

LRA's LOUGHTON LIFE Newsletter

Townwide Autumn Edition

For all residents in IG10: Autumn 2023

*Loughton Residents Association is independent
and focuses on looking after Loughton.*

*We have Cllrs on the County & District Councils and
hold 21 out of the 22 Loughton Town Council seats.*

Grass verges and weed spraying

Residents may have observed that grass verges around town have become overgrown, and weeds have appeared out of control.

The District Council has reported that "the wet weather experienced early in the season, followed by a very warm spell, produced some exceptional growth rates. This, in turn, created some challenging mowing conditions. Staff, however, worked hard to counter this, and the difficulties experienced early on now appear to be easing".



If you see an area that is overgrown and needs mowing, report it to the District Council.

Weed spraying is a County Council Highways function which is contracted to the District Council. There are two spray treatments a year across built up areas (which was reduced from three treatments some years ago to cut costs), with the current spraying happening over August to October. Report any issues on road weed spraying to the District Council and the County Council.

Given the unusual combination of wet and warmish weather in July, plants may have grown faster than normal at this time of the year. We reported two years ago, however, that the same reason was given. It is especially concerning when overgrown weeds start to lift up parts of roads and footpaths, creating a safety risk and eventually needing costly repairs.

Could you be an LRA Cllr?

Next year we would like some LRA members to join our team of experienced Cllrs on the Town and District Councils.

If you are interested, or would like an informal chat, please contact Michael Benbow on 020 8508 4457 or Chris Pond on 020 8508 2361 who can explain what is involved.



New Roding Valley Recreation Ground children's playground

The new Roding Valley Recreation Ground Children's Playground has been opened by the Town Council. The official opening on 1 September was performed by the Town Mayor, LRA Cllr Mick Stubbings, who welcomed residents to the new facilities.

LRA Cllr David Wixley provided both the background and insight into the completion of the project, dismantling both the old playground and building the new, and the contractor, HAGS, explained the design and approach, using the Council's request for innovation, inclusivity, incorporating residents feedback, and the recycle of materials.

Despite the weather, children were still able to enjoy the new playground, which was soon "buzzing" as they enjoyed the new facility.

The Town Council went through many months of planning and design work, along with a public consultation and involvement of Whitebridge and Alderton schools on a number of different design options. There was a formal tender exercise to select a company to do the work, with LRA Cllrs Katie Valentine, Neil Mackinnon and David Wixley involved in the selection.

The Town Council is responsible for eight playgrounds and two outdoor gyms. The Council monitors these and reports on their condition as there is a rolling programme of refurbishment. The Roding Valley Recreation Ground one was the next to be renewed. As playgrounds are exposed to the weather and get well used, they do require regular refurbishment, so this is the second time it has been refurbished in the past 20 years. Most of the remaining playgrounds have been refurbished in that time as well.

Fun in the sun at Jessel Green

Once again the sun shone on the day, and crowds arrived and filled Jessel Green for the annual, not-for-profit community family fun day organised by the Town Council on 25th June.



The usual inflatables, fun fair rides, food, and community and charity stalls lined the perimeter of the Green. Families enjoyed the soft play area for under 5s, dance displays from Studio 1UK and Thunder Mas Band, the ever-popular Punch and Judy, Mr Happy and pantomime characters from the Upstage Theatre. A fabulous display of kites were provided by the Essex Kite Flying Association, which flew above the event, and there was a kite-making workshop.

Our thanks to all the residents who support LRA

High Road food market possibly in the offering

The Town Council has advertised for expressions of interest in organising a market. It's expected to be predominantly a food-orientated market, offering stalls such as fruit and veg, fish, butchery, continental type groceries and food, honey and preserves, cheese, crepes and waffles, amongst other things. The Council has asked publicly for potential market operators to contact them.

Bus route 542

This route has not been a reliable service and the operator, Galleon, had defaulted on the contract, although reports indicate that the service had been operating on most days in the summer holidays. On 31st August, it was announced in the trade press that Loughborough based operator, the expanding and very reputable Vectare, had bought out Galleon. A Vectare spokesman said that it intends "for things to be business as usual at Galleon Travel". LRA hopes not, as far as the 542 is concerned.

Keep on Wombling

Could you be a Womble of Loughton and help us to keep on Wombling?

The Town Council is looking for residents to volunteer to become Loughton Wombles to unite and tackle the continuing problem of litter.

As well as helping a worthy cause, it is a great opportunity to socialise and make new friends. If you'd like to join in and help, contact Debbie by email at contact@loughton-tc.gov.uk or call 020 8508 4200.

Short General Meeting

Tuesday 31st October 2023, 7.30pm

Lopping Hall (the small hall), Loughton, IG10 4LF

We envisage the General Meeting will take 5 or 10 minutes followed by our Executive Committee meeting.

Members can leave or are welcome to stay.

Executive Committee meetings last around 1 hour.

Ward boundaries in Epping Forest

The Local Government Boundary Commission has published their final recommendations for changes to council wards in Epping Forest district. It says residents should be represented by 54 Cllrs, which is four fewer than the current arrangements.

There will be 18 wards represented by three Cllrs each. The boundary changes will take effect for the 2024 local elections.

Most of the existing Loughton wards will change, with the existing seven wards reduced to five.

LRA Comment: Part of the existing Roding ward will be detached and become part of a new Buckhurst Hill East and Whitebridge ward, which goes against all the principles the Local Government Boundary Commission is supposed to follow. LRA much deprecate the addition of the part of Roding ward west of Roding Road to a Buckhurst Hill ward for District Council purposes, but our objection was ignored.

Potholes and road defects

In the current financial year, there is a limited funding pot enabling County Cllrs to nominate defects to be fixed (but only those in carriageways, not footways).



Cllrs are able to nominate 36 defects, separated over two different submission dates during the summer. LRA Cllr Chris Pond has/will nominate both tranches within the Loughton Central Division.

This scheme enables Essex Highways to complete additional repairs locally that may have otherwise fallen outside of the usual risk-assessed, asset-led policy they use to identify urgent defects.

Contacting LRA

Councillors key: D = District T = Town	Membership: membership@loughtonresidents.co.uk Laura Blake, 9 Woodbury Hill, Loughton IG10 1JB	07968 174388
	Enquiries: contact@loughtonresidents.co.uk	020 8508 2361
Alderton Ward Chidi Nweke (D) Hillcroft 07403 489455 Ian Allgood (D) Greensted Road 020 8502 2393 Katie Valentine (T) Habgood Road 07477 012213 Mick Stubbings (T) Greenfields 07766 480522 Philip Abraham (T) Lancaster Drive 020 8502 2925	Fairmead Ward Carol Davies (T) Colebrook Gardens 07817 230372 David Wixley (D) Goldings Road 020 8418 9284 Louise Mead (D) 07746 875952 Sebastian Fontenelle (T) Etheridge Rd 07898 906371 Will Kauffman (T) The Greens Close 07799 148740	St Mary's Ward Barbara Cohen (T) Church Lane 07957 141197 Graham Wiskin (T) Traps Hill 020 8925 2003 Howard Kauffman (D) Church Lane 020 8508 1098 Judy Jennings (D&T)
Broadway Ward Chris Pond (D) Staples Road 020 8508 2361 Kevin Rainbow (T) Audley Gardens 07921 662715 Les House (T) Avondale Drive 020 8508 3369 Michael Owen (D) Baldwins Hill 07467 430145 Philip Beales (T) Harwater Drive 020 8418 0459	Forest Ward Jayna Jogia (D) The Drive 07983 713389 Jon Riley (T) Albion Park 020 8508 6604 Roger Baldwin (D) Burney Drive 020 8281 5488 Stella Murphy (T) High View Close 020 8508 2794 Trevor Downing (T) Smarts Lane 020 8508 8877	County: Loughton (Central) Chris Pond Staples Road 020 8508 2361
St John's Ward Bob Jennings (D) Caroline Pond (D&T) Staples Road 020 8508 2361 Chris Pond (T) Staples Road 020 8508 2361 Michael Owen (T) Baldwins Hill 07467 430145	Roding Ward David Wixley (T) Goldings Road 020 8418 9284 Neil MacKinnon (T) Barncroft Close 07872 324028 Rose Brookes (D&T) Lower Park Rd 07391 879412	Committee Anne Harriman 020 8502 1779 John Walker 07779 338868 Judith Walker 07855 265835 Juliet Pollard 020 8502 0552 Lance Leonard 020 8502 0771 Mark Dalton 07719 736901 Michael Benbow 020 8508 4457 Steve Eaton 020 8923 0065 Tessa Cochrane 020 3643 7492
Secretary: Jill Angold-Stephens 020 8281 0674 Treasurer: Miriam Murphy 07966 177961	Loughton Life Editor: Eva Blasco 020 8923 0065 Minutes Secretary: Susan Creevy	

LRA councillors are Independent and non-political

Planning & licensing

The LRA Plans Group (LRAPG) looks at all planning and licensing applications in the town and takes action where appropriate. It consults residents and supports, or objects to, individual applications as appropriate. It works entirely separately from LRA's Cllrs on Council planning committees. Read more about Planning and Licensing, the role of the LRAPG, how to get more information using the application and reference numbers provided, and how you can comment at <https://tinyurl.com/LRAPPlanning>

Where there are residents in flats above licensed premises, for example on the High Road, The Broadway or nearby, the LRAPG objects to late-night licensing applications.

Higgins office and Hotel development

As reported previously, Higgins has proposed to build new offices and a 100-bedroom Travelodge hotel on Langston Road.



Image: Higgins Proposals Indicate architects image of proposed scheme

The planning application has now been approved by the District Council. LRA Cllr Chris Pond said Loughton

probably does need an hotel given it has a population of 33,000 and no hotel, but doubted if the proposal was acceptable without minimisation of extra car traffic, given the existing traffic problems on Chigwell Lane and Langston Road.

The application was ultimately approved, with a Guest Travel Plan required to be in place.

Princess of Wales, Westall Road

LRA Plans Group has been monitoring this long unoccupied site which the District Council bought back a year or so ago. There have been



several incidents involving youths starting fires and breaking into the building. Following a series of complaints, led by LRA Cllr David Wixley, about the condition of the site and the increasing number of break-ins, the Council has finally secured the site by erecting a hoarding.

Unfortunately, the contractors did not continue the security fencing at the rear where the old boarding can easily be breached, and another fire was started on 29 July that needed four fire engines to put it out.

A planning application is expected soon to redevelop the site for housing.

High Road shops

Residents would have noticed that Repro@96, Organico, Love Brownies and T&G's Tapas Bar appear to have closed for good. In addition, The Last Post remains vacant, and Fable Stores (202-204 High Road) has not opened.

In these difficult times, perhaps landlords are trying to charge excessive rents?

New fruit and veg stall

A licensing application has been submitted for a fruit and veg stall next to the bollards outside Benefit Cosmetics and Phone Clinic. LRAPG has asked that the license be granted temporarily for a year so that its impact can be assessed after this period. It is difficult at this stage to gauge how much congestion will be caused, and how much litter generated.

More housing allowed at appeal

This was allowed without any sign of the District Council's Pollution Prevention Strategy being implemented.

A Planning Inspector has recently approved an application to demolish a house in Algers Road and replace it with an oversized building containing 6 flats. LRA Plans Group had objected to the application because of the impact that pollution from the extra vehicle traffic would have on the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the pressure for parking spaces on Algers Road. The District Council did turn down the application because of the impact on the SAC; an earlier appeal had dismissed the overdevelopment of the site and poor living accommodation arguments. However, since the refusal of consent, the Council has adopted a new Local Plan which refers to a pollution-prevention strategy (the "IAPMS", which purports to provide for ways of preventing increases in traffic from worsening pollution in the Forest).

LRA is concerned appeals such as this are being allowed when the Council has not yet brought any of the proposed measures into effect (in fact, they don't even seem to have started the process of doing so). This means that any increase in building near to the Forest, such as the Algers Road flats, is bound to increase pollution in the Forest, during the time the flats are being built, and when they are occupied, until some future unknown date when the Council finally brings pollution-prevention measures into force.

LRA Cllrs have argued consistently that the Council should carry out the mitigation measures before any more new housing is built. Although this was not upheld during the adoption of the Local Plan, the Council should at least have an implementation plan showing how and when the measures will be put in place. It is very disappointing that the Planning Inspector and Natural England have fallen for the promise of a pollution-prevention strategy without any guarantees it is going to happen.

We also note the reluctance of the District Council to go along with the expanded Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) scheme covering all London boroughs, and also their own tardiness to do anything about reducing the air pollution that is poisoning the Forest. It is somewhat ironic that a scheme similar to the ULEZ has been proposed in the Council's pollution-prevention strategy.

Loughton's water supply

Loughton residents suffered a failure of the water supply in mid-May for nearly 12 hours. This incident yet again showed water infrastructure locally is decayed and no longer robust. Such supply failures, of course, can also disrupt traffic and bus services when roads need to be closed for emergency works.

There is now a (somewhat belated) recognition by the government and the regulator Ofwat that the problem is nationwide. Residents would have read news reports of increased investment by water companies in coming years to tackle storm overflows, increase water resilience and reduce nutrient pollution. At this point, the plans for the next two years do not appear to increase investment to improve the water infrastructure around Loughton.

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and at www.facebook.com/LoughtonResidents**

District Council to manage waste and recycling collections

The District Council has decided to create a council owned company that will collect household waste and recycling. It will also provide street cleansing.



The new arrangements are planned to be in place once the existing contract with Biffa ends in November 2024, with the Council planning to take full management control including:

- A council-owned operating company
- Buying, or leasing and maintaining its own vehicles
- Building a new operations hub at North Weald to support the vehicle fleet and crews.

This follows last winter's disruption to the service. Earlier this year the Council decided to go to market and run a full procurement process for the Waste/Street Cleansing contract. At the time, the Council also announced they were planning to use part of North Weald Airfield to park and maintain refuse vehicles when not on the road, after a new contractor was in place. They have now decided outsourcing to a private company is not the way forward for the service.

The Council has not publicly released material related to the decision or given details on the outcomes they expect, except to say "value for money is much more important than the cheapest option [and] the new service will need to hit environmental targets as well as customer expectations." They also say they are "moving away from diesel, looking at ways to procure a greener, cleaner fleet powered by more sustainable fuels".

LRA Comment: This may save money as the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) stated that the market for services in this area is highly concentrated, when they investigated the merger of Veolia and Suez in 2022, which can lead to higher costs for Councils. However, it could make the District Council vulnerable to strike action (from which it's been generally free since the 1980s). It does make a third wheeler bin more likely for recycling, which may be fine for houses with big gardens and side exits but impractical for small houses and cottages.

LRA Membership

This edition has gone to every household in Loughton however some editions we produce are members-only, therefore receiving this copy doesn't necessarily mean you're a member of LRA.

Around eight hundred Loughton households support LRA with a £5 a year membership payment. This supports our work and means that members receive additional news about Loughton in our monthly members-only Loughton News emails, as well as extra member-only issues of Loughton Life.

For details of how to join, and past issues of our news bulletins, see www.LoughtonResidents.org.uk

If you'd like to become a member but don't have access to the internet, please call 07968 174388 to speak to our membership secretary Laura Blake.

We never share our membership information.

New Town Mayor and Deputy Mayor

We are delighted that LRA Cllr Mick Stubbings has become the Town Mayor for 2022-23, and LRA Cllr Katie Valentine has become his deputy.



LRA Cllr Chris Pond, in his nomination of Cllr Stubbings, said that he had made a very good Deputy Mayor and is an authentic Loughton fellow having been born and bred in Loughton. He has lived his whole life as a Loughton resident and is often seen walking his dog, and known by his fellow councillors.

The new Town Mayor congratulated Cllr Katie Valentine on her appointment as Deputy Town Mayor. In nominating her, Cllr Chris Pond described Katie as a worthy Deputy, as she too was born, went to school and has lived her whole life in Loughton. Katie said that she was really looking forward to supporting Mick.

Members also paid tribute to the work of outgoing mayor, LRA Cllr Barbara Cohen, commenting on how well she had fulfilled her role in a proficient and exemplary way. Barbara did a really good job at bringing extra focus and publicity to her role.

The Last Post, 227 High Road

Wetherspoons shut the pub on 14th May and returned the lease. A planning application was made to allow the vacant pub to be used as a restaurant, pub or a combination of the two uses. The new lessee has yet to be publicly named.



There is, however, past history of the pub using the delivery yard for tables and chairs, particularly after the relaxation of the first Covid lockdown where several local residents complained about noise and antisocial behaviour. The original planning permission secured this area by condition to be reserved for loading and unloading. The owners have applied for tables and chairs in this location in the past, the most recent being in 2020. There remains a risk that without such a condition, there would be no guarantee that the existing delivery areas near the pub would be available, with the loss of the existing parking and delivery area resulting in increased on-street parking and congestion within the vicinity of the site, to the detriment of the free-flowing traffic and safe operation of the High Road.

LRAPG asked the council to impose conditions as per the original planning permission to cover the yard and the following areas:

- Restricting the side yard for servicing, to prevent it from being used for tables and chairs, and to prevent servicing from happening on the main road, which blocks the traffic.
 - No takeaway food deliveries.
 - The hours of opening restricted to 8am to 11pm each day.
- The application has now been agreed to, with conditions broadly following LRAPG's request.