

The Walton News



This newsletter is sponsored by



The Ashley Park. Good food, good times. **Open 11am to midnight, Monday to Sunday.** Ashley Park Road, Walton, KT12 1JP. Tel: 01932 220196.

Relief as council tax referendum is called off

■ Eleventh hour breakthrough averts potential 14.99% council tax rise, but challenging times lie ahead

WE are pleased to report that Surrey County Council has scrapped plans for a referendum on raising the council tax by 14.99% to meet the soaring cost of adult social care.

Instead, Surrey Councillors meeting in February approved a lower increase of 4.99% of which three fifths will be ring-fenced for adult social care. This is a relief. Your Conservative Councillors know that many Walton families would have struggled to pay an extra £190 in council tax this year, and even the lower amount will be a challenge for some.

We spoke to David Hodge, Leader of Conservative-run Surrey County Council, about the financial crisis his administration is currently grappling with.

He said told us that as a Conservative he does not increase council tax lightly but Surrey is caught between a rock and a hard place at present. Residents are thankfully living longer, but the cost of caring for our elderly is rising by around £24m each year.

Yet the funding Surrey receives from Central Government has been cut by £170m since 2010. In 2015 Surrey received £116m, last year just £67m and this year £28m.

From 2019 onwards Surrey taxpayers could be expected to contribute £17m to the pot, the equivalent of 3% on the council tax.



In addition, £70m a year is required to care for residents with learning disabilities, but central funding has been cut by £32m.

Mr Hodge said: "My Cabinet colleagues and I spent five months requesting our Surrey MPs and key Government Ministers help in securing a fairer deal for Surrey's residents. We provided all the data and charts which set out the unfairness of funding for Surrey.

"Surrey residents pay some of the highest

levels of council tax in the country with central government paying in only 20%. While nearly all accepted our case the constant message from Government was there was no money left. But we did not give up."

Mr Hodge launched a media offensive, appearing on all the major TV news programmes to highlight the funding crisis in Surrey which he said had prompted his decision to hold a referendum on increasing coun-

cil tax in order to balance the books and save other services from being decimated while the Council met its statutory obligations to fund social care.

Thankfully, on 7th February, as the Surrey Cabinet was due to approve the referendum, the Government agreed Surrey could be a pilot for the new Business Rates Retention in 2018/19. Mr Hodge is confident that this proposal, and greater reassurances on adult social care funding, offer the prospect of more sustainable finances in the future.

But on being willing to confront his own side in Government, Mr Hodge said: "I make no apologies for standing up for Surrey."

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn complained in Parliament that Surrey had been given a "sweetheart deal" - clearly no support from Labour for our hard-pressed council taxpayers.

Even with a 4.99% rise this year, Surrey must find additional savings of £123m - a huge sum. In recent years, the Conservative administration has saved £450m, while opposed at every turn by Residents Association and Lib Dem councillors.

Ministers have promised to reform the formula that is skewed against Surrey, but this is not due to happen until 2019/20.

'Flagship' sports hub project on track

WALTON Councillor Malcolm Howard has welcomed news that the Elmbridge's flagship Sports Hub is on track to open at Waterside Drive in September.

In January the High Court decided the Council had not paid significant regard to the greenbelt elements of the site and quashed its planning permission.

Cllr Howard said: "The argument in court turned on the interpretation of a single sentence, and Justice Supperstone decided that Elmbridge Council had erred in granting planning approval.

"Whilst the case proceeded EBC prepared a revised application. Any ambiguity was clarified and the project has continued without missing a heartbeat.

"I do not wish to dismiss the thoughts and feelings of objectors. They have exercised their rights in a free society to the limit. How-

ever this flagship project is nearly complete. A contaminated old rubbish dump has been transformed, and top class facilities for Football and Athletics have been created."

Once ready it will become the new home for Walton & Hersham FC and Walton Casuals FC. Teams of all ages will play on the same 3G pitches as clubs like Sutton United, which enjoyed a great run in this year's FA Cup.

Cllr Howard added: "At the Surrey/Sussex Indoor Athletics Championships recently I was present as a new British National record was set by teenager Pippa Earley of the Kingston Athletic Club, in the 60metre hurdles. It was a breathtaking performance.

"Walton Athletic Club also has young athletes like Pippa who are capable of progressing to National prominence and to be the pride of our local community."



Anger at Councillors' pay hike

RESIDENTS Association and Liberal Democrat Councillors have voted themselves an outrageous 12.4% increase.

The two groups, who now run Elmbridge Council as a coalition administration, forced through the inflation-busting rise in their personal allowances at December's full Council meeting.

No Conservative voted for the rise and it was branded "indefensible" by Walton North Conservative councillor Andrew Kelly. He proposed limiting the increase to 2%, which is what the council staff are getting this year, but this was rejected by Coalition Councillors.

As a result, the basic Councillor allowance will rise by £547 from the current £4,395 per annum to £4,942, with effect from May.

At a stroke the RA and Lib Dems added £30,193 to the Elmbridge

Council annual allowances bill and wiped out nearly two thirds of the £50,000 a year savings that were achieved by the last Conservative administration, when it reduced the number of councillors from 60 to 48. Sadly, within months of taking control of the Council we find RA and Lib Dem Councillors are voting to feather their own nests at the public expense.

One Liberal Councillor even had the cheek to blame the Conservatives for the size of the current rise, arguing that if we had increased allowances every year instead of freezing them then a lower number would have sufficed.

■ At the same meeting, the coalition voted to increase the cost of services to the elderly. The price of day centre meals and Meals on Wheels was increased by 6% and community transport by 13%.



Hello and welcome!

On behalf of your Walton South Conservative Councillors - Christine Elmer, Malcolm Howard and myself, Chris Cross - I would like to welcome you to our Spring Newsletter, which we hope you will find interesting and informative.

We have an update on the plans to re-develop the Birds Eye building as well as news of the on-street parking review for Walton. David Hodge, Leader of Surrey County Council, also speaks about the financial challenges facing the County.

As we approach the Surrey County Council elections in May, we would like to ask for your support for both Tony Samuels and Rachael Lake, who have both done a marvellous job over many years, and with your support will continue to strongly represent Walton.

Going forward, as your three Ward Councillors, Christine, Malcolm and myself will continue to be a voice for you at Elmbridge Council and to take up your concerns. Please get in touch if we can be of help.

- Cllr Chris Cross

BE GOOD AT BEING YOURSELF

Unlock your child's potential with Stagecoach Performing Arts

Singing, dancing and acting classes for 6-18 year olds, where students learn to embrace life with creativity and courage

Find out more today:

01932 506 806

walton@stagecoach.co.uk

stagecoach.co.uk/walton



Stagecoach Performing Arts Schools are operated under franchise and are independently owned by their Principals. Stagecoach is a registered trademark of Stagecoach Theatre Arts Ltd.



STAGE COACH

Creative Courage For Life®

Can we help?

Your local Conservative team will be pleased to assist you with any local matters relating to Elmbridge or Surrey County Councils. We are:



**Councillor
Chris Cross**
Tel: 07545 817246
Email: ccross@elmbridge.gov.uk



**Councillor
Christine Elmer**
Tel: 01932 245824
Email: celmer@elmbridge.gov.uk



**Councillor
Malcolm Howard**
Tel: 01932 226127
Email: mhoward@elmbridge.gov.uk

Can you help?

We need deliverers to help us distribute the Walton News and leaflets. Could you spare some time to deliver your road or more? If so please email us.

County Councillors: Rachael Lake (Walton) e: rlake@esherwalton.com | Tony Samuels (Walton South) e: tony.samuels@esherwalton.com



Iconic Birds Eye building 'could be demolished'

DEVELOPERS who want to build 350 homes at the former Birds Eye building, Walton Court, have warned that they may have to demolish the Grade II listed building due to deterioration.

Crest Nicholson & A2 Dominion held an open exhibition in December to show their designs and get feedback from the community.

Their proposal is for 350 units and 300 parking spaces at the site, close to Walton Station, of which 40% would be as Affordable Housing.

Walton South Councillor Christine Elmer said: "Residents concerns were about the proposed height of the new build, the proximity to the road and potential loss of green space, as well adding pressure to local infrastructure."

Residents also expressed concerns that with fewer parking spaces than there are homes, it would lead to more cars parked up locally.

Cllr Elmer added: "We understand the intention of the developer is to demolish the building, due to the deterioration of the internal structure, but that will need permission from

Historic England. This is of course regrettable but many people feel the site has been empty for too long and wish to see it put to good use."

The new owners are aware of the importance of the Locally Listed Bird Sculpture and Memorial to Flight Sgt Charles Sydney RAF and have promised to refurbish and enhance both monuments, and keep them at the site.



The right choice for Walton

SURREY County Council selections take place every four years, with the next due on Thursday 4th May, and local Councillors Rachael Lake and Tony Samuels will be re-standing.

Rachael is currently Elmbridge's Deputy Mayor and a Borough Councillor for Walton North, as well as Walton's incumbent County Councillor.

She said: "In 2013 I inherited a huge backlog of Walton roads that were in desperate need of attention such as the upper end of Rydens Road, Manor Road and Esher Avenue. I've worked hard to bring these and many other roads up to a reasonable standard. I've also been able to get many pavements resurfaced. Many issues like the Weylands campaign fall under both councils and being able to represent you at both levels strengthens our position."

A former school governor at Rydens and Walton Oak schools, Rachael will be committed to ensuring there are enough school places for local children if re-elected and is supporting plans for a new secondary school serving Walton.

She added: "Difficult decisions lay ahead for local government across the UK and I will continue to fight for the best value and the best deal for residents both for the young and the not so young."

Both Rachael and Tony Samuels, the Conservative County Councillor for Walton South and



Outlands, are involved in a review of on-street parking in Walton and seeking residents' views of where resources should be directed, and fighting for fairer funding from the Government for Surrey County Council, particularly where adult social care is concerned.

Tony said: "There are two key issues which I will prioritise if re-elected. The first is to finish the parking review, including resolving the ongoing congestion around Walton Station. The second issue is the application from Crest Nicholson for the development of Walton Court. I will be heavily involved with the infrastructure planning as the application takes shape."

A Surrey resident for more than 30 years, Tony was first elected to the Council in 1993 and is the current Cabinet Associate Member for Property.

He added: "I became a Conservative councillor to serve, protect and make a positive difference to the lives of my constituents, irrespective of which party they vote for. In my legal and business careers my hallmark was an adherence to professionalism, responsiveness and service, qualities I continue to strive for as a councillor."

Both Tony and Rachael take seriously the duty of care, both legal and moral, which Surrey County Council towards children, adults with physical and learning disabilities and elderly people. They are concerned by the rising demand for caring for those residents as well as the £170m cuts to Surrey's annual grant.

Tony said: "We are at a crunch point; demand for services are being compromised by our ability to supply them. I will continue to fight hard to ensure the government provides Surrey County Council with fairer funding."

Elmbridge takes a stand against Heathrow noise



ELMBRIDGE Council has come out in opposition to a third runway at Heathrow Airport amid concerns about air quality and noise disturbance.

Walton South Conservative Councillor Christine Elmer led the debate in the council chamber in December. She spent several months chairing a task group looking into the local impact of the airport.

The government favours building a third runway at Heathrow, following a period of further consultation, but Elmbridge had not declared a position on the issue since 2008.

Cllr Elmer said: "There is no doubt in my mind that noise is one of the most serious issues that our residents face. It is a problem in parts of Walton, Weybridge, Esher and Cobham, but in particular for East Molesey where residents' lives are literally being made a misery."

"They are struggling with noise late at night and early in the morning from 4.30am."

Cllr Elmer told the chamber that expansion would mean an additional 250,000 planes. While the airline industry says these are becoming quieter, Heathrow admits that larger aircraft have been flying lower over Elmbridge in recent times.

Flight paths are being altered with the event of precision navigation and the Council passed a motion calling for dispersal of noise rather than concentration over the same few houses as well as an independent noise regulator to be appointed.

The Council also called for assurances that Heathrow will meet EU air quality targets in full.

The Department for Transport (DfT) are consulting on the proposals until 15th March, See gov.uk/dfth/heathrow-airport-expansion

'Thousands of homes needed'

ELMBRIDGE will have to find space for 9,480 new homes (plus offices and retail) by 2035.

The Government has instructed the Council to play its part in addressing the shortage of homes in the South East. However the task of accommodating so many new homes will be challenging.

The Council has been consulting on a new 'Local Plan' setting out where these will go. The choice is between releasing three areas of "weak performing" green belt

in Cobham and Long Ditton, or pursuing a strategy of high density housing in urban areas, in effect allowing much higher building.

Leaders of the main parties at Elmbridge have written to the Communities Secretary, Sajid Javid, to clarify whether releasing green belt is even an option.

Walton South Councillor, Malcolm Howard, who serves on the Planning Committee with Cllr Chris Cross, said: "An objective assessment of our housing needs suggests that close-to 10,000 new homes will be needed."

"This is equivalent to us building a new town the size of Weybridge. It's a huge challenge."

Lights switched off

STREET lights are switching off in 43 roads in Walton from midnight until 5am as part of cash-strapped Surrey County Council's efforts to save £123m.

Town centres and main roads will continue to be lit as will roads with traffic calming, pedestrian crossings or where police have flagged up concerns.

For a list of affected roads go to: <https://tinyurl.com/htc2yus>

Contact Walton County Councillors Rachael Lake or Tony Samuels if you think there is a good reason to exempt a road.

Sandown Autopoint
IF YOU WANT THE BEST QUALITY SERVICE FOR YOUR CAR

£10 OFF WITH THIS VOUCHER

TELEPHONE: (01932) 228849