

County Councillor Report Sept 2013

Councillor Jeremy Birch

Isabel Blackman Centre: The County Council is pushing on with its consultation about the future of its day care centres for older residents with closure being one of the options. The Isabel Blackman Centre is therefore right in the firing line – the final decision on its future will be made in December. I recently visited the Centre to talk to the day centre users who naturally are totally opposed to closure. They did welcome the recent changes which have seen the day care facility move downstairs with the intention that community activities would now happen on the first floor. There is a dedicated entrance which could allow for this but it's likely if there is to be any promotion of the community hub it won't happen until after the December decision has been made. I am totally opposed to closure of the day care centre and would want to see the opportunity for the community hub to function properly too. I will be speaking out against the County Council closing it and if there is any alternative management arrangements to be put in place the County Council must continue to put enough money to ensure that day care and other activities for older people can be properly financed. Isabel Blackman must stay open:

- Following the closure of the Moreton Centre it is the only mainstream County Council run day care centre in the town,
- With an ageing population we need the continuing option of an adequate number of day care places to be available to all those who need and want them,
- It was established and funded originally by money from benefactors and so it would be a breach of trust for it to be closed,
- It went through a major refurbishment only three or so years ago so to close it would be a criminal waste of money,

Highway Issues: Two highway reviews have been going on with regard to the Old Town – one for High Street and a more general one to review the impact of the highway changes that were introduced on the Bourne and Rock-a-Nore Road as part of the Stade redevelopment and any spin-offs from that into other streets. A public meeting was held some time ago to talk through ideas to make High Street more pedestrian friendly and also to prevent it being used as an alternative to the A259. County Council highway engineers have been working up some proposals for High Street and intend to present them at a public exhibition in the Old Town between 2pm and 8pm on Friday 18th October and between 10am and 4pm on Saturday 19th. The more general review of traffic management in the Old Town has been conducted by Amey on behalf of the County Council. They were out doing some further traffic survey work over the Summer. Amey will be coming forward with some proposals during the Autumn.

Schools: Planning permission has been granted for All Saints Primary School for rendering of part of the side and rear elevations and for changes to front boundary walls for improved security, replacement of chain link fencing with painted metal railings with three new gates to match and new block paving between the school buildings and the site boundary. A planning application has also been submitted for

Dudley Infants School. This is for the removal of sections of boundary wall (temporarily) and the demolition of an existing classroom, an office and a reprographics space within the school. The removal of the boundary wall is to allow access during future proposed construction on the school's site. The boundary wall is then to be replaced after construction. The demolitions are to allow for future remodelling and extension of the existing school to accommodate proposed future works including new offices and admin area, a library and two permanent classrooms, and to bring the main school under one roof eliminating the need for temporary classrooms on site.

Hastings Borough Council News

The council has launched the Switched-On Hastings scheme. The aim is to secure cheaper energy bills for local residents. Anyone that pays their own household electricity or gas bills including those on pre-payment meters can register their interest in the scheme. By providing the largest possible number of registered residents we will aim to get the best collective deal out of an auction with the energy companies.

The lowest tariff wins the auction and this is then offered to those who have registered. Once the auction has taken place on 16 October, personal letters and emails will be sent to each registered resident explaining what the lowest offer is. There is no obligation to accept the offer but hopefully there will be some significant reductions on offer.

By later October new collection arrangements will kick-in for all our waste and recycling. Leaflets preparing everyone have already started to go out. The changes will include doorstep collection of glass, the acceptance of nearly all plastics, tetrapaks etc in the recycling and the distribution of 7,000 seagull-proof bags to most properties in the black bag areas.

These changes will be coming in from 21st October although the new boxes for glass and the seagull-proof bags should be distributed before then. The aim of time is to almost double Hastings recycling rate to 50%. The aim is also to improve street cleanliness by having our waste in bins or in the new seagull-proof bags.

On 18th October along the police the council will be launching a ban on the sale of the heavy duty beers and ciders – above 6.5%. The ban will affect all off-licenses in Central St Leonards, the town centre and the Old Town. Although it is a voluntary ban it will be backed up with the power to review the licenses of any establishment that doesn't join in and then attracts nuisance and anti-social behaviour.

If you would prefer not to receive my county councillor's report please let me know; otherwise feel free to copy it on to others.