

The Molesey News

In support of **STEVE BAX** the Molesey Conservative Residents candidate for Molesey East

Hello and welcome to this special 'local elections' edition of *The Molesey News*. I am Steve Bax the Molesey Conservative Residents candidate for Molesey East.

Three years ago, having been a newspaper reporter on community issues for a number of years, I decided to 'put my money where my mouth was' and become more actively involved rather than continue as an observer.

Since then I have been working for Molesey's better government consistently, and raising issues that

matter to residents – like the Jolly Boatman development at Hampton Court, our poorly neglected roads, problem parking and concerns over school places, to name only a few.

I formed the Molesey Conservative Residents in 2011 to reinvigorate our local politics, which I realised had grown stale from years of unhealthy one-party rule under the Molesey Residents Association. I started the *Molesey News* to keep you informed about issues of local importance as well as the goings on at Borough and County councils.

Throughout this campaign and in the

months leading up to it, I have been knocking on doors to hear your concerns and priorities. These are reflected in this manifesto along with the course of action I will pursue if elected to make Elmbridge Council more democratic, leaner and accountable to you.

This will be my fourth election in Molesey. After near misses in past years I have always resolved to overcome setbacks, learn the lessons and come back stronger. I promise to be equally tenacious and determined in fighting your corner at Elmbridge Council and taking on vested interests.

Last year's election was decided by a mere 24 votes and my sense from speaking to voters on the doorsteps is that this year will again be very close.

Your support on May 22, should you choose to give it, WILL make a difference to how our town is governed.

The Molesey Conservative Residents puts Molesey's interests before anything else in its decisions and activities.

It's time for a breath of fresh air in Molesey's politics, and with that in mind I hope you will support me this Thursday.

Thank you and best wishes, Steve.

Getting out of Europe... via Elmbridge Council?

THE United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) is standing a candidate in Molesey East at this local election for Elmbridge Council.

This is a party whose aim is to get Britain to withdraw from the European Union, and whilst that may be a relevant argument for the elections to the European Parliament in Belgium on May 22nd, it is difficult to see what it has to do with Molesey or Elmbridge Council.

As things stand UKIP hasn't developed enough as a political entity to be ready for elected office in our Borough. This is reflected by its clunkingly inappropriate party name for a domestic local council election, and that its candidate has not taken the trouble to issue a local manifesto to Molesey's voters.

Instead there is a generic party central office-produced leaflet with some vague policies which could apply anywhere from John O'Groats to Land's End (or even Timbuktu!), as much as Molesey. Local elections ought to be about local people, local issues and local services, as well as the candidate's record of local activity.

Until this political party broadens its agenda, and candidates standing here take the trouble to say what exactly they propose to do in Molesey and at the Borough Council, it isn't 'up to muster' for election to local government in the Molesey Conservative Residents' view.



ABOUT STEVE:

Having been a news reporter for several years for the Surrey Herald, I am now employed as the Editor of a busy daily news website in London.

I am currently the Chairman of the Molesey Conservative Residents, the Deputy Chair of the Friends of Molesey Library, and the Treasurer of 'Henrietta' – a playgroup for Molesey's youngsters, which also provides employment for around a dozen local residents.

I've lived happily in Molesey for the last decade since meeting my wife Kim, who is a lifelong resident, and we've chosen to raise our two young boys here.

A fresh approach

Every year approximately only 30% voters in Molesey cast their ballots in our local elections. This is a sobering statistic, because it means that two in every three Molesey voters are deciding not to participate in the democratic process.

Due to its distance and size the Westminster Parliament can only ever be a clumsy instrument for governing our localities, which are far more effectively represented by the council chamber. This is why local councils matter, and the elections which decide who holds office within them are important.

I am concerned that this low participation shows a disconnect has occurred between local government and too many of the residents of Molesey. I will endeavour to reinvigorate our town's political life by pursuing the following course and reforms at Elmbridge Council, to put you the voter back at the heart of the democratic process:

Local not national

I will use the office of councillor to press the principle within Elmbridge Council for more powers to be returned from Central Government in London to our Borough and County councils, to reverse the authoritarian centralisation that has occurred over the last few decades, where the authority of the council, councillors and the voters that choose them has been undermined.

Transparency

Elmbridge Council should remove its restriction on the televised filming of its activities and broadcast full Council and other significant meetings on the internet for public viewing to allow you to see how it conducts its business.

Democracy

There has been a growing tendency for some time within local government of a shift in the power of decision and activity from elected councillors to the unelected council officials. This is a worrying undermining of our democratic tradition. Councillors are chosen by you the voter and are directly accountable to you through the ballot box, but officials are not. I will oppose any further drift in this direction

and work for a return of power to the councillors, and thereby to you the voter who chooses them.

Communication

It's important that you are kept informed about what is going on at the Council and what is being decided in your name as well as how your tax money is being spent.

As a newspaper man I know the value of communication. Information in politics is empowering as it allows us to hold those in public office to account for their actions and ensures good governance.

I will continue producing *The Molesey News* to keep you informed of local issues affecting Molesey and what's happening at Borough and County Halls.

Public purse

I'm concerned that private sector contractors seem to regard the council authorities who employ them as "having deep pockets", and that there seems to be a routine overcharging in the pricing of work projects, leading to wasted public resources and taxation receipts.

As a councillor I will be a guardian of the public purse, which is your money, and will oppose the taxpayer being taken for a ride like this.

Officer salaries

Over the last few years there's been an escalation in the salaries of senior council managers, to the point that several are now on a level some way beyond Members of Parliament.

There has been increasing public disquiet at this unhealthy development and doubts raised as to whether this is an appropriate use of taxpayer funds.

I share these doubts and will press from within the council chamber for this situation to be addressed, with the resulting savings being put back into public services rather than officials' pay packets.



My manifesto for Molesey at the Borough Council



HELP FOR SHOPS AND RESIDENTS

■ Ever since car parking charges were introduced by the last Residents Association administration in 2006, Molesey's town centre car park in Walton Road has been under utilised. Worse than that it is running at a loss - £24k in 2012/13 - as a significant number of shoppers choose to park in residential side streets instead.

This causes frustration and inconvenience to residents in School Road, Park, Pemberton, Matham and others.

If elected I will lobby the current Conservative administration at Elmbridge to introduce a ONE HOUR PERIOD OF FREE PARKING at the Walton Road car park.

This will give a boost to our local shops and provide some long overdue relief for Molesey's town centre residents.

PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT

■ Molesey is a green and pleasant place to live and I am determined to keep it that way.

I will work with councillors of all parties to safeguard our open spaces and resist excessive or inappropriate developments in our town, such as the housing scheme that was proposed at the Pavilion in Hurst Lane.

My opposition to the monstrous overdevelopment at the Jolly Boatman site is well known and consistent. The developer Gladedale is currently up for sale by Lloyds bank and a new owner may wish to vary the planning permission. If this happens it is vital that Molesey has an influence within the Conservative majority group at Elmbridge to obtain the best outcome at this hugely important site.

I can provide that influence. An MRA councillor could not.

TACKLING ANTI-SOCIAL PARKING

■ Residents living close to Hampton Court Station have been troubled for years by all-day commuter parkers, clogging streets, blocking driveways and making it impossible for the council to clean the gutters.

This is a danger as well as an inconvenience for residents who are having to exit their property blindsighted to oncoming traffic.

With the support of

Conservative colleagues at County and Borough level I will introduce a short parking restriction on weekday mornings in the worst affected streets.

During this time only residents or their guests will be able to park and this will help to clear out the all day parking, while providing spaces for Bridge Road shoppers.



ROADS REPAIRED AND RESURFACED

■ While campaigning in this election I have been appalled by the state of some of our roads. Pictured is a large pothole in Park Road and there are others in Palace Road and elsewhere that need urgent attention.

Surrey County Council is spending £100million to resurface roads as part of its Operation Horizon programme.

Under this scheme Seymour Road, Bridge Road, Hurst Lane and Grove Road have been resurfaced. Manor Road and Kent Road will be done in the next year, and Orchard Lane, Church Road, Palace Road and Wolsey Road after that.

I will continue to lobby Surrey to repair our local roads.

LOCAL SCHOOL PLACES

■ The shortage of school places is of major concern to many parents I meet in Molesey.

The rise in birthrates has placed unprecedented strain on school admissions and Surrey County Council is responding with the biggest school expansion programme in its history. I am very interested in this issue and am increasingly drawn to the idea that Molesey should once again have ITS OWN SECONDARY SCHOOL. I will continue to make the case for it and to mobilise support for the idea. The time to act is now.

SUPPORT FOR MOLESEY HOSPITAL

■ I recently visited Molesey Hospital and met the chairman of its excellent League of Friends. We are fortunate to have a community hospital here in Molesey and as a councillor it will have my full support.

Government reforms are allowing doctors and clinical practitioners a greater role in the management of local hospitals.

There is a review underway of how these can be used better to reduce the number of patients being sent to the overburdened



big A&E departments such as at Kingston. I welcome this opportunity to increase the role of Molesey Hospital.

I will provide a link between the hospital and the Borough Council and promote its use.

HELP FOR MOLESEY LIBRARY

■ Three years ago Molesey Library was threatened with closure. Today it flourishes thanks to its hardworking Friends network, of which I am deputy chairman.

As a councillor our excellent local library will have my full support and practical assistance.

FLOOD PREPARATIONS

■ During our unusually wet winter I visited East Molesey residents whose homes were at risk from flooding. Many were anxious at the lack of available information and timely assistance,

despite Elmbridge Council running a 24 hour crisis centre and deploying

thousands of sandbags. To better prepare us in future I will establish a FLOOD WARDEN in every at-risk street in East Molesey to ensure help and information gets to residents in the most need.



Molesey's political life under the Residents Association

As you may be aware there's been an ongoing exchange between the Molesey Conservative Residents and our political opponents the Molesey Residents Association via our respective newsletters, which I believe has proved of use in offering an insight into our town's politics.

Article from the Molesey Residents Association's newsletter, Spring 2014:

THE MOLESEY NEWS

You will have seen the circular under this name. It is nothing to do with Molesey's former independent newspaper but is a Conservative party political circular which often seeks to criticise the Molesey Residents Association and its councillors.

The last publication had a lengthy article further having a go at the MRA. It would be very easy to get into a tit for tat wrangle with the sole contributor and editor of this sheet but that isn't what the MRA is about and not what our many supporters would expect us to do. It may be better to explain why we exist.

Nearly 50 years ago, when Molesey came under the then Esher District Council, the public was not allowed to attend council meetings. Molesey residents were hence unaware when there was a plan going through the (Conservative dominated) council to demolish

all the houses in Palace, Wolsey & Arnison roads, and replace them with London high rise overspill housing.

When, at a very late stage, Molesey residents discovered the truth of what was proposed, there was a huge outcry and the plan was eventually dropped - and the area is now a conservation area!

The victorious residents decided that the only way to ensure that in the future they knew what was going on and to have a say in council affairs was to put up some of their own for election to the council. They had great success and, in 1965, formed the Molesey Residents Association and the MRA now represents the whole of Molesey at Elmbridge and Surrey County Council.

We are nothing to do with any political party (Steve's reply: the MRA is a political party which stands at elections seeking to govern our town, and currently exclusively controls all of its 11 political representative offices) and our sole concern is to do what is best for what (Steve: read here what 'our councillors and prominent Association members think') is right for Molesey, which is exactly what we have stood for since the MRA was formed.

Steve: This is the familiar recounting by the Molesey Residents Association of an event which happened more than 50

years ago. The campaigners back then who thankfully stopped that planning disaster have long since departed Molesey's political stage, and the current leadership of the MRA should stop its tired act of claiming for itself credit for the past work of others.

TIRED ORDER

Those campaigners were the challengers to a tired established order, which today's Molesey Residents Association has now become in our town's political life, with its array of unheard of councillors who generally only make appearances at election time, after which they pretty much vanish from sight once again for four years until the next election, when the well-worn MRA sales pitch along the lines of the above text is trotted out to secure a new term in office.

INVISIBLE COUNCILLORS

Molesey's current roster of MRA councillors count among their number Mr Eldridge (20 years continually in office), Mr Selleck (8 years), Mr Cooper (14 years), Mr Donaldson (12 years), Mrs Robertson (6 years), Mr Hopkins (30 years). All these councillors are almost invisible in Molesey's public life, most of them barely ever appear even in the MRA's own newsletter, which itself contains scant information on how our Borough is being

governed by the Council in which they sit.

TIME TO RE-ELECT ANOTHER ONE?

We now have another of their number that you are being asked to re-elect this Thursday, Mr Popham, who has been your sitting councillor for 14 years, from whom you've also heard comparatively little, and who has chosen to live in Walton-on-Thames rather than Molesey for several years now.

His election leaflet contains hardly any information as to what he has done over the last four years, and few policy commitments for the future, instead merely giving a list claiming credit for Molesey's amenities from our town's library, its hospital, post office and the Mole Hall, to its council services such as the removal of abandoned cars etc. none of which owe their existence to Mr Popham or his Party, but the MRA is hoping you won't notice.

EAST MOLESEY DESERVES BETTER

My view is that Molesey deserves better than this. I formed the Molesey Conservative Residents in 2011 to provide an alternative and to invigorate our local politics, which have become stagnant and moribund from too many years of this sort of complacent one party rule by the MRA.

It's time for a change.

Make sure your vote impacts, vote Bax on May 22!

STEVE
BAX

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for MOLESEY EAST - Thursday 22nd May