

From the Lookout Post – August 2012

Summer events

July will have been an exceptionally busy month. The Caversham Festival in conjunction with *Churches Together in Caversham* took place on Sunday 8 July. The Olympic torch left from Caversham Court on Wednesday 11 July. Caversham Court gardens also hosted both the Progress Theatre production of Henry IV Part I and St Peter's and St Margaret's church fete and the Royal Swan Upping was on 19 July. As we write this column, all these events are still to come and we wish them all good weather and every success.

The major event in August is the SMART 2012, a Festival of **S**port, **M**usic and **A**rt on the **R**iver **T**hames which will take place on 4th August 2012. This day has been titled 'Super Saturday' as it falls on the middle weekend of the Olympic Games.

The festival will take place on Thameside Promenade, running from Reading Rowing Club, along to Rivermead Leisure Complex, and also in Caversham Court Gardens. It will be a free event and has been developed in partnership between the 2012 Partnership Board, Jelly, Culturemix, Reading Rock Academy, Reading Rowing Club, Friends of Caversham Court Gardens and Rivermead Leisure Complex.

From 11am-6pm, there will be a Sporting Village and demonstrations, Community Group stalls, Creative Village, Acoustic Stage and Workshop Area, Open Air Arena, Main Stage, Traylens Funfair, Food Stalls and a big Screen.

The evening event at 7pm is ticketed and will include school age bands from Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Hampshire.

The CADRA AGM

The AGM at Thameside School was well attended and after a brief round-up of the year, Dr Rod Smith set out to explain the complex changes taking place in local health services. There will be four Clinical Commissioning Groups in West Berkshire, covering Wokingham, South Reading, North West Reading, and Newbury. Each will have a Board with a Chair who is both elected and subject to a national assessment process. Dr Smith, Senior Partner at Balmore Park Surgery, is Chair of both the North West Reading CCG and also the West Berkshire Federation linking the four local CCGs. The groups are being set up on a transitional basis, ready for full implementation in 2013.

Local Authorities have a new responsibility for improving public health which was previously with the Primary Care Trusts. In Reading, Councillor Bet Tickner is the Lead Councillor for Health and Wellbeing. Their duties include responsibility for setting up the local 'HealthWatch' to act as local consumer champion.

Against a background of financial constraints, the CCGs will have to look hard at how money is spent. They will need to review areas where care could be provided more effectively and identify treatments which do not always benefit patients. Dr Smith cited as an example that 20% of patients undergoing a knee replacement report that there was no benefit from the operation. There are therefore plans to improve patient counselling before the operation to help each patient decide whether the operation is appropriate for them.

We were fortunate to hear from someone so closely involved with the changes at both a high level and the day to day issues for individual patients. A record amount in the retiring collection is testament to the audience response.

Reading wins £20.7 million “Green” Transport Bid

At the end of June, Reading was awarded £20.7 million for a series of ‘green transport’ initiatives. This is designed to increase bus, pedestrian and cycle journeys and to reduce congestion, all of which is very welcome for Reading and Caversham. The major elements are a new pedestrian/cycle bridge across the Thames, a cycle hire scheme and a London style oyster card for bus travel. There is also reference to new and improved pedestrian and cycle routes. The grant is less than the original bid and so final details are yet to be finalised. The Council have indicated they will be consulting widely with residents, bus companies, cycling groups, local businesses and all interested parties. CADRA will be following the plans closely and respond to consultations. It is important that the Council take full advantage of the considerable local knowledge which local groups and cycle groups can offer. The new bridge should resolve the real problems now faced by cyclists on the road bridges but will need to be carefully considered to provide an aesthetically pleasing view and also to make certain that it is an integral part of pedestrian and cycle routes to and from Caversham.

Clayfield Copse

Late June and early July saw considerable controversy over the proposed introduction of a micro Park and Ride scheme at Clayfield Copse and also at Palmer Park. Following a number of representations, a consultation was introduced. A commitment was given that council officers would engage directly with user groups and would report back to the Reading Borough Council cabinet on Monday, July 16. Subsequent to that, we heard that in view of the many concerns raised, particularly by sporting groups, it is expected that the proposal will be formally withdrawn. We hope this has reinforced the need for local collaboration.

Policing Matters

A combination of policing success in apprehending a number of burglar suspects and the inclement weather has helped to keep the burglary crime incidents low. Also a number of younger youths acting in an anti-social manner in Emmer Green and CPV have been identified and the police are working with the parents to correct the situation before the schools break up for the summer.
