



York Hill drawn by Ron Heath

LOUGHTON LIFE

JUNE/JULY 2006

Tories Grab Power in the Council Chamber

LRA has always believed that it is local issues, not national political issues which matter at District Council level. In the recent election, the media concentrated on national policies, and judgement of the government's record – neither of which can be changed by a District Council. Both the Conservatives and the BNP benefited from this emphasis on national politics.

With all the votes in, the Conservatives hold only 50% of the seats, but have taken control of the cabinet, and major committees. They have cancelled the all-party understanding of the last council, which enabled the 'pro rata' distribution of chairmanships and other offices. They managed to do this with the aid of two of the three 'Independent Group' members, leaving the Liberal Democrats, the second largest party, without a cabinet post or committee chairmanship.

The Conservatives made this alliance with the two 'independents'

because they claim that a council cannot operate without a majority party, that a 'hung' council cannot govern. This is true of Parliament, but at local level, a 'hung' council means that parties have to discuss problems and reach an agreed solution, and one party cannot impose its will.

As a result of this alliance, the Conservatives are showing signs of going back to the 'bad old days' of 25 years ago, with one party controlling the council and without one councillor representing a Loughton Ward in a position of power. It would seem that the Conservatives will recreate the situation that brought about the formation of LRA, which was as a residents' reaction to the lack of Conservative interest and care for Loughton.

It is now up to the newly elected Conservative councillors to prove that they do care for Loughton, and that they have sensible policies for street cleansing, parking, road repairs and other District Council responsibilities.



LRA's Election

John Markham held his seat in St John's with a large majority. Congratulations to Peter House who successfully beat off a strong Conservative attack and retained the seat in Forest vacated by Ken Faulkner.

Our local candidate, Rod Barrett, worked tirelessly to win back the seat in St Mary's, but unfortunately a combination of national politics and sitting councillor advantage told against LRA. In Fairmead and Alderton, James Dean and Rose Brookes, despite their vigorous campaigning and work on local residents' issues, both came second to the BNP, James losing by just three votes, and Rose by only 117 votes.

We are grateful for all the hard work and determination of our candidates and their ward teams of canvassers, deliverers and tellers. And we are proud that all our candidates are continuing helping people on behalf of LRA.

For your summer fruit and veg...



LRA Farmers' Market
1st Sunday of each month
9.00am–2.00pm

While the Centric Parade roadworks are under way, you will find the full range of suppliers in Traps Hill car park (beside the Library), but we hope to be back in the High Road soon.

Loughton Divided?

Local anxieties stirred up...

Loughton has the doubtful distinction of being the only 'leafy suburb' in England with headline victories for the BNP in the recent district council election. There are now six councillors of the far-right party, representing three Debden wards.

LRA had two excellent candidates for the Debden wards of Alderton and Fairmead – Rose Brookes and James Dean. Both came second, with a much increased LRA vote. It was only part way through our door-to-door canvassing that we began to realise the extent of support for the British National Party.

Headline coverage of immigration and asylum issues by the national press, over many months, had prepared the ground for this, along with huge disappointment with the Blair government generally. The final impetus was given by skilfully slanted coverage of two or three local topics.

Loughton, with Debden, has a small proportion of residents of ethnic minority origin, under 5% in the Census 2001. They are mostly business and professional people, and some workers in community services. So the BNP had to find some more

conspicuous targets, if it was to make real headway in Loughton.

Hence their continuing attacks on Epping Forest College, which has a number of black and Asian students from East London, and too few local students. From this focus, BNP make links (mostly far-fetched) with crime incidents in the town, and with imagined 'users' of the Community & Youth Centre yet to be opened in Borders Lane. The Regional proposals for 11,000 new homes in our district – which all parties locally have opposed – were used to rouse fear that Loughton will be overwhelmed by 'asylum seekers' and alien cultures.

These messages – packaged under the label of 'the Debden Patriot' and presented by smart-suited young men from neighbouring boroughs – whip up anxiety about human differences, about crime and about future well-being. The BNP now attempts to present a respectable face, but still uses the old techniques of fear and misinformation.

But people's anxieties cannot simply be ignored. Genuine problems do have to be addressed – and manufactured ones swiftly defused – if Loughton is to remain a good community, and not just a nice place, in which to live. LRA intends to play an active part in this.

Dorothy Paddon

Repairing Our Roads

Town Council vs County

Motorists and residents agree: Loughton's roads are in a lamentable state of repair. Loughton Town Council became so aggrieved at the potholes and the general state of Loughton's roads that they asked for a meeting with County Cllr Rodney Bass, the County Highways Supremo, but he met District Councillors first.

At this district-wide meeting, Cllr Bass admitted that ECC was not providing a good repair service for local roads. He felt that it was better to spend money on A and B roads so that vehicle could speed on their journeys more quickly. However this would be at the expense of the minor "local" (i.e. residential) roads.

He did accept complaints on the speed and standard of pothole repair, and stated that in future, if a gang is repairing one pothole, they will also deal with problems nearby.

The Town Council was not satisfied with this district-wide meeting, and still arranged to meet to press for a better deal for Loughton. The June LRA Farmers' Market displayed a map for residents to document their own road's deficiencies, to provide ammunition for the Town Council meeting.

We urge residents to keep reporting road defects to Essex County (www.essexcc.gov.uk and select 'Report a Highway Defect').

Litter Bugs Increase Rodent Population

Discarded chips, burgers, kebabs and take-away pizzas are mostly to blame for a 24% increase in the rat population recorded by the National Rodent Survey.

The area behind Loughton station bus stops is in such a disgusting state, due to litter and rubbish, that Cllr Ken Angold-Stephens asked the District Council to check for rat infestation. However, bait could not be set until ownership of the land was established. The District Council was supposed to have adopted it some time ago, but it seems that the area is still owned by Metronet.

As part of the Town Council's recent first Litter Pick, Metronet has agreed to cut down the foliage to provide access for volunteers to do an initial clear-up, and then bait will be set. Metronet have agreed to try to keep the foliage under control and the District Council has agreed to clear the litter in future. LRA Councillors will now be pushing District Council to adopt the land as promised.



Fishing the River Roding

The River Roding is our local river, which runs through the Nature Reserve – Loughton Brook flows into it. This little river meanders for very many miles through Essex's meadows, parklands and industrial estates. It has been modified by mills, motorways and many drains and yet it presents the angler, both young and old, with real physical and technical challenges. There are glides, deep pools with sheer sides, overhanging trees and endlessly changing curves and bends.

There are quality predatory fish present such as chub to 4lbs, perch to 2lbs and pike to double figures (these are specimens caught and released by the author). Standard practice is to 'set up' a natural bait rig for chub and quietly await events. This approach depends on the quarry exploring the swim and taking the proffered bait in situ. The problems are that the angler may disturb the prey or it may not be there at that time. These possibilities are made more likely because of the very intimacy of this river.

Council Chambers Chaired by Women

In an unusual turn of events, women will head both District and Town Councils for the next two years.

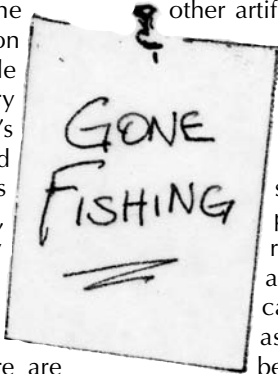
The District Council will be chaired by Lib/Dem Cllr Ann Haigh, with LRA Cllr Caroline Pond as Deputy. Hopefully it means a change of pace for Caroline, who in her two years as Community Well-being Portfolio holder attended all 20 Cabinet meetings, together with 25 Cabinet committees and 45 meetings, while also making 27 official visits. A fine record, and one we can all be proud of.

The Town Council has elected LRA councillors Janet Woods as Town Mayor, and Suzanne Harper as Deputy. Janet has already had some practice, as she has been Deputy to LRA Cllr Mike Wardle who sadly has had periods of illness during his year of office, which required Janet to stand in on his behalf on a number of occasions. Suzanne is also experienced in office, as she was Chairman of the Town Council in 2001/02.

Not many anglers use spinners and other artificial lures. So when a fellow lure-angler was seen earnestly fishing near the Chigwell Lane bridge, he was questioned about his endeavour. He replied that someone had been seen placing a 22lbs pike in the river a week ago. As the author was the 'someone' he can only assume an astounding growth rate because when caught by him it weighed 11lbs!

The challenges this convoluted and complex little river present to the lightweight lure-angler are of the highest order. However the results that are readily obtainable for chub alone are very well worth the effort

James Dean



Local PCT Campaign Succeeds

When it comes to health care, people want a locally-responsive service, not some far-flung bureaucracy. There was a massive outcry from the Epping Forest and Harlow areas when it was suggested that there should be just two Primary Care Trusts covering the whole of Essex.

The Health Secretary has now decreed that Essex shall have five PCTs, and that our new West Essex PCT will be an amalgamation of the three present PCTs of Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford. These PCTs already have good joint working relationships. This should help maintain the current system, which is run by people who know something about the localities involved. Hats off to the campaign which achieved a sensible solution.

Cricket in Loughton Something for all players



We thought we'd remind readers that Loughton has four local cricket clubs. Well strictly speaking three, plus one just over the parish boundary in Buckhurst Hill. All of these have plenty of places for new players young and old, with one club, Loughton, having a women's team which is one of the leading sides in the South of England.

Three clubs – Loughton, based at The Uplands, Roding Valley in Bradfield Road and South Loughton off Avondale Drive – have well established accredited coaching schemes for young players from seven upwards, so the future of these clubs is promising. Typically they run five or six sides for

young players at weekends, and in winter have coaching and competitive indoor matches at the Peter May and Ilford indoor schools. All have websites which give further details.

The bigger three clubs also field six or seven sides for adult players at weekends, so they can cater for a range of abilities. Loughton's first eleven, replete with an overseas professional, finished fourth of ten in the Essex Premier League in 2004. The other clubs all take part in competitive league matches on Saturdays, and gentler matches on Sundays, so there is something for all tastes.

David Jeeter

IN THE COMMUNITY

LRA Opposes Meals on Wheels Price Hike

Essex County Council recently voted to raise the cost of its meals on wheels by £1.20 per day – the highest rise in the country, and a large sum for a pensioner to find.

In his speech on the budget, LRA's County Cllr Chris Pond supported Lib/Dem and Labour amendments, which would have reduced the increase.

Unfortunately, the Conservative majority carried the day with the argument that ECC had fallen well behind similar counties, and a big increase was necessary to correct the imbalance and prevent big deficits in the future. That leaves pensioners having to find £8.40 each week or forego their meals.

New Business, Same Old Rubbish

You may find the same people collecting your waste these days, but they're working for a different company, Cory Ltd. This has come about as a result of the collapse of South Herts Waste Management, which was placed in Administration by the High Court on 19 April. The Council had heard rumours that SHWM were having problems, and residents had complained that the standard of service was suffering. Cory took over operation of the contract on 19 April, together with the workforce, initially for three months while the District Council considers the options. The Council and its officers are to be congratulated on making the changeover as fast and painless as possible. Let's hope it continues to go well.

AROUND THE TOWN

Parking Damages Forest Land

The Forest land at the top of Smarts Lane was turning into a rutted quagmire by cars being parked with two wheels on the verge. Residents of Smarts Lane complained to LRA candidate Rod Barrett, who passed it on to newly elected Cllr Peter House, who discussed it with one of the Forest Conservators. As a result, Forest staff have now built a small embankment, which will prevent this kind of destructive parking.

Cricket Ground Tree Loss

Some residents have asked about the disappearance of some trees from the boundary of Loughton Cricket Club's ground on Church Hill. Unfortunately, the problem was old age and disease. Nevertheless, the lowering of the hedges along Church Hill and Traps Hill has opened up the view, enabling the cricket ground to take its rightful place as a prominent part of Loughton life.

Blast Damage to Deepdene Road?

Some ten years ago Deepdene Road suffered a major gas explosion, involving the destruction and eventual

rebuilding of a number of houses. The roadway was also affected, and the sub-structure was disturbed by the blast. Reconstruction was promised at the time the houses were rebuilt, but has never happened.

LRA has taken up this problem with the council officers, who will examine the records of the surveys taken after the explosion.

Police Request ASBO Extension

Essex Police and British Transport Police have asked the District Council to support the extension from 2 June 2006 of the existing ASBOs, which are in force in Loughton Station, Sainsbury's car park, Station Road, Old Station Road, and a section of the High Road.

Reporting Water Leaks

Now we are on a hosepipe ban (with greater restrictions threatened), everyone is even more aware of water going to waste. If you discover a leak, phone the Thames Water Leaks Hotline on 0800 714 614 – we can certainly keep them busy in Loughton.

LOUGHTON RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

CHAIRMAN Diane Rhodes Ashley Grove IG10 1HS	8508 3284
JOINT VICE CHAIRMEN David Linnell 20 Eleven Acre Rise IG10 1AN Stephen Pewsey 59 Wroths Path IG10 1SH	8508 2932 8508 5582
MINUTES SECRETARY Carol Murray 20 Queens Road IG10 1RS	8508 4892
TREASURER Tony Paddon 12 Forest View Road IG10 4DX	8508 2238
PRESS OFFICER Michael Benbow 28 Brook Road IG10 1BP	8508 4457
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY Juliet Pollard 14 The Hawthorns IG10 3QT	8502 0552
COMMITTEE Rodney Barrett James Dean Ken Faulkner Chris Harper Peter House Kevin Latchford Charles MacKenzie John Woods Bela Yorke	8502 2085 8281 7932 8508 1215 8508 4770 8532 1275 8502 4568 8508 2909 8508 1764 8508 4729
LRA COUNCILLORS COUNTY: LOUGHTON (CENTRAL) Chris Pond (ECC & T) 7 Staples Road IG10 1HP	8508 2361
DISTRICT AND TOWN COUNCILS ALDERTON WARD Caroline Pond (T) 7 Staples Road IG10 1HP	8508 2361
FAIRMEAD WARD Bill Lattimore (T) 29 Harvey Gardens IG10 2AD	8502 1901
FOREST WARD Jack Benjamin (T) 23 Newnham Close IG10 4JG Rose Brookes (T) 3 Lower Park Road IG10 4NB Suzanne Harper (T) 23 Algers Road IG10 4NG Peter House (D) 10 Connaught Avenue IG10 4DP	8508 4765 8502 5981 8508 4770 8532 1275
RODING WARD Ken Angold-Stephens (D&T) 9 Lower Park Road IG10 4NE Margaret Chalk (T) 49 Southview Road IG10 3LQ Richard Pennington (T) 51 Stonards Hill IG10 3EH David Wixley (T) 2 Copper Beech Court IG10 2QH	8281 0674 8508 2226 8508 0807 8418 9284
ST JOHN'S WARD John Markham (D) 77 Queens Road IG10 1RR Roger Pearce (T) 32 Millsmead Way IG10 1LR Caroline Pond (D) 7 Staples Road IG10 1HP Chris Pond (ECC & T) 7 Staples Road IG10 1HP Stephen Pewsey (T) 59 Wroths Path IG10 1SH	8508 1945 8281 1386 8508 2361 8508 2361 8508 5582
ST MARY'S WARD Tony Lee (D) 33 Priory Road IG10 1AF Brian Moore (T) 6 Forest View Road IG10 4DX Mike Wardle (T) 61 The Drive IG10 1HG Janet Woods (T) 1a Woodland Road IG10 1HQ	8508 76491 8508 7112 8508 2771 8508 1764

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