

The Molesey News

Voice of the Molesey Conservative Residents Nov/Dec 2011

MAGICAL MOLESEY

This year's Magical Molesey will be on Thursday November 24, 5.30pm in Walton Road. Come and see the Christmas lights, meet Santa and support our local shops and stalls. See you there!

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Car park empty, streets full

EAST Molesey residents have complained of their streets being 'clogged up' by shopper and commuter cars, while the town centre car park lays virtually empty.

The problem is said to be particularly acute in narrow School Road, but *The Molesey News* has heard accounts of people being unable to get out of drives or park outside their homes in Hansler Grove and Palace, Wolsey and Matham roads.

Meanwhile the 138-space Walton Road car park is still being under-used on weekdays, despite a reduction in charges in recent years to 20p an hour or £2 for the day.

A School Road resident invited the Molesey Conservative Residents' Steve Bax to walk the street with him and see the problems there first hand.

He said: "The real problems started when the charge came into effect in the Walton Road car park, and we now have a glut of cars that don't belong to the street, who park here on a regular basis.

"My wife and I have lived here



■ A busy School Road and (inset) an empty looking Walton Road car park.

over eight years and have learnt to live with the problems. But other residents seem to be getting miffed and are leaving notes on cars and getting grumpy."

He feels the solution is to restore the free parking at Walton Road, so Steve contacted Elmbridge Council's head of parking services, John Strachan, to discuss options.

It transpires the car park generated £32,653 in the 2010/11 financial year, but its operating costs were £48,664 (this includes business rates, lighting, maintenance and enforcement) resulting in a loss to the council of £16,011.

However when you take into ac-

count all 28 Elmbridge car parks, including Thamesmead - the free 21-space car park in Walton, the borough covered its costs and made a £950k profit in the last year.

Steve Bax said: "Free parking at Walton Road would give Molesey businesses a boost and address some of the antisocial parking that residents have complained about.

"But we need to bear in mind that charges contribute to the running costs of our car park, which otherwise would have to be borne by all council taxpayers - including those who don't drive."

An alternative to free parking is for residents to request a parking

permit scheme for their street.

Mr Strachan said these typically cost each home £50-a-year for one reserved parking bay or £70 for two, with the money covering the costs and enforcement.

But he warned permits can result in an overall reduction in parking spaces and resentment from residents at having to pay to park outside their own homes.

Molesey Conservatives would like your views on the parking situation and all the possible solutions. Please take part in our survey at <http://themoleseynews.blogspot.com>. We'll announce the results in the next *Molesey News*.

Streetlight upgrade raises fears over loss of heritage

WORK is under-way in Molesey to replace all orange glow street lamps with modern energy-efficient white lamps, but concerns are being raised over the loss of the town's distinctive 20th Century posts.

Surrey County Council has agreed a 25-year deal with its contractor Skanska to replace, upgrade and maintain 89,000 streetlights across all 11 Surrey boroughs.

The project is being financed by a Government grant and is intended to save 60,000 tonnes of carbon across the county and 'at least £12 million'.

The new lamp-posts will use mobile phone technology to communicate with a central computer in Guildford, allowing faults to be automatically detected and for the lights to be dimmed remotely to save electricity.

The white lamps are also said to deter criminals by illuminating the streets better, and create less glare into homes.

The Molesey News understands that posts under 15-years-old will have their heads swapped, but around 70,000 older posts will be uprooted entirely.

In conservation areas such as Molesey's Kent Town (encompassing Palace Road and other streets close to Hampton Court) Surrey plans to install 'heritage style' swan-necked lamp-posts, although residents will be consulted on their preferred choice of heritage design.

People living outside the conservation area will be able to club together if they wish to pay the extra £150 per post for a swan neck design.

Steve Bax of the Molesey Conservative Residents said: "We welcome the opportunity for the county to reduce its carbon output and save taxpayers millions in electricity payments. But in looking to the future we shouldn't abandon our past.

"The lamp-posts from Palace Road to Spring Gardens, Bell Road to Vine Road are good examples of early 20th Century street architecture and design and greatly enhance the character of those streets. It is worth exploring all options to see if the existing columns can be retained, cleaned-up and upgraded with the new heads if possible."

After making enquiries the Molesey Conservative Residents were told by the county council that "upgrading the old high level gas service columns is not something we could consider".

They say energy suppliers will no longer work on the older columns on health and safety grounds, and claim posts would need to be transported to the North of England to be upgraded, at a cost of £3,000 to £4,000 per column, rather than carrying out upgrades at street level.

The MCR is working with local residents to investigate other alternatives, but we want to hear your views.

What do you think? Should Molesey's older style lamp-posts be saved or should the modern replacements be embraced? Email MoleseySteve@gmail.com or post your views on our website.



Molesey Library seeking friends



A FRIENDS group has been created to support Molesey Library and find ways to increase its usage.

It follows the very welcome news that Surrey County Council has changed its mind about 'closing' our local library and re-launching it as a volunteer-run service.

The U-turn was announced by Rose Wilson, head of the library service, at a meeting with the library steering committee of concerned local residents.

She suggested the change of heart may have been due to the distance to alternative branches, as well as the fact that Molesey Library is larger than the 10 others due to become volunteer-managed. It also has 1,000 more active borrowers than the next biggest library.

The meeting resolved to form a 'Friends of Molesey Library' group chaired by residents James Moore and Peter Ellis.

Mr Moore said: "A strong and active Friends organisation will be critical in developing the profile of the library and avoiding future threats.

"Some areas of activity will include outreach work involving schools and other community groups, events linked to the library and input to the facilities and services provided."

For more on the Friends see www.moleseylibrary.org.uk

HELLO AND A WARM WELCOME



HELLO and welcome to this second edition of *The Molesey News*, the voice of the Conservative Party in Molesey.

I am Steve Bax, editor of this publication, and a prospective councillor for East Molesey.

Since the last edition I have been busy on residents' behalf addressing some of the issues facing our town, many of which are featured in this edition.

They include concerns about the loss of our distinctive 20th Century streetlights, outrageous potholes in Hampton Court Avenue, and empty homes in a poor state of repair.

Plus of course the topic of our lead article - nuisance parking in residential streets. If you have a moment please visit *The Molesey News* website and take part in our online parking survey.

In October I met with the organisers of Magical Molesey, and agreed to help with publicity for this in my capacity as a local journalist.

I also joined the Molesey Library Steering Committee (now relaunched as the friends of the library) and set-up its website.

The news that Molesey Library will continue to be run by the Surrey County Council and with paid staff is very welcome and is a relief for users.

Jolly Boatman

I was delighted to receive many emails and letters in response to the first *Molesey News*, with most saying how much they enjoyed it.

A subject that came up a lot was the hotel, retail and homes development planned for the 'Jolly Boatman' site opposite Hampton Court Palace.

I am happy to state my position which is that I do *not* think the current scheme is right for this site. I support the aspiration of the people of Molesey for the Boatman area to become an open space which compliments the Palace and enhances the view of it from our side of the river.

With the exit of the Star & Garter care home from the scheme, I hope there will be some scope for the developer to rethink its plans and come back with a scheme that Molesey can support.

I believe our town needs a voice within the majority Conservative group at Elmbridge Council to ensure its views on planning matters such as the Boatman are properly heard.

If elected a councillor in the future I would do just that.

Finally I would like to offer you and your family my very best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Making homes greener and affordable

ELMBRIDGE councillor James Browne has been speaking to *The Molesey News* about the major housing challenges facing our borough.

Cllr Browne is the Conservative councillor for Cobham Fairmile and has been the Elmbridge Cabinet member with responsibility for housing for 18 months – a role he is especially suited to given his background as a barrister specialising in landlord/tenant disputes.

He says his two biggest challenges at the moment are increasing the availability of affordable homes, and helping those who could find themselves unable to pay the rent due to a national cut in housing benefits.

Cllr Browne said: “It used to be that the Government paid up to a maximum of 50% of the market rent as housing benefit, but since April this has dropped to 30%. Our fear is that there will be an increase in people in private sector housing coming to us for help. So far it has only been small and we have coped perfectly well, but if we get a tidal wave we could struggle.”

The housing benefit bill in Elmbridge is around £40million a year with 1,322 claims in Molesey, and there are some 1,400 applicants on the waiting list for a home in Elmbridge.

Cllr Browne continued: “Our other big issue is to promote the development of affordable housing. The major problem in Elmbridge is that property prices are so high that it makes it very difficult for key workers and families on low incomes to afford to live here.”

Through the council’s partners, including Elmbridge Housing Trust, it has brought 185 new homes on stream in the last financial year, up to April 2011, and expects to create around 90 more by April 2012.

New builds, such as the development in Faraday Road, West Molesey, will increasingly



Councillor Browne pictured outside the eco-friendly new builds in Molesey's Faraday Road

utilise renewable materials and contain environmentally-friendly features such as solar panels and heating systems that circulate warmth from bathrooms and kitchens to the rest of the home.

Elmbridge has also joined forces with London-based Catalyst Housing to set-up a £1million pot of money to help local first time buyers to get on the housing ladder here.

Buyers can apply for cash towards their mortgage deposit and this is repaid when they come to sell their home years later.

Cllr Browne said: “So far 14 or 15 applicants have been helped. On average people stay in their homes for seven years, so the hope is it won’t be long before

the scheme becomes self-financing.”

Following the last edition of *The Molesey News* a resident got in touch for help regarding an empty home in Bell Road that was in a poor state of repair.

Cllr Browne said generally people look after their homes in Elmbridge, but the council can serve notices on owners to upkeep their properties, particularly if there is a health risk such as loose tiles or damp impacting on neighbours.

Despite the need for more homes, Cllr Browne insists planning applications from developers will always be properly scrutinised, and opposed if councillors deem them inappropriate.

He said: “Planning is the biggest issue that people contact us about, and people in Elmbridge are very good at making their voices heard when they don’t approve.”

“We don’t allow developers to do as they please, but if all the developers walked away there would be a housing shortage and no money in the pot for affordable housing or children’s playgrounds, and the housing market would stagnate.”

Do you have a housing question for Cllr Browne? Email us at MoleseySteve@gmail.com and we’ll pass it on.

“People in Elmbridge are very good at making their voices heard when they don’t approve”

- Cllr James Browne

Bikers boost Meals on Wheels



REQUESTS for Elmbridge Council’s Meals on Wheels are up 83% after the service was highlighted on the BBC’s Hairy Bikers programme.

The bikers, real names David Myers and Simon King (pictured above with Elmbridge chief executive Rob Moran), visited the Molesey Centre in School Road, East Molesey, where up-to 100 fresh meals are prepared every day and delivered to elderly and infirm residents.

They helped to modernise the menu and raise awareness of the service and its constant need for volunteers to deliver meals.

As a result of the series being broadcast in September and October, Elmbridge received enquiries from 40 new potential volunteers and a huge uptake in the service.

Other councils are seeking to copy the borough’s model and it has even had emails from the Meals on Wheels Association of America.

Conservative councillor Christine Elmer, the Elmbridge cabinet member for Social Affairs, paid tribute to the staff and volunteers who took part in the programmes.

She said: “At Molesey as well as filming which took place over an extended period, they also maintained the day to day service.”

“For the future, the aim is to roll out ‘fresh’ menus across all centres once there are volunteers in place with the preparation.”

“The Hairy Bikers have offered their full ongoing support and our thanks go to them and the film company Optomen, for choosing Elmbridge and helping raise awareness of volunteering.”

Users of the service pay £3.25 for a meal and can request a supper too. Last year Elmbridge delivered nearly 60,000 meals.

If you would like to find out more or can spare a bit of time to help deliver Meals on Wheels please call the volunteer coordinator on 01372 474552.

Cameron backs local bid to get women into politics

ELMBRIDGE councillor Elise Saunders is championing an initiative to get more women involved in politics.

The mother-of-four, who was elected a Conservative councillor for Oxshott & Stoke D’Arbernon in May, has teamed up with local businesswomen to launch an Elmbridge chapter of the Conservative Women’s Organisation.

This is a national initiative supported by Prime Minister David Cameron, which arranges social gatherings for women where they can make new friends, share ideas, network and hear from influential guest speakers.

Cllr Saunders (pictured here with the PM) works in the acting industry and was introduced to politics in childhood when she presented flowers to the then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

Speaking about the CWO she said: “There are so many women who have political interests but are not aware of any organisation that offers the opportunity to discuss them and then to act on them.”

“We aim to make this group a



place where women can express their opinions in a relaxed and welcoming environment and then perhaps get involved in activity that can make a real beneficial impact in our community.”

To launch the Elmbridge CWO Cllr Saunders will host an event at her home on the November 11.

The guest speakers will be Tory MP and Transport Minister Theresa Villiers, and Professor Tanya Byron, a psychologist, writer and media personality, best known for her work as a child therapist on TV’s *Little Angels* and *The House of Tiny Tearaways*. She also advises the Government on education.

To attend this event or find out more about the CWO please email EsherWaltonCWO@gmail.com.

COMMUNITY NEWS

THE 3rd Molesey Scouts will host another extra special **Santa’s Grotto** on the weekend of **December 10 and 11.**

For £5 children can meet Father Christmas and receive a quality toy, then step through the doors into a ‘magical wonderland’ - where past themes have included the Wizard of Oz and fairytale adventures.

This year’s theme is ‘top secret’ according to the organisers but the set and scenery has been months in the making.

The grotto is at hut in St Peter’s Road, West Molesey, from 1pm to 4pm. Call Emma on 07930 454675 to book.

THE Molesey News understands that Surrey Police and the Environment Agency are in advanced talks about sharing a premises at Molesey Lock.

The plan would allow officers to continue to have a base in Molesey once the station in Walton Road closes and they are relocated to Esher Civic Centre.

In a possible sign of their closer working ties, PC Ian Madelin and the EA recently teamed up to tackle antisocial behaviour from fishermen along the river.

It follows complaints about litter and tents being put up contrary to bylaws. Police, the EA and the council have produced a leaflet for fishing tackle shops.

STICKING with the police, a reminder that there will be panel meetings in December for residents to have a say on policing priorities.

The first is at Mole Hall in Bishop Fox Way, West Molesey, on December 7, 8.15pm, and then at St Mary’s Church Hall in Bell Road, East Molesey, on December 20, 7.30pm.

THE Horse Rangers Association (HRA) has appealed for help to get through difficult times.

The charity based at the Royal Mews, Hampton Court, offers riding classes to children, the disabled and vulnerable adults.

But funds are tight due to the VAT increase, a reduction in the Gift Aid charities can claim, and a price of hay doubling.

Director Jackie Bryans said: “When our hungry horses get through about 150 bales a month, you can imagine how that adds up. It costs us £1,000 a month to get rid of what comes out the other end too!”

Helpers are producing handmade cards and notebooks featuring the horses and ponies, to sell at local events including *Magical Molesey* on Nov. 24.

For further information, see www.horserangers.com

We appreciate your feedback...

Your name:

Your address:

Your email address:

What do you think of this newsletter? How can the Conservatives make themselves more electable in Molesey?

Please tick if you would be willing to help deliver newsletters.

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