

Walton North intouch



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WALTON SOCIETY BREAK SATURDAY FREE PARKING PLEDGE ... AND GIVE THEMSELVES A 12% PAY RISE

Last May the Walton Society pledged in their Walton Central manifesto to introduce "free parking on Saturdays" and to review "the level of car park charges and the times when charges apply". As part of the Residents' Associations (RA)/LibDems Coalition formed last May, the Walton Society have broken this pledge. However, they have found the money to give themselves a 12.4% pay rise.

At the Full Council meeting in December, the RA (including the Walton Society)/LibDem Coalition voted to introduce **free Saturday parking** for the town/village centre car parks in Molesey, Thames Ditton, Long Ditton and Hersham - but not Walton. So while other parts of the borough will enjoy free parking from April, Walton residents won't. But we'll still have to pay the increased charges which came into effect in January. Walton North Conservative Cllr Andrew Kelly said "Walton residents are not second-class citizens, we pay the same Council Tax as everyone else in the borough. Yet the Walton Society are making Walton residents pay for Thames Ditton to get free parking and break their key election commitment." Fellow Walton North Councillor Alan Kopitko added "The administration are introducing this free Saturday parking to help local businesses. So what do they have against Walton businesses?"



The same meeting saw the RA/LibDem Coalition vote to give **borough councillors a 12.4% pay rise** at your expense. This will cost taxpayers £26,200 a year. Cllr Andrew Kelly proposed to reduce the increase to just 2%, the same increase the Council's staff are getting - this was turned down by the RA/LibDems. The three Walton Society Councillors all voted to give themselves this huge pay rise at your expense. No Conservative Councillor voted for the increase. Andrew said "There is simply no argument in favour of giving councillors such a huge pay rise. The Walton Society leader spoke at length about why councillors deserved the increase but never once mentioned how it comes from the taxpayers or the difficult financial times the Council is going through, nor did he seek to explain why councillors deserve so much more than the Council's own staff. In the eight years of Conservative majority control, allowances went up just 3.5%. After just months in office, the Walton Society are getting their snouts in the trough."

Also at the December meeting, the RA/LibDem administration voted for above-inflation **increases that will hit Elmbridge's elderly and vulnerable residents** - see article overleaf.

Elmbridge Green Belt Under Threat?

The Residents' Associations (RA)/LibDem administration at Elmbridge Borough Council is in the process of drawing up a new Local Plan for our borough. This plan will set out a strategy that will aim to meet the need for new homes, jobs, community facilities and transport infrastructure. It has been stated that Elmbridge will need an additional 9,480 homes by 2035.

This process includes a review of our precious Green Belt. The initial proposals from the RA/LibDem-run Council have suggested three areas of Green Belt should be allocated for development - two areas in Cobham and one in Long Ditton - claiming they are "no longer meeting the purposes" of Green Belt.

The Council's initial public consultation, running from 16 December 2016 to 24 February 2017, aims to get views on the general approach of the development strategy and identify key issues the Plan should address. Your local Councillors Andrew Kelly and Rachael Lake attended a public exhibition (pictured above) at the Playhouse on 23 January.



Andrew said "This important process will affect all of us who live here in the years to come. The Conservative administration, which was in power at Elmbridge until last May, was committed to protecting our Green Belt. We are steadfast in that commitment and will always fight to protect our Green Belt." Rachael added "It's vital the Local Plan addresses the additional infrastructure - schools, roads, public transport and GP surgeries - that Elmbridge will need as more housing is built."

For more information and ongoing updates, visit www.elmbridge.gov.uk/news/local-plan. A second consultation, on detailed policies and specific sites, will be held in the summer. We will keep you updated on this review in future newsletters.

DRAKE PARK APPLICATION REFUSED

In our Autumn 2016 *In Touch* we reported on the 'Drake Park' planning application for 1,024 homes on 147 acres of land on the Walton Green Belt between Fieldcommon Lane, Molesey Road and the River Mole. Half of the homes were designated for 'affordable housing'. The plans also included a primary school, doctor's surgery, shop, pub, restaurant, recreation area and public open space. This was the second such application - the near identical first application was withdrawn by the applicants in late 2015.

Elmbridge Borough Councillors considered the proposal at a Special Planning Sub-Committee meeting on 21 November. On the advice of the Council's planning officers, Councillors unanimously refused the application on four grounds:

- 1) inappropriate development in the Green Belt
- 2) not demonstrated that the transport impact could be sufficiently mitigated
- 3) close proximity to the Weylands allocated waste site
- 4) insufficient information about biodiversity issues

The applicants, Bonnar Allen, have six months to appeal to the Planning Inspectorate, an independent Government body. As we go to print they have yet to do so.

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YOUR LOCAL CONSERVATIVE TEAM FOR WALTON NORTH



Cllr Alan Kopitko
Your local Borough Councillor
Email: akopitko@elbridge.gov.uk
Phone: 01932 229 256



Cllr Andrew Kelly
Your local Borough Councillor
Email: akelly@elbridge.gov.uk
Twitter: @CllrAndrewKelly
Blog: cllrandrewkelly.wordpress.com
Phone: 07758 603 491



Cty Cllr Rachael Lake
Your local County Councillor
and Borough Councillor
Email: r.lake@surreycc.gov.uk
Phone: 07903 313 125
Twitter: @cllrRachaelLake

Walton's Conservative Councillors hold a surgery on the first Saturday of each month (Farmers Market Day) at Walton Library from 10am to 12 noon. There is no need to book, so please just turn up on the day.

Elmbridge Borough Council has two noticeboards in Walton North, one outside the Terrace Road 'Co-op' and the other by the Cottimore Lane shops. These are updated on a weekly basis and feature information about a wide-range of community and voluntary events and groups.

WATERSIDE DRIVE UPDATE

The decontamination of the Waterside Drive site and construction of the new Sports Hub is continuing with completion still on target for September 2017. It will be a home for Walton & Hershaw FC, Walton Casuals FC and Walton Athletics Club. Regular updates can be found at www.elbridge.gov.uk/sports-and-health/elbridge-sports-hub.

The High Court quashed the original planning application for the Hub declaring that the Council had not correctly considered the Green Belt status of the site. Elmbridge's Planning Committee approved a new planning application for the Sports Hub on 17 January. The new application has two fewer spectator stands, removes the external storage areas and changes the floodlighting. At the meeting your local Walton North Councillors insisted that noise, lighting and opening hours strategies be brought to the Committee at a later date. We are keen to ensure the future use of the Hub causes as little disturbance to nearby residents as possible.



Rachael & Alan at the Xcel Leisure Centre to visit the play area drop-in consultation

A public consultation in February is seeking to gather views on the best location and type of equipment for the new children's play area that will be built as part of the Sports Hub project. For more information visit www.elbridge.gov.uk/news/have-your-say-play-area-sports-hub.

STREET LIGHTS TURN-OFF

In early February, as part of a Surrey-wide scheme, many street lights across Walton were turned off from midnight to 5am. Larger roads (such as Terrace Road, Cottimore Lane, Rydens Road as well as the town centre) are not having their lights turned off.

An initial list of roads that would have the lights turned off was published in December. Rachael then lobbied Surrey County Council about roads where she had particular concerns. As a direct result of Rachael's representations 22 roads in Walton North were removed from the list and their lights will not be turned off.

NEW CHARGE TO PLAY TENNIS...

In January the Residents' Association (RA)/LibDem administration (which includes the Walton Society) at Elmbridge Borough Council decided to introduce charges to use the Council's tennis courts. This is the first time charges have ever been introduced at the Council's tennis courts.

From May this year you will no longer be able to use Elmgrove tennis courts without first booking a court and paying a fee.



Elmgrove Recreation Ground

The new charges are estimated to raise just under £27,000 a year for the Council. This comes just a month after the administration forced through a 12% pay rise for councillors, costing taxpayers over £22,000.

...AND INCREASED COMMUNITY CHARGES



Walton Day Centre in Manor Road

On 7 December the RA/LibDem administration at Elmbridge Council voted to increase charges for meals-on-wheels and lunches at the Day Centres by several times higher than the rate of inflation.

It is even worse for community transport users. A single journey to a Day Centre increased by a whopping 30% and the average rise for transport is over 13%. Another service charge was also hiked by 14%.

NEWS IN BRIEF

- Exhibitions were held late last year for proposals for the **Birdseye site** in Station Avenue. The developers are proposing to knock down the listed building and build about 350 homes (mainly flats) and retail units in its place. We understand further exhibitions will take place this year but we are awaiting details.
- A planning application for new signage indicates a Marks & Spencer Food Hall will be taking over the **Aldi site** in Church Street. It also looks like the vacant restaurant unit on New Zealand Avenue is to become an Argentinean steakhouse.
- Abellio decided to resign from various **bus contracts** with effect from 31 December. Surrey County Council worked hard to arrange replacement services. These are in place pending a further review this year. New timetables are available at Walton Library and at www.surreycc.gov.uk/buses.
- The County Council is to carry out an **on-street parking review** in Walton later this year. More information and updates can be found at www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/parking/local-parking-news-and-updates/parking-news-and-updates-in-elbridge.
- The **Council Tax** we all pay goes to three different authorities – Surrey County Council, Surrey Police and Elmbridge Borough Council. For the new financial year starting on 1 April, each authority has increased their portion. The County Council by 4.99% (1.99% a general increase and 3% for social care), the Police by 1.99% and Elmbridge Council by 1.93%.
- The Walton-on-Thames Trading Alliance (WoTTA) organise regular one-hour **community litter picks** to clean up our town. The next one is on Sunday 2 April at 10am (the location is to be confirmed). Visit www.wotta.co.uk to sign up.

IMPROVING OUR ROADS

Since gaining the seat from the Walton Society in 2013, local County Councillor Rachael Lake has been working hard to improve the state of our local roads. She has tried to catch-up on the backlog she inherited four years ago, whether it has been small cul-de-sacs like Cottimore Terrace or longer roads such as Russell Road and Manor Road.

Looking forward Rachael says "One of my priorities for the 2017/18 financial year is Cottimore Lane – the section from Florence Road up to Langport Court on Ambleside Avenue badly needs resurfacing. It's no secret that money is tight, but I shall continue to get as much done as I possibly can."

Russell Road was one of Rachael's priorities when she was elected in 2013 - it was resurfaced a few months later



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Apps Court Farm, Hurst Road, Walton on Thames, Surrey, KT12 2EG
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