

Walton North *intouch*

News from your local Conservative
Councillors Alan Kopitko,
Rachael Lake & Andrew Kelly

Delivered by your Walton North Conservative team

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ELMBRIDGE ADMINISTRATION PASS THE BUCK AFTER BIN CHAOS

The Elmbridge councillor who has presided over months of shambolic missed bin collections has refused to resign or even take responsibility for the fiasco. LibDem Cllr Barry Fairbank is the Portfolio Holder for the Environment in the chaotic eight-party coalition which runs Elmbridge.

At July's Council meeting he was challenged by the Conservative opposition group to explain why the refuse collection service has been so dismal since a new contractor, Amey, took over in early June. Despite having a year to check the contractor was putting resources in place, Cllr Fairbank (right) tried to duck responsibility. He said that, as the contract is administered via a third party called Joint Waste Solutions it is they who are responsible for the mess, along with the contractor, but not him! Huge numbers of residents from Walton and the rest of the borough flooded the Council's switchboards with complaints about missed food bin, refuse, recycling and garden waste collections - made all the worse by the July heat wave.



Cllr Fairbank, who denies going to ground, was forced to admit that he had not even met with the contractor since things went wrong. Conservative Environment spokesman, Cllr Glenn Dearlove, asked whether Cllr Fairbank accepted that, as Portfolio Holder, he owed residents "an unreserved apology". Walton North's Cllr Alan Kopitko added: "I'm shocked that he dismisses any responsibility and passes it to Amey. I always thought it was down to the Portfolio Holder for the Environment to run the waste collection service." Even one of Cllr Fairbank's Residents Association colleagues was highly critical, saying: "He seems to walk away from his responsibilities as Portfolio Holder."

Conservative deputy leader, Cllr James Browne, called for Cllr Fairbank to resign from the Cabinet. He said: "Our residents pay their council tax in the expectation that they will receive the highest quality service. But the service they have received from Amey and those running this contract has been abysmal. I have heard nothing other than 'it is someone else's fault'." Cllr Fairbank replied: "I won't accept responsibility for this."

Elmbridge and three other boroughs - Woking, Surrey Heath and Mole Valley - have entered into a 10-year joint contract with Amey that should save a combined £2.5m a year. So far Amey has only been emptying the bins in Elmbridge with the pressure of serving the other boroughs still to come.

The Council is now claiming the problems are over, but on 4 September Conservative Cllr Rachael Lake learned that one block of retired flats in the centre of Walton hadn't had their now maggot-infested food bins collected for four weeks. Rachael raised this immediately with the head of environmental services at the Council.

Updates from your Councillors

Since our May/June *In Touch*, we have been busy at the Council and in the community. Here is a selection of what we've been doing:

Alan: In August, I was delighted to be invited to attend the Surrey 4x4 Response's Summer BBQ at Walton Oak School. The Surrey 4x4 Response is an organisation formed of 4x4 owners who volunteer their time and use their own personal vehicles to assist the emergency services in adverse weather conditions and marshal community events. They're an amazing group and it was great to meet them and hear first hand the work they do. Being Walton North's representative on the local Planning Sub-Committee always keeps me busy. Recent applications before us include the Stompond Lane redevelopment, a proposal for 12 flats above the old Wellington pub and the Wellington Close flats recladding.



Rachael: As Mayor of Elmbridge, I've been busy meeting people across Elmbridge. We have some amazing community groups in our area. My charity for my mayoral year is Oasis, who work with families in crisis in our borough. I'm holding a Charity Ball at Sandown Park on 2 December - I'd love to see you there. I'm now Chairman of the Communities Select Committee at Surrey County Council which overviews Surrey Fire & Rescue. They've been reviewing all blocks of flats post-Grenfell and they have no major concerns of any blocks within Elmbridge. On a local matter, I pressed Elmbridge Council to take legal action regarding the illegal felling of trees by the Towpath near Walton Rowing Club.



Andrew: I've been trying to get the Council to provide clarity on the future of our Playhouse. There's been delay after delay on a report on the Playhouse's future. For me, it's one of the jewels of Walton. We need to protect the arts in Elmbridge. I've recently joined the Surrey Museums Partnership Committee. Back in June we had some bad fly-tipping on the green off Vanbrugh Drive - this is private land but I liaised with the Council to ensure we put pressure on the landowner to remove it quickly. I've also requested the bushes on various pavements are cut back where they are blocking pedestrians, particularly with pushchairs, getting past.



MORE HOMES FOR RIVERNOOK FARM?

Last year Elmbridge Borough Council permitted a scheme for 83 homes on Rivernook Farm off Terrace Road. The site is Green Belt but the proposal was permissible as it was replacing the existing development of farm buildings. Much of the site would have remained open green land and for the first time would be publicly accessible.

However, the developers who got that planning permission have now sold the site to Bellway Homes. They put in a new planning application for the site in July. This is for 97 homes including 18 flats. The footprint of the new scheme is less than the 2016 application, however, the density is higher. A total of 40 homes would be 'affordable housing'. A new entrance from Terrace Road would be created. Like before, the remainder of the site would be publicly accessible green land.



For more information, visit www.elmbridge.gov.uk/planning and search for the application using reference number 2017/2258.

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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.

LOCAL CONSERVATIVES OPPOSE PARKING CHARGES INCREASE

At a time when many shops are closing in our town centre and the Council should be supporting our town centre, the Walton Society, the other political Residents' Associations (RA) and the LibDems have pushed through an increase in parking charges in the Ashley Park car park behind Homebase.

The Borough's Cabinet, including the Walton Society leader, voted to increase charges, bringing in an extra £45k a year to the Council's coffers. At the same time they agreed to spend £37k on a barrier at a Weybridge car park. At the meeting of all Elmbridge Councillors on 19 July Walton Conservatives Malcolm Howard and Andrew Kelly moved a motion to scrap the Ashley Park charges hike. The RA/LibDem coalition voted down this motion and so the increase went ahead on 4 September.



At the 19 July meeting, Malcolm and Andrew also proposed that the 3 hours free Saturday parking in the three Walton town centre car parks should be permanent, instead of ending next year when the Drewitts Court repair works end. The RA/LibDem voted down this proposal as well meaning the Walton Society voted to time limit Walton's free town centre parking.

Andrew said "It's a matter of fairness. Car parks in Hersham, Molesey, Thames Ditton and Long Ditton have all got free Saturday parking with no end date - why is Walton being treated as second-rate? And why aren't the Walton Society using their influence at the Council to stand up for our town centre?"

NEW TENNIS TAX CRITICISED

Elmbridge Council's decision to charge residents for using the public tennis courts has been criticised by the mother of two times Wimbledon champion and Elmbridge resident Sir Andy Murray. Judy Murray tweeted her support for a petition which called for the charges to be scrapped. She wrote: "Public tennis courts should be free to access. We don't pay to use swings or feed ducks or picnic on the grass. Don't tax tennis."



A dozen courts - including at Elmgrove in Walton - have been fitted with a keypad entry system. Players must now register online and pay £5 per hour or £36 for a season ticket. The political Residents Associations (RA) (including the Walton Society) and Lib Dem administration defend the scheme on the grounds that it will raise around £26k per year for the upkeep of the courts. It is interesting to note that this is close to the £30k that the RA/Lib Dems added to the annual council bill when they put up their own allowances by 12.4% last year.

Charging started despite a council survey which had found that 68% of respondents would not play tennis if the courts were not free. This is yet another policy disaster by the RA/LibDem administration and Elmbridge Conservatives have called for a rethink.

WALTON PARKING REVIEW

Surrey County Council has published its proposals as part of a review of on-street parking regulations in Walton. Most of the proposals in Walton North are for double yellow lines on the junctions of some roads to improve safety. It is proposed that the parking space on Church Street by 'The Regent' is removed. 'Car club' spaces are suggested for New Zealand Avenue and by Walton train station.

For full details of the proposals and information on how to respond to the public consultation visit: www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/parking/local-parking-news-and-updates/parking-news-and-updates-in-elmbridge/walton-on-thames-parking-review.

NEWS IN BRIEF

- **Walton Charity** is considering facilitating a brand new bus service designed for people who currently have poor transport options. They are consulting on two routes: the 'Walton Loop' (Xcel to Hersham Green via Walton Hospital, Rydens School and Walton and Hersham stations); and the 'Brooklands Link' (from Walton centre to Weybridge centre via Walton Hospital, Walton station, Hersham Green and Brooklands retail park and college). The survey is at www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/9DS8ZRO - please let them know your views about this exciting idea.

- **Walton Heritage Day** took place at Cowey Sale on 9 September. This year Walton Conservatives' stall conducted a survey of what residents think of Walton. Thank you to all those who took part. (Mayor Cllr Rachael Lake with Cllr Chris Cross & Cllr Andrew Kelly.)



- As reported in our last *In Touch*, Elmbridge Council has received an application to demolish the Grade II-listed **Birds Eye building** on Station Avenue and replace it with 375 homes. Historic England, the government body responsible for historic buildings, has now formally objected to the proposed demolition. They say they are not convinced the developers have proven the current building is economically unviable.

- A new **bus timetable** came into operation on 2 September. After a nine month break, the 461 once again goes from Walton to St Peter's Hospital every half an hour til 7.30pm. The route of the 564 has been extended to include the Xcel Leisure Centre, which has been without a bus since January. For more information, visit surreycc.gov.uk/buses.

- As we go to print, the new **Waterside Drive Sports Hub** is about to be formally opened by Mayor of Elmbridge Cllr Rachael Lake. A Planning Committee meeting on 5 September agreed the hours of use and lighting strategy for the Hub. Your Walton North Councillors sought assurances that the closure time (midnight on Friday and Saturday, 11pm Sunday to Thursday) is the time the building closes not the last orders time. We will monitor the Hub going forward to ensure there is no unnecessary and obtrusive noise and light disturbance for local residents. The completion of the new play area has been delayed due to construction issues.

- Planning applications have been received to build 10 flats at **16-18 Sandy Lane** and 12 flats at **85-91 Cottimore Lane**.

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