

BOROUGH COUNCILLORS' REPORT TO O.W.P.C., 11th FEBRUARY 2009, submitted by Cllr Malcolm Beer.

One or both Cllrs Beer and Wiles have (or will have) attended and participated in the following Borough related meetings in the period 26th January to 11th February:

Planning & Environment Overview & Scrutiny Panel, Aviation Forum, Site Meeting re proposed Cycling Circuit, Heathrow Airport Consultative Committee (HACC), Local Authorities Aircraft Noise Council (LAANC) Executive Committee, Kings Court First School Governors, Cycle Forum and Windsor Town Forum. In the days immediately before the OWPC meeting we will have attended a planning site visit in Windsor, Old Windsor Youth Club Management Committee and a Budget presentation. I know that Cllr Wiles has also attended other meetings.

Meetings of the Manor Lodge Liaison Group and Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Panel were postponed due to weather conditions.

Two senior Department for Transport officers attended HACC to explain the details of the Government's decision to allow the expansion of Heathrow Airport. Night flight arrangements were not part of the policy statements as they are a separate operational matter which will be considered separately for the next 5 year period from 2011. The Government will be seeking a Dispensation from EU air pollution limits from the 2010 start date until 2015. I did not get a satisfactory answer as to how air pollution would be controlled thereafter.

The LAANC Executive Meeting was informed that Legal Counsel had advised that a further legal challenge on the inappropriate night noise classification of Boeing 747-400s could be a costly failure and the 2M Group of local authorities had decided not to proceed further. However, the legal team were scrutinising a number of contradictions and lack of definition in the Heathrow expansion statements to consider legal action. It was considered that similar action in the past had given local communities continuing benefits against the impact of aviation activity.

I chaired the Cycle Forum at the Chairman's request in his absence. There was a unanimous decision to actively enhance the promotion of cycling including more safe routes to school, proficiency training and the like. I gave an update upon the encouraging reaction to the work of a top level cycling coach and I to get an off-road cycling circuit. This could utilise some of the £24.3 million of Sport England funding for grass roots cycling in the wake of the cyclists' outstanding successes in the Olympics.

The Windsor Town Forum spent a long time discussing the roadworks at the Legoland end of Imperial and Clewer Hill Roads, which are intended to reduce the very extensive traffic hold ups caused by these junctions.

The Straight Road / Church Road / St Peters Road junction open public meeting which I have arranged will be from 7.30 pm in the Day Centre. A senior Borough Highways Officer will show and discuss plans of the options which will assist in getting a decision and action to address the problems.

Some of the "Real Time" information signs about the arrival time of the next Route 71 bus are now operative.

It is too early to make detailed comment on the proposed 1.9% Council Tax increase as we will be attending meetings about this in the next few days. Much as everyone would like to see no increase at all, it would be unrealistic to expect that when the cost of providing ever growing local services are continuing to rise. It may not be accepted by the public, but very few of their costs are related to what is happening in supermarkets or the High Street, and there are no contingency funds or hidden pots of money in Borough Councils these days, so talk of further efficiency and economies brings the suspicion of backroom cut backs and periferal increases in charges. We anxiously await developments.

Malcolm Beer, 7/2/09.

MEETINGS, ETC., ATTENDED ON BEHALF OF O.W.P.C.

The District Association of Local Councils (DALC) meeting of representatives of the Parishes within the Royal Borough was aborted because of a glitch in the booking system which saw Cllr Troughton, myself and other attendees waiting in the cold outside the Guildhall. I have rearranged the meeting for one of the evenings before the OWPC meeting.

Having been a RBWM DALC rep on BALC, the Berkshire link between the Districts and NALC (the national association) for many years, I am one of the six member Berkshire Quality Councils Accreditation Panel which scrutinises applications for Quality Council status. The criteria are very exacting and far above the immediate ambitions of most Parish and Town Councils, as they virtually require a scaled down version of a Borough Council's approach to their functions. I took part in a meeting in the Reading area to consider the wealth of data to support the renewal applications of two large Town Councils, one of which was staggering in its range of activities and its public engagement and the other was almost as impressive. Quality status enables the Councils to take on additional duties and services and get some government grant funding. In some areas many Council's of all sizes have qualified, but there are only the two mentioned above in Berkshire.

Malcolm Beer.