

LOWER SUNBURY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION 2009 SPRING NEWSLETTER



www.losra.org

Proposals announced for charges in all Lower Sunbury car parks

Objections needed by April 8th

Following last year's implementation of car parking charges in the Thames Street (Indian Zest) and Fordbridge Road (Old Bathing Pool) car parks, Spelthorne Council has come back with proposals to introduce charging in all the other Lower Sunbury car parks – The Avenue, The Magpie/Walled Garden and Green Street - where we have previously managed to get proposals dropped.

Notices asked for objections to be in by 1st April, but as there was an irregularity in the original published notice, it has been republished with a new deadline date of 8th April.

Scale of charges

The proposals provide for the first hour of parking to be free, and charges of £1.00 for 2 hours, and £1.50 for over 2 hours. Season tickets for residents would be £10.00 for 3 months, £15.00 for 6 months or £20.00 for a year. Business season tickets would be £25.00, £37.50 and £50.00 for the same periods.

In fairness to Spelthorne, they have explained that they are obliged by Government legislation to make their car parking provision self-financing. They have also tried to accommodate previous objections by making the first hour free to enable people to use the car parks in order to use local shops, and have made it clear that they are prepared to provide special passes for volunteers who work at the Embroidery Gallery, although they have not thought through

the logistics of this, as it can involve well over 50 people in any one week.

However, our view is that in reality, charging for car parks in areas such as ours makes no economic sense. Runnymede and Elmbridge Councils have both recently decided to drop charging in certain car parks because income does not cover the cost of policing and maintenance. This will be almost certainly be the case in Lower Sunbury. It will take years simply to recoup the cost of implementing the scheme quite apart from covering the cost of attendants to police them.

Quality of life

The downside of introducing charges in terms of cost to the community and impact on residents' quality of life will far outweigh whatever minimal income is achieved. All the arguments we used against these proposals in previous newsletters still hold good.

There is an acute shortage of on-street car parking in Lower Sunbury. Residents, especially in and around the Conservation Area, who don't have their own off-street parking, rely on these car parks during the day as well as overnight, and the introduction of season tickets for residents is simply an extra cost on top of their Council Tax..

The proposals could be disastrous for local traders. It is very worrying that immediate experience with the Thames Street car park is that

even with the first hour free, local businesses have seen a noticeable drop in trade. People who otherwise use the car parks for long-term parking will fill up the on-street spaces, discouraging people from parking to use local shops, restaurants and other services. Businesses like restaurants and pubs, and the Embroidery Gallery, where people may want to stay for more than an hour, are likely to suffer, especially in these straitened times.

Extra on-street parking will also have road safety implications. If cars move on to fill up the streets, we know exactly what will happen – the authorities will simply restrict on-street parking with yellow lines, making life increasingly difficult for residents.

All these car parks serve adjacent parks and open spaces, as well as the Embroidery Gallery. We are supposed to be encouraging people to exercise and get out in the fresh air, and we are keen to see local assets well used. Imposing charges in these car parks will only discourage visitors.

Social cohesion

These car parks are an important part of the local infrastructure, which is essential to the social cohesion and organisation of a suburban community like ours.

Once again, we need to show the strength of local feeling. Given the blatant antipathy which continues to be shown towards Sunbury among substantial elements of Spelthorne Council's elected members, only the sheer weight of well-argued objections will stop this proposal going ahead, so it is absolutely vital that you register your objections as soon as possible. Many thanks for your help with this effort.

**Please see over for details
of how to object**

Please register your objection to car park charging proposals by April 8th

You should write a letter or send an e-mail registering your objections and if possible giving the grounds for your objection.

Letters of objection should be sent to:

**Michael Graham, Head of Corporate Governance,
Spelthorne Borough Council, Knowle Green,
Staines TW18 1XB**

E-mail objections should be sent to:

corporate.governance@spelthorne.gov.uk

You should also write to or e-mail all the Sunbury East and Halliford & Sunbury West councillors, asking them to make strong representations to the relevant officers. Their details and direct links can be found on the LOSRA website under Useful Information.

We have posted a draft letter of objection on the LOSRA web site with a link from the news section. It is better if you give your letter a personal slant if possible, as well as using the suggested arguments.

London Irish buys option on new site

Following last year's announcement that London Irish RFC were aiming to move from their training base in The Avenue and develop the site for housing, we understand that the Club has bought a 3-year option for £250,000 on a site in Spelthorne away from Sunbury which would provide 13 training pitches. We do not know where this site is.

The threat of such an important area of designated Urban Open Space being built on is pretty horrific, and LOSRA would certainly vigorously oppose any such plan. In the current climate, it would be unlikely to happen, but times obviously change. Presumably an alternative training site would be financed by the housing development, so we need to keep an eye on this situation.

Spelthorne cancels Area Forum meetings

The Council has announced that the Area Forums scheduled to be held during the spring have been cancelled. The Sunbury Forum on 28th April at St Paul's College will not therefore go ahead.

The Area Forums were designed to give Spelthorne residents the opportunity to meet and talk to their local councillors and express their views on local issues. However, Area Forums held throughout the autumn were not as well supported as previously, prompting the Council to re-think the best way to achieve their objectives and encourage more residents to attend, although the Sunbury forums are always well attended.

The Council is considering a number of ways to make the Area Forums more appealing such as holding the meetings in the summer months, when it is hoped that the lighter evenings will encourage more people to attend. It is also considering the option of combining the Area Forums with other existing events, such as resident association meetings. Reflecting the good turnout at the Sunbury meetings Sunbury will now have two forums, one for Sunbury Common (11th June) and the other for Lower Sunbury which will be held on 7th July 2009 at the Riverside Arts

Developers continue to target 72 The Avenue

Even before the Appeal by developers against Spelthorne's refusal of their plan to demolish this beautiful house and replace it with two houses completely out of character with the area, another planning application has been submitted.

All those who have made representations in respect of previous applications should have been separately notified by post.

To view details of the application, visit the Spelthorne Council Website www.spelthorne.gov.uk and search under application number 09/00162/FUL. As this is a new and revised application, all previous correspondence relating to earlier plans will have no relevance. Developers are known to rely on 'campaign fatigue' so it is all the more important that residents take the time to make their views known. Representation must be made in writing or by email and be received by 6th April 2009.

Benwell Centre re-development

Residents who have long queried why a viable day centre remained closed for so long pending development of the site, will now doubtless have mixed feelings to learn that Notting Hill Housing Trust has finally started work on the highly controversial project to build 39 extra care flats on the site.

Higgins Construction, the builders, arrive on site on Thursday 19th March and received the keys from Cllr. Vivienne Leighton, Portfolio Holder for Health and Independent Living. It is expected that construction work will have been completed by the summer of 2010.

Centre, Thames Street. Please make a note in your diary.

The new arrangements for Area Forums will be publicised in the Council's Bulletin magazine, on the Council's website, on community notice boards and in the local press. For its part, this Association will feature the new arrangements on its website www.losra.org

LOSRA has always taken the view that the Area Forum is a valuable community resource; and provides an opportunity for the sort of free flowing discussion which is not available to residents in the formal environment of the Council chambers. Nevertheless, it is difficult to argue with the figures. The cost of staging these events, when measured against numbers attending, has forced the Council into its current re-think.

Cllr Andrew Hirst, Portfolio Holder for Communications and Engagement said: "we want to hear resident's views and be able to discuss local issues with them so it's vital that we encourage as many people to attend as possible by ensuring that the meeting covers topics which are of interest and is held at a convenient time and place."

Spelthorne decision to reduce councillors' questions is an affront to local democracy

Under the title: Improvements to the Business Management and Civic Life of the Council, The Executive (or Cabinet) of Spelthorne Council approved a report by the Head of Corporate Governance which *'seeks to improve the democratic processes of the Council and underscore the position of councillors within the Community.'*

The report, commissioned by Cllrs. Davis and Smith-Ainsley, then proceeds to propose measures which appear designed to have exactly the opposite effect and, no matter how dispassionately one looks at it, the proposals are likely to impinge seriously upon the duty of elected Sunbury councillors to do their job; and this is what we understand the proposals will mean:

- The Mayor will have the discretion to direct that questions as well as answers be dealt with by way of written exchanges, thus depriving the public and media from hearing these exchanges in the Council Chamber.

- Councillors will be restricted to just one question each (currently two are allowed - one on ward issues; and one on general or committee issues).

- 5 working days notice (as against 3 at present) will be required for any question tabled.

- The ability to 'Call in' decisions by the Executive for debate at the Scrutiny Committee will in future require the consent of the Chairman of that Committee; and that notice of the 'call in' must be completed in writing within 3 days (as opposed to the 5 at present). *It should be noted that the Chairman of the Spelthorne Committee, unlike in many other Councils, is always appointed from the ruling party.*

Affront to Local Democracy

It is well known that Sunbury is represented by nine ward councillors, eight of whom combine to form the sole Opposition in the Council Chamber, with the remaining 31 councillors forming the majority party. No matter what one's political affiliation, such proprietorial changes to the Council's Constitution will be seen as an affront to local democratic accountability; and an insult to the councillors and residents who elected them.

In order to understand the apparent agenda behind these proposed changes,

LOSRA conducted research into the 2008 minutes of full Council meetings, and now has the following questions for the Council:

- Given that this Association has long campaigned for the electronic recording of all Council meetings (yet to be implemented), will such recording become superfluous on those occasions when the Mayor exercises his discretion to direct written questions and answers?

- Apart from one notable exception, who asked a total of six questions, the total number from the remaining 30 members of the majority party amounted to a mere seven (mostly friendly) questions for the entire year. By contrast the 8 member party in Opposition, as one would expect, tabled no fewer than forty five, with eleven supplementaries. Research indicates that none of these questions were either vexatious or mischievous (as distinct from inconvenient or difficult). Would the Council deny that their proposals are hostile to the concept of local democratic accountability, and that they have been deliberately designed to curb the legitimate functioning of the Opposition?

- During the year, a mere two items have been 'called in' (where the Executive has been called to account before the Scrutiny Committee). Now that the consent of the Scrutiny Committee Chairman will be required, does the Council accept that it is quite possible that any future attempt to 'call in' may be frustrated at the whim of the Chairman; that any refusal will be perceived as a gagging order by the electorate; and that the reduction from 5 to 3 days to give written notice will likewise be perceived as an arbitrary (some might say deliberate) obstacle to effecting legitimate scrutiny of the Executive?

LOSRA Unconcerned with the Politics

Members of this Association will be aware that LOSRA is a strictly apolitical organisation but it is passionately interested in preserving our democratic processes and freedom of debate. The most effective

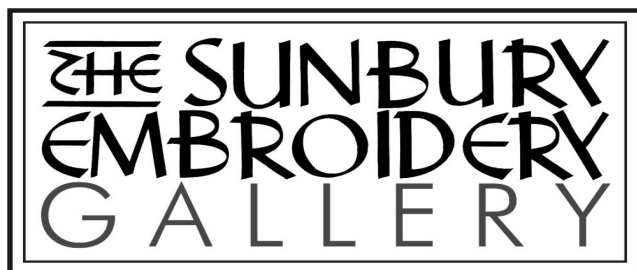
community representatives are not those who know everything, but those who listen to the community and know how to ask the right questions. If we have a good Council, it is the duty of all councillors, regardless of party, to be critical of it so that it becomes even better. It should not be a Council which feels under attack; and that has to resort to proposals such as this because it is incapable of rationally arguing its case, initially with the Opposition and ultimately with the community it serves.

It is especially insulting that these proposals are presented as an improvement to democratic processes. Does Spelthorne truly believe that people are so gullible that they will believe such an obvious misrepresentation? The Spelthorne community is entitled to more respect than this. These proposals, apart from encouraging despair in rational thinking people, are nothing less than an assault on both our cherished democratic conventions and on the intelligence of the electorate.

The full report may be viewed under the agenda of the Executive (item h) 18th March, on www.spelthorne.gov.uk

Tony Kinsey Quintet to play at inaugural Albert Skinner Jazz Night

A consortium of local groups is promoting the inaugural "Albert Skinner Jazz Night" at Sunbury Cricket Club, Lower Hampton Road on Friday 8th May, starring the Tony Kinsey Quintet, including some of the top names in modern jazz. Albert was a great jazz fan, and we feel that an event like this is not only a fine way to remember him but also a fun way to bring the community together. Tickets (£12.50 including supper) will be on sale at Skinners Newsagents from 8th April, and there will be a lot of local publicity, with full details on the LOSRA website shortly. We are looking forward to a sell-out evening of brilliant music, so make sure you get your tickets early.



Logo panels now in place

There is no special newsletter for the Embroidery this time around, but there are a couple of important news items. One is that the embroidered logos of local organisations have now been stretched and hung along with the hassock panels in identical cases to the main Embroidery panels. The effect is stunning, with the Embroidery stretching almost the length of the Gallery, so please pay a visit to see the full Embroidery now in place, and advise members of your organisation so they can see its logo in its full glory.

There are some splendid new items of merchandise about to arrive in the shop in time for Easter - aprons, tote bags, and noteblocks - which we are sure regular customers will want to collect.

The new Exhibition programme is well under way. For details, there are leaflets at the Gallery or see the LOSRA website at www.losra.org/docs/SMEEventsLeaflet09.pdf

With the clocks going forward, opening hours at the Gallery & Café are now extended to 5pm until October. Thanks as always to everyone for their continued support.

THE LOSRA COMMITTEE

| | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|--------|
| David Banks | 38 Kenton Avenue | 789652 |
| Pamela Cabannes-Barrall | 4 Forge Mews | 761131 |
| Elleke Carling | 3 Croysdale Avenue | 882726 |
| Don Cunningham | 2 Parkwood Grove | 889033 |
| Colleen Cuthbert | 8 Maryland Way | 783606 |
| Peter Francis | Linden Lodge, Woodlands Drive | 770661 |
| Cathie French (Treasurer) | 173 French Street | 789157 |
| Roger Harding | Sunmead Cottage, Green Street | 782744 |
| John Hirsh (Chairman) | 21 School Walk | 781363 |
| Ian Robinson | 33 Kingsmead Avenue | 783774 |
| George Rushbrook | | 788471 |
| Patrick Smith | 6 Maryland Way | 783683 |
| Matt Thomas | 7 Nursery Road | 787709 |
| Paul Watts (President) | 87 The Avenue | 788449 |
| Chris Wills | | |
| David Woods | 47 Sunna Gardens | 786806 |

Future of TP26 Linear Park decided

At a meeting of the Council Executive on 20th January, the decision was taken on a unanimous vote to purchase the Linear Park from Surrey County Council. Spelthorne Council secured the deal with a nominal purchase price of £1 and a disbursement from Surrey of £150,000 for the construction of a cycle track; and £3,500 per year for the next 15 years towards maintenance.

This very welcome development represented the final chapter in a story which began more than 4 decades ago, when the TP26 was first conceived as a road which would have effectively cut Lower Sunbury into two halves. Indeed it was this threat to the community which brought about the creation of this Association over 41 years ago.

Having made the decision, the Council embarked on a period of consultation on the plans for a pedestrian/cycle path and landscaping, which included the holding of an exhibition at the Embroidery Centre. The Exhibition was well attended and resulted in 188 written feedback forms being submitted to the Council. It is fair to say that residents held many differing views as to how the Linear Park would eventually shape up, and it is inevitable that not all opinions will be reflected in the final landscape.

There were opinions against the introduction of a path, which was proposed several years ago by Surrey County Council as part of the "Safe Routes To School initiative. The Friends of Sunbury Park have lobbied strenuously in favour of a natural Breedon Gravel surface for the path rather than any kind of tarmac, and for the width of the path to be reduced from the proposed 2.5 metres. Following the consultation period, The Chief Executive accompanied by senior officers, councillors and LOSRA, walked the length of the Linear Park to visualise first hand what might be achieved. We commend the Council for its consultation of residents before embarking on a project of such significance to the local community.

At the Executive meeting, the Leader of the Council also invited LOSRA to ask residents to suggest titles for the naming of what is known only by reputation as The TP26 Linear Park. This invitation has been widely reported in the local press and on the LOSRA Website. After considering all suggestions, the list was narrowed down to the six most popular; and these can now be seen on the Website poll. If you have not yet voted for your favourite title, you have until 8th April to do so.

Whatever the case, the outcome represents something of a historic moment for LOSRA, especially those who founded the Association and began the campaign to get the road scheme abandoned.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

If you have not paid your subscription for this year, could you please help us by paying your subscription either by using the secure facility on our web site or dropping your subscription in to one of our two collection points using the tear-off slip below. You can deliver it to either of the following shops : Skinners in Avenue Parade; Twirltour Travel in Green Street. Our thanks to these businesses for their help in providing this service. **As advised in our previous newsletter, the subscription is now £5.00 per year.**

Please find enclosed my annual subscription of £5.00 for family membership of the Lower Sunbury Residents' Association for the calendar year 2009. (SPR09)

Name: Address :
..... Tel. no. : E-mail address.....