

BOROUGH COUNCILLORS' REPORT TO O.W.P.C. 29th APRIL 2009, submitted by Cllr Malcolm Beer.

One or both Cllrs Beer and Wiles have attended and participated in the following Borough and related meetings in the period 26th March to 28th April (NB Last Report for OWPC 25/3/09 should have read 11th to 25th March):

Members Training on "Councillors' Call for Action", Windsor Development Control Panel (WDCP), Local Authorities Aircraft Noise Council (LAANC) Executive Committee, Full Council, Licensing Panel (re taxis), Special Aviation Forum and Audit & Performance Review Panel.

The Councillors' Call for Action training related to a new power to demand a meeting of parties involved as a last resort when a Council related matter fails to progress. This appears to arise from a recent Local Government Act addition which has just come into force, and there is a parallel Community Call for Action procedure whereby individuals can demand Council action on longstanding issues.

Several of our Parish Councillors and a large number of residents attended the WDCP meeting at which the least popular option of the proposed Randall Court redevelopment in Lyndwood Drive was recommended for approval by the Planning Officers. There is always a very substantial tendency to adopt the Officers' recommendation unless overpowering planning policy reasons against a recommendation can be demonstrated in a refusal notice. In a long debate your Ward Cllrs strong opposition to the proposals, mainly on grounds of inappropriately located parking and consequent escalation of traffic movements on the inadequate road, plus over dominance and overlooking from 3 storey flats close to the road, seemed to be outnumbered by those supporting the Officers' Recommendation, but the vote proved otherwise and the application was refused. The submission of the more acceptable option with the flats set back and parking in front, now seems likely to be submitted in the near future.

The LAANC Executive Committee which I chair was advised that the 2M consortium, now of 23 Councils claiming to represent 5 million people under the aircraft flight paths, has had its challenge to the Government's go ahead for Heathrow Runway 3, Terminal 6 and other decisions accepted by the High Court. I found it particularly disappointing that the disputed ANASE (air noise) study will not feature in the challenge due to top legal Counsel advice that the Judges will not favourably consider complex technical arguments. I got approval to continue to campaign for a top level review to adopt the unchallenged aspects of ANASE.

Last week's full Council meeting saw a tediously long debate on how the Thames Valley Police Authority should be challenged after a very nasty incident at the official opening of the Windsor Wheel. Two Councillors had intervened when one youth was being kicked in the head by a crowd of others, and police took an allegedly long time to appear despite several 999 calls. It was evident that the Council meeting was unanimous in its concerns about the running of the local police force and a copy of the letter of complaint will be sent to the Home Office.

A late item on the agenda related to limiting Councillors speaking time at planning meetings to 10 minutes and also plans to introduce electronic voting in compliance with yet another Government "recommendation". I spoke against this waste of money, especially when WDCP has to try to determine important planning applications using a totally inadequate screen display system which I have been trying to get remedied for ages.

Another Government edict means that the Crime & Disorder Forum on which I sit will have to become the Crime and Disorder Overview & Scrutiny Panel. As "outsider" participation is limited in O&S Panels, which generally preview Cabinet agenda items and can also Call-In Cabinet decisions with which it disagrees, I made a plea for the current level of Parish Council representation to be maintained. OWPC's Cllr Troughton is one of two who currently represents the Windsor area Parishes.

Neither of your Borough Councillors was able to accept the invitation to attend the official opening of the Beaumont House de luxe hotel accommodation due to other commitments. It will be recalled that the Parish Council did not oppose the Listed Building Consent applications to restore parts to their former glory, but had major concerns about the absence of any planning applications regarding the additional 83 de luxe double bedrooms and resulting increase in activity in and around the complex. We are about to reopen our complaint to planning officers on this matter.

The Special Aviation Forum last week followed a precedent established by its predecessor group by inviting the two Windsor & Maidenhead MPs to answer Councillors' and public questions about their views and policies on Heathrow related issues. Both of them affirmed their support for RBWM opposition to Runway 3 and Terminal 6, and night flights. There was some concern that they were not keen to push for immediate action on implementing the cessation of the Cranford Agreement (which causes long spells of non-stop landings over parts of Windsor) as our MP (who lives in Old Windsor) thought it might cause a division in the universal local government opposition to Runway 3.

The petition to remove the vandalised fencing from the Parish Path (from the Recreation Ground to Straight Road) was considered by Cabinet although it had already been removed. I met the Cabinet Member who was due to present the report "on site" although the item was thought to be done and dusted. I was unable to attend the Cabinet meeting due to a clash with another meeting, but my pre-meet was useful as apart from drawing attention to the need to close gaps each side of the Straight Road gate, several of the petitioners attended the Cabinet meeting and expressed various past and ongoing concerns - which will be addressed in due course.

A RBWM suggestion that a Combined Youth Club Management Committee takes the place of those for Old Windsor, Datchet and Eton Wick seems likely to be rebuffed by those involved locally. A similar proposal a few years ago was opposed and the policy of allowing our youngsters to take advantage of facilities in Windsor was introduced. That seems to have fizzled out, but perhaps the Youth Service minibuses should be used to renew the activity.

Malcolm Beer.

MEETINGS ATTENDED ON BEHALF OF O.W.P.C. - Submission by Cllr Malcolm Beer.

Last week's RBWM District Association of Local Councils (DALC) meeting at Maidenhead Town Hall had been set back a week because of a clash with the Berkshire Assn of Local Councils (BALC) training session on Planning. This seems to have reduced the attendance, despite the presentation by Christine Lalley about her role as BALC Executive Officer (previously known as County Secretary) in answering Parish queries and getting legal advice on a wide range of matters.

DALC is the association representing most of the local Parishes and BALC has five reps from each area DALC, which in turn has one or two reps on NALC the national umbrella organisation.

By all accounts the Planning training was very informative and well presented by RBWM Officers. The DALC meeting discussed the Borough's recent Parish Conference and discontent with S.106 developers' contributions to Parish level facilities rumbled on. It was emphasised that Parishes must flag up which projects for which they sought S.106 support when they made their responses to planning application consultations.

It was agreed that a request should be submitted that the newly introduced "Councillor Call for Action" and the similar Community version should be explained at the next Parish Conference.

It was noted that some Parishes had yet to sign up to the revised Parish / Borough Charter and that a concerted effort would have to be made to ensure that relevant Council Officers were aware of it.

In reporting on Borough activity I mentioned the Council's rejection of the proposal to reinstate the Thames Flood Forum and also OWPC's resulting proposal to set up a Flood Working Group of the 4 downstream Parishes to meet RBWM and EA Officers about ongoing issues. Cookham and Bisham reps asked that their Parishes should also be included as they had serious unresolved problems.

I advised on locations where BT were going to replace telephone call box cash machines with card operated ones. Most have had very little use. The phone box near the former post office in St Lukes Road is one which will be altered in the very near future.

Old Windsor Carnival: I advised the last meeting that O.W.P.C. was not willing to donate £250 to cover the cost of generator hire and fuel as such things could be hired for a fraction of this sum. The group which has taken over the site set up and PA equipment has a 60KVA generator which will cope with all needs, and £250 was said to be an appropriate costing for its use. **The Committee then asked me to ask the Parish Council if it would be so generous as to offer a donation toward the cost of the mobile toilet hire - and this is that request. I would be grateful if I could email a response before the next Carnival meeting tomorrow.**

Malcolm Beer.