



Thames Cottage

The Walton Society

All Walton Newsletter



March 2010

The Walton Society is a Civic Amenity Society formed in 1975 in accordance with Civic Trust principles to safeguard and enhance the natural beauty of amenities in the locality and to encourage the preservation of the best architectural features in the town. **It has no Party political affiliations whatsoever.**

MORE BUDGET BLUES

Council Tax bills in Elmbridge for 2010 /11 will be increased by just over 2%, in line with the average across the country. For a standard Band D property, this works out at an **extra £31.86** for the year.

Most of this will go to **Surrey County Council** which has increased its part of the bill by £27.18 – 2.5%. This is probably close to what Central Government will permit, but it certainly will not allow SCC to make any meaningful improvements to the local road network, now generally recognised as the worst for potholes in all of England, and there are likely to be cuts enforced in a number of service areas, for example those for young people and Adult Social Care, although details have yet to be spelt out. More worrying is the likelihood that the situation will get worse in future years as funding from central Government, already low in relative terms because Surrey is, statistically, an affluent county, could well be cut further, and the pressures on services will become greater as we start to pay for past failures to invest sensibly for the future.

At **Surrey Police** a 2.4% increase – £4.68 for the year – more than reinstates the £3.24 recouped last year as a result of Government capping, a futile exercise which has probably cost taxpayers more overall in bureaucratic expenses than was “returned” – for a few months – to Surrey council tax payers.

At Elmbridge Borough Council, there is no increase in its part of the Council Tax, achieved by using **£778,000 from reserves**, to make up for lower income from investments, and savings of approx **£600,000** on new long term contracts relating to the collection of waste, recycling, and street cleaning by reduction to fortnightly services. EBC is also able to pay off all its long-term debt, which helps the budget position.

Nonetheless, the Administration has insisted on enforcing cuts to services which will affect local residents. Community Transport for the elderly loses 3 vehicles and several drivers to save around £100,000; the Arts Development Officer, who retires this year, will not be replaced, to save £14,000; SHOUT activity schemes for children in the holidays are being cut back to save £9,100, and a £100,000 saving has been inked in from a reduction in expenditure on CCTV **when and if** this is outsourced to Runnymede Borough Council.

And these cuts are unnecessary. They could be avoided without increasing Council Tax or taking any more money from reserves. The Council in its Budget has given itself leeway to provide for **extra staff costs** (£162,790) and to cover possible future inflation on **unspecified contracts** (£190,000). These accounting adjustments could easily have been scaled back so as to avoid real cuts in services which will have a disproportionate effect on the elderly and the general quality of life in our community for many years to come.

CLLR CHRIS SADLER

TRUST IN CIVIC VOICE

Following the sad news that, after fifty two years operating as the national umbrella body for Civic Societies, the **Civic Trust** had been put into Administration it was gratifying to know that a new body for the Civic movement will be launched on 17th April at a meeting in London, and is to be called **Civic Voice**.

The Steering Group recently announced its draft plans which The Walton Society is currently examining, balancing up the benefits to be gained by joining **Civic Voice**, but also mindful of the financial commitment expected.

The potential of the civic society movement is unique with over 1,000 local organisations and 250,000 members working together. The intention of this national body is to make individual local civic societies and their members stronger by providing a voice lobbying and campaigning on the national policies and issues that are difficult or impossible to change locally. Members will become part of a wider movement championing the importance of the places where we all live.

The Walton Society will be represented at the Launch meeting and will be in a position to report further in due course.

Councillor's Corner

All Change for Lights

At the beginning of March Surrey County Council started a multi-million pound programme of replacing 89,000 of its existing sodium streetlights over the whole County with new, environmentally friendly lighting. The process, to be carried out by a new contractor, Skanska Infrastructure Services, (a Swedish company), will take about five years to complete.

Teams will work in three groups of Boroughs. In the north of the County work has already started in Spelthorne, to be followed by Elmbridge, Runnymede and Woking in that order.

On A, B and C roads the design and placement of columns may be moved to ensure lighting levels meet British Standards. Central Government is paying the cost of installation whilst operating and maintenance costs will be met by County. Where special designs are used, e.g. in Conservation Areas, there is a selection of 8 designs to be chosen from. The new lighting will be white, and lighting levels will automatically adjust late at night to save energy, carbon emissions and costs.

Faults will be reported by an automatic system and it is hoped to carry out repairs in 6 days! I hope this system will work better than the old one!

Potholes

We are all very much aware of the appalling state of our roads. Sadly the recent wintry weather has simply added to the already considerable backlog of major repairs needed to the network in Surrey – which by all accounts appears to have more problems than other Counties. I have toured my area with colleagues to draw up a list of work that needs to be done. Clearly the temporary repairs carried out on a number of local streets, such as Oatlands Chase, Station Avenue and Ashley Road would seem to be a waste of resources as the condition of these roads has been just as bad a week or so later. Indeed, one repair outside Ashley School using bags of cold tarmac lasted barely four hours!

I have been pressing for other repairs to take place, notably on Terrace Road, which I have described to County as a real hazard.

Though refuted by Surrey Highways, I have contended Walton is being neglected. I still hope that we shall see more ‘proper’ repairs taking place – as I observed in Rydens Avenue.

I have also presented to the Highways Committee some ideas under the heading ‘a New Approach’ in the hope that they will rethink their whole policy on maintaining our road system to a standard of which local people will no longer feel ashamed.

TOM PHELPS PENRY

NOTICE is given that the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

of The Walton Society

will take place on **Tuesday 15th June 2010** at St. Andrew's Church Hall, Hershams Road, Walton-on-Thames – 7.30pm for 8.00pm

Nominations for Officers and Executive Committee to be sent to

John Lisle, 63 Stoke Road,
Walton-on-Thames KT12 3DD
Tel: 01932 222931

Members only. New members may join at the door
The meeting will be followed by self-financing refreshments

WALTON'S OLD LIBRARY BUILDING SUITS C.A.B.

It is now over two years since Elmbridge Borough Council were forced to abandon plans for moving the Museum from its present home in Weybridge when it learned that it had failed to be awarded a £1million Heritage Lottery Grant to enable the old Walton Library buildings to be extended and refurbished as the new home for Elmbridge Museum.

Since then, we – with the support of the CAB – have been pushing the idea that the former Library, suitably updated, could become the permanent location for the Walton CAB – which has occupied, on a temporary basis, most of an old wooden hut on the Elm Grove site for almost 30 years.

The hut is now widely regarded as inadequate. The space inside is cold in winter as a result of poor insulation, sound travels too easily through the partitions for confidential discussions to take place easily, there are problems with mice or rats, and lack of space stops any thought of expanding the scope of their operations.

With little progress having been made in the last two years, we suggested in early January that the Council include in its Corporate Plan an objective of agreeing a location for a permanent home for the CAB by mid 2010, with a view to relocation being achieved by the end of the year. We also suggested that the premises might be able to accommodate other local charities that have expressed an interest in being co-located with the CAB.

Sadly, the accountants in the Conservative group who seem to control what goes ahead and what does not, have vetoed this idea and simply agreed that the Council should “**assist in identifying new premises for the CAB**”, without any mention of considering the option of the old Walton Library or any timescales. In short, the idea has been kicked into the long grass. The CAB are likely to remain in their hut for many winters to come, whilst the Library buildings, already empty for almost two years, are likely to stay empty for the foreseeable future, since no other suggestions for using these buildings have been forthcoming.

CLLRS CHRIS SADLER AND DAVID WALSH

GREEN BELT DEVELOPMENT ON WHEATLEYS EYOT

Late in 2009, the Environment Agency (EA) submitted a Planning Application to relocate their workshop from their mainland site close to Fordbridge Road on to Wheatleys Eyot, opposite Xcel Leisure Centre. They admitted that the new location would be on Green Belt land and in the floodplain, and so against accepted Planning policies. Furthermore, at over **7 metres high** and **with a footprint of 195 sq.m.** it would be a blot on the riverside landscape. EA argued “special circumstances justified the move, notably the lack of any other depot facilities for miles along the Thames.”

When this came to the Elmbridge Planning Committee for decision, I felt that **no real justification had been demonstrated** for relocating a building of such a size to a prime Green Belt spot, nor was there any evidence that they had considered using other facilities along the Thames in the area. **Nor had there been any consultation with local residents about the details of the proposals.** Fortunately, despite the Council’s officers’ willingness to agree this as an exception to Green Belt policy, I was able to persuade the other members of North Area Planning that we should protect our key Green belt sites and reject this application.

With Spelthorne having rejected EA’s proposals for an overly dense 88 dwelling redevelopment of the mainland site last autumn, it is clear EA need to fundamentally rethink their ideas and work with local residents to come up with an acceptable scheme for this sensitive site, rather than try to bulldoze their ideas through regardless of local opinion.

CHRIS SADLER

Visit our Website at www.thewaltonsociety.org.uk

100 CLUB

Recent winners include:

November: J Gill £40.35; M Schofield £18.00; G Randall 9.00; B Judd £4.50

December: M Martin £18.00; K Rigden £9.00; J Ridley £4.50

January: J Pulford £18.00; A-M Walsh £9.00; A Cook £4.50

February: M Welch £40.50; J Osborne £18.00; M Martin £9.00; M Hankey £4.50

VIEW FROM THE TOWER BLOCK

Those of you who watched the recent T.V. series “Tower Block of Commons” will have witnessed the way by which several MP’s from different parties came down from their Ivory Tower when facing the challenge of seeing life in tower blocks in various parts of the country. Though life in tower blocks in Walton is very different from that portrayed in the programme, it might well be a useful lesson for some of our local councillors to see just how much the view from the roof of Wellington Close has changed since it was viewed by the dignitaries involved in opening the new shopping centre in Walton in 1965 as seen on the British Pathe newsreel of the time.

The town has changed immensely over the last 45 years as new housing, in particular flats, has sprung up everywhere. A number of our roads have changed in character as older properties have been demolished and replaced. Clearly we need to accept that this process will probably continue, but we must ensure that the character of our town is maintained and that buildings that are an important part of our heritage are retained, even if different uses are found for them. A clear example of this is the old Library site, which is the original Infant School and marks the southern entrance to the town.

It is also vital that with a much higher population density we should preserve our open green spaces including those which may be threatened with development such as the Kings Road open space which fronted the old swimming pool, Hershams Golf Club and part of Esher Rugby Club. And we should also keep a wary eye out for other crafty ideas developers might try.

ANDREW REID

Diary Dates

**Heritage Day – Saturday
September 11th**

11 am to 4.30 pm. at Walton Wharf, Manor Road.

Music from the Cobham Band, Punch and Judy for the kids, stalls of all kinds, and some surprises.

THE WALTON SOCIETY COUNCILLORS

Surrey County Council

Tom Phelps Penry, Walton Division

01932 247519

Elmbridge Borough Council

Chris Sadler, Walton Central, 01932 881687
David Walsh, Walton Central, 01932 253315

Published for The Walton Society by Martin Schofield and printed by The Brampton Press.