

A message from your Chair

Firstly, may I take this opportunity to offer my sincerest gratitude to you for the trust placed in me to chair your committee this last year.

With that trust and responsibility placed on me, you have inspired me to work with total commitment and heart to make our co-op one to be proud of:

- a co-op that our tenant members can run collectively - where tenant members have their say and are respected and listened to;
- living in homes that are of the highest standards, and are warm and safe;
- repairs that are prompt and efficient - with contractors that work with the utmost professionalism and to the high standards that you deserve;
- to live in a community that cares and supports each other;
- where respect, openness, transparency, honesty, working together, community, diversity and empowerment are the norm.

So many positive changes for the betterment of our tenant members

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead



and our co-op have already taken effect in this last year, and I promise you there's much more to come...

Hard work and commitment - along with the support of good Committee members, a great administration officer, great consultants advising us, Pinnacle support and, more importantly, your support - we have moved mountains from where we were this time last year.

And the best of all - your voices are now finally being heard!

Jaimini Bharghada



**Chair of
Belgrave
Neighbourhood
Community
Housing
Association**

What we have achieved

The last 12 months at a glance:

- BNCHA's 30-year-old rule book updated.
- Policies updated. These will be further updated on gaining your feedback from the Let's Talk programme.
- Business plan drawn up along with mission statement.
- Assets management plan updated.
- Finance plan.
- Major works plan drawn up and approved.
- Windows programme set in motion.
- Electrical improvements carried out in all properties.
- Website updated.
- Canterbury House windows programme completed.
- Canterbury House roof works completed.
- Loughborough Cottages lift refurbished
- Loughborough Cottages stairlift installed.
- Various longstanding tenant members' repairs commenced and others completed.
- Special repairs log set up and monitored by committee.
- For the first time an ongoing active membership strategy put in to play and direct feedback from all our tenant members.
- Nic Bliss, Head of Policy for the Confederation of Co-operative Housing (the UK's national representative body for housing co-ops), appointed to act as Chief Officer for one year.
- Samatha Goodwin, Tpas senior consultant, appointed for one year.
- Relations with service provider Pinnacle strengthened, resulting in closer working.
- Solicitors tendered for and appointed.
- Longstanding investigations independently conducted and completed.
- Three-year internal auditors tendered for and appointed.
- HR appointed on a 12-month retainer.
- Our own administration officer appointed.
- BNCHA email address created:
hello@belgravecoop.org.uk
- BNCHA telephone number set up: **0116 20 50 888** for administrative support and access to your committee.
- Direct access to the Chair.
- BNCHA's digital filing system set up.
- Qualified Gujarati translator appointed for correspondence with tenant members.
- Preparing Service Level Agreement and Code of Conduct for our contractors which is in the process of being signed and implemented.
- Building connections with local authorities, other public and private stakeholders and individuals to build stronger working relations and communications with.
- Our first open event. This was held at Canterbury House car park, along with food and entertainment. A chance to meet the committee and Pinnacle staff to discuss your issues, and meet and mingle with other BNCHA tenant members and members of the local community.
- Repairs workshops.



Improving your homes

Improvements we have carried out so far:

- 8 properties had their windows renewed
- 11 properties had kitchen renewals
- 12 properties had bathroom renewals
- Loughborough Cottage lift refurbishment
- Loughborough Cottage stairlift installation
- Canterbury House window replacement programme
- Electrical Improvements completed in all properties.

Works planned from September 2021:

- Canterbury House roof repairs/replacement
- Canterbury House CCTV upgrade
- Canterbury House alarm upgrade
- Window replacement programme for a further 39 properties
- Kitchen replacement programme for 50 properties
- Bathroom renewal for a further 200 properties
- Structural surveys and remediation programme for at least 22 properties
- External painting cyclical programme for all properties.

How are we doing?

Over the last three months:

- On average we have collected 108.21% of rent
- Reduced rent arrears from 4.73% to 3.71%
- Rent arrears have reduced from £85,617 to £66,831 (April to July)
- 22 new lettings undertaken (since October 2020)
- Carried out 49 emergency repairs
- Carried out 183 urgent repairs
- Carried out 216 routine repairs
- 100% fire risk assessments
- 98.10% asbestos surveys
- 98.14% gas safety checks
- 99% electrical safety certificates.



Getting the right people to run BNCHA

Independent investigations have now started to reveal some of the problems in BNCHA's past such as some committee officers:

- making major decisions for the co-op involving lots of money without any discussions with the committee, the staff employed to provide the services or with anyone else
- arranging to have works done on their own homes costing several thousand pounds whilst not ensuring basic repairs for members' homes
- putting in expenses claims to the committee to cover the costs of their work when they were meant to be volunteers
- putting in expenses claims to the committee to cover stays in hotels
- refusing to authorise fundamental contracts for organisations such as gas contractors who were needed to ensure the health and safety of members
- seeking to arrange contracts with organisations who they may have had connections with without any proper processes
- running petty squabbles about irrelevant issues
- refusing to take advice from the skilled and experienced people employed to help ensure that members receive the repairs and services they need.

Some of these issues were identified by an organisation carrying out an independent review of how BNCHA was and is governed. The good news is that the independent organisation concluded that the co-op under the current committee is now on the right track.

The Government's regulator – the Regulator of Social Housing – who had previously been concerned about BNCHA's poor governance have said to us "Since we met earlier in the year, I can see you have made great progress in stabilising and developing the Association." They have noted our ongoing action plan and want to be kept in touch with progress.

Nonetheless, there is much bad news from the past. We do not want to go back to this nonsense!

We need our members to vote for the best people to run the co-op at the next AGM on Friday 1st October. You will know from previous bulletins that the current committee is focused on:

- Delivering on plans to upgrade most of our members' homes – and we have previously told you about how that work has started.
- Making sure we have the best possible repairs service – we have established logs where repairs or complaints

that aren't dealt with as they should be are tracked. Even if it may not be possible to sort everything immediately, we are ensuring that members who report problems are communicated with so that they know what is happening.

- Talking to our members – we have set up the current housing survey and we are looking at various methods to ensure we talk to our members about their hopes and concerns. What our members tell us – the priorities you tell us about – will shape the decisions the committee takes in the future.
- Making sure that the committee runs as it should do – we have also been doing less exciting stuff where we make sure we run the committee in ways that the Government's regulator expects us to; making a business plan to ensure we plan out and have the money for the things our members need; getting independent organisations to check out that we are doing things as we should. This stuff is not the stuff that directly affects the services that members receive, but it has to be done so that we have the money and resources to deliver the things that our members need and want.

BNCHA is a community-based co-operative owned by our members, but it is also a comparatively large business and has to run in accordance with sound business principles. We are making sure that this happens.

We hope that you will agree that you want all this to continue. To make sure it continues to happen, you can do two things:

- 1) Vote at the forthcoming AGM for members of the current committee, to make sure we can continue the work to improve your homes and the services you receive. Do not vote for committee officers from the past who have caused so many problems for the co-op. If you would like to vote in the elections but can't attend the AGM, please get in touch with us at the BNCHA office to see how we can help you will cast your vote.
It's your co-op. If and how you vote will make a difference to the quality of your home and the services you receive from BNCHA.
- 2) Get involved yourself. If you want to join us to help make improvements happen and if you are constructive and want to improve things for all BNCHA members, contact us at the BNCHA office to see how you can get involved.

Let's talk! Members' views

We have recently been carrying out BNCHA's survey of our members and have had a brilliant response. You may have seen us knocking on doors to help people complete the survey.

Don't forget it's a prize draw survey with five **£50 Love2shop** vouchers being drawn at the AGM from those who complete the survey.

We will let you know what members have told us in the survey when the survey is complete, but there are three clear messages coming from some of the people who have responded to the survey so far:

1) Members want to talk

There's a lot of information coming from the paper and online surveys returned so far, but we have had the most response from talking to people door to door.

Members are really keen to tell us their views on how the co-op is delivering its services, and we are having really exciting and constructive conversations. We will build on this into the future.

We want to hear from our members – so please keep communicating!

2) Some of the messages coming back are not good

Some members are telling us about repairs that have not been done, complaints that have not been responded to and a general lack of communication – and most of these problems have been going back years.

It's painful to hear these things but we want to hear them. It is only by letting us know that we can change things.

The current BNCHA committee makes two promises:

- We will ensure that action is taken on every issue that is raised with us.
- We will ensure that those who raise issues will be communicated with so that you know what is happening with the issues you raise.

But we also need members to understand.

We have a backlog of repairs and under-investment in homes that we are trying to address. We are establishing programmes to improve homes and we are starting to log and track all the issues that members raise with us – **but it will take time to get everything right.**

Particularly as we come out of the pandemic, there are problems with finding good contractors and contractors are starting to charge higher costs. We are also having to weed out past contractors who have done shoddy jobs. And of course, we have to manage our budgets well so that we do the jobs that are really important first.

But we will get there. We ask you to support your committee to make sure we get the best for everyone.

3) There's a lot of support for BNCHA and the committee already

Despite the problems that members have been identifying, the survey is also showing there is a lot of good feeling towards BNCHA and its committee at the moment.

Sometimes, given the level of problems being identified, we are not sure that BNCHA deserves such support, but nonetheless we really do thank you for it.

But we stress – we don't want support for the co-op to mean that you suffer in silence. **If you have previously reported problems and things are not being sorted, then please tell us about them.**

A big thank you to your amazing committee of 2020/2021

Thank you for sacrificing your personal time, commitment and hard work throughout the year.

The achievements of this past year would not have been possible without your support and dedication to the BNCHA.

Sadia Ahktar, Joru Barot, Nylam Parmar, Lalita Suthar, Ketan Ganatra, Lesley Webster, Santa Modvadia, Jaimini Bharakhada.



Sunshine fun at Canterbury House

We were delighted to host an open day at Canterbury House on 5th September as part of BNCHA's new 'Let's talk' programme of activities.

The event was an opportunity for tenant members to come along and chat to BNCHA committee members and Pinnacle staff, as well as flagging up any issues or questions.

It also provided the chance to meet and socialise with other tenant members and local residents.

There was free food and ice-cream, plus a mehndi artist and face painting during the fun-packed day.

BNCHA Chair Jaimini Bharakhada said: "It was a beautiful sunny day and we hope this is the first of many such enjoyable social events to be organised by our co-op."





Community celebrations return

Leicester's annual Diwali and Christmas celebrations will be returning to the city's streets this year.



The city council has announced that the day the Diwali lights are turned on, Diwali Day itself, and the switching-on of Leicester's Christmas lights will all be marked with on-street entertainment, although in a slightly different format to previous years.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, last year's events were marked virtually with online content.

This year, the council plans to take the festivities back on to the streets, with a new approach that will reduce the need for people to congregate in one place at the same time.

The council plans to close Belgrave Road to traffic as usual, for both switch-on day on 24th October and Diwali Day on 4th November.

In a change to previous years, the stage usually sited near to the Belgrave roundabout will be replaced with two giant screens located on Belgrave Road showing a pre-recorded cultural programme that will run throughout the evening.

A third giant screen will be located on Cossington Street

Recreation Ground. This will enable visitors to view the entertainment in different locations and at different times, reducing the need for crowds to gather in one place at a fixed point in the evening.

With the Covid security of visitors a key consideration, the annual firework displays will be replaced this year with a Fire Garden on Cossington Street recreation ground, and a Global Rainbow that will beam light across the city.

Cossington Street Recreation Ground will also host a Diwali Village featuring food stalls and funfair rides.

Deputy city mayor for culture Councillor Piara Singh-Clair said: "We have been determined to do all we can to bring the Diwali and Christmas celebrations back to the streets of Leicester, while making public safety our priority.

"The new format of the Diwali events means that people can enjoy the sights and sounds of our Diwali celebrations at any point during the evening, and won't need to congregate in one space.

"Our plans for Christmas activities are currently being finalised, but we will be taking a similar approach."



Belgrave Road will close at 5pm on Sunday 24th October to mark the Diwali lights being turned on. The cultural programme will be shown on the giant screens every hour from 5.30pm to 8.30pm. It will include a religious ceremony performed by the Hindu Festival Council, as well as entertainment from Nupur Arts and local dance groups. The lights will be turned on before the road closure to prevent crowds gathering.

Diwali Day festivities on Thursday 4th November will also start with the road closure at 5pm, and the showing of the cultural programme from 5.30pm to 8.30pm.

The council is currently finalising its plans around the Christmas lights switch-on, which is set for 18th November, and other Christmas activities and will publish these in the next few weeks.

The return of the ice-rink to Jubilee Square has already been announced, and this will be in place from 2nd December to 3rd January, with tickets going on sale in October.

The council's annual bonfire and firework display on Abbey Park is also set to return this year. More details will be available soon.



Traffic calming plans

Traffic calming measures and a 20mph zone are due to be introduced in roads near Abbey Mead Primary Academy in Ross Walk, Belgrave.

Measures such as speed cushions, humps and bollards are due to be installed in February 2022.

The programme of work will include Vicarage Lane, Belgrave Avenue, Elmdale Street, Shirley Street, Asha Margh, Holden Street, Ross Walk, Charles Bennion Walk, Pearson Avenue, McKay Avenue, Moccasin Avenue, Sandal Avenue, Union Street, Brogue Street, Hildyard Road, Hunter Road, Dundonald Road and Marjorie Street.

Youth hub opens

A centre to help young people find work, education and training has opened in Leicester city centre.

The youth employment hub, in the former Visit Leicester tourist information centre in Gallowtree Gate, was launched in June.

It offers advice to young people on jobs, apprenticeships, training schemes and college courses.

Find out more at

www.leicesteremploymenthub.co.uk/yeh

Keep our neighbourhood clean!

You can report environmental issues such as graffiti, litter, fly-tipping or dog fouling via the 'Love Leicester' app.

Check out www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council/policies-plans-and-strategies/environment-and-sustainability/love-leicester/

Your local police team

Your local beat team is located at the Belgrave Neighbourhood Centre on Rothley Street, at the heart of the community.

Our job is to support the Belgrave community, prevent crime, build strong community relations and deal with those who cause the most harm.

We have over 30 years' experience between us and are keen to engage with stakeholders, partners and colleagues.

Officers based in Belgrave are highly skilled in many aspects of policing and, between us, we can speak Gujarati, Hindi and Punjabi which reflects the languages spoken in the local community we serve.

We are a hardworking team and always put the community first, dealing with the issues raised by you as a priority.

Your local neighbourhood beat team consists of:

Sergeant 2940 Graham Wells

PC 2225 Toby Pickering

PC 4811 Ash Pema

PC 1063 Alex Riley

PC 1327 Kim Thomas

PCSO 6168 George Butler

PCSO 6075 Gurpinder Gill

PCSO 6015 Sima Patel

PCSO 6055 Jo Colford

PCSO 6047 Claire Marriott

- You can contact us via the Leicestershire Police website www.leics.police.uk or by calling 101.

Meet your local councillor



Councillor Ross Willmott lives locally in Belgrave and has been a City Councillor for over 20 years in neighbouring Rushey Mead.

From 1999-2010 he was Leader of the Council and during that time he led the major investment in the City and locally including the building of Soar Valley & Rushey Mead secondary schools, Mellor primary school, Braunstone Leisure Centre, CURVE Phoenix Cinema, Taylor Road primary

school, and started building new council houses.

Ross also led creation of City Wardens and ward funds to be spent supporting local groups. These ward funds and the community meetings proved to be invaluable during the pandemic and grants were given out to hundreds of local groups delivering food, helping people with shopping and collecting prescriptions, and just keeping in touch with people.

Little did we know at the time how important this initiative would prove to be. Funds are still available for community activities and the application process is via the City Council website.

Ross said: **"I was very impressed by the efforts of many volunteers in the local community who came together to help**

people and I was directly involved in getting out information and delivering shopping as well as helping businesses with grant applications.

"As we come out of the worst of the pandemic, one of the top priorities has to be more housing. It is a priority of the Labour councillors and we know that overcrowding and demand is very high in Belgrave and Rushey Mead. So the work done by BNCHA is really important.

"The council is committed to building more houses and has committed many millions of pounds to achieve this. I also think we need to be providing more advice on benefits and training so people can get jobs as well as better care and support for the elderly.

"I look forward to working with you and your new committee."

Ross is also Chair of the Belgrave Hall Conservation Area Society, whose aim is to protect the many fine buildings in the area.

**Cllr Ross Willmott
Rushey Mead Ward
Leicester City Council**

The Right to Buy our homes?

Some members have been asking about whether they are able to buy their homes. The answer is no!

Council housing tenants and some housing association tenants have the Right to Buy their homes, but this right does not apply to Belgrave Neighbourhood Co-operative Housing Association (BNCHA).

The rules of the co-op are such that this right will never apply and this would have been made clear when our members' tenancies started.

Members' aspirations to own a home are understandable but, if members have the means to do this and wish to, they need to buy a home elsewhere.

BNCHA was established in the Belgrave area of Leicester as a community organisation, controlled by its tenant members, to provide homes for people in housing need.

All BNCHA's tenants, when they were originally housed by the co-op, had some form of housing need and when their tenancies started they could not afford to own a home or rent one on the open market.

BNCHA has given all its members from a variety of backgrounds over many years the opportunity to live in a good quality home at low rents with the quality of services that members wanted.

BNCHA wants to pass on this legacy to the next generation of people who have such needs in the future – making sure that there is a good supply of homes for people in housing need

now and forever.

We know from our waiting lists that there are many such people who need housing and, as the largest provider of social housing homes in Belgrave, if the homes we provide were not there in the future many more local people would be homeless.

If we were required to sell our homes to the people currently living in them, we could not provide homes for people in housing need in Belgrave. We could not afford to replace our homes if any of them were sold and what typically happens when the Right to Buy becomes available is that the better quality homes are sold, leaving the housing organisation seeking to manage fewer poorer quality homes with fewer resources.

We don't want this to happen and most of our members would agree that this is not desirable. But, even if that changes, the rules and structure of the co-op means that we are not able to offer our members a Right to Buy their homes.

If members particularly would like to buy a home, there are schemes operated through housing associations and other organisations that offer low-cost home ownership alternatives. If BNCHA members consider this to be an important priority, we will explore whether we can provide advice to members who might want to explore such options.

Quiz time

How well do you know your co-op?

Have a go and return your form either by handing it in on arrival at the AGM on **October 1st 2021** or returning it to the office no later than **September 30th 2021**. All returns will be entered into a prize draw. Three picked entries from the draw at the AGM will each win **£25**.

1. BNCHA is:

- Private housing
- Council housing
- Social housing

2. BNCHA is a:

- Housing association
- Mutual housing association
- Fully mutual housing association

3. BNCHA has how many properties at present?:

- 100 to 200
- 200 to 300
- 300 to 400

4. BNCHA properties are located in:

- Belgrave and Rushey Mead
- Belgrave and Cossington
- Belgrave only

5. BNCHA is the largest organisation of its kind in England:

- True
- False

6. Who is landlord for BNCHA?:

- Pinnacle
- BNCHA tenants
- BNCHA committee

7. Who does BNCHA belong to?:

- Pinnacle
- BNCHA tenants

8. Where is the BNCHA office located?:

- 131 Loughborough Road
- Belgrave Neighbourhood Office

9. Who is Pinnacle?:

- Landlord of BNCHA
- Service provider to BNCHA

10. By a tenant having made a £1 payment at the beginning of their tenancy, and having been issued a receipt with the share number on it,

the tenant becomes a shareholder of BNCHA:

- True
- False

11. BNCHA shareholder tenants run the co-op by electing a certain number of tenant members to form a committee to represent them:

- True
- False

12. Shareholder tenants over the age of 18 years interested in joining the committee can put themselves forward by completing a nomination form which is available to all tenants prior to the AGM:

- True
- False

13. There is no other way of becoming a committee member:

- True
- False

14. BNCHA committee members meet once a month to make decisions regarding the running of the co-op:

- True
- False

Meet your housing team

Pinnacle is proud to deliver quality housing services on behalf of BNCHA. Working closely with the co-op committee, we aim to improve the quality of your home and ensure the services we provide are value for money, effective and tenant focused.

The team has a wealth of housing experience and believes engagement and communication is key to a successful partnership.

Please contact us to report or discuss any aspect of your housing service or to tell us if we get something wrong. We will learn from that so that we continuously improve the service you deserve and expect.



Harinder Rai
Pinnacle Regional
Manager



Caroline Beattie
Housing Support
Officer



Dawn Dudding
Senior Housing
Officer



Ramesh Raikundal
Co-op Liaison
Manager (day-to-day
operations)



Mina
Administration
Officer and Secretary
for the BNCHA
Committee



Nita Bhardwa
Housing Officer



Hiran Bhatt
Trainee Housing
Surveyor (day-to-day
repairs/voids)



Nathan Pemberton
Project Surveyor
(major/improvement
works)



Divia Odedra

Useful numbers

- **Community Advice and Law Service (CALs)** – the office is currently closed but CALs is still supporting people in Leicester with free expert advice on debt, welfare benefits and housing. Call **0116 242 1120** or email enquiries@cals.uk.net
- **The Samaritans** – this suicide helpline can be called 24/7 on **116 123**
- **Central Access Point** – mental health support on **0808 800 3302**
- **Domestic Violence Helpline** – **0808 2000 247**
- **Leicester City Council** – **0116 454 1000**
- **National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children** – **0808 800 5000**
- **Age Concern** – **0116 299 2233**
- **Citizens Advice Bureau** – **0808 278 7970**

Belgrave Neighbourhood Co-operative Housing Association

131 Loughborough Road
Leicester LE4 5LQ

Tel: **0333 600 2500**

Email: hello@belgravecoop.org.uk

www.belgravecoop.org.uk