

Members' Newsletter

In this newsletter

- What's coming up in our Co-op
- Changes at the Co-op
- New Committee
- Co-op Work
- Meetings in February
- In memory of Shamsa Butt
- Poem by Shamsa
- Rent arrears and quiz
- Recipe
- Things to Do in the Easter Holidays
- Information
- Answers to quiz
- Contact details



Photo: Spring in Crowcroft Park by Jean Friend

What's coming up in our Co-op?

Trip to Leeds

The **Planning Group** is organising a trip to Lilac Co-housing community in Leeds on Sunday 21st April for a learning day on community building in housing co-ops. They say: "here are limited spaces available. We'd like participants to feed back their experiences to the wider co-op after the event. Please contact

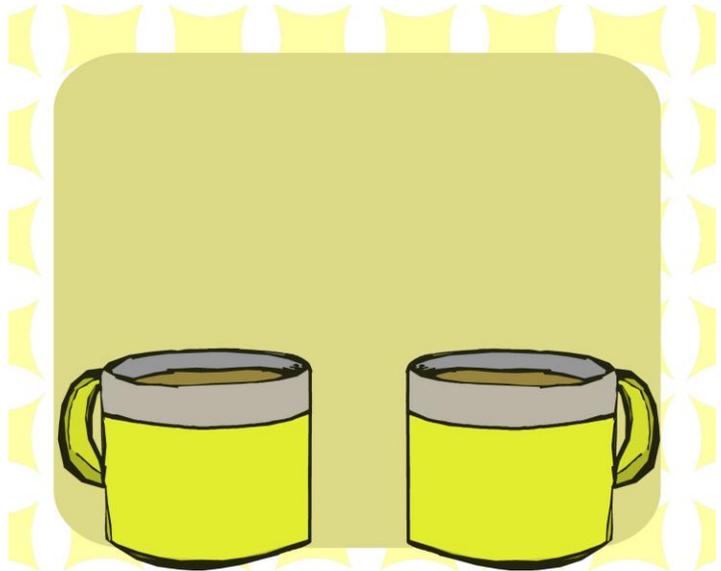
Mika if you're interested mika.royd@gmail.com, or ring the office.”



Photo: LILAC. BBC News

Tea and Coffee Mornings

Brought to you by the Social Group



A chance to chat and get to know each other better.

Saturday 13 April 10:30-12.30 and Saturday 8 June 10:30 -12 noon.

At the 422 Hub (Old Town Hall), 422 Stockport Road (by the bus stop near the Plymouth Road junction, on the side going into Manchester).

Changes at the Co-op

Big Thankyous to all the members who have been running the Co-op the last few years. A special thankyou to:

Kemi, who is retiring as chairperson after 3 years of dedicated hard work.

Nasreen, who has also retired from the committee but plans to continue contributing in other ways.

Cara and Hannah, who have left the Membership Group after many years of dedicated service.

Training needed

Julie is Chair of another housing co-op, and was asked if she would join our Committee a few



years ago for her vast knowledge and experience of cooperative housing, and also because she has accredited qualifications. Julie said that she is concerned about the lack of knowledge in general of our Co-op Committee members. We must improve on this to meet the Confederation of Cooperative Housing Code of Governance.

Following the last 2 General Meetings, a group of members are finding a program of training to improve this. We are also looking at whether it is possible to have more formal support from Blase, who is from the Confederation of Co-operative Housing, as Julie does not have the time to give us all the support we need.

New Committee, New People



Many members have attended recent General Meetings to discuss the challenges our Co-op is facing. The next step is to elect a new committee, to be responsible for the present and future wellbeing of the co-op.

It is expected that our Annual General Meeting will be held in May. This is when the new committee is elected, so please do think if you would like to be nominated for election. If you do not know any other members of the co-op to nominate you, then please contact the office and arrangements can be made.

Current committee members can be nominated for re-election again, as well as these, there needs to be a new intake.

“I’d like to think about it but I’m not sure I could do it”

Linda, the current Secretary, is happy to chat to people about what it means to be on the committee, or on a subgroup.

Co-op Work

Farzana has been working hard on putting information into the computer, including from the Stock Condition Survey, which will be the base for creating a 30-year plan. Farzana has also been paying all the Co-op’s invoices, working on the budgets for 2024, getting all the finances ready for our annual audit, and gathering the statistics needed to be submitted to social housing regulators.

Message from Farzana: I will be on leave week beginning 8th April - back Wednesday 17th April

Shared Habitat are settling in as our new provider for repairs and rent collection. Please do pass on your views so that we can be sure our members are happy with the service that is being provided by Shared Habitat. If the Committee do not know there are problems, they cannot be addressed.



Shared Habitat deal with all Rent & Repair queries.

Email: enquiry@sharedhabitat.co.uk

Telephone or WhatsApp: 0161 791 2000

The **Membership Group** became too small to function, so Committee members will deal with this work until more people come forward to join.

The new **Repairs Group** has been liaising with Gareth from Shared Habitat to discuss some of the repairs that come up, especially in empty properties. They tell us “Nothing major to report”. Perhaps they don’t realise how many times the Co-op has tried and failed to set up a Repairs Group so this is a major success. Thankyou people!

Meetings in February

On 14 February, the Committee arranged a meeting for members to give their views about the 3 options for this year’s rent increase. 7 members came to the meeting and 2 sent their comments to the office. It is hoped that more members will join in next time.

Following recent general meetings, a **group of members** met on 29 February to talk about how we can make sure that we can continue as a properly functioning cooperative.

This is not an exclusive group. It is the people who have so far come forward to say they are interested and able to give more time to our Co-op. we welcome as many people as possible to get involved in securing our Co-op's future.

If you want to get more involved, please do contact the office and ask for your name and contact details to be passed on to the committee secretary, Linda.

A wide range of views were shared at the meeting, fairly well summed up by the following two paragraphs.

Message from the Chair

Some members who consistently support the Co-op have said they want to split off and remain as a cooperative. They feel there are a large number of members who don't want to cooperate so may be better suited in a housing association, where they are not expected to volunteer. There will need to be some serious decisions made over the next few months about whether we have the support from enough members to continue. Working with Blasé from the Confederation of Co-operative Housing would be our last attempt to revive the Co-op. What's clear is that those who have held the Co-op together over the last 10 years plus are no longer willing or able to continue in the way we are currently going.

Another opinion from a member

The reality for our co-op at the moment is that there are some members, who, for whatever reason are not able to get involved, there are some members who are not interested in getting involved, and there are some who have done so much work for the co-op over the last few years or in the past that they are either burned out or feel that they no longer have the energy to give more to our Co-op at the moment. But there are still a group of people who are optimistic that we can address the difficulties facing our co-op, get things back on track with making sure we meet the Code of Governance and other good practice, and look forward to seeing our co-op into its fifth decade.

In Memory of Shamsa Butt



Photo: Shamsa at the launch of 'Kiss', a poetry collection featuring her writing.

It was with surprise and sadness that I learnt of the passing of Shamsa Butt in late January, a co-op member since 1993 and my neighbour on Beresford Road. Shamsa – or Aunty Shu as she was known - passed away at Manchester Royal Infirmary after a short illness. She was a woman with strong opinions and a kind heart. She'd often make me delicious dahl and homemade roti, and whoever came to her door, they never left empty-handed. During the 1980s, Shamsa was a member of a writing group at Common Word, and here we reprint one of the poems she wrote in her memory.

Mika

Freedom

Some have no ties or burdens.
Their life is
Cycling, walking, skiing, climbing, boating,
In Scotland, Wales and Switzerland.
Studying, travel, tourism,
In Malta, Gibraltar, Greece and Italy.
Safari, Disneyland, Yoga, Tai Chi, rebirthing,
Kundalini,
Tavernas, parties, entertaining, coiffure, leg wax,
Carpets, central heating and Political Correctness.
Is this freedom?

My life has been
Shopping, cooking, leaning, washing, saving,
scrimping,
Worry, State School, ignorance, narrowness,
provincialism,
All in Manchester;
A sick mother, younger brothers, sisters, children,
Bullying neighbours, racist police, racist teachers,
Violence, Fascism,
Days out to Blackpool, illiteracy, black and white
telly.
Linoleum, coal fires, chip shops, G.P.s, rats
And endless hard work.
Is this slavery?

Their life isn't freedom but money.
My life isn't slavery but struggle.
Their life is the death of the human spirit.
My life is freedom is action.

By Shamsa Butt

Rent Arrears

Any kind of debt is a big worry, and with rents rising to meet the rising cost of repairs there can be fears around affording the rent.



The no 1 thing to remember is **let the co-op know**, by contacting Shared Habitat, **as soon as** you get into difficulties.

No 2 is remember, **help is out there** but make sure it is reputable help. There are honest debt advisers who do not charge you, then there are loan sharks who cause years of further debt, fear, and misery, and also firms who charge you to help you sort out your debts. Check they are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and check they are free, before you use them.

Some reputable, free debt advisors are

National Debtline 0808 808 4000

www.nationaldebtline.org

Step Change 0800 138 1111

www.stepchange.org

Money Helper 0800 011 3739

www.moneyhelper.org.uk

Rent Arrears Quiz

Answers at the back

True or False?



1. If I get behind on my rent everyone on the committee will know about it. **True or False?**

2. Shared Habitat are in charge of checking the rent is coming in and contacting members about arrears. **True or False?**

3. Shared Habitat have the power to evict me. **True or False?**

4. I'm behind with my rent because of a problem with Housing Benefit. I don't need to do anything till my claim is sorted. **True or False?**

5. I'm having trouble keeping track. I can ask for a rent statement whenever I need one.

6. The Co-op has a duty to follow up all cases of rent arrears. **True or False?**

7. I've agreed to a repayment plan but I've got other debts and it's more than I can afford. I have the right to get it changed. **True or False?**

Recipe: Lentil Bolognese

Sent in
by a member



Photo: Jean Friend

Serves 4

Ingredients: 1 large onion chopped up, 250g mushrooms cut into quarters, 4 medium carrots cut into thin sticks, 2 sticks celery chopped up small, 4 handfuls of red lentils, 1 tin of tomatoes, 2 tbsp tomato paste, 1 tbsp paprika, 2 tbsp cooking oil, boiling water.

Method: Fry up the onion for a few minutes then add the carrots for a few more minutes. Then add the rest of the veg and fry a few more minutes.

Add the tinned tomatoes, tomato paste, paprika, lentils, and enough water to cover,

Cook for about 20 minutes more on a very low heat, topping up with more water whenever it looks dry. Make sure the lentils don't stick to the pan. Too much water is better than too little as it will all boil down.

Serve with spaghetti or any other pasta of your choice.

Things to Do in the Easter Holidays

Crowcroft Park Orchard Garden

Join us on the Bowling Green for a gardening day. Seed Sowing (with some to take home) - Wed 3rd April 11-2

Bug Hunts - Wed 10th April 11-2



Free Walk and Talk Trail

The [National Literacy Trust](#) have created a [walk and talk trail](#) for families. Packed with tips and tricks to help develop your child's language and communication skills, the trail can be used anywhere, anytime! You'll find lots of advice, tips and activities to support you to chat with your child and help them learn new words. Perfect for families with under fives.

You can download the trail from www.wordsforlife.org.uk/activities/talking-to-your-child-when-out-and-about

Days out for £4.00. Get a £2.00 ticket (adults) and £1.00 ticket (children)



Salford Quays, Media City and the Lowry

53 bus from Stanley Grove or Dickenson Rd to Salford Quays

Have a picnic overlooking the Ship Canal and its lovely bridges, watch the birds and the boats. The Lowry is free. They welcome families to their weekly programme of creative activities for babies, under 5's and under 11's. The Lowry Explorer packs are designed to provide a fun way for children and families to explore our exhibitions.

TransPennine Way along the Mersey

50 bus from Anson Rd or Birchfields Rd to Parrs Wood and continue walking. Turn left at Wilmslow Rd after Parrs Wood car park and left again onto the Transpennine Trail. You could see kingfishers, sandmartins, cormorants and herons. You can come back the same way or walk through to Stockport and come back on the 192

Museum of Science and Industry

192 bus to Piccadilly then Free Bus no1 from Piccadilly Stop EX. Get off at Lower Byrom Street, just outside the museum.

Always loads to see and do for all ages. There are tables where you can eat your picnic

Days out for £5.00. Get a 1 day Bee AnyBus for £5.00 (adults) and £2.50 (children)

Go wherever you like in Greater Manchester! Like

Lyme Park – 192

to Stockport then Skyline 199 to Lyme Park. Deer, adventure playground, Mr Darcy's pool, moorland walks



Lancashire Mining Museum - 192 to Piccadilly then 35 to Coach Rd, Astley, then 12 minute walk down Coach Rd. Lancashire's only surviving headgear and engine house

Heaton Park - 192 to Piccadilly then 135 to Heaton Park. Gardens, lake, animals, playground

Family Group days out for £9.00. Get a 1-day Bee Bus family (off-peak) ticket for £9. It allows a family one day's unlimited travel on Bee Network buses after 9.30am on weekdays and all day at weekends and bank holidays. The family ticket can be used by a group of one to three children accompanied by one or two adults when travelling together

You can buy all these tickets on the bus. Older children will need an iGo card or proof of age.

Waterside Arts – Visit *Hope. Despair. Miracles.* a photography exhibition by NLHC member Roxana Allison about people making a real difference in Longsight. See if you can spot any of our past and present members. Open until 20th April, Monday – Saturday, 10 am to 5 pm. Free / Everyone welcome. Tram Stop: Sale.

Information

Council Tax Rises. The Single Person Discount is worth a quarter of your bill. There are other discounts as well, Check if you are eligible. Citizens Advice can help – 0800 2787800

Homes for Change Co-op. An interesting piece in the online newspaper The Mill about works and what doesn't work in this other Co-op. Link: [The price of living in communal paradise: admin, absentee volunteers and cat sh*t wars \(manchestermill.co.uk\)](http://manchestermill.co.uk)
For a paper copy, please ring the office.

Cost of living support



Answers to Rent Arrears Quiz

1. **False.** As long as you agree a repayment plan, the committee won't be given your name and address. The committee be informed **only** if all attempts to reduce your arrears fail.
2. **True.** Shared Habitat are like an agent for the Co-op and they report back to the committee.
3. **False.** Only the committee can make this decision, after considering all the circumstances.
4. **False.** You need to let Shared Habitat know **as soon as** rent is owed, and explain the reason to them.
5. **True.** You should always get a statement every 3 months but you can request one any time.
6. **True.** It's a legal duty to recover as much rent as possible. The rents pay for repairs, improvements, staff, office, and expenses.
7. **True.** Repayment plans have to be affordable. You need to go back to Shared Habitat and make a new agreement. You may need to show them the paperwork about your income and outgoings. They can also help you find a free debt advice service who can work out an affordable plan with everyone.

Office Contact:

For anything that is not to do with repairs, rent or complaints, contact the office:

Phone, text or WhatsApp
07422 692 610

Email: office@nlhcoop.org

Office hours:
Wednesday to Friday

Complaints email:

complaints@nlhcoop.org

Committee Email:

office@nlhcoop.org

Mark your message "For Committee" or ring the office and let the worker know your message is for the committee.

Facebook:

www.facebook.com/groups/nlcmemberforum



Important – Please inform office when you change/update:

- Telephone / Mobile numbers
- Email address

For repairs, questions about rent, and complaints contact Shared Habitat.

Say you are a tenant of New Longsight Housing Co-op.

Monday to Friday 9:00am – 5:00pm

Phone: 0161 791 2000 –

WhatsApp: 0161 791 2000

Email: enquiry@sharedhabitat.co.uk

For emergency repairs out of hours. Only when there is risk to life or limb:

Phone 0161 791 2000& leave a message;

WhatsApp 0161 791 2000 or

Email enquiry@sharedhabitat.co.uk

Next Newsletter

If you have something for the June newsletter, please send it to lindamarsh.nlhc@gmail.com or ring the office about it by 4pm on Thursday 16th May