

LRA's LOUGHTON LIFE

The newsletter of Loughton Residents Association

February 2011
Member's edition



The future of LRA

LRA is wholly run by local resident volunteers. Over the last ten years we have expanded to cover all seven Loughton wards, with a majority of the councillors on the Town Council, ten councillors on the District Council and one councillor on the County Council. This is an important part of LRA's work in looking after Loughton. Some of these will be standing down at the next elections. Would you be interested in standing in May 2012?

But LRA is involved in many other things too - creating, producing and delivering this newsletter; the monthly Farmers' Markets in the High Road; our weekly email bulletin of local news; monitoring planning and licensing applications (and contacting residents and/or opposing applications where appropriate); responding to Government consultations; and much more. Keeping all this going, and deciding what we should be doing, involves another group of volunteers - and more help is needed here, too. To find out more, ring David Linnell or Chris Pond (see back page) or email contact@loughtonresidents.co.uk

David Linnell will be standing down as Chairman at the AGM in April (but will still be very much involved in LRA). Because its Constitution currently precludes LRA councillors from being Chairman (or Press Officer), it will be proposed at the AGM that this rule be relaxed. We may not find a councillor to take on the Chairman's role, and anyway this is not a suitable long-term solution, as councillors already have heavy commitments. But it may help keep things going until a suitable non-councillor candidate for Chairman is found.

The rule was originally introduced because of concerns that the council involvement would make LRA "political". However, LRA now feels it has enough experience to guard against this, and remain firmly Independent and non-political. It is also proposed that there be a minor amendment on membership to deal with any councillor who switches party midway through an electoral period, without asking for a by-election.

Please support LRA

If things go according to plan, you should receive a letter with this copy of Loughton Life, asking you to renew your subscription (or, for those who have already paid for 2011, confirming that you have done so). LRA is run by volunteers, and we keep our costs to the minimum. We do depend upon your subscriptions to keep going, and it is a great help if you renew now. We are very grateful for our members' support. If you have any queries email contact@loughtonresidents.co.uk or ring 020 8508 2932.

Coping with the snow

Loughton's snowy Christmas meant delight for the town's children, but headaches for the rest of us. Icy side-streets in our hilly neighbourhoods became impassable. LRA has opposed changes in County Council policy which have meant that salt bins are not routinely refilled, and instead, a ton of salt is delivered to each parish council to distribute as it sees fit.

Fortunately, Loughton Town Council shouldered the burden. Temporary storage space was found for the grit and staff, although already very busy, made time to deliver bags of salt to almost all the town's 25 grit bins using its own small van despite this being a County responsibility. The County Council cabinet member, Norman Hume, has said this policy will be reconsidered after the current winter. A further ton of grit was negotiated, so that reserve salt is available for any more snow. This can-do spirit reflects everything the Town Council stands for, and staff are to be congratulated for their efforts, but it comes at quite a cost. The change of policy was made without consultation and little notice, so local councils had no time to make other arrangements.

Unfortunately, six extra bins the Town Council ordered after the January 2010 snow were axed by the County Council, but in some of the locations, nearby residents offered to act as keepers and/or spreaders of salt. Sadly, not everyone was so considerate. There were several reports of grit being stolen by organised gangs, and a couple of entire grit bins disappeared. On Baldwin's Hill the grit was emptied out of the bin so that it could be used as a makeshift toboggan!

LRA continues to challenge the County Council over not salting roads near schools. For instance, Oak View School was closed for three days in December, largely because its surrounding roads were not salted or cleared. Quite apart from the damage to children's education, many parents' lives were disrupted by school closures.

Forest bus service planned

In partnership with Essex County Council, Epping Forest is planning to trial a shuttle bus service on Sundays and public holidays from Chingford to Loughton, through the Forest via High Beach. Initial plans are for it to run from April 3rd to October 31st. This will be an accessible 14-seat minibus on an hourly hail and ride basis. A flat fee of £2 is proposed, with under-16s free and concessionary passes.

**For more information about LRA & Loughton please visit
www.loughtonresidents.co.uk**

Planning & licensing matters

The LRA Plans Group looks at all planning and licensing applications in Loughton; we consult residents and/or support or object individual applications as appropriate. It works completely separately from LRA councillors on the Town and District planning and licensing committees, who have to decide on applications on the basis of planning law and on the evidence presented to them.

Approved

Morrison's: opening, and selling alcohol, 6am-11pm, and on Good Friday and Christmas Day. LRA is concerned about the effect on nearby residents, and will be watching how this new freedom is used in practice.

Rectory Lane: a street-trading van on the corner of old Rectory Lane and Borders Lane. LRA, the Town Council and local traders, opposed this as unfair competition and as unsafe at a very busy spot in the rush hour, and are looking to challenge the decision.

Hillcroft and Colebrook Gardens: the District Council put forward proposals to provide parking bays, which came directly from efforts by LRA Cllrs Ken Angold-Stephens and David Wixley to get council funds allocated for such changes. As some Hillcroft residents had concerns, LRA delivered a letter to each household encouraging them to make comments.

Turned down

Clays Lane: another proposal to use land on the corner with England's Lane for a golf teaching practice facility. LRA opposed this as unsuitable on Clay's Lane.

77 Newman's Lane: erection of a detached house on land/garden to side of existing house. LRA thought that this was an appropriate site for a house, but objected strongly to the design as out-of-keeping.

Theydon Bois: LRA opposed the proposal to put a large car park on green belt land next to the station, which would add to commuting to Theydon, and worsen the overcrowding on Central Line trains for residents who use Loughton and Debden stations.

Crystal Lounge, High Road: Following various incidents last year, the Police called for a licence review. LRA delivered letters to nearby residents, asking them to give their views to the District Council. Because the High Road is also a residential area, LRA considers that it is an unsuitable place for any early-morning food and/or entertainment venues. We hope in the long term to get them all closed by midnight. Unfortunately, the Police came to an agreement with the licensee, and the premises will now close as late as 1.30pm.

In progress

Retail park, Langston Road: LRA has concerns about the planning aspects of this application by the District Council, using land zoned as light industrial, and about its impact on residents and traders in the Broadway and High Road

Sports Hall, Rectory Lane: LRA has various concerns about the application to build another care home on this site. In particular, College students now have to use sports facilities in Redbridge.

David Linnell



What a Councillor does

I did a lot of phoning last December about gritting and was told, for instance, that Sparelease Hill and Tycehurst Hill are classed as second priority, which is the reason given for why they were not done.

I believe that potholes should be repaired, when at all possible, on a permanent rather than temporary basis even if it means we have to wait a bit longer for it. In the long run this will save money. If you see potholes please report them to County Highways at "Report a Highway problem" (www.essex.gov.uk) or ring 0845 603 7631. For the criteria used, see the Essex Highway Maintenance Strategy on the County website.

I also monitored the Christmas lights in the High Road and spoke to the Town Council and the Chairman of Town Centre Partnership to ensure that as a high a standard as possible is maintained with the resources available.

Many people are worried about the possible switching off of street lights at night and I strongly believe that the lights should not be turned off before 45 minutes after the last train for the safety of users. As such I have spoken to the Street Lighting Engineer and the neighbourhood police officer.

Finally as a resident of Loughton I would like to say thank you to all the people who work hard to maintain a beautiful and very pleasant town to live in and bring up family.
Cllr Lucette Howe, St Marys Ward

Broadway Ward surgery

Date: first Thursday of the month

Venue: in or outside Spray's Bakery on the Broadway

Time: 10-11 am

Cllr Jennie Hart

Farmers' markets

LRA's Farmers' Markets have run for eight years. Please come along on the first Sunday of each month, 9am-2pm in the High Road. See our display, talk to LRA councillors about problems and visit our second hand bookstall (March – December).

Thanks to all those who braved the cold to join us for carols at the December market, and contributed to a collection for St Clare's Hospice, which raised £347.37. Special thanks to: the members of the Roding Players who played carols (their next concert is on Saturday 9 April, 7.30pm at St Mary's Church, Loughton www.rodingplayers.co.uk); Terry Tew, Chigwell Lane, for the loan of the PA system to play carols in the players' break (www.terrytew.co.uk); and Sainsbury's, Loughton, for free mince pies and cold drinks.

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Know your rivers quiz

Congratulations to all who entered, and especially to Alan and Sheila Witts, who win a £15 token.

1. What? Where? When? How?.....?? (3) WYE
2. Sounds more like atmosphere than water (4) AIRE
3. Site in France is attractive (8) BEAULIEU
4. What a joker! (4) TEES or LUNE
5. One for the Bard (4) AVON
6. You'll get here if you count from one to ten (6) SEVERN
7. This river gets things under control (6) THAMES
8. Just missed a bronze medal (5) FORTH
9. Shirt gets torn in this river (5) TRENT
10. Some erosion here? (4) WEAR
11. Fork in the river? No, just part of one (4) TYNE
12. Sounds as if this river gradually seeps out (4) OUSE
13. Where Adam and Eve fished? (4) EDEN
14. Is there a quay along its banks? (6) WHARFE
15. Found in a cornfield (3) RYE
16. Almost halfway there (6) MEDWAY
17. A gangly footballer (6) CROUCH
18. Would George have written about this? (6) ORWELL
19. This river will rise..... (4) SOAR or LARK
20.and this one run fast (5) SWIFT or FLEET
21. Sounds as if Mr Livingstone dined here (6) KENNET
22. Found in a car's engine (3) CAM
23. Bird of peace (4) DOVE
24. It's a dark one! (10) BLACKWATER
25. What a horse does (4) NAZE (NOTE: this was a mistake by the setters because the Naze is not a river but a headland, although most people gave this as their answer! Not counted in the final scoring)
26. Makes you think of ice cream (5) COLNE
27. The river for a meadow (3) LEA
28. Ship of the desert – or a watery alternative (5) CAMEL
29. Does it get your vote? (3) EXE or EYE
30. One might score a bulls-eye (4) DART

Films are back in Loughton!

Do you love film? Often wished there was a cinema in Loughton? You are not alone! Loughton Film Society has been formed to show films in Loughton for all the community. To join Loughton Film Society or for more details please visit www.filmloughton.co.uk

Budget blues

Councils are under heavy financial pressure, with Government funding being cut and costs increasing. How will this affect your Council Tax? Roughly 73 per cent of what you pay goes to the County Council, mostly education, 13 per cent to the police and fire services, 10 per cent to the District Council and 3 per cent to the Town Council.

The LRA-led Town Council will be holding its council tax rate, with no cuts to services this year, thanks to continuing careful management by our councillors. Districts and counties that impose no increase get a 2.5 per cent compensation grant from the Government, but Town Councils do not, so the Town Council tax freeze is all the more to be applauded.

It is expected that the Conservative-controlled County Council will hold its council tax rate too, although over the next few years it will be making cutbacks to the services provided. We understand, for instance, that no libraries will close, but opening hours may be trimmed.

The Conservative-controlled District Council, unlike most other Councils, can meet its savings target of £0.5 million this year, partly through efficiency savings and other measures, without damaging frontline services. Unfortunately the council has to find a further £2.5 million savings in 2012/13 and despite its best efforts in cutting waste and non-essential services it would seem at the moment that cuts to front line services will be inevitable. Already external recruitment has been stopped, and it is very likely that fees for planning and licensing applications will rise sharply. There may also be increases in car park charges which LRA has tried to protect and which are among the lowest in the Country. If one-off savings were needed, LRA would be proposing using the District Council's healthy reserves to keep services going. Unfortunately future years will be even tougher, so taking from reserves may not solve the problem long term.

Following a committee recommendation the District Council is likely to agree that the Town Centre Officer will be kept until April 2012 as it was felt she was doing a vitally important job for our Town Centres in these times of economic stress. The Conservation Officer is retiring and we are trying to ensure the Conservation Area Appraisals we contributed to do not remain in limbo.

Final details of the cuts are still not clear but there is no doubt the County and District Councils will face some very difficult decisions next year. LRA will do all it can to protect front line services although we have to be realistic in our understanding of the difficult decisions ahead.

Ken Angold-Stephens

LRA's Farmers' Markets, High Rd, first Sunday each month

Get more from LRA!

Every year, LRA volunteers deliver two editions of Loughton Life to every household in Loughton. LRA members get extra newsletters, like this one. Did you know members can receive a weekly email local news bulletin? Just send an email titled "News Bulletins please" to contact@loughtonresidents.co.uk

If you've asked us to send you the News Bulletins but you're not receiving them, please check your "Junk email" folder, as some programmes divert bulk mailings to this folder. If that's not the problem, please let us know.

LRA who's who

Email: contact@loughtonresidents.co.uk

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TREASURER Miriam Murphy 01992 530221
21 Graylands, Theydon Bois
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28 Brook Road
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY Juliet Pollard
14 The Hawthorns 8502 0552
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134 Valley Hill 8532 0053
COMMITTEE
Jack Benjamin 8508 4765
Rebecca Fricker 8508 8369
Chris Harper 8508 4770
Barry Johnston 8508 0843
Kevin Latchford 8502 4568
Ann Obeney 8502 3604
Bela Yorke 8508 4729

LRA councillors

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Chris Pond 7 Staples Road 8508 2361

DISTRICT (D) AND TOWN (T) COUNCILS

ALDERTON WARD
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3 Lower Park Road
Lance Leonard (D) 8502 0771
25 The Lindens

BROADWAY WARD
Jennie Hart (D) 8508 3661
74 Queens Road
Katie Nicholson (T) 07904 069998

Roy Thomson



LRA cllr Roy Thomson, who had represented St Mary's Ward on the Town Council since 2008, died in November. He would have been 73 on Boxing Day, and had been ill since the Summer. Roy was a stalwart of the Planning and Licensing Committee, and brought to it a considerable knowledge of building design and maintenance, derived from

the RAF and the private sector. Professionally, Roy had seen through the building and occupation of the Great Woodcote Park development in the 1990s, and knew every house on it very well. Roy will be much missed, and our sincere condolences go to Pauline and the family. There will be a cooption to fill the vacancy.

FAIRMEAD WARD
Tessa Cochrane (D) 8508 4148
16 Shaftesbury
Carol Davies (T) 8508 4234

13 Colebrook Gardens
David Wixley (D) 8418 9284
2 Copper Beech Court Goldings Road

FOREST WARD
Jill Angold-Stephens (T) 8281 0674
89 Lower Park Road
Colin Finn (D) 8508 5577
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Peter House (T) 8532 1275
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