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## Message from Chairman - Kevin Thomas

Welcome to our Autumn Newsletter packed full of contributions from across our Association, Wards and Sir David.

I hope you are finding our newsletters interesting and a helpful means of keeping up to date with Association and related matters. If you have any feedback or can provide interesting SWCA related articles please feel free to let Jackie know in the office.



Sadly, the continued restrictions are playing havoc with our fund raising activities.

We held a successful Chairman's Tea Party as a test event in August (see later in this edition) but sadly, subsequent changes meant we have had to cancel other planned activities until the constraints are eased. This, together with the loss of revenue from hall lettings is not helping our Association finances and we will inevitably have a deficit. That said, our Wards and Councillors continue to have impact. It's business as usual and we are upping our plans for the forthcoming local elections next May. We are always on the lookout for helpers, so please, if you can spare any time, no matter for how long, it will be very welcome.

Iveagh Hall is looking rather smart at the moment. We have had a thorough deep clean and have new cleaners. We have sorted out a long running issue with the hot water supply in the kitchen and toilets. We just need to be able to get back and make use of the facilities!

Take care, keep well and enjoy the read.

## Help raise funds for the Association



**200 CLUB** - is a fund-raising lottery, which pays out once a year. The funds are raised to support the Conservative Party in Southend and Southend West Conservative Association. Each number costs £15 (you can purchase as many as you like), and there is a better chance at 200-1, of winning a prize in the 200 Club than in the national lottery!

If you would like to join the 200 Club, please contact the office.

Thank you for your support.

## Message from Deputy Chair - (Political) - Cllr Kevin Buck

The recent election of Paul Gilson as leader of Leigh Town Council is a great personal achievement for Paul and positive progress for the Conservatives in Leigh. I would like to take the opportunity to personally congratulate Paul for his election victory and I'm sure all members will want to give Paul their unequivocal support in this important role for the Conservatives in Leigh. Given the somewhat disappointing local election results in May 2019 and the postponement of the elections in May 2020, we must continue to capitalise on the general election result of December 2019, and now this local opportunity.



The Covid-19 pandemic continues to dominate our lives at the moment and ever changing control measures are proving to be a challenge for all, both physically and politically. Following all necessary guidelines, we must continue the local political campaigning to ensure that we are getting our message across and the electorate know we are still here for them and are being as active as ever.

Local help and volunteering is always welcome, whether it is delivering leaflets, helping with litter picks or assisting at the Iveagh Hall, so if you would like to help and volunteer in your ward or the Southend West Conservative Association, please get in contact with the office at Iveagh Hall.

Finally, I would like to thank all the volunteers and helpers that give freely of their time for the benefit of the local Conservative Association and the Party, we could not do this without you, so thank you.

Stay safe.

## Message from Deputy Chair - (Membership & Fundraising) - Judith Suttling



Since our last Newsletter our membership has stayed at a steady number; a few people failed to renew, but we were pleased to welcome ten new members. We were also pleased to welcome eight new 'friends' from the Iveagh Conservative Club who pay £10 to our Association.

Please be aware, that to reduce our environmental impact, Conservative Central Office no longer issue plastic membership cards. Please be assured that this does not impact membership – members will never be asked to produce a card to prove membership. In replacement a membership pack, which includes a certificate of membership, is now sent.

I find it very frustrating not to be able to organise some fundraising events! Those who attended our Chairman's Tea Party in August so enjoyed being able to meet again. We made sure everyone was socially distanced and the numbers kept at thirty, the only drawback being that it was a little difficult to carry on a conversation with someone at the other end of the table! We had nearly thirty people booked to attend our first Marlborough Club lunch, and the menus fixed until the end of the year, but we had to cancel that when the new rules were announced.

Unfortunately we are not able to hold our usual October Annual Dinner, but we look forward to starting our social events with renewed vigour as soon as it is safe to do so!

## FUNDRAISING NEWS

We were fortunate enough to squeeze in an afternoon tea before further social gathering restrictions were introduced. Numbers were limited to 30, and social distancing was in place at each table. The format was slightly different this time (for obvious reasons); the food and refreshments were laid out on a top table, and served to the guests by the 'helpers'. No entry fee was charged, but £122 was made from generous raffle contributions. Here are some photos taken on the day



## NEWS FROM CWO - Georgina Phillips, Deputy Chair

The CWO has, like all other dining groups, had to suspend activities due to the virus. We were in contact with our members, who were keen to regroup, and had an afternoon tea in mind for the end of September, but sadly this had to be cancelled due to government guidelines.

An award, in memory of the late Nancy Howard, is to be presented annually, and this year we have decided that the award will go to Estrellita Stanley, for her long service and dedication shown in running our raffles. Estrellita will be presented with the Nancy Howard Award shortly. A newsletter coming out soon will have a photo of the award being presented.



We send our best wishes to all our members and look forward to seeing you all as soon as possible. In the meantime, please stay safe and we hope to meet up in the near future.

## POST COVID

Councillor David Garston writes.....



Now that the government are preparing for post Covid I am writing about two issues that will affect Southend and its residents.

I have been appointed to a new working party to look into ASELA (Associations of Local Government in Essex), which comprises of a group of Council Leaders from Southend, Essex County Council, Castle Point, Rochford, Basildon, Thurrock and Brentwood. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by all these Councils in 2018 and they have been

meeting ever since, and discussing ways forward which will benefit South Essex. They have a small budget and because up to now, no minutes have been published, it is difficult to see what the money has been spent on, however, we are now promised that minutes of future meetings will be published. Following pressure from members, it will give me and other Conservative Councillors an opportunity to have our say, as well as learning more about this very complex issue.

Of all the political parties, Southend Councillors are clear that we do not see the benefit of an overall authority with an elected mayor, and wish to retain our unitary powers. However, we recognize that a larger Council with double the residents would be more cost effective.

There is a Government White Paper due to be published in the Autumn on the reform of Local Government. In this White Paper there are huge reforms proposed for Planning or Development Control across the country. The Government's desire to " Build, Build, Build " and speed up the whole process, which they say goes back to the Victorian era, will have implications for our town and the role of the Planning Inspectors who determine appeals and the Southend Local Plan will be unchanged. There is a new Southend Local Plan being written now and the White Paper makes it clear that this process needs to be speeded up.

The benefits of joining with our neighbours are huge in terms of road access, housing, regeneration and grants but, in my view, we do not want a takeover. The issues facing Basildon, Thurrock and Brentwood are very different to those facing Southend. I know, having been an Essex County Councillor representing Southend, that the smaller issues like potholes, street lights, school places, parking, housing etc., delegated to District Councils, can be so easily overlooked, and at the same time life changing issues facing our town will be determined by outsiders who rarely visit Southend.

It is difficult to list all the proposals in this article but briefly, the promotion of supportive and innovative developers including small and medium enterprises will be assisted to use modern building processes to speed up construction. Building beautiful is an important proposal. Even though the Government require quicker processes they also insist on good design of new buildings.

Notices of an application will no longer be attached to lamp posts, instead an easy digitized system is intended which will make it much easier for the public to see exactly what is being proposed in their area. This system must be user friendly, however, for those of our residents who do not have access to a computer, I can foresee problems.

Currently, Councils are required to determine applications within eight weeks; the new proposal is five weeks including two weeks of public consultation. Section 106 planning obligations will be removed and replaced with an infrastructure levy aimed at securing more affordable homes.

This is a consultation and you are encouraged to view the proposals and submit your comments to the Government before 27<sup>th</sup> October 2020, via the online survey:

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/MHCLG-Planning-for-the-Future/>

## COUNCIL UPDATE - Cllr Meg Davidson, Conservatives Deputy Group Leader



**Meetings, meetings...** we may be in the midst of a pandemic, but the Council's meetings continue unabated. Virtual meetings will remain the norm for the rest of this year at least. The technology is holding up well, though no meeting passes without at least one participant forgetting to turn on their microphone – a very easy mistake to make!

Currently the Conservatives are in opposition, so our job is to hold the Labour/Independent/ Lib Dem administration to account. We applaud the excellent work of Council staff, especially the Public Health team and our tireless refuse collection workers, to name but two. But we continue to challenge the Labour-led coalition when necessary.

We are strongly opposed to their plans to close the Queensway underpass: we fear this will cause horrendous traffic congestion. We have also spoken out against hasty and poorly thought out cycle path schemes, failures to tackle the problem of illegal traveller encampments in the Borough and the ill-advised transfer of Southend Energy's customers from Ovo to Robin Hood Energy (RHE) in February 2020, even though RHE was known to be in financial difficulties.

***On a positive note, there was a rare show of cross-party support for a proposal put forward by Conservative councillor for Chalkwell, David Burzotta. David submitted a motion to the Council to tackle cycling on pavements. This has always been illegal but is rarely enforced by the police. The Council has agreed to consult on a scheme to give Council officers powers to issue fines to pavement cyclists throughout the borough.***

*Tougher enforcement will help keep pedestrians safe*



## A WORD FROM WESTMINSTER....

I have no doubt at all that each and every one of you is thoroughly fed up with the impact that the coronavirus pandemic has had on your lives. Just as it seemed that restrictions were being eased, we now find a whole raft of new measures to combat the virus. I have given up predicting where all this is leading, but I do know that the sooner we get an effective vaccine, the better. I know only too well from the emails I receive that constituents are also getting frustrated with some of the restrictions, which do not always seem logical.



*Sir David Amess MP*

Having visited the walk-in test centre myself, with Southend having the first in the area, I have seen first-hand how the authorities are dealing with people who report symptoms of the virus. For that approach to be successful we need to quickly increase the capacity to process the results.

I, like all of you, have missed our usual summer events; the list of traditional gatherings that have had to be cancelled is endless. For the moment, if at all possible, we should make as much use as we can of Zoom and Skype to keep in touch with each other. I and my team are fully functioning in Parliament, raising issues of concern and dealing with people's problems. My new approach to having a rolling programme of surgeries throughout the whole of the constituency, has been very well received.

During the month of October, I will also be visiting all parts of Southend West. For any information as to what I am doing please see my website and Twitter feed. If you have any specific problems which you would like me to deal with, please contact me at [amessd@parliament.uk](mailto:amessd@parliament.uk) or by calling my office 020 7219 3452.

## NEWS FROM WARDS

### BELFAIRS

Cllr Alan Dear writes.....

Both Cllr Lesley Salter and I hope everyone continues to be safe & well in these strange times!

I have regularly walked the Ward during the pandemic, reporting problems as needed. If you need any help during this difficult time please give us a call or drop us an email. As always we will do our best to help.

Jack Warren, Belfairs candidate for 2021 local elections writes.....

*Let's be honest, 2020 is the year most of us simply want to forget. Yet, despite the challenges we have all faced since the pandemic struck, it's important to see the positives this year has brought too. We've seen neighbourhoods across Belfairs coming together to help one another, and our community spirit reinvigorated – something I hope will not be lost when life eventually returns to normal (whatever normal is nowadays!) On my part, I recently celebrated turning 30 as well as becoming an uncle for the second time. So, as the nights begin to draw in, I do hope you continue to keep safe and well.*



### BLENHEIM PARK

Cllr Helen Boyd writes.....

I hope everyone continues to be well in these strange times!

Always bearing in mind the guidelines, I have been as active as possible on behalf of my family and the residents in the last months.

All kinds of queries have come to me via email and telephone during the pandemic, including planning matters, missed waste collections, parking and, depressingly as usual, litter!

I have regularly walked the ward, reporting problems as necessary, and, to be fair, Council Officers have mostly responded well. They have promised to have the speed lights in Mountdale Gardens up and running in time for the schools reopening in September.

Schools must reopen for the general well-being of our young people, and I know that our educational establishments are putting in place all the safety measures possible to keep the pupils and staff virus-free. Guidance is provided from the Council team, and I am happy to help if there are any issues.

Our Council meetings have been online, and I can foresee much more online working in the future, where it is appropriate. Very tiring staring at a screen for any length of time though, and I miss personal interaction, but this is the 'new normal' (!?)



## NEWS FROM WARDS cont'd

### ST LAURENCE



**Cllr Mark Flewitt**

After waiting over six weeks to be told about a leak and the damage to the Ekco Museum's numerous artefacts, I visited the unit recently, and was happy to witness the care and attention these items are getting, and learning so much more!

Thanks to the few for looking after masses of treasured stock. Less than 100 items were affected in any way by the ceiling water penetration. I am assured that these are recovering, but that a full inventory is, of course, being made.

My suggestion of some virtual presentation for both councillors and public alike, is looking promising.



**Cllr David McGlone**

On 9th September Cllr Mark Flewitt and myself had the privilege of visiting Anglian Water Sewage Treatment Plant

We were warmly welcomed by Area Manager, James Froggatt and his team to look around the site which treats the sewage from a wider area of the town, and beyond, than we imagined.

A fascinating insight of the sewage treatment process was explained to us and assured us that a very technical and extensive monitoring regime is carried out 24/7, 7 days per week.

## GREAT BRITISH SEPTEMBER CLEAN ON PRITTLE BROOK GREENWAY

Local councillors and members of the Prittle Brook Community Group (PBCG) were joined by MP Sir David Amess for the relaunch of PBCG's litter picking sessions on the Greenway. The event was part of the Great British September Clean organised by the Keep Britain Tidy campaign. There were two teams at work, and they cleared 18 bagfuls of litter from the Prittlewell/Westcliff stretch of the Greenway.

