

From the Lookout Post - August 2008

After a quieter patch round the Council elections, there is plenty of news to share with you this month.

Transport Commission

The commissioners presented their report on 1 July. As might be expected, they have concluded that Reading's growth is far outstripping its infrastructure. Reading is bigger than its boundaries, hence the need for a strategy for Greater Reading. Central to this is the need to make a case for greater government resources, given that Reading is a designated diamond for growth but yet growth in transport capital expenditure has been low in the South East region.

Recommendations include formally abandoning the proposed one-way IDR scheme and a whole range of measures, which we could not do justice to in this column, are set out in their report on the Council website.

Bus Route 9

Reading buses are currently carrying out a consultation on proposed route changes starting September. They report that congestion at Caversham Bridge and Shinfield Road makes it difficult to provide a reliable service. They propose to split the route into two overlapping sections and at the same time cease the Sunday service between central Reading and Caversham Heights as so few people used it. For more details see www.reading-buses.co.uk. The consultation seems to have received very little coverage and is currently due to close on 18 July.

Reading Festival

A variation to the Festival license is in the process of being approved. The only significant change is the construction of a temporary pedestrian bridge over the Thames, linking to the camp site at Mapledurham. This is expected to be a metal construction with eight support towers. The provisional date for the bridge to be erected is 11 August when the river will be closed for periods of an hour at a time during the evening. Dismantling is currently scheduled for 27 August, with similar closures and the site should be clear by 29 August. The height will be sufficient to allow normal river traffic.

CADRA and WADRA are both working with RBC Licensing and the Festival organisers to represent residents' views and encourage maximum communication. As a result, measures are in hand to try to reduce the problems experienced in 2007 when festival goers tried to park in residential streets. Further meetings are planned. Information including the hotline number and email contact during the festival period will be available on www.cadra.org.uk. You may also like to see <http://www.readingfestival.com/home/> to get an idea of the main comings and goings and have a better chance of missing them.

Planning

Appeals continue to be a feature and have been lodged for the second application behind 161 Woodcote Road and also for the two applications by Gravel Hill Cottages accessible from a well used bridleway. Both are on Caversham's rural edge.

The appeal on the sheltered housing scheme between Wolsey Road and School Lane by Caversham Centre was successful. Work has already started, but there are some issues still to be agreed under reserved matters.

Kings Meadow Pool

The Borough Council and the Environment Agency invited bids for the development of the Kings Meadow pool and the Caversham Lock Island. A number of bids have been received. In July, the Borough Council's Cabinet and the Scrutiny Panel consider recommendations to work up in greater detail two of the offers received - one for the pool only and the other for both the pool and Lock Island. The recommendations take into account a report from English Heritage.

CADRA has been given the opportunity to comment and has stressed the need for local people to be able to enjoy the area as well as the importance of maintaining the planning principles established for this area following public consultation.

Police Staff All Change in Caversham

From 1 July 2008, Acting Inspector Penny MacKenzie heads up the Caversham Police team. Inspector Graham Dix, after a highly successful 3-year commitment to Caversham, joins Thames Valley Police HQ. During his tenure reported crime reduced by about 20% each year. This can be partly attributed to the ability of Inspector Dix to have appointed officers, including the 4 new Police Community Support Officers, with a specific commitment to responding to residents' concerns.

From 1 August, Sgt Rob Pitman (formerly a PC in Lower Caversham) will take over from Nigel Scarratt who has also moved to the Loddon Valley Police Station. PC John Finnerty leaves Caversham to become a Tutor Constable at Reading, passing on his skills and experience to newer recruits. PCSO Jeni Williams, although no longer in Caversham, will be at the Railway Station with British Transport Police.

Although appointments are outstanding for Caversham, a number of officers are providing cover. PC Stuart Murdoch continues to focus on Lower Caversham, and PC Debbie Smith covers all of Caversham, specialising in criminal incidents. PCSO John Hendy continues to build on his experience in Emmer Green and Caversham Park Village and PCSO Chloe Denny covers Lower and Central Caversham. PCSO Emily Heath will shortly complete her training and be deployed around Caversham Heights.

We are very pleased to know that, at least initially, Acting Inspector MacKenzie and Sgt Pitman will, be totally dedicated to Caversham.

Seasonal Warnings from the Police

Every summer, thieves take advantage of open doors and windows and can steal your possessions, including credit cards and keys. Make certain that all ground floor windows are closed and locked when you leave your home and when you retire for the night. Do not be an easy target when you are in the garden by leaving accessible windows open, or side doors and gates unlocked.

Sadly, the warmer weather often fosters more anti-social behaviour. Please do report information on criminal activity and antisocial behaviour on 0845 505505 or Crimestoppers 0800 555111. The number for any serious crimes, requiring an immediate police response, remains 999. Further advice to reduce your chances of being a victim of crime can be found in the Crime Reduction section of the Thames Valley Police website, www.thamesvalley.police.uk.