



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA

Our Borough

Spring 2026

New neighbourhoods

Looking ahead to Kensal
Canalside and Earl's Court

A caring community

Check out our exciting vision
for adult social care

Are you vote-ready?

What you need to know ahead
of May's local elections

Perfecting Portobello

How the community is shaping
our world-famous market's future

Plus

• Challenging budget set • Cyber attack
recovery • Albert Bridge update

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From the leader

Welcome to this edition of Our Borough.

A lot has happened since our edition last year.

As many of you will know, at the end of last year this Council was the victim of a cyber attack. I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for all your patience and support as we recover. Full recovery takes time, but I am determined that we use the attack as an opportunity to build back better. We need resilient systems, that are customer focused, making it easier for you to get what you need from us.

We have also received our funding settlement from the Government. As you may remember, the Government is dramatically reducing funding to inner London boroughs such as Kensington and Chelsea. We had expected to lose £82 million, however, I am afraid to say that the position has worsened and in December the Government confirmed that we would lose £108 million over the next four years. This is an unprecedented funding cut and is equivalent to well over 40 per cent of our controllable budget.

Through no fault of our own, this borough will be facing some very tough choices in the years ahead. Throughout this, we will do everything we can to protect the services our residents really care about. In our budget for the year ahead (pages 12-13), you'll see no change to services such as our twice-weekly bin collections, our award-winning parks, clean streets and borough-wide parking permits.

Despite an incredibly challenging financial picture, it's not all doom and gloom. There are lots of exciting things we are planning over the months ahead:

- Working with Transport for London, we are delivering full step-free access at South Kensington Station (p7)
- We are delivering a brand-new park at Lots Road, including a new pier and walkway along the River Thames (p17)
- Portobello Road is getting a multi-million-pound improvement (p28-29)
- We are transforming our adult social care accommodation, with plans for a new day care centre and more high needs accommodation (p22-23)
- We are opening more new homes, with 85 homes at Barlby Road being delivered this year (p18-19)

Enjoy the issue!

CLlr Elizabeth Campbell
Leader



Investing in a cleaner borough

The streets of Kensington and Chelsea got an early spring clean this year thanks to a £700,000 investment – meaning more staff, more vehicles and more streets cleaned every day.

The new service includes two new electric vehicles and three new electric sweepers.

Busy areas such as shopping streets, restaurants and stations will benefit from enhanced street washing with a new crew and vehicle.

An extra crew will operate daily, clearing dumped rubbish from 50 more streets in a further boost to the borough's cleaning schedule.



Cllr Johnny Thalassites, lead member for environment and planning said:



“Residents care about the state of their neighbourhoods and so do we. We pride ourselves on the cleanliness of our streets, but there is always more we can do, which is why we are making this extra effort to make the streets of Kensington and Chelsea the cleanest in the UK.”

“Despite the challenges we face, both in our budget and recovering from a recent cyber attack, this boost to our waste and street cleaning shows that this Council is absolutely committed to finding ways to meet the priorities of our residents and visitors to keep Kensington and Chelsea a wonderful place to be.”

Extra staff will be on hand to empty bins at weekends when footfall is high.

This new investment in street cleaning has been made possible thanks to increased enforcement of environmental crime, like littering and fly-tipping.

Private renting is changing

Did you know that rules for private renting are changing?

The Renters’ Rights Act comes into force on 1 May 2026 and will mean new rules for landlords.

The Act aims to transform the experience of private renting and provide renters with greater security and stability so they can stay in their homes for longer.

The key changes include an end to Section 21 “no fault” evictions, a ban on fixed-term assured tenancies, a one-per-year limit on rent increases and a ban on discriminating against prospective renters who have children or receive benefits.

The Act also provides councils with greater powers to investigate landlords and enforce compliance, including issuing higher fines and penalties.

To help us prepare for the Act, we’re consulting on a new Housing Enforcement Policy.

Find out more and have your say by Monday 30 March 2026 at consult.rbkc.gov.uk/housing/housing-enforcement-policy

UK Government

LANDLORDS GET ON TOP OF THE RENTING CHANGES

You will need to know these important changes

Renting is changing

Landlords wanting to know more about the new rules under the Renters’ Rights Act should visit www.gov.uk/rentingischanging

Scan here

Get Active for Life

Did you know that as a resident of Kensington and Chelsea, you qualify for a host of free and low-cost activities across our leisure centres and parks to help you live a more active lifestyle?

Active for Life is a Council programme of activities, classes and sporting provisions, including a number especially for key groups such as older people, those with disabilities or long-term health conditions, women and girls and the socially isolated.

One of the best ways to start your journey to a more active life is by signing up for discounted monthly or annual membership to our two leisure centres – **Kensington Leisure Centre** on Silchester Road W10 6EX, and **Chelsea Sports Centre** on Manor Street SW3 5PL.

You can also take advantage of a pay-as-you-go Better Pay and Play membership, providing you with discounts of up to 50 per cent at both centres on swimming, classes and use of the gyms.

Active advantages

Just 30 minutes of physical activity each day can help:

- Lower blood pressure
- Improve mental wellbeing
- Build social connections
- Reduce risk of heart disease and obesity

Want to find out more about resident memberships and fitness benefits at our leisure centres? Visit www.better.org.uk/kensington or call **020 3793 8210** for Kensington Leisure Centre or www.better.org.uk/chelsea or **020 7352 6985** for Chelsea Sports Centre.



Supporting victims of flooding

We are installing measures to help protect homes at risk of flooding in the borough. After successfully applying for grant funding from the Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, we will be able to install protective measures in more than 80 properties, like flood doors, flood barriers and self-closing air brick covers.

The properties will be selected based on evidence of vulnerability to flooding including in Notting Hill, Notting Dale and Lorne Gardens. We ran a consultation last year to gather evidence and expressions of interest.

We have been supporting residents in Lorne Gardens since the recent burst water main at Holland Park Roundabout,

lobbying Thames Water to also contribute to additional measures at these homes and to fix their ageing infrastructure.

Find out more about our work to limit the impacts of flooding, and how you can protect your home at www.rbkc.gov.uk/flooding



Food waste collection goes boroughwide

Did you know that soon everyone in the borough will be able to sign up to a free food waste collection?

Most wards are already offered the service and we are now expanding boroughwide. We will provide caddies for kerbside collections and our crews will collect on one of your usual waste collection days, making it easy for you to remember.

Take our quiz below to test your knowledge and find out more.

How many recycled tea bags does it take to make enough energy to boil a kettle?

- a. 6
- b. 16
- c. 160

How much does it cost for food waste collection in Kensington and Chelsea?

- a. £75.90 per year
- b. £3 per week
- c. Free

How much of the rubbish we throw away in Kensington and Chelsea is food waste?

- a. 10 per cent
- b. 30 per cent
- c. 45 per cent

Sign up for food waste collections via foodwaste@rbkc.gov.uk or by calling **020 7361 3001**.

Scan the QR code or visit our website for more information: www.rbkc.gov.uk/foodrecycling

Scan here



Answers:
Question 1: a. 6

Question 2: c. Free

Question 3: b. 30 per cent



Step-free at South Kensington Station



With 30 million visitors a year, South Kensington Station serves three major hospitals and world-famous institutions and museums, attracting visitors from near and far.

After many years of resident and Council campaigning to ensure residents, patients and visitors have equal access to this iconic area of London, Transport for London has at last committed to installing step free access to all platforms.

Last year, the Council offered a multi-million pound contribution to the project to help make it happen, as long as step-free was made available to both the Circle and District line platforms and the Piccadilly line platforms.

This offer of a financial contribution will stand, despite our financial challenges. Council leader Elizabeth Campbell has asked officers to look at how we can ensure it is factored into our budgets in the future.

Theo Mandic-Tyler, 26, accesses disability services in Kensington and spends most of his time in the borough. He said:

“It’s boring for us wheelchair users to just use the buses. We would like to use the tubes but at the moment we can’t.

“Hopefully in the future everything will be able to be better for wheelchair users and buggy users and more wheelchair users will come.”



Potholes? What potholes?

Maintaining our streets is one of the things we know you expect to be done by your Council and done well. In our November 2025 residents’ survey, 73 per cent of respondents were satisfied with our road maintenance – 24 per cent higher than the London average.

When there are national headlines about poor roads across the country, how do we ensure Kensington and Chelsea’s streets are near enough pothole free?

Well, the secret is not rocket science - it’s proactive investment and forward planning. Last year, we spent around £4.5 million on maintaining our roads and 90 per cent of the work we do is proactive. That means we are keeping them safe before they need emergency repairs.

We have a regular inspection programme, with our principal roads and heavily used pavements inspected monthly and minor roads every six months.

Our inspectors record the condition of the pavement, carriageway, and street furniture and look for any other potential hazards to road users. We make urgent repairs within two or 24 hours depending on the severity.

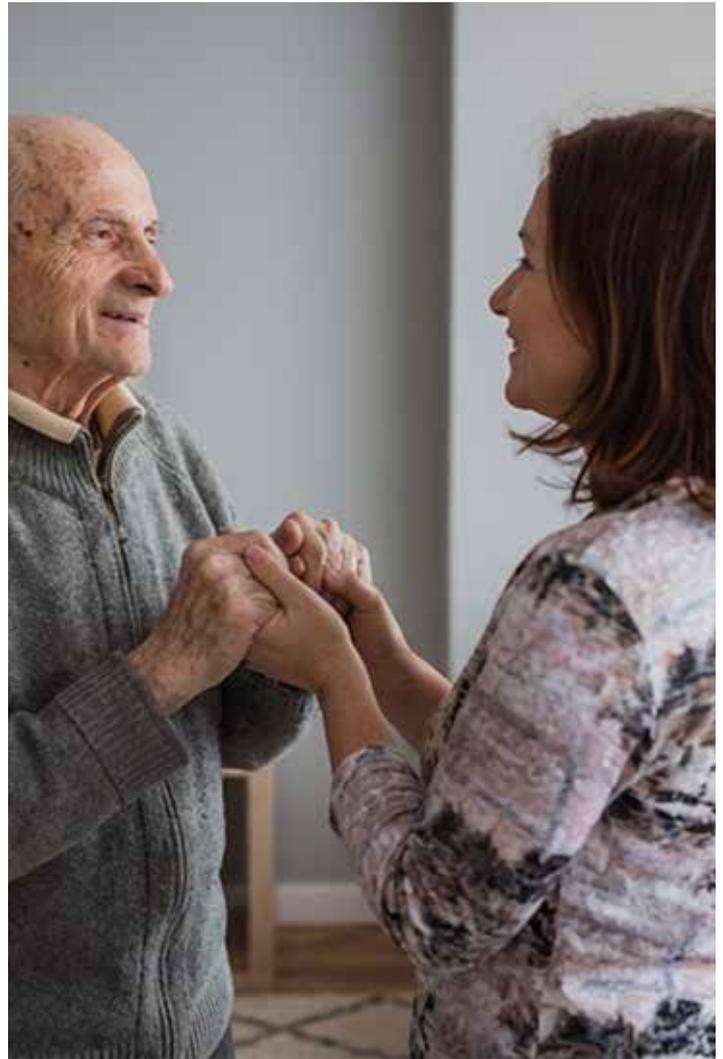
If you would like to report a footway or carriageway defect on our streets, please contact Streetline on **020 7361 3001** or email highways@rbkc.gov.uk.

Healthy hearts and minds

Feeling lonely or worried about your health? You're not alone – thousands of residents experience loneliness or face risks to their heart health. These challenges often go hand-in-hand, affecting both mental and physical wellbeing.

Loneliness isn't just an emotional struggle; it can be as harmful as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, increasing the risk of dementia, stroke, heart disease, and early death.

Similarly, heart health issues like high blood pressure and diabetes often creep up on us. Together, these factors can impact our quality of life – but small steps can make a big difference.



We are tackling both loneliness and heart health in Kensington and Chelsea by:

- **Raising awareness:** Offering free 90-minute sessions on loneliness, run by Mind, for anyone living or working in the borough.
- **Improving identification:** Frontline staff are trained to ask about loneliness sensitively, supported by social media and printed guides listing local services.

Did you know?

Cardiovascular disease is one of the leading causes of early death in the borough.

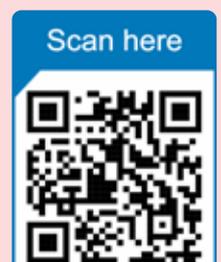
What can you do?

To find out more, check out the information on these websites or scan the QR codes

- **Feeling lonely?** Check out our Wellbeing Hub to explore free or low-cost mental health and emotional wellbeing support. www.rbkc.gov.uk/wellbeing-hub



- **Want to help others feel connected?** Sign up for free loneliness awareness and support training from Mind. www.q.me-qr.com/l/mind-loneliness-and-awareness-training



- **Get moving:** Join one of our Wellbeing Walks, a great way to boost your mood and your heart health. www.rbkc.gov.uk/events/wellbeing-walk-2



- **NHS Health Check:** Book a free check-up of the health of your heart and blood vessels. www.nhs.uk/tests-and-treatments/nhs-health-check/



Healing and growing through gardening

Volunteering outdoors is a powerful way to heal and build pride in place – and on the Lancaster West Estate, green spaces are providing shared areas of respite, purpose and community connection.

Following the Grenfell tragedy, the estate's gardens have provided a quiet but meaningful opportunity for local residents to come together.

What were once underused spaces have been shaped into welcoming environments through collective effort, where people choose community and connection.

Time spent gardening together creates moments of care and belonging, with around 90 per cent of participants saying they now feel more connected to their community.

Volunteering on the allotments has opened doors to learning, skills and employment development, while also supporting people with complex needs through the Volunteer Centre.

Robert Halbert-Pereno, who has lived on the estate since 1996 and helps coordinate volunteers, said: *“Working outdoors, touching the earth and growing food has helped me find calm, routine and confidence again.*

“Activities such as food growing, learning about locally-growing herbs and foraging, and welcoming schools, survivors, Council staff and corporate volunteers have turned the gardens into truly shared public spaces.”



These green spaces encourage understanding across different groups and help challenge misconceptions about the area by inviting people to experience it firsthand.

In a place shaped by loss, volunteering outdoors offers moments of happiness, dignity and hope – reinforcing a shared sense of home and reminding residents that pride in place can be grown, together.



Recovery underway following criminal cyber attack

A number of services are starting to return following the criminal cyber attack which targeted the Council late last year.

Since the attack on Monday 24 November 2025, our teams have been working night-and-day with cybersecurity specialists from NCC Group and the National Cyber Security Centre to restore systems our residents rely on.

Thanks to this work, in February we were able to safely and securely resume accepting direct debit payments for council tax, and were able to make £10 million in backdated housing benefit payments.

This was followed by us successfully restoring our planning systems in March, allowing us to progress applications beyond the validation stage. Many of our phone lines are also now working again.

Now we have entered the recovery phase of the incident, additional systems will return once it is safe for them to do so. Keep an eye on our website, www.rbkc.gov.uk, and social media to find out the latest news.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2024, the local government sector reported over 150 incidents to the Information Commissioner's Office.

What happened

Following extensive investigation with cybersecurity specialists from NCC Group and independent forensic experts, we confirmed that this was a cyber-attack with criminal intent, with data copied and taken away.

Our cybersecurity team detected and contained the attack quickly and we believe it was stopped before it spread to third-party systems that help us provide services and store data.

We confirmed a data breach with the Information Commissioner's Office at the earliest opportunity. We are now investigating that breach for any sensitive data. Small samples show that some of the resident data copied is likely to contain sensitive data and personal information.

It is possible that any data copied and taken from us could be misused or published. We are planning accordingly for this, working with law enforcement at every step.

Cyber recovery update

What we're doing

We are currently checking details in files that may have been accessed; much of this will yield nothing, but we want to make sure we turn over every stone. We're prioritising checks for any sensitive personal data or information about vulnerable individuals, but it will take months to check everything thoroughly.

This work is being done in coordination with Westminster City Council and London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, and we are working with law enforcement agencies and the National Cyber Security Centre to track data and any criminality.

We will continue to be open and transparent at every step, but without causing unnecessary alarm, or compromising an ongoing criminal investigation.

Support for residents

We have already written to all residents with guidance on what to do if you are worried about the breach.

You can follow the trusted advice from the National Cyber Security Centre (*see Staying safe online, right*) on protecting yourself from fraud, scams, or identity misuse. There's advice on what to do when an organisation suffers a data breach at the hands of cybercriminals at www.ncsc.gov.uk/guidance/data-breaches

DID YOU KNOW?

Between June and September 2025, the Council intercepted and isolated over 113,000 phishing attempts.

Stay vigilant

Criminals may use information obtained from this breach to make scams seem more legitimate. Please take extra care with:

- unexpected emails or messages requesting financial or personal information
- links or attachments you were not expecting
- contacts claiming to be the Council but asking you to provide sensitive details.

If in doubt, use our published contact routes rather than replying directly.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Council spends £12 million a year on digital, data, and technology.

FAQ

Find the answers to frequently asked questions about the cyber attack: www.rbkc.gov.uk/cyber-security-incident-faq

Scan here



Next steps

Our investigation is ongoing and will take several months due to the complex nature of the attack and the data involved, and the need to restart many of our systems.

We are committed to sharing accurate updates as soon as new information becomes available, including via our frequently asked questions (*see link above*).

We will write to individuals if their sensitive data has been released, and will continue to work closely with law enforcement and cybersecurity agencies here and internationally to investigate the incident.

We understand this is a worrying situation, and we thank you for your patience and cooperation. You can find our latest updates at www.rbkc.gov.uk/newsroom/we-are-responding-cyber-security-issue

Staying safe online

Follow these handy hints from the National Cyber Security Centre to secure yourself and your family online:

1. Protect your email by using a strong and separate password

Cyber criminals can use your email to access many of your personal accounts, leaving you vulnerable to identity theft.



2. Install the latest software and app updates

Software and app updates contain vital security updates to help protect your devices from cyber criminals.

3. Turn on two-step verification

Two-step verification is recommended to help protect your online accounts.

4. Password managers: how they help you secure passwords

Using a password manager can help you create and remember passwords.

5. Backing up your data

Safeguard your most important data, such as your photos and key documents, by backing them up to an external hard drive or a cloud-based storage system.

6. Three random words

Use three random words to create a password that's difficult to crack.

Find out more at www.ncsc.gov.uk/collection/top-tips-for-staying-secure-online

Council sets out its most challenging budget ever



In February, the Council approved the budget for 2026/27 – one of the most difficult budgets we have ever had to set.

Over the coming years, we expect to lose £108 million in funding due to the Government's Fair Funding Review. This is an unprecedented funding cut and is equivalent to well over 40 per cent of our controllable budget.

To protect essential services and balance the books, councillors were forced to take some tough decisions to close the budget gap. This is to ensure we are able to deliver quality and value for money council services to our residents.

Listening to residents

Thank you to the residents who shared their feedback in our recent budget consultation and council tax reduction scheme consultation. Combined, we received more than 970 responses with residents telling us what council services they value the most in our budget for 2026/27.

The feedback showed:

- 84 per cent of respondents said they understood why the Council was having to look at reducing services, make savings and increase fees/taxes
- 48 per cent supported a five per cent increase in council tax
- 60 per cent supported a second homes premium.



What residents told us

“I am always supportive of more funding for parks and trees as it has a clear noticeable improvement to everyone’s day to day.”

“Excellent initiatives, especially expansion of advertising. Please investigate if there are other similar areas in which the borough can generate more income.”

What’s included in the 2026/27 budget:

- Council tax increased by 4.99 per cent
- Council tax reduction scheme reduced by 10 per cent
- A 100 per cent council tax premium on second homes
- Updated fees and charges for 2026/27.

Impact of government cuts

Over the next four years, the Council needs to find £108 million in savings due to cuts to government funding. Last summer, we estimated an £82 million budget gap following proposed changes to the Government’s Fair Funding Review. However, after we received our local government settlement figure in December last year, this gap has increased by a further £26 million.

Kensington and Chelsea is not alone – four other inner London councils face similar funding pressures.

Tough decisions

We have worked hard to keep taxes low as we believe people’s money is best placed in their pockets. This year is slightly different, as we face a huge budget gap of £108 million.

We have had to take a difficult decision to reduce the amount of support available for residents on our council tax reduction scheme. Those currently receiving 100 per cent relief on their bill will now receive 90 per cent relief. This means around 5,000 residents will pay 10 per cent of their council tax bill for the first time.

This is still one of the most generous schemes in London, but we know paying council tax bills for the first time will be difficult for some residents.

Making savings

We are working to transform how we provide council services by finding better ways of working, generating income through advertising and doing things differently. We have already made over £21 million in savings, including through our staff voluntary redundancy programme.

Investing in our borough

We will continue to invest in services where it matters most to our residents. This includes housing, social care and our amazing spaces.

- £4.4 million towards strengthening Portobello Road
- £8 million investment in our parks, including recent improvements to Kensington Memorial Park
- £700,000 investment to improve waste collection and street cleaning.

Find out more

If you have any questions about the budget or council tax, please email Budget@rbkc.gov.uk or visit <https://q.me-qr.com/l/budget-performance-and-spending>

Scan here



Important update on council tax bills

Annual Council Tax bills will be sent later than usual this year.

Following the cyber attack at the end of last year, we are carefully checking our systems and records. Our priority is to make sure every bill is as accurate as possible.

Because of this, residents will receive their annual council tax bill in May instead of March, with the first payment to be made in June.

Direct Debits will then be taken from June 2026 to March 2027.

For more information, read our FAQs at www.rbkc.gov.uk/cyber-security-incident-faq, and if you need to contact us, visit www.rbkc.gov.uk/contact-us/call-or-email-us or look at the details on the back cover.

Cracking down – enforcement for a fairer, safer borough

Some enforcement is easy to see, like when we catch someone in the act of littering or issue a parking ticket.

But there are many more ways we work behind the scenes to make sure our borough is a safe and fair place for people to live, work and visit. Here are some recent examples of how we've been cracking down.

Blue badge fraud

Our fraud team makes sure that blue and purple badges in the borough are being used by the people who they are registered to, and who need them most to live independently. Every time someone fraudulently uses a disabled parking badge, they risk depriving someone who really needs that space.

In December, the Council successfully prosecuted one person for using a child's disabled badge fraudulently. He was fined £1,200 for misusing the badge on two occasions as well as costs of £1,079.44 and a victim surcharge of £120.

The team's investigations have resulted in two further prosecutions, seizing 38 lost or stolen badges, issuing 28 warning letters and collecting £5,170 in penalty charge notice fines.



Protecting our built heritage

In May and November 2025, our planning enforcement and design and heritage officers gave evidence in court, in a prosecution of a builder and owners who had made irreversible changes to a Grade II listed home in Bedford Gardens.

Our officers were shocked by the extent of the works, and in giving evidence described it as some of the worst and most excessive unauthorised works they had ever seen.

As historic and original fabric was removed, the damage to the property was irreparable and the heritage value depreciated.

The Council won the case and four defendants: the builder, Kenneth Steven Beckett, the builder's company, Steve Beckett Limited, and the owners Jason and Peggy Cheung Lund were convicted. They were fined £50,000 each, ordered to pay costs of £10,000 each and a victim surcharge of £2,000.





What happens if you don't pay?

From April to November 2025 we collected £296,800 from Fixed Penalty Notices issued for waste-related offences, like littering and fly tipping.

Not everyone thinks they should pay, but where a representation has been unsuccessful, or the individual has simply ignored the fine, the team is prepared to go to court.

Last year, we took 180 cases to court. Of these, 175 resulted in a conviction – that's more than 97 per cent. This meant fines, costs and victim surcharges of more than £70,000.

We only issue Fixed Penalty Notices when we are confident of an offence and we only escalate to prosecution when we are confident of the outcome. Anyone has a right to make a representation against a fine and we consider this before we progress with prosecution.

Big boost for homebuilding

It's a promising time, with much-needed homes as well as new high streets, cultural destinations and community facilities on their way in Kensington and Chelsea.

Here's an overview of the exciting new schemes...

Since our last edition of *Our Borough*, there has been some big progress on two major developments, set to bring forward almost 4,000 homes in total. The applications were all approved by the Council's planning committee in November and December 2025.



Kensal Canalside

There will be a brilliant new neighbourhood in Kensal Canalside, after the planning committee approved an application from developer Ballymore and supermarket chain Sainsburys.

With very little space to build across Kensington and Chelsea, the 2,519 new homes planned in W10 are hugely important for meeting local housing need.

The plans include 500 affordable homes, a new community hub and supermarket, new public green spaces and transport links with cycle paths and an extended bus route.

The application is a two-stage process and is referred to the Mayor of London after the committee's decision. This is standard procedure with a major application of this size.

Earls Court

Earls Court has always been a welcoming, vibrant community with a rich cultural past. Once the home of the Brit Awards and events at the London 2012 Olympics, the former exhibition centre site is set to get a new lease of life. Plans include up to 1,400 new homes and a new cultural centre, along with green spaces.

There will be 310 homes, a nursery and food and beverage units in the first phase.

Like Kensal, this application is a two-stage application which will now go to the Mayor of London.



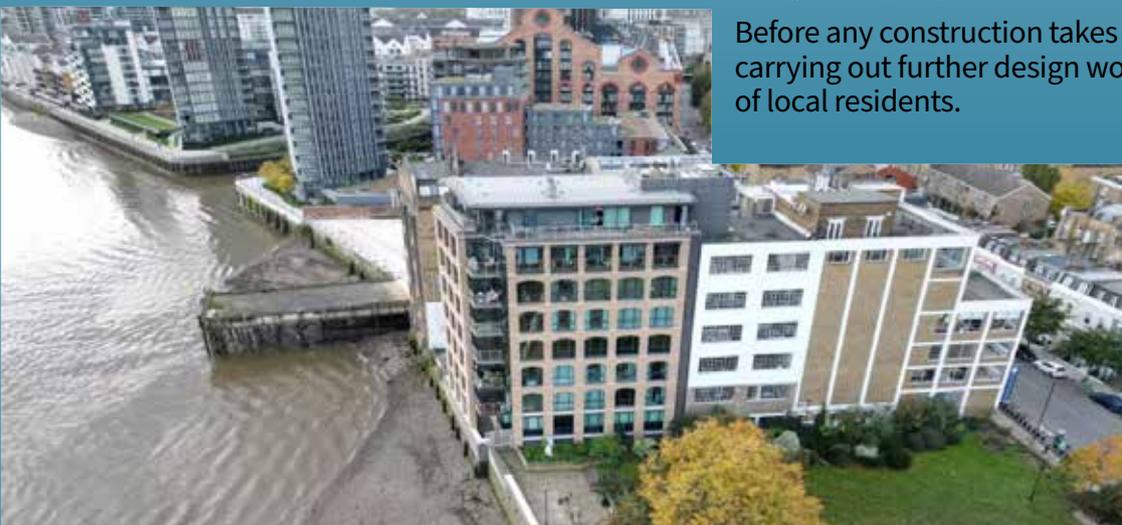
Progress for Cremorne Wharf jetty and riverside walkway plans

Plans to rebuild the jetty at Cremorne Wharf and explore the potential for a new riverside walkway have taken a step forward following February's leadership team meeting.

The proposals are part of wider work to open up this stretch of the River Thames to residents and visitors for the first time in many years.

Leadership team agreed to progress plans to demolish the existing jetty and replace it with a new structure of the same size. The existing jetty is not accessible and is no longer safe for public use.

The new jetty would provide a riverside public space which would sit alongside a proposed new open space at Cremorne Wharf, and link directly to a new river walkway.



Councillor Emma Will, lead member for property, parks and leisure services, said:

“These plans would reconnect people with the river. Rebuilding the jetty and creating a new riverside walkway will open up a part of the Thames that has been closed off for decades.”

“Linked with the new Lots Road open space, it will create a unique and wonderful place for the whole community to enjoy.”



The walkway would extend the Thames Path between Cremorne Wharf and Cremorne Gardens. This would complete a continuous riverside route from Chelsea Creek and Lots Road Power Station through to Cremorne Gardens and Cheyne Walk. Both these proposals will require the necessary planning and statutory approvals.

Options are being explored for the new walkway, including a route along the riverside to the east and a raised walkway over the riverbed. Further design and consultation work will now help shape the final approach.

The new Lots Road open space, currently going through the planning process, would be the first new Council-owned open space created since Westfield Park in the early 1980s. If approved, it would include planting, seating, a drinking fountain and ornamental entrance gates on Lots Road.

The proposals would also support health and wellbeing, improve biodiversity and air quality, and bring more people into the area.

Before any construction takes place, we will be carrying out further design work and seeking the views of local residents.

Apprentices build careers at Barlby new homes site

If you've been at the northern end of Ladbroke Grove recently, you may have spotted the latest of our new homes developments springing into life.

The Barlby Road site is quickly taking shape, with its 83 homes – including 38 for social rent and 10 for key workers – set to be ready for residents by the end of this year.

But what you may not know is that the buildings are being constructed with the help of a number of local residents who have been carving out careers in construction by signing up for apprenticeships based at Barlby.

Seven apprentices who live near to the North Kensington site have gained experience in trades including carpentry, bricklaying, drylining and electrical installation. The roles have been arranged through the Council's development contractor Hill Partnership Ltd to boost employment and skills in Kensington and Chelsea.

Cllr Kim Taylor Smith, lead member for employment, culture and economy, said:

"It's fantastic to see these apprentices building valuable careers while helping to deliver much-needed new homes right in the heart of their community."



"Not only is our new homes programme providing new Council-owned homes for the first time in a generation, but it is also creating a legacy of skills and opportunities that I hope will benefit residents and the borough for years to come."

An additional 12 local people have been employed to work at Barlby during the construction process.

In addition to the new homes, the Barlby Road development includes a multi-use sports hall which will be available for pupils of nearby Barlby Primary School and will also be open to the community after school hours.

The project is expected to be completed later this year, with the first residents moving in by the end of 2026.



Find out more about the new homes at Barlby Road at

www.rbkc.gov.uk/housing/new-homes-safer-homes/barlby-road

Scan here



Drylining apprentice Marcel enjoys the physical nature of his work, which involves measuring, cutting and fixing boards. He also appreciates building new homes in the heart of his community:

“This is something that I thought would be a good career path because I like being physical and I like the process of fixing things.

“I live literally right around the corner, and I’m involved in building something where I’ve been living my whole life. It’s quite a big thing, and it’s a proud thing as well.”



Marcel

Apprentice bricklayer Jacques added:

“I’ve learned quite a lot, because the guys here are good and they informed me of a lot of stuff.

“I think an apprenticeship is a positive thing. It’s good to be hands on, on site, getting experience, and then in college as well.”



Jacques

Olivia has been developing her skills as a carpenter, including helping to hang doors and fit skirting around the new homes. She said:

“It’s challenging but exciting as well. I just want to progress and get better at my trade, and eventually teach someone else how to do it.

“An apprenticeship is a good way to get a steady career. I’ve been trying to get an apprenticeship for a while, and I’m very lucky and grateful that I’ve got this one.”



Olivia

Alfie, who is an apprentice electrician, said:

“I’ve always been interested in becoming an electrician. I do four days a week on site and one day at college, and I’m learning to do a lot of new things.

“I like that I’m helping to build the community and providing it with more houses and growth.”



Alfie



Barlby Road New Homes

Our Borough Spring 2026

New homes. Safer homes.

New Council Homes

19

Get election ready



Kensington and Chelsea will go to the polls on Thursday 7 May.

Your vote will decide which ward councillors are elected in your local area. The party with the most ward councillors elected across the borough will be the majority party and have overall control of the Council.



Local elections – why bother?

The amount of people who turn out to vote for local elections is generally lower than in general elections. But compared to voting for who you want to be the prime minister, or even your local MP, your ward councillors will be hyper-focused on the specific area you live in – known as a ward.

Which ward do I live in?

There are 50 councillors representing 18 wards in Kensington and Chelsea. You can find out which ward you live in and who your current councillors are on our website.

Visit www.rbkc.gov.uk/ycyv and check out the **local democracy hub** or scan the QR code on page 21.

Am I registered to vote?

You will have received a Household Notification Letter which outlines who is registered to vote at your address. If the details are all correct, you can relax. You're registered and ready to vote on Thursday 7 May.

If the details are incorrect or incomplete, make sure you follow the instructions on the letter to ensure you and your household are registered. Alternatively, visit www.gov.uk/register-to-vote to check or amend your details.

You have until **Thursday 20 April** to register to vote – if you don't register by this date, you won't be on the register and will not be able to vote on Thursday 7 May.

How do I vote?

When polling day is here, and you are registered to vote, you will need to go to your local polling station to vote. A map to your polling station will be on your Polling Card, or you can find it by inputting your postcode at www.wheredoivote.co.uk

Remember!

You must bring a valid photo ID to the polling station in order to vote. This can be your driver's license or passport, but other IDs are accepted – make sure you check if your ID is valid by searching “valid photo ID”.

**No ID? No vote.
Don't forget!**

Can't make it to the polling station?

If you can't make it to the polling station in person on Thursday 7 May, you may want to register for a postal or proxy vote. This will allow you to send your vote via post or nominate someone else to submit your vote.

Visit www.rbkc.gov.uk/ycyv and visit the local democracy hub, or scan the QR code.

Scan here



Turn to
page 27
to find out why
voting is important
to our residents.

Keeping care in Kensington and Chelsea

Supporting our most vulnerable residents to stay independent and live well for longer is a top priority for the Council – and our outstanding-rated Adult Social Care service is looking to the future to ensure we keep delivering on that goal.

With the number of residents with learning disabilities expected to rise nationwide, we might need to provide as many as 60 additional units of specialised accommodation by 2040 to keep up with demand.

And because specialist out-of-borough placements can place residents further away from their friends and family, we're planning to deliver value for money by improving and increasing facilities right here in Kensington and Chelsea.

Big plans

Day services for people with learning disabilities are a key part of our commitment to promoting independence, inclusion, and wellbeing.

Almost 100 people with learning disabilities or

mental health needs use our current dedicated centre in St Marks Road. But with that building no longer fit for purpose, we're planning to relocate the day service to a new, fully refurbished location to ensure we can continue to provide excellent, long-term support for those who need it.

Another facility in line for an upgrade is our Kingsbridge Road Short Breaks Service, which has 11 units available for people with learning disabilities or autism and their families to take planned or emergency short breaks. Plans currently being developed could see the units replaced and co-located on the same site alongside new supported living properties.

We're also considering plans to provide seven self-contained supported accommodation flats at a new site in St Helen's Gardens.





Making the most of new neighbourhoods

We've been making sure that major new neighbourhoods do their bit in boosting our borough's supply of specialised accommodation.

We've requested up to ten units for residents with learning disabilities and autism to be included at both the Kensal Canalside and Earl's Court developments, which you can read about on page 16.

Find out more

Keep an eye on our Leadership Team meetings to follow developments and decisions.



Caring for Albert Bridge

What goes into looking after a Grade II landmark and crucial river crossing?

In Kensington and Chelsea, the Council maintains two bridges – Albert Bridge and Chelsea Bridge.

Albert Bridge is 150 years and one of only two bridges in central London that have never been replaced – the other being Tower Bridge.

We take our responsibility as guardian of Albert Bridge very seriously, which is why we closed the bridge to traffic when one of our engineers found a crack in an iron component in February as part of a routine inspection.

Cllr Johnny Thalassites, lead member for planning and environment, said:

“Our ambition remains to get this bridge open as soon as possible.

“I want to thank motorists for their ongoing patience. We know it is frustrating, but we know for now we have to close the road to avoid the risk of extra weight causing further damage that could make repair significantly more difficult, more lengthy and more expensive.”

We inspect the bridge deck visually every two weeks and it has a major inspection every six years, alongside a general inspection every two years. It was during one of these regular inspections that the crack in the northeastern abutment was discovered.

Council engineers and contracted bridge experts have been checking all the similar components to ensure there is not any other damage and establish why the crack has occurred. We are bringing in additional engineering expertise to act as an independent checker of both the external advice we have received and our own in-house engineering expertise.

Water has been pumped out to review submerged components and this has found no further visible damage. We are also doing more detailed testing using ultrasonic technology.



Traffic management

We've written to Transport for London to request that they consider what measures they could use to help improve traffic flow, including reopening banned turns along Chelsea Embankment.

We've also put in place a temporary traffic order. This will allow a closure of up to a year. This is not confirmation that we are closing the road for a year, but a precaution to ensure that, in the worst-case scenario of a long running repair, other road authorities are aware of the closure and we can work together to limit traffic impacts.

'The Trembling Lady'

Albert Bridge is designed to move slightly, for example to accommodate a change in temperature or traffic. It was nicknamed "The Trembling Lady" shortly after it opened in 1873. Some movement is expected but the findings of the inspection require a detailed investigation.

A weight restriction has been in place on the bridge since 1884. Since the 1990s this was managed through road layout and more recently, since January 2024, the Council has been enforcing a three-tonne weight limit by issuing fixed penalty notices to drivers breaking the rules.

Bridges in London

The capital's bridges are managed by a patchwork of owners. Seven are the responsibility of Transport for London, five by the Bridge House Estates trust and the others by eight individual boroughs, two of which are in Kensington and Chelsea.

Active for Life 2026

From football and cricket, to tennis, swimming, Tai Chi and yoga - there are many sports you can take up in the borough.

Free and affordable activities for all

Every resident is entitled to a free Better Pay and Play Card. Discounts of up to 50 per cent.



Sign up at our leisure centres or by going to www.better.org.uk/kensington or www.better.org.uk/chelsea



www.rbkc.gov.uk/sports-and-leisure



SCAN ME

Our Borough

Ahead of the local elections on Thursday 7 May, we asked residents what the right to vote means to them...



**Marcelo Decampos,
Ladbroke Grove**

The local elections are important because you have somebody for your neighbourhood... they can represent you and work for the local rights for citizens of the borough. The local councils are doing a great job in the sense of when you need anything. I know from my area I can contact them as they represent me in the borough. I think it's very important to have your say and have your vote in elections.



**Graham Bound,
North Kensington**

Well, it is the most direct influence we have over democracy and if we value it, which most of us do, then the best thing we can do is vote when we have the opportunity.



**Jan Matthews,
Holland Park**

I come to walk in this wonderful park here and admire all the work of those who work here... It's very important as a community member to participate in the governing process and so I believe in voting. It's important to vote.



**Alex Torochkina,
Holland Street**

I think it's so important to vote so that you can actually receive the services that you need, and also just help the borough be better.



**Jennifer Crago,
Holland Park**

We live in a democracy, and we are incredibly honoured to be able to have that opportunity to tell our leaders what is most important to us as a nation and as a community.



Find out more about the upcoming local elections on pages 20-21.

Shaping the future of Portobello Road

For more than 160 years, Portobello Market has been shaped by the people who live, work and trade there. Over the past three years, that tradition has continued in a different way – through one of our most extensive community engagement processes, helping to protect and shape the future of this iconic street.

Since 2023, we have worked closely with residents, traders and community groups to develop proposals for the £4.4 million Strengthening Portobello Road scheme. Through workshops, walkabouts, community panels, market drop-ins, one-to-one conversations and consultations, thousands of local voices fed directly into how the plans evolved.

A six-week public consultation in late 2025 marked a key milestone, bringing together years of dialogue and feedback for phase one.

What we heard

What emerged was clear: people supported the need to improve safety, accessibility and resilience, but only if changes respected Portobello Road's character and minimised disruption.

Those views mattered. Concerns about construction impacts, materials and cost led to significant revisions to the proposals. Most notably, changes to the road surface will save £1.6 million and reduce construction time by around eight months – a direct result of community feedback.





In February 2026, our leadership team agreed to proceed with Phase one of the scheme, shaped by those conversations. This work will focus on priorities the community consistently told us were most important:

- **Permanent sliding bollards to replace temporary barriers**
- **Improved accessibility for pedestrians and traders**
- **Flood mitigation to protect homes and businesses**
- **More greening**
- **Upgraded market infrastructure to support daily trading.**

This has been an ongoing partnership which has balanced national safety requirements with local knowledge, lived experience and care for a much-loved place. It also reflects a wider ambition: to strengthen the physical foundations of Portobello Road so its market, culture and community life can continue to thrive.

What comes next

Construction is expected to begin in early 2027. As plans progress, we will continue working with the community to share timelines, manage disruption and shape future phases. Thank you to everyone who took the time to get involved – Portobello Road is stronger because of you!

Want to discover more of your borough's Amazing Spaces? Head to our website to check them out!

www.rbkc.gov.uk/amazingspaces

Scan me



New Public Participation Commitments agreed after resident co-design

Residents have helped shape a new set of Public Participation Commitments which set out how they can influence services and Council decisions.

The commitments are now being embedded into day-to-day work across the Council and replace the Charter for Public Participation.

The work was co-designed with residents over several months last year. Full Council agreed the commitments in December 2025.

More than 500 local people shared their views during a 12-week consultation earlier in 2025, where we asked how we could improve the way we involve communities in decisions that affect them. What residents told us directly shaped the final commitments.

After the consultation, residents worked alongside Council officers in three co-design sessions. Residents came from across the borough and reflected different ages, backgrounds and experiences.

Together, they refreshed the commitments and agreed a new name – Public Participation Commitments. Our community, our people, our voices.



In the commitments, local people told us they wanted:

- clearer, more accessible language
- early engagement before decisions are made
- to understand why a particular participation approach is being used for a specific issue and be entitled to question whether that is the right approach
- stronger accountability and feedback
- better openness and transparency
- more inclusive engagement that reaches under-represented groups
- hearing about what has changed as a result of their input.

Everyone who took part in the co-design sessions was paid the London Living Wage.

The commitments explain how and when residents can expect to be consulted, engaged, and involved in Council decisions. They support our Grenfell Inquiry commitment to be more open and to listen.

Residents will continue to play a key role. A new framework will be developed with residents to measure delivery. A resident oversight group will track progress and hold us to account.



AJ Tumlos, Youth Council member, said: *“In my two to three years that I have been here, this is the one time that young people have been heard, and it is a really proud moment. We're going to take this as a positive sign that young people can be heard. Public participation is crucial for young people, and this was a really good collaboration, where everyone's opinion was heard, no one was ignored. It was also fun and interactive.”*

Local resident Carol Patterson, said: *“I'm a typical resident who doesn't actually get involved, so when the opportunity came up, I thought why not. I thought it would be great to do something rather than sit in the background. The sessions were incredible and I loved that there was a wide range of residents involved, a really diverse group.*

“The fact that everything we said came together in the final document was impressive. I see so much of what we talked about in the document, it's really exciting. The key now though is once this is implemented, we need to see the Council following through and continuing the level of engagement and outreach that we have talked about.”



Find out more

The full Public Participation Commitments are now part of the Council's constitution. Read them on our website at www.rbkc.gov.uk/ppc

You can also read a variety of case studies which show our Public Participation Commitments in action on our Your Community, Your Voice web hub at www.rbkc.gov.uk/ycyv



Scan here



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Useful Council numbers and contact information

General contact details

- 020 7361 3000
- www.rbkc.gov.uk

Benefits

- 020 7361 3006
- benefits@rbkc.gov.uk



Council tax

- 020 7361 3005

Education

- 020 7361 3009
- educationline@rbkc.gov.uk

Electoral services

- 020 7361 3444
- elect@rbkc.gov.uk



Environmental health

- 020 7361 3002
- environmentalhealth@rbkc.gov.uk

Family information service

- 07814 804262
- families@rbkc.gov.uk



Housing management

- 0800 137 111 or 020 3617 7080
- HM-CustomerServices@rbkc.gov.uk

Housing solutions

- 020 7361 3008
- housingsolutions@rbkc.gov.uk

Libraries

- 020 7361 3010
- libraries@rbkc.gov.uk



Licensing

- 020 7341 5152

Parking

- 020 7361 3004
- enquiries@rbkcparking.com

Parking permits

- 020 7361 4381
- residentparking@rbkc.gov.uk

Parks

- 020 7361 3000
- parks@rbkc.gov.uk



Planning

- 020 7361 3012
- planning@rbkc.gov.uk

Registrars

- 020 7361 4100 (for emergencies only)
- registrars@rbkc.gov.uk



Report a problem

- www.rbkc.gov.uk/contact-us/report-problem or via your MyRBKC account

Social services

- 020 7361 3013
- socialservices@rbkc.gov.uk

Streetline

- 020 7361 3001
- streetline@rbkc.gov.uk

Tell Us Once bereavement service

- 020 7361 3940

For a full list of contact details, visit www.rbkc.gov.uk/contact-us/call-or-email-us or scan the QR code

Scan here



Help for those affected by the Grenfell tragedy

020 8637 6279 (8am to 8pm)
or 0800 0234 650 (8pm to 8am)

www.grenfellwellbeing.com

Why not sign up for a **MyRBKC** account? Once registered, you can view council tax and benefits, track the progress of problems you have told us about, set up email notifications for the Council issues you care about and more.

www.rbkc.gov.uk/myrbkc