

The Town and Parish News



Bringing communities together in the Wokingham Borough

March 2009

Building work under-way on new community centre for residents in Finchampstead

BUILDING work began this month on the new community centre for Finchampstead.

The long-awaited development will provide Finchampstead residents with a purpose-built community centre, children's centre, library, sports hall, café and other facilities such as a parish office and a local police base. It will also be a place of worship for Finchampstead Baptist Church.

The £4million-plus development will be funded primarily from church funds with additional funding from Wokingham Borough Council, The Big Lottery Fund's Community Buildings Programme, Sport England and Surestart grants, and



Left to right: Peter Mather, site manager, Cllr Simon Weeks, deputy leader of Wokingham Borough Council, Kirk Shepherd, assistant site manager, Graham Robinson and Jim Gallagher of Finchampstead Baptist Church.

Finchampstead Parish Council.

The building phase is scheduled to take 41 weeks and it is hoped that the new Finchampstead Community Centre will be completed by Christmas this year.

A turf-cutting ceremony was held to mark the start of work on Thursday March 5, with representatives from the Borough Council and Finchampstead Baptist Church attending.

In this issue:

Page three

New technology will make it even easier for resident to recycle as there will be no need to sort recycling into separate boxes.

Page four

Former and current pupils of Addington Special School got together for a fond farewell of their old school site.

Page five

A taskforce has been set up to help businesses in the Wokingham Borough through tough economic times.

Page six

A barrier has been put in at a Wokingham town centre car park to help prevent further illegal traveller encampments.

Wokingham Borough Council's trial of part night street lighting explained

IN the latest of his regular columns, Borough Council executive member for highways and transport Cllr Keith Baker looks at street lighting.

SEVERAL councils across the country have already taken the action to turn off selected street lights, and officers have spent considerable time talking to some of these councils in order to understand what they did, how they did it and what were the results.

They identified number of benefits covering both environmental and economic areas.

Therefore we have decided to trial turning off 1,000 street lights from approximately midnight to 5.30am for 12 months. We fully recognise that there are concerns from residents, parish and town councils and police about

safety and security for those areas which have their lights turned off.

We share those concerns and therefore have defined an extensive list of exclusion criteria which, if met, will mean that those street lights cannot be turned off.

Using the experience of other councils we have identified a comprehensive list of 15 criteria.

These criteria are currently out to consultation with the police, parish and town councils and the emergency services and I urge all of you to respond. There are no limits on the number of criteria and any additional ones suggested will be evaluated and included if appropriate.

Once the exclusion criteria have been approved we will use them to select street lights which are suitable for the trial.

In order to make the trial as broad as possible, we will use our best efforts to try to cover all types of streets and all parts of the borough.

Monitoring will be vital and we will be working with various organisations such as the police on what is the best way to do this.

If the trial is deemed to be successful we intend to expand the number of street lights over the following two years to add approximately 4,000 each year out of the 16,600 lights currently installed in the borough. Finally, you may have read that this will cost £384,000 to save £9,000 in the trial year which clearly does not make sense. The £384,000 covers the total 3 year project costs with a full year's savings in the region of £170,000. The actual cost in the first year is approximately £50,000.

Calling all to join the big clean up

THE first Love Your Neighbourhood Clean Up Day takes place on Sunday April 26 when ten individual litter-picks will be organised by the Borough Council, parish and town councils and neighbourhood action groups.

The litter picks will take place in Arborfield, Barkham, Dinton Pastures, Earley, Finchampstead, Sonning, Wargrave, Winnersh, Woodley and Wokingham. Full details will be on www.wokingham.gov.uk. There is no need

to book a place, just turn up, even if you can only spare 30 minutes all help is welcome.

There will be a prize for the largest amount of rubbish collected as well as the most unusual item collected. The rubbish will also be separated into recyclable and non-recyclable waste. Litter-pickers, waste bags and tabards will be available but people are advised to bring their own gloves and not to pick up anything potentially hazardous.

New technology will make it even easier to recycle

RESIDENTS in Wokingham Borough can stop separating their card and cans and paper and plastic bottles into different recycling boxes thanks to a new machine that does it all for them.

Based at Smallmead household waste and recycling centre in Reading, the machine called a Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) is now ready to sort out tonnes of mixed recycling from the Wokingham Borough.

Peter Baveystock, waste and recycling manager, said: "Of course we will still pick up two boxes and welcome as much recycling as possible, but for those people who live alone or in small homes this will save space and will save everyone time by not having to sort it all out."

Currently more than 38 per cent of all household rubbish

in the Wokingham Borough is recycled and the council is keen to increase this.

Items that can be placed in one black kerbside recycling box include:

- Plastic bottles - without the bottle tops
- Steel and aluminium drink and food cans
- Newspaper and magazines
- Cardboard packaging - but not polystyrene
- Cereal packets - but not the plastic lining
- Telephone directories and Yellow Pages
- Paper catalogues, envelopes and junk mail - but not the plastic lining
- Soap powder and frozen food boxes

More information on what to recycle and where to recycle is available online at

www.wokingham.gov.uk/recycling.

Borough Council rated as 'fair' by Audit Commission

WOKINGHAM Borough Council has been judged by the Audit Commission to be a 'fair' local authority.

The Council was judged by the Audit Commission, as part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment for 2008, as a two star authority that continues to improve adequately.

The council's CPA score is based on a number of individual service assessments and inspections, as well as incorporating the council's corporate assessment judgement, which was announced in January 2009 and declared the council to be performing adequately.

The assessment measures how well councils are delivering services for local people and communities. For more visit www.audit-commission.gov.uk.

Packed programme for festival

MUSIC, drama, boating, golf and more will be on offer during the Wargrave Village Festival this summer.

Wargrave will be alive with festivities through June and, although tickets for some events are sold out, others are still available.

Among the festival highlights are a jazz night, choral concert,

historic walk, open gardens, wine tasting, a comedy club, a production of Twelfth Night and more. The event organisers will be looking for volunteers and they can be contacted via

www.wargravevillagefestival.co.uk. The website also has full details on the festival and ticket availability.

Bulletin goes live

A COMMUNITY Safety Bulletin to update residents on all aspects of how the Wokingham borough is kept safe is now available as online. Residents can sign up for email editions at: www.wokingham.gov.uk/updates.

It is also available on the council's website at: www.wokingham.gov.uk.

Commission confirms Council 'acted properly' over Iceland

AN Audit Commission report has confirmed that Wokingham Borough Council acted properly in managing its investments and was not negligent in the months leading up to the collapse of the Icelandic banks last year.

At the time of the investments, the borough council's policy was to invest only in highly secure organisations, and both Icelandic banks in which the council had deposits had high financial security ratings. The Borough Council has since further tightened its policy and is now only investing in organisations that are at least AA- credit rated and in government-backed organisations.

Borough Council business services manager Graham Ebers said: "The Borough Council followed guidance

issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and, in the light of last year's events, the council welcomes the report's recommendation that this guidance be strengthened. Local authorities earn significant amounts in interest from deposits and this interest has been used to provide services and control council tax increases."

The Borough Council has built up reserves that will allow it to maintain services and the Audit Commission report states it has found no evidence that potential losses in the Icelandic banks will lead to service cuts or to council tax rises.

The latest indications are that local authorities expect to recoup a sizeable proportion of the money deposited in Icelandic banks.

Fond farewell to special school

CURRENT and former pupils and staff at Addington Special School bid a fond farewell to their current school at an open day as they prepare to move into their new state-of-the-art school in April.

Former pupils, staff and other visitors joined current pupils and staff to tour the current school in Loddon Bridge Road on March 17.

The new £13.5million school in Woodlands Avenue in Woodley will include science, art and drama classrooms, a gym and hydrotherapy pool, as well sensory suites, soft play area, physiotherapy, speech and language areas. There will also be a guitar-shaped music room and as the school is a music specialist school this a fantastic facility.

Pupils will move in to their new school just after the Easter holidays.

Mini-libraries to be taken into communities

BOOK collections for all the family to borrow will soon be available at three community centres.

The collections have been put together by Wokingham borough library staff and will be available at the Community House, Billing Avenue, Gorse Ride, Finchampstead; The Community Flat in Eustace Crescent, Wokingham and Rainbow Park Community Centre in Winnersh.

Residents will be able to borrow the books as they would from regular libraries.

To celebrate the launch of these collections, family fun sessions will be held at each of the locations next month. These will be at:

- The Community Flat, Eustace Crescent, Wokingham: 10am to midday on Tuesday April 7
- The Community House, Gorse Ride, Finchampstead: 10am to midday on Tuesday April 14.
- Rainbow Park Community Centre, Winnersh: 10am to midday Friday April 17. All these events will be free.

State of the borough and the local economy discussed at conference

MORE than 100 people discussed the affect of the economic downturn and other issues at the Wokingham Borough Community Conference on March 20.

Hosted by the Wokingham Borough Strategic Partnership, the conference was a chance for residents to talk about issues in the borough.

The conference reviewed the work of the strategic partnership and debated its future before moving on to the economic situation.

There were also workshops on:

- Balancing economic prosperity with a sustainable quality of life
- Being a healthy community
- Being a well-educated community
- Supporting and caring for



Keynote speaker Andrew Robinson making a point.

people who need help

- Being a community where everybody feels safe, welcome and respected.

The discussions focused on what challenges the economic downturn will bring to the area

and what support the participants could offer the borough at this time.

Following the workshops the keynote speaker was Andrew Robinson from Churches, Charities, Local Authorities Investment Management Ltd (an investment company for community organisations) who spoke about the need for true partnerships that genuinely work together.

The event ended with a State of the Borough debate chaired by Mr Robinson, with panellists Wokingham Borough Council leader Cllr David Lee, Wokingham Borough Council opposition leader Cllr Prue Bray, Pol Exeter from the Black and Minority Ethnic Forum and David Knowles Leak from the Federation of Small Business.

Taskforce will help businesses in the borough

TRADERS and companies in the Wokingham Borough will be supported by a new Business Taskforce that was launched on March 13.

The taskforce's main aim will be to help coordinate activities and support in a bid to limit the impact of the economic downturn.

The Business Taskforce includes representatives from the Federation of Small Businesses and the local branch of the Chamber of Commerce as well as council representatives.

One of its first tasks will be to set out a package of measures that could help struggling

businesses – this means that they will look to coordinate a variety of ways to help businesses rather than using an ad hoc approach.

Some of the areas that the taskforce will be looking at include:

- Helping firms do business more easily with the council.
- Developing key actions that can be put the council's executive.
- Co-ordinating actions that can help people back into employment.
- Providing help to businesses with waste disposal and recycling costs.

Neighbourhood working helps keep unwelcome travellers out of car park

RESIDENTS living near a Wokingham town centre car park that has been frequently blighted by illegal traveller camps have welcomed a new barrier designed to keep the unwelcome visitors away.

Travellers have regularly set up unauthorised camps in Easthampstead Road (east) car park in recent years. But a new height barrier has been put in place to keep travellers from the end of the car park they have often used.

Some of the residents who have suffered most contacted Wokingham Borough Council area manager Wendy Crosson-Smith who arranged for the barrier.

One of the residents Pam Ward, said: "The sorts of problems people face when travellers arrive are the constant noise from the



Left to right: Margaret Pester, Joe Pester, Doreen Lockey, Cllr Rob Stanton, Doris Buy, Pam Ward, Dorothy Griffin and area manager Wendy Crosson-Smith.

generators, the mess that is left behind and sometimes vandalism – people have had fences broken and the children have sometimes got into people's gardens. It is not all the travellers, but it has been a problem."

The barrier has been put up to stop large vehicles reaching

the end of the car park farthest from Easthampstead Road. It is not possible to block them from the whole car park as businesses backing on to the site need to use it for deliveries.

However, the barriers should block access to the area most often used by travellers.

How to contact your area manager:

The council has appointed three area managers to work with residents and partners such as the police and town and parish councils to resolve issues locally. They are available every week at Lower Earley, Wokingham and Woodley libraries.

The area managers are:

Nick Christo: Woodley and the north of the borough: (0118) 974 6341 or email:

nick.christo@wokingham.gov.uk.

Wendy Crosson-Smith: Wokingham and south east of the borough: (0118) 974 6261 or email: wendy.crosson-smith@wokingham.gov.uk.

Allan Tiplady: Earley and the south west of the borough: (0118) 974 6319 or email: allan.tiplady@wokingham.gov.uk.

To book an appointment contact:

Lower Earley Library: (0118) 931 2150

Wokingham Library: (0118) 978 1368

The next Town and Parish News will be out on Thursday April 30 and any articles should be submitted by Monday April 27.

Contact: David Allen on (0118) 974 6056 or david.allen@wokingham.gov.uk