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STEVE SAYS:

HELLO and welcome to the summer Molesey News. I'm Councillor Steve Bax and I produce this newsletter on behalf of the Molesey Conservatives to keep you up to date on community matters.

As I write, Molesey is basking in the sun and we look set for another hot summer (hopefully not too hot!). We're about to get a new Prime Minister and I hope whoever wins is able to resolve the Brexit impasse and start to reunite the country.

There's no doubt that public dissatisfaction with national politicians over Brexit was the dominating factor at our local elections in May.

Across Surrey the Conservatives lost 45% of their council seats (in Guildford it was 74%) and in Elmbridge we held six seats and lost three.

This resulted in us losing control of the council to a coalition of seven residents associations and the Liberal Democrats.

Conservatives will keep them honest from opposition, and on a personal note I've been appointed shadow cabinet member for transport, which will be an exciting challenge.

I'd like to thank everyone who voted for our Molesey candidates Xingang Wang and John Gould in May. It proved impossible to win but they battled courageously against some very difficult political weather, not of their personal making.

Disappointingly our MRA opponents, yet again, circulated an offensive 'eve of poll' character criticism of our East Molesey candidate. He, and we, canvassed residents on issues not smears. Politics at their worst!

We'll keep working hard for Molesey and will do our best to win your support next year.

I hope you enjoy this edition and have a great summer!

Molesey braced for more aircraft noise!

THOUSANDS more low-flying planes could be directed over Molesey under plans being progressed by Heathrow Airport and opposed by local Conservatives.

Our town is exposed to noise from departing planes for the 30% of the year when they take off into an easterly wind. However, when winds are light (below 5 knots – about 6 miles per hour) aircraft can take off or land in either direction.

Heathrow is planning to relax its 50-year 'westerly preference' rules to allow more overflying of Molesey and more misery for our residents who, because of concentrated flight paths are disproportionately affected.

Noise concerns are among the most common and serious issues regularly raised with your local councillors.

One badly affected East Molesey resident told us: "The distressing thing about concentrated flight paths is that many residents do not receive the noise and therefore do



not feel the need to complain or support their neighbours."

In a double-whammy, the airport is seeking to increase the number of early morning landings by up to 25,000-a-year by having planes approach from the south (over Molesey and other parts of Elmbridge) and turn in sharply to the airport - an initiative known as Independent Parallel Approaches (IPA). East Molesey County Councillor Peter Szanto is fighting these proposals at the Heathrow

Community Noise Forum, where he represents Elmbridge.

In his letter to Heathrow's director, which you can read in full on the Conservative website (esherswalton.com), Peter warns: "Elmbridge residents are exposed to high levels of noise from departing aircraft during the day and night. IPA would, for the first time, expose our residents to aircraft noise from low-flying arrivals on westerlies, particularly in the early morning."

He points out that Heathrow's recent consultation was flawed as residents were not asked whether they supported introducing IPA, only which options they preferred.

An Elmbridge Council task group chaired by Cllr Steve Bax this year, strongly recommended against IPA or altering the westerly preference.

With the strong support of our local MP Dominic Raab, who has also written to Heathrow, we are calling on airport directors to keep their promises (made as part of their case for a third runway) that overflown communities 'should not experience a material increase in noise or deterioration air quality'.

Cllr Szanto adds: "The proposals for IPA do not meet this pledge. Limits on noise and air quality should be legally prescribed, independently monitored and enforced, including alternating routes to disperse noise over a wider geography."

Heathrow's consultation on expansion runs until 13 September at aec.heathrowconsultation.com

Taxpayers get bill for bigger Cabinet

CONSERVATIVES proved that Elmbridge Council could run efficiently with a lean Cabinet of seven councillors, during their year in control from 2018-19.

But with the coalition of seven residents association political parties and the LibDems back in charge after the May elections, the first thing they did was expand the top team to nine - costing taxpayers an extra £12,666 a year.

This gives the LibDems three seats at the top table.

Cllr James Browne (pictured), who leads the 21-strong Tory opposition, comments: "It is sad to see our residents' money being used to pay for sticking plasters to hold a coalition of eight parties together.

"We will put forward a positive alternative in the year ahead."



Anti-social order to tackle riverside issues

RESIDENTS are frustrated at the lack of Environment Agency (EA) enforcement against abuses of our riverside, and so are we.

For too long now, commercial slum-boats have been moored without permission at Hurst Park, and now we are seeing the occupants of houseboats in West Molesey fencing off the public riverbank as their own private gardens.

Molesey's Conservative councillors, Steve Bax and Peter Szanto, continue to meet with residents, lobby the EA to get a move on, and press Elmbridge and Surrey to bring their influence to bear. Unfortunately, as local councils own very little of the riverbank we are reliant on the EA to take the lead in legal action, and progress has been slow.

At our urging, MP Dominic Raab has written to the EA on 24 occasions in the past four years. He said: "It is clear that the existing enforcement powers are inadequate for dealing with the level of anti-social behaviour and unlawful activity."



In April the then Conservative administration at Elmbridge Council served planning contravention notices to a dozen boats over the land-grabbing.

The council is considering longer-term solutions. Councillors Bax and Szanto, along with Mr Raab, strongly support the introduction of a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) which is a flexible tool for dealing with antisocial behaviour.

The problem of boats being moored without permission has grown recently due to increased enforcement in Kingston and Richmond displacing boats into Surrey.

Further displacement is anticipated in years to come as regular mooring areas and marinas within London are developed.

For more information see www.elmbridge.gov.uk/moorings-unauthorised

Bigger build at Royal Cambridge site?

THE Royal Cambridge Nursing Home is seeking to demolish its existing buildings in Hurst Road and replace them with two larger ones on the site.

They wish to provide modern facilities for 32 elderly residents, as well as 60 units for the Sheppard Trust, a similar charity who are looking to relocate their residents from Holland Park.

Molesey councillor and planning sub-committee chair, Steve Bax has met with the trustees, their Thames Ditton architects and also with concerned local residents.



He said: "This is a beautiful old building that sits well on the edge of the Conservation Area. They need new facilities but whether the scheme proposed is appropriate is something councillors will have to weigh up, and we will be listening to residents' views."

Blow for Elmbridge

A JUDGE has found in favour of objectors and overturned the planning permission for Elmbridge Council's flagship Xcel Sports Hub at Walton.

The Council feels the decision hinges on a technicality and can be challenged at an appeal.

The £18m facilities opened in Waterside Drive in 2017 on previously polluted land and are home to athletics and football.

The sale of Walton and Her-sham FC's former grounds for housing is expected to cover the cost of building the sports hub.



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'Environment a key priority'



By Dr. Peter Szanto
County Councillor for East Molesey

CARE for our environment is a key priority for Surrey County Council in the months and years ahead, particularly in light of our recent near-unanimous vote to declare a climate emergency.

Surrey will create an Environment and Climate Change Charter that will set the framework for ambitious but deliverable policies and targets.

As we go forward under a new leadership team headed by former Elmbridge Borough Council leader, Councillor Tim Oliver, we're also reviewing Surrey's waste strategy with the aim of boosting recycling. I'm pleased to report

that charges for DIY wood and roof felt at our recycling centres have been suspended.

The council's finances are steadily improving but considerable challenges remain. Last year's budget assumed using £25 million of reserves to help fund services, in fact we achieved a modest surplus - Surrey's Transformation Programmes are starting to bear fruit.

A joint Ofsted and Care Quality Commission review in March into the Council's provisions for children with special educational needs and disabilities showed significant improvements in four out of five areas since 2016, albeit there is

still some way to go before overall performance can be regarded as satisfactory.

The public consultation on Surrey's Fire and Rescue plans has concluded. The case for change following the negative report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate is overwhelming. There will be a sharper focus on fire prevention while not compromising on incident response.

The Council's Overview and Scrutiny system has been radically reformed with the intention to enable 'backbench' councillors across all parties to play a greater role in policymaking while holding the

Executive to account for decisions.

On a personal note, I have been appointed Chairman of the Elmbridge Local Committee. Its responsibilities include roads and parking. Our roads are gradually improving and the annual parking review will assess proposals for tackling commuter parking in residential streets near Hampton Court Station.

If you see a dangerous or worrying situation across any of Surrey's responsibilities from concerns regarding children or adults in need to potholes or highways, report it at www.surreycc.gov.uk/do-it-online/report-it-online

Consultation on new housing plan

ELMBRIDGE has been set 'ambitious' housing targets of achieving 623 new homes in the borough every year.

How we will meet our targets will be set out in the council's new Local Plan. A special meeting of the new Residents Association and LibDem cabinet will be held on 24 July to agree options for a public consultation.

In 2016/17, when the coalition was last in power, the council consulted on the release of three large areas of greenbelt for housing. There were over 3,650 objections and residents were loud and clear: the greenbelt must be protected.

When Elmbridge Conservatives took control of the council for one year in May 2018, they directed officers to develop a new Local Plan which preserved the greenbelt. We will be encouraging the new administration to follow our lead.

Another public consultation will run from 19 August to 30 September. It will include the previous options and two more.

You will be able to view the information at libraries and the Civic Centre in Esher, and sign up for Local Plan alerts via consult.elmbridge.gov.uk

Fears over flood gate removal

SLUICE gates which form part of Molesey's flood defences are coming to the end of their working life and will be replaced or removed, the Environment Agency (EA) says.

Mechanical gates were installed at the Lower Mole around 40 years ago as part of the alleviation and remedial measures which followed the terrible Molesey flood of 1968.

However, visitors to a public exhibition at Imber Court in June were told that the sluice gates are reaching the end of their working lives.

Molesey councillors Peter Szanto and Steve Bax attended, and Steve said: "Our concern, and that of residents we met, was that the EA should not make any changes that will weaken our flood defences, particularly as we are likely to experience more extreme weather."

However, the EA insists that 'maintaining the standard of flood protection' and providing the 'best possible scheme for the environment, people and wildlife' are the top priority. They say the main purpose of gates is to keep river levels high for recreational purposes, and they can be removed safely.

Steve adds: "By returning the river to its natural state we would see water levels drop significantly, by around 1.6m, and this could create



safety issues for residents in accessing boats. It would expose more of the unsightly concrete walls that line the river and we might also see a proliferation of illegal moorings without the gates.

"For all these reasons we think the better course of action is for the EA to replace the gates with modern alternatives which allow a passage-way for fish."

The EA will consult Molesey residents on its preferred course of action later in the year.

■ DREDGING is not planned to be carried out as part of this project. The EA said the depth of silt in the Mole is not significant and not

restricting the ability of this channel to convey flood flows.

"Therefore dredging is not required and not the best use of resources," the EA has said.

■ FLOATING pennywort is widespread in the channels that form the Lower Mole. It grows rapidly (up to 20cm per day) and can push out native plant species, restrict flows and deplete oxygen levels in the water, killing fish.

The EA has experimented with lowering the river levels during frosty weather to expose the pennywort to frost and says it will continue to work with riparian owners to address the problem.

COMMUNITY NEWS

ELMBRIDGE Council has refused permission for a 15m high phone mast in Bridge Road near the junction with Arnison Road. Councillors argued it would tower over Boleyn Court and a better location was needed. There were 58 letters of objection, mainly around safety concerns.

ROBIN Driscoll, a former script writer for Mr Bean, will give a talk at Molesey Library on 24 September, 7pm. He'll talk about his career in TV and new life as a thriller novelist. Tickets are £5 with proceeds to the Friends of Molesey Library. And don't forget, Fridays are coffee and cake morning at Molesey Library and Saturday 11am is Story Time for under-fives.

MOLESEY Care uses volunteers to drive elderly or disabled local residents to doctors, hairdressers, shops or other appointments. Now in its 30th year, the charity is appealing for more volunteers. Could you be a driver or an organiser? Please call 0208 9411010 for more information.

COBHAM Free School could remain in 'temporary accommodation' in Hurst Road, West Molesey, until 2021 at a cost of £1m, local MP Dominic Raab told Parliament in March. He argued the money could be better spent relocating the office tenants of Munro House, Cobham, where the school is due to go.

HURST Meadow car park has been resurfaced and extended to accommodate up to nine more vehicles. The project was delayed by six weeks after the ground was found to be in poorer condition than anticipated, and dog walkers ignored signs and walked across the concrete while it was still curing. A fly-tipping incident at the refurbished car park is being investigated.

HEALTHY Hearties Surrey is a support group for anyone with a heart condition and/or their family, which meets at St Paul's Church in East Molesey on the third Tuesday of each month from 2-3pm. Call Angela Hartley on 07918788347 for info.

MOLESEY FC has lost its planning appeal to build 50 flats, a new clubhouse and day nursery at its ground and adjacent land in Grange Close. The club launched an appeal after being turned down by councillors in November.

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Help to Buy – there are pros and cons

Are your kids struggling to get on the property ladder? A Help to Buy equity loan could be a good option but it may not be the right move for them.

KWW is one of the leading conveyancers in Surrey and we deal with lots of H2B business. We are happy to offer you the benefit of our experience in this vital area of funding.

To qualify for H2B, the home in question must be a new build costing less than £600,000. The buyer provides at least a 5% deposit, and the Government will lend up to 20% of the property's value (40% in London). The balance of the purchase price is financed with a mortgage from an approved lender.

The loan must be repaid when the home is sold, or after 25 years if later. The amount you repay reflects the ratio of the loan to the value of the property when you first



borrowed. So, if your H2B loan was for 20% of the value of your home when you bought it, you must repay 20% of the price you sell it for.

Help to Buy has its pros and cons, and it is important you consider how suitable the scheme, and any particular property, is for you. Talk to us early on, as the scheme involves some additional steps in the conveyancing process.

Read Sarah Trickey's H2B blog on the KWW website - www.kww.co.uk

The truth about car park charges

IT IS disappointing to see the Molesey Residents Association demeaning itself by engaging in repeated personal attacks on Councillor Steve Bax.

The last two editions of their newsletter have carried damning articles under the heading 'Car Park Charges Going Up Up Up' accusing Steve of promising free parking but voting for rises.

The articles make no mention of what the new charges actually were or any context, so we will try to set the record straight for readers.

Car park charges were introduced in 2004, ironically by the MRA and its allies when they ran the council.

These cover overheads like maintenance and the taxes payable for every bay. As government grants have fallen, the council is increasingly reliant on income from car parks to fund and maintain services.

This is why, despite Steve fulfilling his 2012 promise to lobby for free parking (even though he was not elected at that time) it was not financially viable.

At last November's Full Council, the rates were set for 2019-21.

In contrast to the alarmist MRA articles, those changes were minimal for Molesey. 30 minutes' parking at Walton Road was FROZEN



at 40p until 2021. The 80p hourly rate was also frozen for 2019/20 and only to rise by 10p in 2021. The cost of an all-day ticket rose from £3.50 to £4 but this reflects longer charging hours of 8am to 7pm. Yearly permits were retained with a 45% discount, and Conservatives also introduced a 70% discount for electric vehicles.

Steve and other Tory backbenchers won a concession to retain the three hours free parking in Molesey on Saturday for six months pending an all-party review. Thankfully that led to it being retained indefinitely.

Had Steve joined MRA councillors in opposing this amendment, free Saturday parking would have stopped in January. Please don't be taken in by misleading MRA attacks. Email us and we will be happy to set the record straight.