

From the Lookout Post – July 2015 Caversham Bridge

CADRA AGM

The past 12 months was a busy period to look back on! Plans were finalised for St Martin's Centre which look very different from those first proposed. Following the CADRA report, 'Sharing our Streets', Transport Officers are preparing proposals for Caversham Centre for local consultation. This would be funded from the St Martin's financial contribution. The application to build three very tall towers on the Coopers site was robustly refused by the Planning Committee. Following the limited exhibition on Extra Care apartments at Albert Road, more people were able to see the outline plans on the CADRA website and send their comments. These were just some of the issues outlined in a report on the past year and what has been happening locally.

John Roach who has been a very active member of the team for the past 12 years has decided to stand back. Helen Lambert and Stewart Bolton presented a small gift in recognition of his widespread contribution – not least in contributing to this column.

CADRA aims to reach out to everyone in Caversham through its website and Facebook page and help build a real sense of community. Members receive more personal information through emails and the latest newsletters and often help and advice to point them in the right direction. Even more importantly, they support and help shape a clear voice for the community. You can join via the website www.cadra.org.uk or pick up a leaflet from the library.

Adult Care Services and Albert Road Extra Care Housing

Following the formal AGM, Melanie O'Rourke, Interim Head of Adult Care Services at the Council talked about the changes in how Adult Care services are provided for older people and those with particular needs. This is the largest budget heading among Council services so of interest to us all. There is a clear shift away from an institutional model of care towards care plans for each individual, aimed to allow them to retain their independence and individuality. A number of changes in how this operates are set out in Phase I of the Care Act, implemented this April. Phase 2, to be implemented next April, 2016, will introduce changes in charging and a new Care Account which can be transferred across different authorities. Local Authorities are waiting for the national guidance due in October and a further consultation later in the year.

The growing demands on the NHS in turn put increasing pressures on adult social care for community packages and care homes. The different agencies are working together through the 'Better Care Fund'. This includes providing new facilities to which patients can be discharged while they are assessed for their care, a 'Hospital at Home' service for carefully selected individuals and Neighbourhood Clusters.

The Council also has an important role to safeguard vulnerable adults. It was reassuring to hear that Reading has now adopted the principle that Care Agencies must pay their staff a Living Wage and pay for travel time between visits. You can find a copy of the presentation at www.cadra.org.uk

More locally, there was considerable discussion about the closure of the Arthur Clark home and Albert Road Day Centre. The Council had committed to retain this site for services for older people and work with a partner to provide Extra Care housing. Melanie explained that many residents in Extra Care housing elsewhere, were previously resident in care homes. With the care available to them, they are able to have their own front door, kitchen and bathroom and make their own choices. The planning issues including the proposed four storeys and parking provision were not covered at the meeting. They will be covered through the planning process and there may well be a planning application submitted before you read this column. There was however a lively discussion on the eligibility criteria on who will be eligible to live in the apartments and the Council was strongly urged to ensure that they provide for local people with higher needs.

The Heights Primary School

As we write this column, the results of the consultation have just been released showing clear support for a school on Mapledurham Playing Fields. 61% of all respondents gave the playing fields as their first choice, 15% gave Highridge and the lowest was Albert Road Recreation Ground with 2%. This is by no means the end of the story and the next step will be for the Education Funding Agency to announce in July which site they intend to pursue. If this is the playing fields, then there is a process to seek the agreement of the Charities Commission and, whichever site is selected, a planning application will need to be submitted.

If the final decision is for a school on Mapledurham Playing Fields, we hope that all of Caversham can unite behind the need for good sports and community facilities alongside the school. The football pitches are heavily used and even more so when other pitches in Reading are water logged. Caversham has a significant retired and pre-school population who could really benefit from a base for community activities, particularly during the school day. For a population of almost 32,000,

Caversham is badly served for both sports and community facilities to help us keep active and engaged. Is this something we could all actively support?