

BOROUGH COUNCILLORS' REPORT - O.W.P.C. WED 12th NOVEMBER 2008 submitted by Cllr Malcolm Beer.

This Report covers the period 20th October to 12th November.

Meetings Attended: One or both of Old Windsor's two Borough Councillors have attended meetings of the Licensing Panel, Crime & Disorder Forum, Randall Court Redevelopment Presentation, Manor Lodge Liaison Group, Cabinet (re St Peters School rebuild?), Meeting with First Bus Director re 71 Bus & Real Time Info (alongside Chair & Vice Chair of Parish), Windsor Development Control Panel, Shopmobility 10th Anniversary, Planning & Environment Overview & Scrutiny Panel, Aviation Panel, Corporate Parenting Seminar, and will be attending the Noise & Track Keeping Group at Heathrow, Rural Forum, Cycle Forum and a meeting with Footpaths Officer in the days before the Parish Council Meeting.

Crime & Disorder: As promised at the last meeting, I have apologised to everyone involved with the Crime & Disorder Panel regarding my ill chosen description of the local Neighbourhood Action Group and also sent letters of apology to the local press. As they have not appeared I contacted the Editor of both papers and he has apologised for delay in doing so.

The Crime & Disorder Forum considered a report on Antisocial Behavior, and it came as something of a surprise to me (and maybe Tony Troughton as well) that Old Windsor was just pipped by Eton Wick as having the least number of ASB incidents (circa 100) in the period April to September, which was down on the previous year. I was sitting next to Cllr Jesse Grey, the Borough's rep on Thames Valley Police Authority, and he was at pains to suggest that we did not need full police cover!

As our recreation Ground and other places are plagued with smashed glass, I asked that consideration be given to introducing a Borough By Law prohibiting the sale of drinks in glass bottles.

Vandalisation of Fence: Before my emails about the standard of the original fence and its repair had ceased, a further vandal attack on the fence to the Parish Path alongside the Rec where it passes between gardens off Straight Road has again taken a great deal of my time in trying to bind back the loose wires to make it safe and also to get it repaired again. The last episode cost £150 to repair but the maintenance budget is severely limited. I will be meeting the relevant officer on site on Wednesday afternoon.

Planning: I "called in" the application for a boundary wall in Harwood Gardens for determination by Windsor Development Control as the Parish and neighbours were convinced that the vision splay was inadequate. We were disappointed that the Highways Officer insisted that his minimalistic vision splay met requirements and were appalled that most Councillors followed his lead despite my having pointed out that another application had a recommendation for a totally different vision splay. The neighbour thanked us for our efforts. I am pleased to note that my longstanding campaign for a proper display of planning application details at these meetings seems likely to be achieved from the next meeting.

The case of the details of a recent planning application on Ham Island not being received by the Parish Council, and a decision being made by officers under delegated authority without the Parish having commented, has caused me a great deal of work after an initial protest and request to reopen the matter. Royal Mail may have been at fault and, as expected, a decision cannot be reconsidered. The Borough is following the Government imposed requirement to delegate between 90 and 95% of applications to Officers. Many emails have centred upon a neighbour's complaint that he had been waiting to put his concerns to the Parish when it considered the application, and thus he had been denied the opportunity to do anything. There were many peripheral issues involved, and although I think I have explained most of them to the objector, I do not know what the outcome will be.

I am still chasing action on planning items I raised in my last report, i.e the apparently unauthorised filling on the St Georges Farm paddock near the lock cut, and also the extra 83 double bedrooms at the Hayley Conference Centre which have only been considered under Listed Building Consent issues. I have also been trying to get proper supervision of the restoration of The Manor grounds and have recently noted that some of its TPO'd trees have been butchered. That prompts me to note that the recent application to fell a sycamore on the Church House rear boundary to the churchyard because it was damaging the wall, appears to overstate the case for the multi-trunked tree's removal. I would appreciate other peoples' opinions on this.

Route 71 Bus: The meeting which I had arranged for the Parish Council Chairman, Vice Chairman and Borough Councillors to meet the Director of First Buses and a senior Borough Officer saw what they call a full and frank discussion but no concessions whatsoever from First Buses. This despite the case put by all four of us plus the 569 signature petition and a suggestion that just a few buses could use Burfield Road to serve the elderly residents. One plus is that the Borough Officer will investigate the practicality and cost of a minibus service for the elderly residents in question. It is to be hoped that we will be believed in future if we say that something or other is impossible to achieve, as we did in this case.

Flooding: The Planning & Environment Overview & Scrutiny Panel discussed a range of issues including the 6 monthly report on flooding which I asked for several years ago. The report majored on some work in conjunction with Thames Water to relieve areas of excessive surface water flash flooding which had engulfed private and commercial property. I criticised the postponement of the Environment Agency Annual Flood Seminar which they had substituted for the quarterly Thames Flood Forums, which were invaluable for monitoring remedial work agreed under Clive Onions' Flood Risk Assessment Group (FRAG) "Mechanisms of Flooding" Report. Might get something someday. I also raised question on the inordinate delay in approving the Datchet Flood Plan as a model for all other Parishes, and asked for urgency in this matter and also when the EA flood map of October 2008 (which says it is not a flood map!) would be officially adopted for planning purposes, as the flood area was around 50% of the map still being used. Nobody could answer so a senior planner agreed to discuss with me after the meeting. I have posted a letter explaining things and copy of the latest map to him, and await an answer, Cllr Wiles will also take up this issue with EA top brass at the forthcoming Thames Region Flood Defence Committee later this month.

Following a tour of the village after the recent heavy rainfall, I will be trying to get some action to counter the ponds which occur at so many of our dropped kerb crossings.

Heathrow: The Aviation Forum recommended a Borough response to the Airport Operating Procedures consultation with the specific objective of trying to define, limit and publicise noise thresholds and the like which will be embodied in future operational codes. At the Planning & Environment Overview & Scrutiny Panel I pointed out that the updated Local Transport Plan outlined Crossrail plans but failed to note the Airtrack link to T5 or its benefit to SouthWest train users. This will be rectified.

Corporate Parenting: The Seminar centred upon the legislative procedures and responsibilities involving Councillors which had been introduced by Government after some highly publicised cases of abuse and neglect of children. While the need for a near 100% safety net catering for all manner of circumstances is not questioned, the concept that Councillors should get actively involved and act as mentors to young children in care was difficult to take on board in these days of suspicion of any male who takes an interest in younger people!

Thames Path: I have been approached by a retired resident who can no longer enjoy walks alongside the river and finds that obstacles on the towpath make it inaccessible or dangerous to his electric buggy. I will take the footpaths officer along the Thames Path after discussing action upon the Parish Path fence. He is already aware of the problems caused by the

protruding Chestnut tree roots (alongside the Parish area) and the extremely steep hump back bridge to a boathouse, and we will try to find a way to resolve those problems.

2009 Roadwork Programme: I draw colleagues attention to the fact that Borough have asked for suggestions upon which roads should be resurfaced next year. Please look around the village and let the Parish and me know what you think in the next couple of weeks.

Malcolm Beer. 10/11/08.