

# **LOWER SUNBURY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION 2009 AGM NEWSLETTER**



[www.losra.org](http://www.losra.org)

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**The Annual General Meeting of the Lower Sunbury Residents' Association will take place at The Riverside Arts Centre, Thames Street, Sunbury, on Wednesday 24th June at 8 p.m.**

### **AGENDA**

- 1. Apologies for absence**
- 2. Minutes of the 2008 Annual General Meeting**
- 3. Chairman's Report**
- 4. Treasurer's Report**
- 5. Election of Officers and Committee**
- 6. Q & A session with Roberto Tambini, Chief Executive of Spelthorne Borough Council**
- 7. Update by Robert Shaw, Chairman of Sunbury Millennium Embroidery**
- 8. Open Forum**
- 9. Any other business**

Please note that we do not circulate the Minutes of last year's AGM or the Associations audited accounts with this notice, because to do so would generate disproportionate printing costs. Copies will be available at the AGM, and will also be posted on our web site. If you are unable to visit the web site but would like to see the documents in advance of the meeting, please contact John Hirsh, LOSRA Chairman, whose details are on the back of the newsletter.

## **Roberto Tambini, Chief Executive of Spelthorne Borough Council is special guest at this year's AGM**

Roberto Tambini, the Chief Executive of Spelthorne Borough Council, has accepted our invitation to be the special guest at our AGM this year. He will be attending with Deputy Chief Executive, Nigel Lynn, and Assistant Chief Executives, Brian Harris, Bob Coe, Liz Borthwick and Terry Collier, who look after the various areas of Council business.

Mr. Tambini has requested that, rather than give a speech or presentation, he undertakes a question-and-answer session, fielding questions from the audience. From our point of view, this is an excellent approach, as it gives residents the opportunity to focus on issues and problems which are of concern to them, and get answers from senior Council officers who are responsible.

Our Chief Executive has been in his role for nearly three years, and is by now well-acquainted with the key issues in the Borough, and also has been well exposed to the role that LOSRA plays in the community and how it interacts with the Council's processes. We are delighted that he clearly takes the Association seriously

enough to feel that the coming to the meeting along with his team would be a useful exercise, and we appreciate his taking the time to attend.

It would help greatly if those who wish to ask a question can advise us in advance, so that we can consolidate those which deal with similar topics, and also give Mr. Tambini and his officers advance notice of anything that might need prior research to ensure we get a full answer on the night. Please e-mail them via the 'Contact LOSRA' menu at the top of the Home Page of the LOSRA Website or mail them to John Hirsh at the address on the back of this newsletter.

We would emphasise that this does not mean that the Q&A session will be strictly managed or that questions will be censored, or that any subjects will be off limits. It is an opportunity to allow Spelthorne's senior officers to respond to issues that concern us, and to demonstrate once again the knowledgeable interest that Lower Sunbury residents take in local affairs.

# London Irish plan double whammy for Sunbury - build houses on The Avenue site to finance development of new club facility on Hazelwood Golf Course

Members of the LOSRA Committee received a letter on 11th May from the Chief Executive of London Irish RFC. This confirmed what we reported in our Spring 2008 newsletter regarding the Club's plans to develop a new facility in Spelthorne and try to develop their existing site in The Avenue for housing. However, it introduced what had previously been suspected but not confirmed, namely their intention to take over Hazelwood Golf Course and build their new facility there. Here is the text of the letter, so that you know as much as we do.

Dear LOSRA Committee Member

As you may be aware, for the last five years London Irish has been looking into alternative sites to potentially relocate from its existing premises at The Avenue, Sunbury, which the club has outgrown.

The Avenue, Sunbury has been the home of the London Irish since 1931 and over the years the site has been developed to provide playing, training, administration and hospitality facilities. Today, The Avenue provides the training headquarters for the Professional squad as well as a base for the 800 members of the London Irish England Rugby Academy and the Amateur Club. In recent years it has become clear that The Avenue is no longer able to accommodate the requirements of London Irish or allow for future expansion due to limitations of space.

London Irish considers Spelthorne and in particular Sunbury as our spiritual home and with 300 mini rugby players playing every Sunday throughout the season and over 450 of members living within a 10 mile radius, we really want to stay in the local area. We have therefore carried out an extensive search, considering over 20 sites and the nearby Hazelwood Golf Club has been identified as a suitable site. At 22.4 hectares this site has the space to serve the growing needs of the club compared to the 6.4 hectares of our existing site, whilst also creating the opportunity to provide additional community facilities. To fund this move, the current London Irish premises at The Avenue, would need to be redeveloped.

We understand how important it will be to get this development right in terms of landscape and design, particularly as residential properties neighbour the site. We have therefore appointed an extensive professional team including Urban Initiatives who is recognised as one of the UK's leading master planning consultancies, with a sensitive approach to urban design at its very core.

Initial outline proposals for both sites are currently being drawn up and it will be essential that we engage with the local community, as their feedback is important to us and we want to hear their thoughts and views on our initial plans.

We recognise that Lower Sunbury Residents Association (LOSRA) is a key stakeholder within the local community and therefore we want to ensure that you are fully engaged in the process as plans develop for both The Avenue and Hazelwood sites. We would be happy to arrange a meeting at this time if you feel that it would be beneficial.

We will also be sending a letter to all residents bordering The Avenue site as understanding local views and opinions is a fundamental part of helping to make this relocation possible and ensure the future of London Irish in Sunbury. To assist us in this, we have appointed community relations consultants M&N Communications (M&N), to ensure that the local community and key stakeholders are kept fully informed at every stage.

The development process will take time and M&N will keep you updated with any information that may affect you, at the earliest possible stage. They will also let you know how you can get involved with the consultation and design process in the near future, including dates for a public exhibition which will be held in mid-June. Members of LOSRA will be invited to a preview of the public exhibition and M&N will let you know about this event.

If you would like to set up the suggested introductory meeting in the interim then please do not hesitate to contact Rebecca Biddle or Katie Kinnes at M&N Communications, who will

be happy to coordinate this, on Tel: 01483 415915 or email

[r.biddle@mncommunications.co.uk](mailto:r.biddle@mncommunications.co.uk)

[k.kinnes@mncommunications.co.uk](mailto:k.kinnes@mncommunications.co.uk)

Yours sincerely

Graham Walpole

**Chief Executive, London Irish**

We will certainly be arranging a meeting with the Club as suggested in order to establish our position, and ensure that we influence the process from the outset.

The London Irish site in The Avenue is designated as Protected Urban Open Space, and we believe that the land's status emphasises its importance as a green lung in the middle of the suburban area. We would resist any plans for housing development there very strongly.

Our view of Hazelwood Golf Course is naturally coloured by our experience in resisting the application by Chelsea FC to build their training centre and academy there. Our objection to that was primarily based on the suburbanising of this important area of Green Belt which would result from turning a 22.4 hectare semi-rural area into serried ranks of playing fields. The impact on local residents of traffic and parking, and the loss of a public golf facility were other key considerations.

Without wishing to be overly cynical or suspicious, we also need to be aware that London Irish is largely owned by building companies and property developers. The swathe of Green Belt between Sunbury and Halliford and Shepperton, apart from Hazelwood, is already mainly owned by housing and gravel companies, and is constantly under pressure to be released for development. It would be naïve for us not to consider that there may be a longer term motive that would not necessarily involve the playing of rugby on the whole of the Hazelwood site.

There are, of course, many other considerations, including the important community role that the Club plays in encouraging junior rugby, so there will clearly be a range of views to be taken on board.

We have published this letter because we are aware from the previous Hazelwood issue that interest in this subject is spread right across Lower Sunbury, and we felt everyone needed to know in order that people could be involved from the outset if they wish. If you want to be kept informed of any meetings or exhibitions, please register your e-mail address on our website at [www.losra.org](http://www.losra.org) so that you will receive information via our regular e-mail bulletins.

## Monksbridge Garden Party in aid of Princess Alice Hospice Wed. 10th June, 1pm-5pm

Della Pascoe is holding her ever-popular garden party in the beautiful garden of Monksbridge in Thames Street on Wed. 10th June from 1pm-5pm in aid of Princess Alice Hospice. There will be champagne lunches available, boat trips, plus a variety of stalls offering plants and gifts and a bring-and-buy cake stall.

The raffle has fantastic prizes; a week's luxury holiday for 4 in a beautiful villa on Kefalonia, Wimbledon tickets, dinner for 2 at L'Autre Pied, one of London's most fashionable restaurants, tickets for Prime Minister's Question Time and a luxury Dinner Cruise for 2.

This is always one of the must-do events of the Sunbury summer, offering a chance to enjoy the delightful surroundings, and help raise money for a worthy cause. All are welcome, with a £3 suggested donation for entrance. The event is sponsored by Tesco, so all proceeds will go direct to the Hospice.

# **Planning Inspector rejects appeal on 72 The Avenue and upholds residents' arguments. Meanwhile, Planning Committee Chairman says development "will eventually be approved"**

Sunbury residents scored another highly significant victory when the Planning Inspector rejected the appeal by applicants against the refusal of planning permission to build two large detached houses on the site of 72 The Avenue.

The Inspector's ruling could not have been more emphatic, and although it is too long to reproduce here (and we are restricted by copyright law from doing so) you really should read it by going to the Planning Inspectorate web site at [www.pcs.planningportal.gov.uk/pcsportal/fscdav/READONLYOBJ=COO.2036.300.12.879613&NAME=/Decision.pdf](http://www.pcs.planningportal.gov.uk/pcsportal/fscdav/READONLYOBJ=COO.2036.300.12.879613&NAME=/Decision.pdf)

This is available as a 'live' link in the news story on our web site.

We, and our local councillors, had argued strongly that the impact on the street scene, especially at this important junction with the Linear Park, would be unacceptable. Spelthorne's Planning Officers refused to include these arguments, which were clearly supported by Policy EN1 in the Local Planning Guidance, and the Planning Committee Chairman, Cllr. O'Hara dismissively derided these arguments, calling the Linear Park a "muddy impromptu footpath".

However, the Inspector stated that the open and spacious entrance to the Park is a highly visible and attractive feature in the street scene and a focal point in the road, and that the houses would significantly damage the open appearance of the site and broad symmetry of the Park entrance. He felt that the Park was clearly a valued and well-used amenity and its setting and enjoyment would be diminished by the proposals.

In addition, the Inspector concluded that the development would have a materially harmful effect on the living conditions of the occupants of No. 74, who have campaigned so diligently and forcefully against the proposal.

This could not be a clearer or more emphatic rebuttal of the stance adopted by the Planning Officers and especially the Planning Committee Chairman.

What makes this decision even more significant is that at the last Planning Committee, while the Inspector was still deliberating on the Appeal into the earlier application, a further application for two houses on the site was being considered. It was rejected on the narrowest of margins, but Cllr. O'Hara took it upon himself to state that the development of two houses on the site was inevitable at some stage, and instructed the Planning Officers to work with the applicants to find a formula to enable the development.

Our view is that this was completely out of order, preempting as it did the possibility that the Inspector would introduce grounds for refusal which would preclude such a development on broader grounds, which he has duly done. We will be making strong representations to Spelthorne's Chief Executive and Leader of the Council about this matter. In addition, worrying issues have surfaced about the propriety of other aspects of this application, which even involved a complaint to the police about a possible criminal offence. Residents have also complained about glaring inaccuracies in the Planning Officer's report.

Meanwhile, this decision on the earlier application represents an important victory, demonstrating that Spelthorne as a planning authority is hopelessly out of touch with, or completely contemptuous of, the aspirations of council tax payers about the local environment and quality of life, and also appears to have a totally one-sided view of its responsibilities. For some reason, residents who oppose development on environmental grounds seem to be regarded as cranks or extremists to be derided because they are inconveniencing the inexorable march of "progress".

Experience shows that it is probably too much to hope that the Planning Authority at Knowle Green might possibly learn some lessons from this, but we will do our best to ensure that the messages are thoroughly drummed into the relevant officers and elected representatives.

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## **Vacancy for a Sunbury pensioner to live in historic almshouses**

Tucked away off Nursery Road at the end of Ravenscourt are Sunbury's hidden Almshouses. The very modest single storey buildings sit in a pretty garden, and have been providing a haven of peace for eight elderly residents since 1891. The then Vicar of St Mary's, Rev. Henry Vigne, joined with three other benefactors to build and endow simple homes for "aged or infirm persons, parishioners of the parish of Sunbury aforesaid", and consisting of single bed-sitting rooms with very basic facilities.

Over the years the buildings gradually fell into disrepair and by 1964 residents were still living with open fires, shared cooking and washing facilities and communal outdoor WCs, and an overgrown neglected garden. Fortunately the Trustees decided that they should be saved, and Mrs Irene Bremner donated £2000 towards their renovation. Due to the energy and determination of the Chairman, Mrs Joy Chadwick, further funds were raised and the homes were modernized with the addition of kitchens, bathrooms and central heating, so that they could continue to serve their purpose.

Since their renovation, the Almshouses have been kept in good order with regular maintenance and improvements. However times and expectations change over the years, and as we all know regulations and legislation become ever more prescriptive. The present accommodation still provides simple homes for single active residents over the age of 60, but the buildings are lim-

ited in the way they could be further adapted to modern standards. Even in Mrs Chadwick's brief history of the Almshouses, written in 1979, it was noted that it was not possible to take "infirm" residents as there are no warden or nursing facilities, and today we cannot meet the requirements for disabled people. However the Trustees are actively looking at ways of ensuring that this little known resource can continue to benefit the local community in the spirit of the Trust set up by the founders.

We now have a vacancy for a single pensioner of limited means who has lived in or has close connections with the Parish of Sunbury, and if anyone would like to have more information please contact the Secretary, Mrs Brown on 01932 782149.

## **Planning Inspector reviews Environment Agency site**

A hearing took place recently at Spelthorne Borough Council Offices, chaired by a Planning Inspector appointed to decide whether it is "sound" of Spelthorne to include the Environment Agency site in Fordbridge Road in the next Local Development Plan as a site suitable for housing.

Jonathan Webster and Jenny Grant, residents of The Creek, spoke on behalf of the local community putting the point that for a number of reasons the site was unsuitable for residential development, and the Inspector visited the site and the immediate area. The Inspector's report is due to be published in mid July.

## Car park charging to be introduced on July 1st

Regrettably, despite numerous objections from local organisations, residents and businesses, Spelthorne Council have voted to approve the proposal to introduce charging in all of Lower Sunbury's car parks, namely The Avenue, Walled Garden and Green Street, in addition to Thames Street and Fordbridge Road, where they are already in force.

Experience in those car parks shows that car park usage has fallen dramatically since charges were introduced, resulting in an increase in on-street parking in Elizabeth Gardens near the Thames Street car park and a drop in trade for businesses close by, and a fall in use of the Old Bathing Pool open space.

We are sure that local businesses will be affected by the extension of charging, and that on-street car parking will increase, causing more danger, congestion and inconvenience. We will be asking businesses and other establishments like the Embroidery Gallery, to monitor trade against last year so that we can build a case for the decision to be reviewed in the future.

Meanwhile, we will also be asking for disclosure of income from the car parks against the cost of implementation and enforcement, as this will almost certainly demonstrate that it is an economic nonsense which is simply there to tick the relevant boxes for the Council.

### THE LOSRA COMMITTEE

David Banks	38 Kenton Avenue	789652
Pamela Cabannes-Barrall	4 Forge Mews	761131
Elleker Carling	3 Croysdale Avenue	88272
Don Cunningham	2 Parkwood Grove	889033
Colleen Cuthbert (Secretary)	8 Maryland Way	783606
Peter Francis	Linden Lodge, Woodlands Drive	770661
Cathie French (Treasurer)	173 French Street	789157
Roger Harding	Sunmead Cottage, Green Street	782744
John Hirsh (Chairman)	21 School Walk	781363
Ian Robinson	33 Kingsmead Avenue	783774
George Rushbrook		788471
Patrick Smith	6 Maryland Way	783683
Matt Thomas	7 Nursery Road	787709
Paul Watts (President)	87 The Avenue	788449
Chris Wills		
David Woods	47 Sunna Gardens	786806

## FRIENDS OF SUNBURY PARK

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Sunbury Park will be held at the Embroidery Gallery in the Walled Garden, Thames Street on Wednesday 10th June at 7.30 p.m.. The meeting is open to all those with an interest in the Park and its maintenance and well-being, and we look forward to seeing you there.

## Sunbury Open Gardens Day Sunday 28th June

The seventh Sunbury Open Gardens Day will be held on Sunday 28th June in aid of the Shooting Star Hospice for children in Hampton and St. Mary's Church. This hugely successful event was enjoyed by over 600 people last year and six new gardens will be open to visitors this year.

The gardens, all very different, will be open from 11am -5pm. One in particular features a Saxon Burial Mound and at the bottom of another, something to please boys of all ages! Teas, plants, books, cakes, jams and a mega raffle will all add to the attraction.

Tickets costing £4 in advance will be available at Skinners and at the Embroidery Gallery, or by phone on 01932 786675 towards the end of May. Tickets purchased on the day will cost £5. Do come and enjoy a very pleasant day out knowing that you will be supporting worthy local charities.

## Albert Skinner Jazz Night a sell-out

LOSRA supported the recent innovation into the local social calendar with the inaugural Albert Skinner Jazz Night at Sunbury Cricket Club. The event, featuring Sunbury's own jazz luminary, Tony Kinsey, with his Quintet, was hugely successful, with all 150 tickets selling out very quickly - if capacity had allowed another 20 or 30 could easily have been sold.

The audience enjoyed some stunning high quality music, and there was a fantastic atmosphere, and we are sure that it was an occasion that Albert would have appreciated. Many thanks to all the local organisations who helped promote the concert, and the many people who helped with different aspects of the evening. There will be another Albert Jazz Night in the autumn, so keep your eye out for details.

## MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

If you have not paid your subscription for this year, could you please help us by paying your subscription either by using the secure facility on our web site or dropping your subscription in to one of our two collection points using the tear-off slip below. You can deliver it to either of the following shops : Skinners in Avenue Parade; Twirltour Travel in Green Street. Our thanks to these businesses for their help in providing this service. You can also pay by credit card using PayPal by visiting our website at [www.losra.org](http://www.losra.org). As advised in our previous newsletters, the subscription has increased to £5.00 from the beginning of January 2008.

Please find enclosed my annual subscription of £5.00 for family membership of the Lower Sunbury Residents' Association for the calendar year 2009. (AGM09)

Name: ..... Address : .....

..... Tel. no. : ..... E-mail address.....