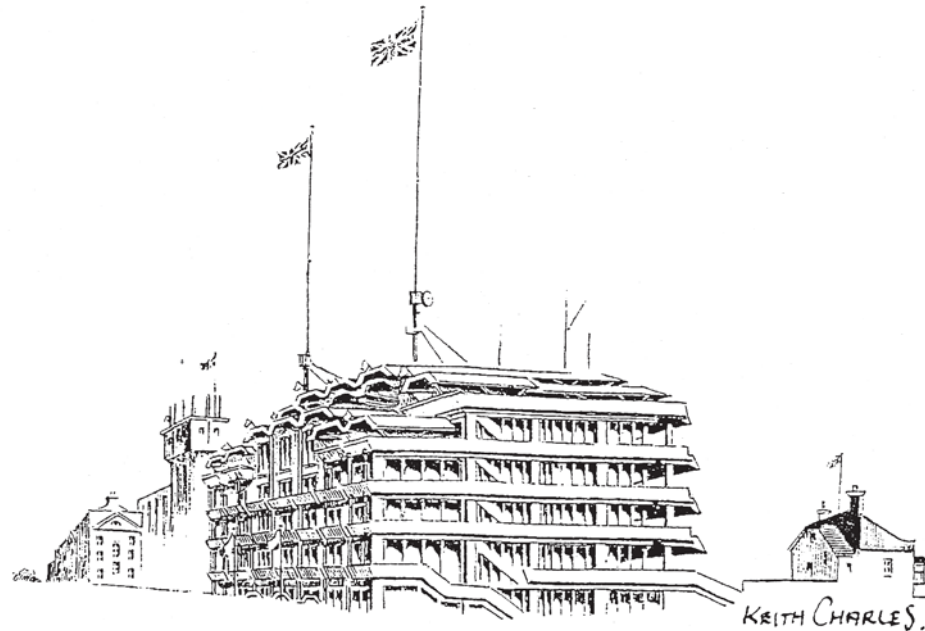


WOODCOTE (EPSOM) RESIDENTS' SOCIETY
Representing the whole of Woodcote Ward

SPRING 2008 NEWSLETTER
&
NOTICE OF AGM



The Society's Annual General Meeting will be held on

Monday 31 March 2008 at 8pm

Venue: St. Martins C of E Junior School, Ashley Road, Epsom

Visit our website on:
www.epsom-ewell.co.uk/wood.php



Committee for 2007/08

<i>Officers</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Tel</i>	<i>Email</i>
<i>Chairman</i>			
Rob Blackwell	113 Grosvenor Road, KT18 6JF	274995	robert.blackwell@talk21.com
<i>Hon Secretary</i>			
Kathy Belcher	4 Whitehorse Drive, KT18 7LY	728534	
<i>Hon Treasurer</i>			
Ian Allely	2 Chalk Paddock, KT18 7AT	726627	IanFTN@compuserve.com
<i>Committee Members</i>			
Linda Blackwell	113 Grosvenor Road, KT18 6JF	274995	
Hazel Morgan	18 Chantry Hurst, KT18 7BW	720375	hazelinthegarden@tiscali.co.uk
Brian Saxby	59 Sunnybank, KT18 7DY	725915	saxby@kingston.ac.uk
Emma Swan	6 Sunnybank, KT18 7DX	729258	mark.emma@virgin.net
Tracey Whittington	10 Dudley Grove, KT18 7NB	725522	kaw1@talk21.com
<i>President - Margaret de Lyon</i>			
Margaret de Lyon	15 Dorking Road, KT18 7JR		
<i>Hon Auditor</i>			
C J Bevis FCA	19 Wilmerhatch Lane, KT18 7EQ		
<i>Our Woodcote Ward RA Borough Councillors</i>			
Teresa Cass	1 Headley Parade, Langley Vale Rd, KT18 6AW	270495	tcass@epsom-ewell.gov.uk
Mike Richardson	23 Hambledon Hill, KT18 7BZ	745784	mrichardson@epsom-ewell.gov.uk
<i>Our RA Surrey County Councillor</i>			
Chris Frost	Oak View, 8 Warren Hill, KT18 7BX	720430	c.frost@surreycc.gov.uk

Chairman's Introduction & Annual Report

We are now nearing the end of our first year since the Epsom & Ewell Borough elections last May.

Our two RA Borough Councillors Teresa Cass and Mike Richardson, who were elected, have worked hard for Epsom and especially looking out for our interests in Woodcote ward.

The WERS Committee and myself have also been very busy throughout the year since our last AGM. There have been many varied planning applications in Woodcote Ward. We have done well in getting changes to some building plans and were particularly pleased with the result when 14 flats at Hill End were turned down.

We are involved at the moment with the plans for the development of Lavandou Stables in Chalk Lane. Many residents are against this proposal which involves the change in use of the existing stables to accommodate residential and commercial property. The racing industry brings extra wealth to the area and any plans which reduce this income are to be treated with caution. Residents are naturally worried about the increase in traffic that the plans would bring to Chalk Lane and the surrounding area.

The R.A. councillors and WERS, with local residents, have spent many hours during the year sorting out the problems with the bored youngsters who have been causing trouble in Langley Vale. We have had meetings with Surrey police, and liaised with Chris Grayling, our local MP, in an effort to find a more permanent solution to the problem.

Christ Frost our RA Surrey County Councillor has been working hard in the interest of Epsom & Ewell on many issues that affect our daily lives. Please go to pages 8 and 9 for Cllr Chris Frost's reports.

It has been suggested to me that could we start a campaign to reduce the litter in our streets. If every resident cleared the small amount of litter from the front of their own property on a regular basis (which a lot of us already do) everywhere would look so much nicer.

As a society, we are here to help the residents of Woodcote Ward so if you have any questions or queries please feel free to contact anyone on the committee. We would love it if you could attend our AGM at St Martins School on Monday 31st March at 8pm.

We still need more road reps and other helpers and we would welcome anyone who can spare just a little of their time. The more people we have, the easier it becomes for us all and the more effective we can be. If you would like to help in any way then please contact myself or any one of the committee members.

*Chairman. W(E)RS
Rob Blackwell*

Let Us Set the Record Straight - Yet Again

There has been much publicity recently from the Conservatives and some also from the Liberal Democrats which is both misleading and incorrect. It seems that we have to set the record straight yet again!

Claim:- A single Conservatives councillor persuaded the whole Council to provide kerbside collection of plastics and cardboard.

Fact:- Cllr. Mike Richardson publicly announced the Resident Association's intention to collect kitchen food waste, plastic and cardboard in July prior to any debate initiated by the Conservatives. Detailed proposals were included in the autumn edition of the Woodcote Newsletter.

Claim:- Christmas trees are to be recycled 2007/08 thanks to their pressure

Fact:- Christmas trees were first collected for recycling in 2006/07 and is an ongoing service.

Claim:- Conservatives want full kerbside recycling

Fact:- Their proposal would cost c. £180,000 or an additional 4% on the Council Tax but they have said cost does not matter. The principle adopted by the Resident Association is to increase recycling in a cost effective way.

Claim:- Conservative claim there is a threat to sell off Bourne Hall

Fact:- A wide ranging review of all Council owned property was carried out and extreme options, such as selling Bourne Hall, were rejected. This was in 2004.

Claim:- Resident Association councillors refused to extend the statutory consultation period in respect of a planning application over the Christmas period.

Fact:- Cllr. Mike Richardson requested the application be considered by the Planning Committee thus automatically extending the period into February. This request was publicly announced in early December 2007.

Claim:- RA Councillors voted for increased Councillor Allowances

Fact:- The councillors who represent us do not receive any “pay”. They receive an allowance which covers expenses they incur to be able to represent us effectively. Not one of the Liberal Democrat Councillors have actually refused this increase which they were at liberty to do. To see more about the Councillor Allowances please see the article elsewhere in this newsletter (written by RA Councillor Eber Kington (Ewell Court)).

News from the Borough Council

Hook Road Car Park

Following the provision of additional lighting, installation of pigeon grilles and changes to the CCTV monitoring the car park has been granted the nationally recognised Park Mark Safer Parking Award. This is given by the Association of Chief Police Officers and the British Parking Association to those car parks which are deemed to have met a high standard in providing a user friendly environment to reduce crime and fear of crime.

CCTV Enhancements

Cameras have now been installed in Upper High Street (opposite the cinema) and Hope Lodge car park and the existing camera in Depot Road has been re-

sited to give a better view of Church Street. These together with the borough’s other CCTV cameras are proactively controlled and monitored 24 hours a day 7 days a week from a purpose built monitoring centre which has direct links to the Police.

Countryside Matters

Two of the external organisations where I represent the Council are the Epsom Common Association (ECA) and the Lower Mole Countryside Management Project (LMCMP). **Epsom Common** has recently won the prestigious Green Flag award from the Civic Trust. A Green Flag is awarded to the country’s best parks and open spaces for being welcoming, safe and well maintained. Also they have to be well managed for nature conservation and involve the local community.

In the case of the common ECA was formed some 30 years ago. Their volunteers (EcoVols) carry out many tasks together with volunteers from the LMCMP. The common also serves as an educational resource for schools and for the general public who participate in the guided walks.

The LMCMP work over a much larger area covering not only the common but also other parts of the borough and also parts of Elmbridge, Mole Valley and Kingston.

They, together with students from NESCOL, have been involved in the restoration of the Grade 2 listed **Warren Wall** in Langley Vale. Originally built in 1720, progress has been made in uncovering the base of the wall including a previously hidden corner where it turns alongside the public track.. The old bricks have been recovered for reuse and trees felled where they had threatened the stability of the wall. See the Noticeboard for details of the appeal for help with this work.

*Cllr. Mike Richardson
RA Woodcote Ward*

Planning Applications

Hill End, Woodcote side, Epsom

Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of 14, two bedroom flats in two buildings with associated basement car parking.

Borough Council Refused

8-12 Dorking Road & 6 Elm Grove

Demolition of existing dwellings, replacement with 30 sheltered apartments for the

elderly (category 11 accommodation), ancillary lodge, managers accommodation, car parking and communal facilities and **Block B** - 5 self-contained apartments for the elderly (category 1 accommodation).

Borough Council Refused

Appeal submitted to Planning Inspectorate, Bristol incorporating revised elevation by Churchill Homes to overcome the reason for Borough refusing permission.

Appeal Hearing

At the opening of the Hearing, Churchill Homes stated that they now accepted under section 106 of the Town and Country Act 1990, to make a financial contribution for the purposes of off-site open space provision in the Borough if the Appeal was successful.

As a result, the Council therefore withdrew its fourth reason for refusal.

Six reasons for refusal were therefore discussed at the Appeal Hearing:

- The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the areas
- The effect of Block A on the living conditions of occupiers of No. 14 Dorking Road
- The effect of Block A on the living conditions of occupiers of the Bell House
- The proposed provision for affordable housing on-site and off-site
- The effect of the proposal on biodiversity and
- The effect of the proposal on highway safety with particular regard to conditions in Elm Grove

The inspector from Bristol did make a site visit and visited Elm Grove at a busy school time. However, the primary matter discussed was the provision for affordable housing.

Affordable Housing- the adequacy of the appellant's offer was argued fiercely by both the Council and Churchill Homes. On the day of the Hearing Churchill Homes made the 5 self-contained apartments in Block B available on a shared equity basis, as a major part of their contribution to affordable housing in the Borough. The Council argued that it required 3-bed family affordable housing to be built in Epsom, not sheltered accommodation. The density of the build, 35 units, should equate to the equivalent provision of at least 40% on site/off site affordable housing or a similar monetary contribution to the Council under paragraph 3.12.11 of the

Borough's Core Strategy Policy 9. Churchill Homes argued that their contribution should be 20% based on the size of the plot of land.

The Appeal was granted.

The Borough Council have published the Supplementary Planning Document on Affordable Housing and Developer Contribution. This explains how the Council's requirements for affordable housing will be met. It is only applicable to applications over 5 dwellings and clarifies interpretation of the Council's Core Strategy 9 policy. This is due for adoption in June 2008.

News from Surrey County Council

Council Tax Increase

No doubt you will recall that the Borough Council collects Council Tax on behalf of Surrey County Council, the Police, as well as itself. The County Council set a Council Tax rise of 4.8% for its component of the tax at a meeting in early February. The Residents' Association Group of County Councillors pressed for a rise no greater than 4%, that being the latest RPI figure available in early February, but were outvoted by the Conservative Councillors. We explained how we would cut costs that would not affect services, but to no avail.

The treatment of Surrey, and other southeast England councils, is verging on the scandalous. The Government have again altered the way the grants are calculated, to remove more money from areas like ours towards the major towns. Overall, English councils receive 75% of their funding from the Government. Surrey receives just 25%; the balance has to come from Council Tax payers. We are going to receive a £2m increase, on a net budget of £600m. However, the increased rate of Landfill Tax that will apply will cost us an extra £3m a year. So not only will we receive no additional money, we will actually be receiving less. Each person in Surrey receives £205 from the Government towards all local government services. The average person in England gets £595, and in Manchester that figure increases to £856.

Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS)

Your Residents' Association County Councillors continue to request Vehicle Activated Signs where residents have expressed concerns over speeding traffic. Some more are going to be installed over the next few months, in Alexandra Road, Ashley Road, Longdown Lane South and Woodcote Green Road. They are a reminder to drivers of the speed limit, and when the police monitor traffic speeds with their mobile enforcement units in roads where they are fitted, drivers have very little excuse that they didn't know the limit.

Chalk Lane Gate - where is it?

The money to replace the last gate was agreed in February 2006. It is taking a disgracefully long time to sort out a suitable replacement. The first investigation that took place was to delve into the legal archives to make sure that the County Council has the power to erect a gate across the road. I am pleased to say that the relevant paperwork was eventually

tracked down, so that hurdle has been overcome. The issue now is finding a design of gate that is extremely sturdy, so that it is next to impossible to remove. This is what is taking the time. At the time of writing, we are looking into the possibility of using a design created by the Lower Mole Countryside Management Project to safeguard one of the sites they have worked on. I am very conscious of the need for this gate, and am doing all I can to expedite matters. A new Highways Manager is also helping the process along.

Surrey Safety Camera Partnership:

Speed and red light cameras are playing a major role in helping cut casualties on Surrey's roads. This is the key message from the latest Surrey Safety Camera Partnership annual report. Figures from the second year of the Partnership show that overall there has been a 47% reduction in the total number of collisions at fixed speed camera sites, including a 72% reduction in the number of collisions involving death or serious injuries. There were also big improvements in collision rates at red light camera and mobile enforcement sites. The figures compare the average annual number of collisions in the three years prior to the installation of the cameras to the average annual number of collisions over the two years the Partnership has been in operation.

Fairer parking rules to come to Surrey

New parking rules are to be introduced by the government from 31st March that should be good news for motorists. Recognising that some parking offences have greater impact than others, the Traffic Management Act 2004 introduces different levels of penalty charges, depending on the seriousness of the offence. For example, parking on a yellow line, or in a disabled bay without a blue badge, will attract a higher penalty (£70) while staying too long in a free parking place is reduced to £50. This provides a greater deterrent to those who are tempted to park in a way that causes danger, disruption or makes life more difficult for those more vulnerable. As now, charges will be halved if paid within 14 days.

The new legislation also aims to be fair to those on the receiving end of a ticket. If you challenge the ticket the local authority must respond within 14 days. In addition, wheel clamping and removal of vehicles are discouraged except for people who persistently break the law, and if you challenge the ticket but are unsuccessful, you must be re-offered the early payment discount.

Enforcement officers will also be able to issue tickets for parking on zigzag lines at pedestrian crossings, taxi ranks or across a dropped kerb, and for double parking. Local councils will be able to serve penalty charge notices by post if the driver has driven away or become aggressive before the ticket can be served, and will also be able to use CCTV evidence to issue a ticket.

The new national guidance seeks to focus local authorities on tackling road safety and congestion, and the county council will carry out regular reviews to make sure that the intended results are being achieved. This will be in consultation with the borough and district councils that enforce the rules on its behalf, and with other local people and organisations.

Kiln Lane Link

Although the County Council supports this scheme, the lack of funding for regional highway schemes means that it is not likely to be built for many years. It is in the list for 2016-2026, but it is quite possible that schemes from other parts of the southeast will arise with a higher priority. The Local Committee will be looking to implement some of the measures that are associated with the link, as a means of alleviating some current problems (mainly around the Kiln Lane/A24 junction).

Comprehensive Performance

Assessment:

The Audit Commission has judged that Surrey County Council is "improving well", awarding it three stars in the latest Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) of county and single-tier councils in England. The three-star score (out of a possible four) means Surrey County Council is maintaining its position as a good authority, which manages its resources well and delivers good value for money. Audit Commission inspectors highlighted the council's progress in its priority areas for improvement - adult care, highways, waste and children in care.

*Cllr Chris Frost
RA Surrey, Epsom & Ewell, South East*

Council Tax

Our council works very hard to get the right balance between keeping our council tax as low as possible (EEBC is the 3rd lowest in Surrey) and ensuring there is enough money to provide all the services our residents expect. Although we know that the 4.5% increase this year may upset some residents we wanted to remind you that Epsom & Ewell Borough Council only receives 11% of your total council tax payment. This represents a weekly amount of £3.59 for a Band E property.

£3.59 per week provides residents with all of the following core services and much more.

- Refuse Collection
- Recycling
- Street Cleansing & street care
- Parks and Open Spaces (52% of Epsom & Ewell is green open space)
- Recreational Grounds
- Graffiti removal
- Community & Social Centers,
- Meals on Wheels
- Route Call
- Free Off-Peak Travel for over 60's and disabled
- Community Alarm
- Shop Mobility
- Youth Services

Home Services
Pest Control
Noise Nuisance
Abandoned Vehicles
Rainbow Leisure Centre
Epsom Playhouse
Planning

Full details of all of the above can be found at: www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk or at the Town Hall.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – MONDAY 31 MARCH AT 8PM **St Martins C Of E Junior School, Ashley Road, Epsom**

AGENDA

1. Opening remarks
2. Apologies for absence
3. Approval of Minutes of AGM held on 5 March 2007¹
4. Approval & adoption of the Accounts for the year ending 31 December 2007²
5. Election of Committee and Hon. Auditor for 2008-09³
6. Review of subscription charges
7. Reports from your RA Councillors
8. Any other business

¹ Copies of the minutes are reproduced elsewhere in this Newsletter

² Copies of the accounts will be provided at the meeting.

³ If you would like to stand for Committee, please obtain a nomination form from the Chairman or Secretary. Completed nomination forms must be returned by 24 March

Members requiring detailed information on specific matters are requested to contact the Hon Secretary in advance so that questions can be answered as comprehensively as possible.

MINUTES OF AGM HELD AT ST MARTIN'S C OF E JUNIOR SCHOOL 5TH MARCH 2007

Present – 43 members and friends of the Society, our Residents' Association Woodcote Ward Borough Councillor Mike Richardson and Residents' Association County Councillor Chris Frost

The Chairman, Robert Blackwell opened the meeting.

ADOPTION & APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF AGM 16th MARCH 2006

Adoption proposed by Emma Swan, seconded by Grant Bilham. Adopted unanimously

ADOPTION & APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2006

Treasurer, Ian Allely, reported increases in both membership subscriptions and advertising revenue. No change was proposed to the £2 per household yearly membership or £20 life membership.

Adoptions of accounts proposed by Brian Saxby, seconded by Sybil Lacey. Adopted unanimously.

ELECTION OF COMMITTEE FOR 2007/08

Valid nominations had been received from Ian Allely, Kathy Belcher, Grant Bilham, Rob Blackwell, Margaret Haslem, Sybil Lacey, Hazel Morgan, Brian Saxby, Emma Swan and Tracey Whittington. The Committee, at its first meeting will appoint the officers. Elected by show of hands and carried unanimously.

ELECTION OF HONORARY AUDITOR FOR 2007/08

Ian Allely, on behalf of the Society, thanks Chris Bevis for his services and was pleased to inform, the meeting that Chris has consented to continue as our Auditor. His re-election was proposed by Ian Allely and seconded by Brian Saxby. Adopted unanimously.

ELECTION OF HONORARY PRESIDENT FOPR 2006-2009

The re-election of Margaret de Lyon to serve as Hon. President for a further 3 years was adopted by a show of hands.

REPORT FROM RA COUNTY COUNCILLOR CHRIS FROST

Chris Frost reported that the County had 8 Residents Association members.

He works continuously to alleviate traffic dangers in the ward and was pleased to report:

- i) Installation of traffic calming measures in Langley Vale
- ii) Traffic signals designed to be used by horse riders on Epsom Downs and in Langley Vale
- iii) Town centre double lines to be introduced

REPORT FROM RA BOROUGH COUNCILLOR MIKE RICHARDSON

Mike Richardson stated that Epsom & Ewell's Council tax remained the third lowest in Surrey, with the Council operating on just 11% of the total and still adhering to its no debt burden. Yet, with the equivalent of just 13p per week per household, the Council had improved consumer services with more CCTV monitoring and with graffiti cleaning being one of the Council's top priorities.

Garden refuse collection had been introduced with an excellent uptake but although this produced less normal waste, he stated that the Council had no intention of introducing a fortnightly normal green-bin waste collection at the present time. Recycling was expected to reach 30% by the end of the year and the Council's policy is to increase recycling in a controlled way which has resulted in Epsom & Ewell Council having the 20th lowest cost in the country. In answer to a question from resident Sean Sullivan, Mike stated that the Council were providing containers for recycling plastics at specific centres rather than a doorstep collection because presently doorstep collection would cost £600 per tonne and the Council would only receive £150 per tonne back. Again, in answer to questions

raised, Mike explained that cardboard was not dissimilar to plastics and more facilities would be provided in centres so cardboard would not be part of the kerbside collections at present.

Cllr Richardson also answered a number of questions from the floor:

- Proposed supermarket, Upper High Street – Council had rejected plans and a public consultation meeting would be held
- Rosebery Park Children’s Playground – to be replaced. Mike understood the playground would not be moved, just updated.
- Improvements in infrastructure necessary due to overwhelming residential development. Mike states that the infrastructure was being built into the Hospital Cluster site with the provision of a new school and secondary schools have been expanded.
- Nonsuch Mansion – Borough decision was clear; it wished to continue with Sutton Council in managing the Mansion and keeping the grounds open to the public. Surrey County Council should not be allowed to sell it for private development.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Proposed Parking Restrictions in Squirrel’s Way – to be implemented in Summer 07. A strong representation of 8 households expressed their concern at the yellow lines on both sides of two of the three Squirrel’s Way spurs, nullified by applying waiting restrictions for only 3 hours (9.30am-12.30pm). These residents believe Atkins personnel will repark their cars at lunch time. They also believe that the new parking proposals being introduced in surrounding areas would exacerbate the situation in Squirrel’s Way.

Cllr Frost stated that Squirrel’s Way was one of 10 roads where new restrictions were being introduced. If restrictions were applied all day, tradesmen and friends would not be able to park. Cllr Frost stated that he would report the concerns of the residents at the meeting to the East Surrey Highway Services but because of the legal situation, the proposals announced would be introduced in the summer. They could be amended if evidence proved they were not working.

The parking restrictions being introduced in the vicinity of St Martin’s School and Atkins raised again the issue of child pick-up and set-down within the confines of the school. General consensus of the meeting was that this should be looked at by the County again.

Durdans/Lavendou Stables – damage to listed wall – Caroline Baldock of Epsom Equestrian Group was dismayed at the damage to the listed wall and particular that the gates do not close there. Cllr Richardson said that officers had inspected the damage and Lord Halifax would be instructed to carry out repairs.

Planning Applications – Durdans – Cllr Richardson was aware of an intended application by Lord Halifax and the Council were monitoring developments.

Borough Council Elections – 3 May 2007 – Emma Swan, the Society’s election co-ordinator, stated that although it would have been nice to introduce our 3 candidates at the AGM for ratification, she asked that the role be delegated to the committee. She was pleased to announce that Cllr Mike Richardson had agreed to stand for a further term and Rob Blackwell, Chairman of the Society, had accepted the Society’s invitation to stand as one of the three RA candidates. Interviews for the third candidate had taken place and an announcement would be made shortly.

In closing the meeting, Rob Blackwell reiterated the importance of each resident using all 3 of their votes and asked that residents did indeed vote for all the RA candidates.

The meeting closed at 9.45pm.

Lavandou Stables - Proposed Development Update

Our RA Borough Councillor Calls for Tough Action on Historic Stables

Our Residents’ Association Councillor Teresa Cass is calling for tough action by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, including the possibility of a Compulsory Purchase Order, in an effort to secure the future of Lavandou Stables. We are all concerned that talks on securing the future of the site have gone on for too long whilst the buildings have been allowed to deteriorate.

The Society circulated over 800 notices to houses near to the Stables or likely to be affected by any development plans. This informed them of the exhibition of drawings/plans to be displayed at a public meeting held by Turley Associates on behalf of Lord Halifax’s Trust in Epsom Town Hall on 25 January.

This was the first formal knowledge of what is being proposed: The Grade II listed Indoor Riding School at Lavandou Stables was designed by the renowned architect George Devey. It is one of a number of historic buildings which have been used for over 100 years for race horse training. Lord Rosebery commissioned the building of the Lavandou yard in the 1870s, and the Riding School is one of only two surviving examples in Britain. The outline proposal suggests that the Riding School will be converted into a commercial office development and the Cicero stables into 3 houses. In addition, 11 houses are proposed in place of the rest of the stables/yard.

RA Councillor Teresa Cass said:

“Discussions between the owners’ agents and planning officers have gone on for a number of years and we are now awaiting a planning application for homes and office space. It may be argued that such a development would save the structure of the buildings, but at what cost to the local environment and Epsom’s Equestrian Heritage? The extra traffic that homes and offices would bring to a country lane and a Conservation area will significantly alter the character of this historic part of Epsom”.

In order for the Society to effectively represent your views we asked for feedback following the 25 January exhibition. Thank you to those residents who have given us their feedback. Teresa’s concerns above were echoed by the majority of you (see below).

Councillor Cass has called for the Borough Council’s Planning Department to issue a **Repairs Notice** followed, if necessary, by a **Compulsory Purchase Order** which would effectively take the property out of the hands of Lord Halifax. At the Council Meeting on Tuesday 19 February, Councillor Cass asked the Chairman of the Strategy and Resources Committee to start the process to save the Lavandou Yard.

Councillor Cass said:

“It’s time to take drastic action. The Council should issue a Repairs Notice listing all the repairs that are required to preserve the Yard and buildings, including works to the roof structure, chimneys and masonry. If no repairs are started within 2 months, then we should issue a compulsory purchase order so that repairs are undertaken”

Epsom & Ewell MP Chris Grayling has also now spoken to a group of concerned organisations and residents who might form the basis of a protest action group. The Society and Cllr Cass attended this meeting which was on 28 February.

Feedback/Information received to date:

- The major concern is the traffic impact of any development in what is a conservation area.
- Most people are extremely concerned to ensure that, whatever happens, the buildings are preserved.
- To effectively fight the planning application (when it comes), only valid objections under planning law can be considered...not wishes!
- A PR person is required to alert the horse/trainer industry of the possible sale - could someone come forward for this please?
- Other interested parties are/need to be involved: Epsom Training & Development Fund might get involved as they require small starter yards, etc; United Race Courses are keen to see the yard retained; the Equestrian Conservation Trust, chaired by RA Cllr Michael Guest, has applied for charitable status.
- A trainer has previously expressed interest in buying and has reaffirmed that he would like to buy the site – apparently the price offered was unacceptable to Lord Halifax.
- The over-riding view is that there needs to be a buyer for the establishment to be retained as an equestrian centre.

Please email any further feedback about the plans (positive or negative) to Rob Blackwell at Robert.blackwell@talk21.com. Alternatively, should you wish to contact your RA councillors, their details are on the contact page at the start of this newsletter. The Society and your councillors will keep you informed of developments.

Please note that a formal application has not been submitted as we go to press but it is essential that, if you want to object to or support the planning application, you write directly to the Planning Department when the application is received. Please do not write to the council until the official plans are submitted because, if the case goes to appeal, your letter may not be admissible as it will be seen as pre-emptive and not a comment on the actual Planning Application. **Planning applications are updated onto the EEBC website every Friday.**

Councillors' Allowances

We would like to thank RA Cllr Eber Kingston (RA Ewell Court) for this article

All councils nationally provide their councillors with allowances. In an ideal world these allowances might be distributed under some nationally agreed formula but that is not the case, and each individual local authority must decide on the level of allowance. In effect, councillors have to vote themselves their own allowances.

The national system does, however, provide for an independent safeguard. Local authorities are required to set up an independent Remuneration Panel to review allowances and make recommendations to the Council.

The idea behind allowances for councillors is that no one should be prevented from being a councillor because of their financial circumstances. Allowances are not a wage or salary, but are designed to cover the costs of expenses occurred whilst representing us ie telephone calls, travel, stationery, hiring meeting places etc. which could be a burden to someone on a fixed pension or low wage.

The system of allowances is a nationally agreed policy which has all-party support at the

national level and is usually agreed locally on a non-partisan basis. In Epsom and Ewell however, and despite councillors' allowances being much lower than those of the surrounding councils controlled by the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Parties, those same party politicians on Epsom and Ewell Borough Council decided to oppose the recent Recommendations of Epsom and Ewell's Independent Remuneration Panel. The Panel had reported that allowances in Epsom and Ewell "remained below the average for Surrey authorities, and 13% lower than those of authorities of comparable population size" and therefore recommended increases to bring the basic local allowance up to the level of comparable authorities. Those recommendations were agreed at the Council meeting in July.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. *Who is on Epsom and Ewell's independent Remuneration Panel and who selects them?*
Currently there are two representatives of the local business community and an individual from the local voluntary (charitable) sector. They were asked to be on the Panel by the Chief Executive of the Council. No politicians are involved in the process.
2. *What evidence does the independent Remuneration Panel use in making its recommendations?*
The information used is national data from the IDeA, and local comparative data with other Surrey districts and comparable local authorities. They can also call witnesses and seek other evidence.
3. *Does a Council have to accept the findings of their Remuneration Panel?*
No, although the whole point of the having the Panel is to provide independent advice and so avoid the political controversy that comes with councillors determining their own level of allowances.
4. *Why were allowances reviewed in July 2007?*
Allowances are reviewed every four years, and the last review was in July 2003.

Do as I say, not what I do

As RA councillors we usually like to be positive in our comments about policy and seek to avoid the party political criticism that is evident in so much of what goes on in politics today. However, it is difficult to avoid making some comment when you are faced with local party politicians who criticise the motives of councillors who voted for the increases recommended by the independent Remuneration Panel. It really is a case of "don't do as I do, but do as I say" - for what exactly do the party politicians do when they are in power locally and nationally?

- Two weeks after claiming that existing allowances in Epsom and Ewell were sufficient for any councillor, a conservative on the Borough Council claimed an additional leaders allowance, despite their being only two Conservatives on the Council.
- His predecessor in 2006/2007 also claimed a leadership allowance and yet he was the only Conservative on the council. (Who was he leading?).
- For the last 3 or so years and Conservative and Liberal Democrat councillors in the other Surrey districts have chosen to pay themselves substantially more than we have locally.
- In Epsom and Ewell we have allocated a basic allowance of just £1,600 to the Chairman of the majority RA Group on the Borough Council. However the Liberal Democrat Leader in Kingston last year received £21,780 and the Liberal Democrat Leader in Sutton received an allowance of £37,305.
- On 27th July 2007 the Independent newspaper reported that the allowances of Members of parliament last year cost the taxpayer £95 million.

So when our residents receive pamphlets from the political parties seeking to portray themselves as virtuous in the matter of members' allowances it is interesting to compare their out-of-power comments with their in-government actions.

Incidentally, you might also wish to know that, despite their "protests" not one councillor from the Lib Dem and Conservative Party on Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has declined to accept the recent rise in allowances.

Epsom General Hospital

As a member of the hospital campaign group I am keeping a close eye on developments. The latest news is that members of the hospital Trust Board, together with NHS Officials, are still considering Adrian White's offer to purchase the site and run it for the NHS. At the moment, most of the services currently run in Epsom look set to continue. A major review of NHS services in London is underway, and it makes sense for the Trust Board to wait until this review has reported before they decide what changes may be necessary for the Epsom & St. Helier Trust. The one significant question mark concerns maternity services. Members of the campaign group carried out a survey last autumn, to see where patients would go if there were no delivery unit at Epsom. So few would go to St. Helier that the Trust would lose significant income. We are hoping that this will persuade them to continue with a full range of maternity services at Epsom, especially since the birth rate now seems to be increasing again. A Department of Health official has apparently looked at the services provided at Epsom, and said that there are no safety issues.

*Cllr Chris Frost
RA Surrey, Epsom & Ewell South East*

Recycling News

Recycling continues to be a priority for both the borough and residents alike and the Council propose to develop the service using the following guiding principles; a high recycling rate, cost effective service and customer satisfaction. These already rank highly and the Council intends to keep it that way.

Kerbside Collection

There is an opportunity, given that the current transport fleet contract is due for renewal in October, to acquire specialist vehicles to collect food waste, plastic and cardboard. Collection of food waste will put Epsom and Ewell ahead of all the councils in Surrey to provide this service. A more detailed account was included in the previous Newsletter and additional detail and publicity will emerge from the council throughout the coming year.

Blenheim Road Civic Amenity Centre (The Tip)

Work has started to provide 'ferry style' queuing for cars within the Tip site. This means that fewer cars will have to queue in the road outside. Better tipping facilities are also being provided.

The result will be to increase or upgrade the existing facilities and make it easier for residents to recycle more household waste. The planned upgrade includes:

- Improved queuing system for traffic within the site and the creation of a new one way 'in and out' traffic system making it quicker and easier to use
- Creation of four split-level container bays accommodating eight large bins for wood, cardboard, residual waste and other bulky materials which will enable easy access to the recycling containers, eliminating the need for steps.
- A dedicated HGV/trade customers entry/exit
- Additional parking will also be created, enabling more people to use the facilities
- More facilities to recycle additional materials such as bulky plastics. These include items such as plastic garden furniture and plastic toys.

The redevelopment programme should be completed by May 2008. In order to ensure minimum disruption to the recycling service, the site is being redeveloped in stages. This requires some traffic management in order to ensure public health and safety but the facilities will remain available for the community to continue their recycling efforts.

A second phase to improve road access in the immediate vicinity is currently being discussed.

Noticeboard

Warren Wall

Warren Wall in Langley Vale

Is not completely hearty or hale

Parts of it need attention

But the access is too difficult to mention

Help is on its way

And not just for a day

Volunteers from the Lower Mole Countryside Management Project

Will for three days make this the object

Of their attention at 10.00am on Tuesday to Thursday 11 to 13 March

When they will be clearing the track of oak, ash and larch

So that others can carry out remedial action.

The volunteers work from ten to four

And quite often come back for more

Additional help is desperately needed

If this area is not to become reseeded

End of Beaconsfield Road, Langley Vale is where they meet

With a packed lunch, waterproofs and boots on their feet

Why not join them and help protect the environment

So that you may return home quite content

Tea, coffee, tools and instruction are all supplied

So that the volunteers efforts are fully applied

Phone 01372 743783 for further information

When on site we have a coffee break around 11.00am, if you would like to join us for a cup we can explain what is being done.

The Mayor of Epsom & Ewell's Grand Charity Ball Saturday 12 April

At The Queen's Stand, Epsom Racecourse

In aid of the Mayor's charities

Tickets £65 each to include champagne reception,

3 course dinner, cabaret and dancing

Contact the Mayor's secretary,

Carol Caiger on 01372 732100

or email: ccaiger@epsom-ewell.gov.uk

Epsom Sports Club – Beer Festival

BBQ, Sports and Entertainment

Saturday Evening Party

19th and 20th April

Call 01372 722487 for

further information

New Committee Members Wanted

In order to continue looking after all residents' interests we need an active committee. A couple of longstanding and very hard working committee members are standing down this year so we would welcome three or four new people to join us in order to share the work. When the Residents' Society write to an organisation representing your views, its comments are taken very seriously as it speaks for so many local people. With a full committee, it does not need to be that time consuming and committee members can always choose how much they do. Please don't wait for someone else to volunteer - find out more by speaking to any of the committee members or contact Rob or Kathy for a committee nomination form.