealing with someone if they found them unconscious and not breathing.

The challenge is growing in popularity every year, and Mighty Men of Valour – the Broad Green-based group working to improve the lives of boys, men, husbands and fathers (<http://mightymenofvalour.org>) – beat off stiff competition from 11 other teams



from across the borough to take part in the finals in the packed council chamber.

This year almost 2,000 people of all ages have taken part in 78 community events as part of the project.

Councillor Alison Butler, council deputy leader and cabinet member for homes and regeneration, said: "Fire safety is a serious matter, as the tragic fire at Grenfell has shown – but learning about it is important and can save lives. The Mighty Men of Valour team were worthy victors and really took the challenge seriously – as did every team who entered."

David Gill from London Fire Brigade's Crossfire

team said: "Having a plan for what to do in the case of a fire, and knowing some basic first aid are all life-saving skills, and this challenge helps us to teach hundreds of people every year how to stay safe in their homes. It's a great project and has undoubtedly helped prevent some potential tragedies".

The challenge is open to community groups based in or near any of Croydon's larger council housing developments. If you would like to find out more, email the sustainable communities team at sustainable.communities@croydon.gov.uk or telephone **020 8726 6100** ext. **62065**.

Join us and help improve housing services for all

Tenants and leaseholders who are already members of the tenant and leaseholder panel (TLP) are calling on others to get involved and help make a difference.

The resident-led panel meets four times a year in the Town Hall's council chamber and discusses housing services which affect tenant and leaseholders across the borough. If you want to contribute your ideas and views on the way the council manages your homes and estates this is the panel for you.

Agendas are set by residents, and meetings are chaired by a resident. Councillors and housing service managers are present to listen to you and answer your questions.

Yaw Boateng, a Handcroft Road estate tenant, has been a panel member for several years. He said: "The panel meetings cover a range of topics from rent and service charge setting, antisocial behaviour, caretaking and future programmes for improving our homes.

"It's important that the council gives us the opportunity to influence our services. We need more people to get involved. It's only four meetings a year, so give it a try. I've learnt so much – and the council does listen to us!"

If you are interested in joining your fellow tenants and leaseholders on the panel, send an email, headed 'TLP membership', to getinvolved@croydon.gov.uk to receive details of how to apply for membership.

Give our communications the seal of approval

If you're a Croydon tenant or leaseholder with a passion for good communication and getting voices heard, our new Communications Checked group is for you!

We're on the hunt for a diverse mix of friendly and open-minded residents of all ages and backgrounds who'd be able to set aside a few hours over the course of a year to review and feedback on publicity materials, information and online content created for Croydon tenants and leaseholders before they are published.

The group is open to virtual members who'd prefer to give feedback via email or online. Your input will help us to make sure our communications are easy to understand, user-friendly and appeal to all those who live in our homes.

Over the next few months, we also want to

make it easier for residents to have their say and talk to us about the things which matter to them. We know many of you lead busy lives and it's not always possible to attend face-to-face meetings during the day or evening.

We'll be asking this group for their views about how we can engage with a wider and more diverse group of residents, especially young people and those with families.

Getting involved can help people to feel part of their community and reduces the risk of social isolation, so finding ways to talk to tenants who live alone or have caring responsibilities is also a big

priority for us.

Interested? Just email getinvolved@croydon.gov.uk or call the resident involvement team on **020 8726 6100** for an informal chat about what's involved.

More information about the many ways in which you can get involved and have your say on housing services can be found at www.croydon.gov.uk/residentinvolvement



Council homes to be redecorated for free

Will your council home be one of those that we decorate for free this year?

You can apply for the council's supported redecoration scheme if:

- either you or anyone living with you is 70 years of age or older, or you are physically unable to do the work yourself and there is no able-bodied person between the ages of 16 and 69 living with you (if you are applying for this scheme because of a physical disability or chronic illness, your professional carer will need to confirm that you are unable to redecorate your home);
- you are a secure (permanent) Croydon Council tenant; and
- you are receiving, or are eligible for, housing benefit.

You will also need to meet the following criteria.

- You do not owe any outstanding rent or other housing charges.
- Legal action is not being taken against you for a breach of your tenancy conditions.
- You are not currently subject to council action for antisocial behaviour.
- You have not received a second warning letter about an outstanding gas safety inspection.
- You have not had decoration vouchers for your property in the past seven years.
- All or part of your home has not been redecorated in the past seven years (or, if on our inspection, your home is in good decorative order).

- You are not in the process of buying your current home through the council's Right to Buy scheme or a home on the open market.

When can I apply?

If you meet all of the scheme conditions, apply before the closing date of **Friday 30 March**. Applications will be considered and selections made on a first-come, first-served basis.

If you are interested in the supported redecoration scheme, apply by email to lettingsteam@croydon.gov.uk for an application form.

Please contact the council on **020 8726 6100** if you need help to complete an application form. If you are housebound, a home visit can be arranged to help you to complete the form.

Storing scooters for safety of residents



The safety of those living in its blocks of flats has always been a priority of the council – and that priority has taken on higher significance following the awful events at Grenfell Tower.

Fire safety inspections are long-established, and recent visits by London Fire Brigade officers have highlighted the risks associated with the storage, and charging, of mobility scooters in corridors and communal areas.

Some may feel that those areas have adequate space to enable escape in the event of a fire. However, when corridors are full of smoke, any sense of direction can be lost, and objects in the hall or corridor could potentially cause delays in escaping, and, in a worst-case scenario, death.

To ensure the safety of residents, and following fire brigade advice, the council has embarked on a programme of providing purpose-built scooter storage.

Blocks identified as having fire risks are the council's initial focus, as the aim is to support residents' desire to stay in their own home and be independent for as long as possible. The council recognises that this solution makes residents happy, as the alternative may be moving into an

expensive care home.

The first block to see external scooter storage completed was Layton Crescent in Waddon, and the first resident to apply for a scooter store was Thelma Gibbs (pictured).

Allington Court, in Addiscombe, was the second block completed, where part of the communal dining room area was converted.

Work to build scooter storage at Southlands Close, in Coulsdon, is under way.

Each scooter storage solution will be different and appropriate to that particular block, the space available and to the level of need identified, but also future-proofed to provide more scooter storage than is currently needed.

Anybody thinking about buying a scooter should first consider where they are going to store and charge it. Any resident must contact their tenancy officer to obtain permission before going ahead with the purchase.

Clearing the communal spaces

The tragic fire that destroyed Grenfell Tower has had far-reaching consequences spreading beyond those immediately affected to tower blocks and their residents across the country.

Croydon has been working closely with the London Fire Brigade to keep residents safe in the event of a fire, pointing out that it's not just the building itself that ensures your safety, you have a role to play too, particularly in how communal areas are used.

Reviews of communal areas have resulted in a stricter observance of the rules regarding what can be kept there. Fire safety inspections have identified items in the communal areas that pose serious fire hazards. Many residents have responded positively by removing such items, and finding alternative places to store them.

In some cases, however, items have had to be removed by the caretaking staff. Unfortunately, there have been instances of residents threatening and abusing staff as they have been going about this important work.

Such behaviour is unacceptable, and is in breach of the conditions of tenancy. Action will be taken against this minority of residents.



It is very important to remember that in a fire every second counts and any clutter in communal areas could prove fatal by delaying residents' escape and fire brigade access to the building.

In addition to being a trip hazard, items being stored in communal areas are often highly flammable, and could cause a fire to spread faster.

Your safety is our priority, and it is vital to ensure that anything that could spread the fire or delay escape from the building is removed from the communal areas. We appreciate your ongoing cooperation with this.



Building homes Brick by Brick

Croydon, like many other London boroughs, has a rapidly growing population and a critical shortage of housing of all tenures.

You may be aware that Croydon Council is seeking to address this problem by setting up a development company called Brick by Brick, which has been developing proposals for various sites around the borough.

Work has now progressed to initial construction activity stage on many of these sites and the Brick by Brick team has been liaising with neighbouring residents.

Initial works include putting up

hoardings, ground investigations and/or demolition works on the following sites:

- Auckland Rise and Sylvan Hill, South Norwood
- Ravensdale Gardens and Rushden Close, Upper Norwood
- Regina Road, South Norwood
- Marston Way, Upper Norwood
- Northbrook Road, Selhurst
- Malton House, Selhurst

- Tollers Lane, Coulsdon East
 - Homefield House, Coulsdon East
 - Cheriton House, Bensham Manor
- If you would like more information about Brick by Brick, contact the local delivery team or see www.bxbdevelopment.com

The company can also be followed on Twitter – [@bxbdevelopment](https://twitter.com/bxbdevelopment) – for further updates.



Large and unwanted items? Call on the bulk waste service

Getting rid of unwanted items that can't be recycled or reused but are just too big to be easily handled is not as difficult as many may think.

The council offers a collection service that will transport up to 14 large or unwanted items per visit and up to four white goods – such as a cooker or an oven, a fridge, a freezer or electrical items.

There is a small charge for this service.

- Furniture and non-electrical items: £10 up to seven items; £20 for eight to 14 items.
- White goods and electrical items: £20 for up to four items.

To use the service, you must have an online My Account. If you haven't done so already, set up a My Account at

www.croydon.gov.uk/advice/counciltax/faqs/registeronlineaccount

For more information on bulk waste, visit www.croydon.gov.uk/bulkywaste



Improving the housing stock

The council's ongoing programme of property-condition surveys has revealed that some blocks of flats would benefit from improvements.

Working closely with contractor partner Mulalley, the council has investigated issues at some of its blocks and worked to find ways to remedy the problems affecting those blocks and their tenants.

The council is committed to improving the appearance of the blocks and surrounding areas, creating places that people want to be.

Consultation and engagement events have already taken place at several blocks to discuss the proposals and gain feedback from residents.

At College Green, Upper Norwood; Chertsey Crescent, New Addington; and Dartmouth House, Selhurst, the following works are planned:

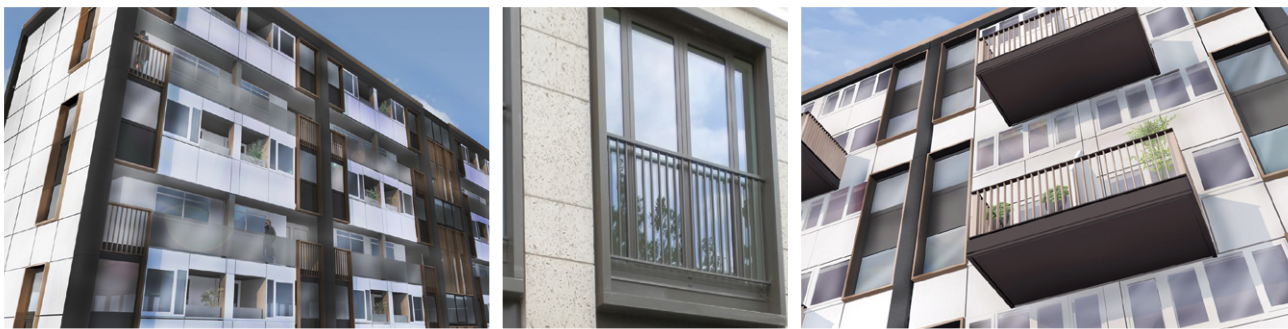
- external cladding;
- roof renewal;
- new windows;
- improved security;

- new or improved refuse areas;
- enhanced external areas;
- improved lighting; and
- increased thermal efficiency

In addition to the installation of sprinklers in 25 of the tallest tower blocks (see front page article), work is also ongoing to the blocks in Longheath Gardens to undertake concrete repairs, replace the roofs and carry out cleaning and repairs to the drains across the estate.

The condition of all blocks will continue to be assessed, as will investigation of any issues with a view to finding solutions.

Investigations to several blocks across the borough are ongoing and details of specific developments will be published in future editions of Open House.



A guide to Tenants Home Improvements



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Tenants' home improvements

Did you know that, if you have a secure tenancy, with the council's permission you can carry out some types of improvement or alteration to your home?

The types of improvement you can make include replacing a kitchen or bathroom, installing a shower over a bath, or constructing a vehicle hard-standing (subject to installation of a drop kerb/crossover).

More information about the types of improvements you can make and how to make an application are in the new A guide to tenants' home improvements booklet, which can be found at www.croydon.gov.uk/tenantshomeimprovements.

Alternatively, email virginia.nievespearce@croydon.gov.uk or call 020 8760 5768 ext. 63571.

Taking care of business

Would-be entrepreneurs flocked to central Croydon in the autumn to pick up valuable tips on setting up their own businesses.

Open to everyone, including the long-term unemployed, the Pop-up Business School returned to the Whitgift Shopping Centre for a second year. This free course was designed for those with a business idea but no website, premises or start-up cash.

The course was sponsored by Croydon Council, Whitgift and Centrale shopping centres, the Croydon Partnership, and Wandle and Optivo housing associations.

Over two weeks, 94 residents attended, seeking help in developing their ideas by getting:

- one-to-one help from a team of experts;
- tips on developing their own website for free; and
- advice on marketing via social media.

Following the workshops, they were offered the chance to use their newly acquired skills in a vacant Whitgift unit, managed by the Croydon Partnership's community team with support from Croydon Voluntary Action volunteers. Over three weeks, 16 people traded, five of whom were Croydon Council tenants.

The outcomes of the Pop-up Business School include:

- 26% of those who took part made a sale in the first two weeks;
- 18 have now published their own websites;
- 38 have set up their own social media Twitter, Facebook or Instagram account;
- a range of different businesses created covered subjects including cooking, online blogs, health and beauty, and event planning; and
- improved confidence, self-efficacy, happiness and business skills.

The success of the Pop-up Business School has prompted organisers to work with the participants to set up a Friends of Pop-up group for networking, support and sharing ideas.

For more information visit the Pop-up Business School website at:

www.popupbusinessschool.co.uk/croydon or email sian.foley@croydon.gov.uk



Participants' feedback

"Thank you guys so much, I have learned so many new skills. I will definitely recommend this workshop to other budding entrepreneurs."

"This is money well invested in the community, enabling a wide spectrum of people to benefit from business options."



Stopping off for good, affordable food



Healthy, good quality, affordable food – that’s what the recently opened Food Stop in Fieldway promises to deliver.

More than 380 local residents attended the official opening, in October, by the Mayor of Croydon, Councillor Toni Letts, assisted by JB Gill, a former member of teen favourites JLS.

And, in the first few months of operation, Food Stop helped almost 100 struggling households save a combined £4,700 on their food bills.

Most of those households are parents with children but there are also several elderly members. As well as the cheaper food, members can access benefits including a weekly jobs club, budgeting help, and health

and well-being advice to avoid homelessness.

Food Stop is a project delivered by the Family Centre, in Fieldway, and supported by the council’s Gateway service development team in partnership with FareShare, a charity that sources products from supermarkets including Tesco, Waitrose and Aldi.

Fieldway and New Addington residents can become members for a weekly fee of £3.50, giving them access to healthy, good-quality, affordable food worth around £15 to £20 per week and helping them save an average of £500 to £700 per year on their food shopping expenditure.

The food ranges from fresh meat and vegetables to tinned foods and pasta, and includes donations provided by charity FareShare.

The scheme is innovative because, in return for access to discounted groceries, families in need are signed up to receive help with household finances from Croydon Council’s Gateway service. Since being set up in 2015, Gateway has helped more than 1,300 families avoid homelessness, supported over 500 people into jobs, and given £2m to support residents with rent arrears.

Councillor Hamida Ali, cabinet member for communities, safety and justice, said: “It’s fantastic. Food Stop is making a real difference to struggling households of all ages by putting food on the table and making bills more affordable.

“However, Food Stop isn’t just about short-term

support, but assisting residents in the long term – from learning to cook healthier meals and getting a job to affording family days out.”

Food Stop opens every Wednesday and Thursday, with priority given to jobseekers on benefits such as Universal Credit.

Anybody living in Fieldway or New Addington who is keen to become a member or wants to find more information, should call the Family Centre on **01689 844277** or email familycentre.fieldway@virgin.net

With membership currently available only to residents of Fieldway and New Addington, applications will need to be accompanied by proof of address.

As part of the project, FareShare has enabled the Food Stop to become a local collection point for other charities who distribute free food elsewhere, such as the Salvation Army.



Former member of boyband JLS, JB Gill attends the opening



The Food Stop shop

Roll up your sleeves and join a community clean-up day

Clean-up days are all about the community coming together to tackle unloved spaces or improving forgotten areas.

They are days that the residents make the difference with their ideas and effort. Recently, the council worked with residents to clear away fly-tips, brambles and weeds from a patch of land behind their houses. The residents have asked that this area is turned into something that they can use to deter antisocial behaviour.

Adam Curtis, tenancy and neighbourhood services coordinator, said: “We’re always wanting to have more areas where we can support residents.

“It’s a day of real collaboration to transform

areas where local residents work with neighbourhood safety officers, housing officers, Veolia and other organisations.”

Previous clean-up days have seen council staff and contractors helping residents clean forgotten alleys, install flowerbeds, remove fly-tips, restore areas behind houses, and clear larger areas, such as communal ground.

Anybody keen to organise a clean-up day and who wants more information, can call Adam on **020 8726 6100** or email adam.curtis@croydon.gov.uk



We want your views on Croydon’s libraries

Following the collapse of Carillion in January, the council brought Croydon libraries back in-house, securing the long-term future of the service and guaranteeing the jobs of all library staff.

As part of the council’s commitment to protect and boost our library services for residents, we want your views – whether you currently use Croydon’s libraries or not – about how we can improve the service and what you would like to see more of in Croydon libraries.

Whether courses, a café, easier access to council services or a meeting space for businesses, tell us your thoughts and help shape the

Croydon library service of the future. The views expressed in the survey will form part of a borough wide library strategy that will help shape the delivery of library services for decades to come.

To share your views, complete the online survey at www.croydon.gov.uk/librarysurvey by **26 March 2018**.

Anyone needing help completing the survey should contact staff at their local library.



Exploding the myths

There is a housing crisis in Croydon, and while there are various projects to increase supply, demand continues to grow.

Council tenancies are no longer for life, but there is an increasing supply of private rented properties in the borough.

There are around 5,000 households on the council's housing register and transfer lists waiting for social housing but, in September, only eight households successfully bid for ready-to-let social housing (including secure transfers).

Should you or any family members or friends have a housing issue, there are various housing schemes now available – see the picture.

Detailed information can be found at www.croydonchoice.org.uk

For more information about available support, visit www.croydon.gov.uk/your-home-your-move

Despite an abundance of factual information, it remains the case that many outdated myths about social housing continue to exist. Among the most common are the following – like all **myths**, they simply are not true.

- I have a right to a council house – my parents got one.
- Young people who are pregnant automatically get a council house.
- If my doctor says I need a council house, I will be given one.
- Homelessness is a quick route to a council home.




Pip goes under the Taasc spotlight

The focus of September's Taasc (talking about adult social care) event was personal independent payments (Pip).

Taasc events take place twice a year and give service users and carers an opportunity to meet service managers to comment on issues that affect them and others in the borough.

The discussion topic was chosen by the Croydon adult social services user panel (Cassup), which helped to facilitate roundtable discussions on people's experiences of Pip.

The event was chaired by panel members Yusuf Osman and Nicky Selwyn (pictured).

Presentations were delivered by the Department for Works and Pensions and the Croydon welfare rights team and were well received.

To keep up to date with the latest resident involvement news and information, sign up to receive the e-newsletter Involve at www.croydon.gov.uk/subscribe or visit www.facebook.com/croydonresidentinvolvement.



JustBe happier and healthier

JustBe Croydon is a website for all Croydon residents. It has been designed to help you take positive steps toward becoming a happier and healthier YOU.

Big steps or little steps, we believe everyone can make small changes with a little bit of help and support. We have selected the best tools to help you make a change, from losing weight, getting more active and stopping smoking to drinking less, sleeping better and feeling happier.

There are apps, podcasts, expert advice, videos, diet plans and exercise routes to help you get started. There is information on local services and a range of resources that will support you in making changes to your lifestyle.

You can even assess your health right now

using our Health MOT. We will help you to identify lifestyle changes and put you in touch with the right tools – or people who can help you make a change.

If you have any problems accessing the website, or would just like a chat with one of the Live Well Advisors, you can find them at one of our weekly Health Hubs across the borough.

Stay aware and learn more on how to take the steps to a healthier YOU via the online options below.

www.justbecroydon.org

www.justbecroydon.org/health-checker/health-mot

 JustBe Croydon

 @JustBeCroydon



Parks get new contractor

The council's green spaces contractor, with overall responsibility for the borough's parks, is now called Id Verde following a merger with the former contractor, Quadron.

There will be no change in the process of reporting concerns, which is to call the contact centre, on **020 8726 6000**, from where it will be referred to the contract inspector.

Celebrating Silver Sunday



Gordon Bennett – what a great afternoon!

Combating social isolation and loneliness was the aim of a Silver Sunday event for the borough's senior residents – and judging from the comments of those who went, it was a success.

St. Georges Church, in Waddon, was the venue of the afternoon tea party on 11 October, to which residents from our sheltered and other accommodation were invited.

More than 70 residents from across the borough registered to attend and they were treated to an afternoon of cakes, sandwiches, pastries, biscuits and as much tea and coffee as they could drink.

The hall was simply decorated with balloons and garlands, and the tables covered with white table clothes and lavender napkins, set with cake stands full of cream scones, macarons and mini cakes.

Attending the event were representatives of Age

UK and JustBe Croydon. As well as speaking to the residents about some of their current projects, they helped with the serving of food, refreshments and completing the questionnaire.

Entertainment came in the shape of old-time musical performer Gordon Bennett, who handed out song sheets so that everyone could get involved in the singalong. Partygoers were also encouraged to form a Conga chain and dance around the room, encouraging others to take part.

The results of the questionnaire showed that residents had enjoyed the afternoon and relished the opportunity to meet and converse with others.

They indicated that they would like similar events in the future, and were interested in day trips, knitting groups, craft making and a fashion show for seniors, as well as more entertainment.

If you would like to deliver a project for older people to combat isolation – such as a Big Lunch, Silver Sunday or other community project – email the sustainable communities team at sustainable.communities@croydon.gov.uk or telephone **020 8726 6100** ext. **62065**

Croftleigh vintage tea party



Buck's Fizz, fantastic food, magic and music – what better way to spend a Silver Sunday afternoon?

Reverend Nick Graves, Big Love Foundation and a team of volunteers from across the community came together on 21 October to deliver the fun-filled event.

The tea party's aim was to increase social interaction and inclusion of older people, identify vulnerable persons, and to signpost them to support. The event also worked to improve the general well-being and enhance the lives of local older residents, while using the gathered knowledge of the people in the room to direct isolated individuals to services and groups for support.

A Buck's Fizz reception was followed by a delicious selection of food while Theo the Magician entertained revellers with up-close

magic tricks. The finale was a performance by Ayres and Greyces, a music and spoken word performance group who entertained the room with a set taking in Everly Brothers songs and poems by Pam Ayres.

Positive feedback included:

- a woman who tearfully thanked the volunteers, saying how beautiful the room looked and how special that made her feel;
- a number of individuals expressing their gratitude to the church and Croydon Council for staging the event and saying that it was the first time that anyone had thanked them; and
- an individual who said: "This event means so much to us because most of the time we're made to feel that we're a burden to society because we're living too long!"

To keep up to date with the latest news and information from the resident involvement and scrutiny team and to find out more about your housing services and how to get involved and have your say, sign up to receive the e-newsletter *Involve* at www.croydon.gov.uk/subscribe, or like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/croydonresidentinvolvement. You can also subscribe to *Your Croydon weekly*, the council's email full of news and information about your borough.