

ALPHA ROAD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

in association with the Alpha Road Estate Community Group

NEWSLETTER - February 2014

London Mayor's office pays for bike storage

THE Alpha Road Estate's many cycling residents will soon have a designated place to store their cycles – or rather, four places to be precise!

The lack of cycle parking provision on Alpha Road Estate has long been a serious bone of contention among our two-wheeler fraternity, particularly among residents of our various flats' blocks for whom dragging a bicycle up two flights of stairs and then having to park it in their kitchen is both impractical and difficult.

As a result, many bikes are left in drying rooms and entrance halls.

However, the council has now obtained funding from the London Mayor's office to meet the cost of installing bike storage facilities across the borough.

In total, 15 new bike stores will be introduced and Estate Manager Jacky Farrier has managed to secure four for the Alpha Road Estate.

The 'Bikehangar' bike racks – each of them able to accommodate up to six full-sized cycles – were chosen because of their relative vandal-proof security features and their low profile, which means their installation will not obstruct the views from any residents' windows.

Subject to final consultation and agreement with residents, the proposed locations for the new bike racks are as follows:

- 1 In front of the Mayford buildings (two racks taking a total of 12 cycles)
- 2 At the rear of the Shamley building



BIKEHANGARS: Examples of the kind of secure 'Bikehangar' bike racks to be introduced at four sites on the Alpha Road Estate, which are among 15 new bike stores to be introduced across the borough of Kingston. The London Mayor's office is funding the cost of installing the bike storage facilities

- 3 The central courtyard between Capel and Holmwood blocks.

It is hoped that additional funding will be made available in 2015 to enable more racks to be installed adjacent to other flats blocks on the estate.



Improvements all round

Give us your views on how to spend new grant money

WHAT new projects would residents would like to see tackled under RBK's Minor Environment Improvement Grants programme – that's what we want to find out.

The grants programme enables residents' associations to submit funding bids for suitable schemes each year.

This year (2013-14), the programme is funding our new bins and extra lighting, but our bids for 2014-15 need to be submitted by April.

There is a maximum of £100,000 available, which has to be shared across all the estates in Kingston. It works out at around £10,000 each.

Last year your RA successfully bid for improvements worth £9,350, so let's see if we can better that this year!

Some of the ideas we are having costed include:

- Refurbishment of the raised flower bed on the corner of Charles Sumner House and Hobill Walk. This work will level the soil and see it replanted with shrubs that flower at different times of the year, together with flower bulbs, to provide a colourful focal point to a part of the estate that is heavily used by pedestrians.
- Installation of a wild flower garden on spare ground facing Britannia Road and the replacement of broken fencing with a picket fence. We'd like the wild flowers to include poppies, enabling the gardens to commemorate the lives lost in World War One, the 100th anniversary of which takes place this year.
- Refurbishment of the raised flower bed at Percy Court with old shrubs, weeds and ivy cleared and replaced with flowering shrubs and plants. This will turn an eyesore into a pleasant area for the people who live there.
- Renewal of shrubs screening the recycling facilities on the state by replacing them with flowering evergreens and incorporating four contracted 'watering visits' to ensure we don't lose them if we get another really hot summer – as happened last year.
- Installation of a further six fox-proof waste bins on other sites around the estate.
- Installation of notice boards in blocks of flats that currently don't have them, together with a few free-standing ones around the estate that can be accessed by people who live in the houses.
- Provision of a shed at the back of Tilford, where residents can store the tools they use to cultivate their back gardens
- Further improvements to the lighting on the estate – details yet to be finalised



WHERE HAVE ALL THE FLOWERS GONE: Re-planting schemes are on our improvement wish list.



NOT A PRETTY SIGHT! Which is why we want to see shrub screening installed around our recycling bins

- Resurfacing the ball court and installing better lighting to enable it to be used by organised groups throughout the year.

It is unlikely we will be able to get all of the above financed from this year's budget so we really need to know your priorities, together with any other ideas you would like to be considered.

Please complete the form on the opposite page and return it to: Alpha Road Residents Association, c/o Kingston Federation, 1 Tadlow, Washington Road, Kingston, KT1 3JL or send an email to linda.coote@tiscali.co.uk no later than March 7, after which we need to submit our wish list for funding.

One proposal for the installation of a lockable door at the en-

trance to the first floor of Percy Court to stop the hall and stairs being used by people without a legitimate reason to be there was given serious consideration by both the RA and the council.

But what first appeared to be a good idea had serious drawbacks, not least of which would have seen postal and tradesmen delivery workers inconvenienced and the creation of barrier for the emergency services.

It seems the only way this could work effectively would be the installation of a proper door-entry system and the provision of mail boxes outside.

Unfortunately council finances are not currently available for this, although such systems will be considered at some future time.

Planning ahead with students

A KICK-OFF meeting was held with Sarah Dutton at Kingston University to discuss the practicality of asking landscaping students to produce some plans or artists' impressions of what the estate might look like if we were able to get some large-scale landscaping improvements carried out.

It is still early days with this big project but we will keep you informed as we go along.

The next step is to get a meeting with one of the university's landscaping lecturers to get some professional advice on what we need to do to push this along.

Once we have designs we're happy with – and which the whole estate is happy to sign up to – then we'll pursue the funding of new landscaping projects with the council, tapping into environmental improvement grant funding through the Better Homes programme.

for Alpha Road Estate

BY the time you read this our new fox-proof bins should be in situ and hopefully the installation of the additional lighting will have been started, if not yet completed.

You may have heard that the additional street lights already approved are to be installed in the alleyways at Britannia Road, Paragon Grove, Smith Street and the alleyway opposite Allum Court.

The replacement of the signage on the blocks of flats is awaiting the completion of the external works to these buildings.

The installation of two proposed benches along King Charles Road has sadly been abandoned by the RA, following objections from a small number of residents whose flats would have been closest to the benches.

Thanks to the persistence of one of our residents and a ward councillor, the badly-needed resurfacing of Howard Road and the pavements alongside was getting under way as this newsletter went to press.

This has been badly needed for years and it is frustrating for us all that it takes the council so long to undertake these repairs when they are so obviously needed and it takes an accident to finally get things moving.



WHO CARES: We do, which is why the replacement of numerous broken fencing around the estate is on our improvement wish list.

Lights, bins, benches, roads and pavements all under the spotlight

CONSULTATION ON ESTATE IMPROVEMENTS

Please assign a ranking to each item to reflect how much you would value the improvement suggested. Please rank from 1-9 (1 being the highest value)

Refurbishment of the raised flower bed on the corner of Charles Sumner House and Hobill Walk	
Installation of an area of wildflower garden and the replacement of broken fence	
Refurbishment of the raised bed at Percy Court	
Renewal of shrubs screening recycling facilities	
Installation of a further six fox-proof waste bins on various sites around the estate.	
Installation of notice boards in blocks of flats without them, together with a few free-standing ones	
Provision of a shed at the back of Tilford to keep tools residents use to cultivate their back gardens	
Further improvements to the lighting on the estate – details yet to be finalised	
Resurfacing and improving lighting of ball court for use by organised events throughout the year.	

Please use this space to note any real objections you have to any of the above suggestions and your reasons:

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Please use this box to note any other suggestions for minor improvements you would like considered in this year's budget:

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Name:

Address:

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Please return to: Alpha Road Residents Association, c/o Kingston Federation, 1 Tadlow, Washington Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT1 3JL by March 7, or send an email to: linda.coote@tiscali.co.uk





Christmas surprises all round

WHEN the girls and boys from Tolworth Infants School arrived at Charles Sumner sheltered housing scheme just before Christmas to give a surprise carol concert to the residents – they found themselves on the receiving end of a pleasant surprise of their own!

The choir, comprising youngsters aged from four to seven years old, treated their audience to a large selection of favourite carols and traditional Christmas songs, all delivered faultlessly and with great enthusiasm.

But then it was their turn as a surprise Santa Claus arrived to dispense presents all round, as a big ‘thank you’ to the youngsters for providing a pleasant morning’s entertainment.

However, Santa’s work in Surbiton was far from done because less than a week later he made a special visit to the Alpha Road Estate children’s Christmas party, attended by 55 youngsters from the estate and neighbouring schools.

Held at Christ Church, the party was organised by Alpha Road’s Community Group for the second year

running, and proved a great success with everyone having seasonal fun.

One of the mums summed it up perfectly, saying: “Now it really feels like Christmas has arrived...”

Our thanks goes to all the people from the Community Group and the Residents Association who gave their time to organise and run the event – and not least to Mr Charley Farley for entertaining the children before they tucked into their party tea.

And, as the pictures on these pages show, fun, merriment and laughter were the only orders of the day!



Join the IT revolution with free local training

WE may well be living through an IT revolution but the fact is there are still many, many people who would barely know how to switch on a computer, let alone how to use even its most basic facilities.

If YOU are one of those people, and you'd really like to be able to do things like surf the net, send and receive emails or perhaps have a live face-to-face conversation with your Great Aunt Agatha in Australia, then read on – because there's good news for you!

Community Connected is a community outreach project with lots of experience in training people how to use the Internet and email.

It has a team of staff and dedicated volunteers who are passionate about getting people online, to help them enjoy all the benefits the online world can offer – including saving money on purchases, having closer connections with friends and family, or improving health, finances and overall wellbeing.

And the even better news is – **IT'S ALL FREE AND AVAILABLE LOCALLY.**

Anyone is welcome to sign up for a Community Connected course, whether you are a complete beginner or someone just wanting a refresher to brush up your IT skills.

Training takes place through demonstrations, interactive



group activities and an online learning system that you can use from anywhere with an internet connection.

You can ask your course leaders anything about the training or technology and they'll spend as long with you as you need until you feel your question is answered, or you can perform the task in question.

Interested? Then make a note of the following times and dates, and get yourself along to:

SURBITON LIBRARY, Ewell Road, Surbiton KT6 6AG on February 11 and 25 and March

11 and 25. Each session starts at 1.30pm and lasts three hours.

TOLWORTH LIBRARY, 37/39 The Broadway, Tolworth, KT6 7DJ on March 18 10am-12.30pm.

For those confused by broadband and which package to go for, or what device you need – laptop, tablet, desktop – they'll help you use the price comparison sites and work with you to decide on the best package you need and what type of equipment to buy.

And if you don't have your own computer, you might be in-

terested in Community Connected's refurbished computer programme which, for just £40 will provide you with a computer, already set up with Windows 7 and anti-virus Libra Office software, plus a flat screen monitor, mouse and keyboard.

More courses and venues will be added in the coming weeks, so for the latest information contact Philippa Leary, Community Connected, 50 Canbury Park Road, Kingston, Surrey KT2 6LX, tel: 020 8255 8040 or by email to: training@superhighways.org.uk

Suffering a seasonal hangover?

IF your hangover is a financial one, then maybe the Money Advisory Service will be able to help.

The MA is a service set up by Government to help people make the most of their money. It give free, unbiased money advice online, on webchat, over the phone, in printed guides and face to face.

The cost of Christmas and New Year celebrations can quickly mount up for many people, eating into those well-intentioned budgets and rapidly making money issues a real struggle.

So early in the new year can be a good time to review your

money – income and outgoings – and make some changes so you are better off.

The Money Advisory Service has a range of tools to help you manage your money better and get to grips with budgeting.

It can also help you to look at where you might cut back on day-to-day purchases, and offers 10 New Year's money resolutions – tips to make your money go further.

It can also help plan for holiday spending and other big ticket items during the year, so take a look and see if it can help you improve your general financial health in 2014.

You can access the 10 tips, a

money-stretcher calculator, budget planner and money health check as well as many other hints that may help you, by going online to MA at www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk or, if you prefer, you can call on 0300 500 5000. MA is open 8am-8pm Monday to Friday and 9am-1pm on Saturday.

Of course, if your seasonal hangover is the 'other sort', then cutting back on the booze might help both your physical wellbeing and your finances!

A belated Happy New Year to all Alpha Road Estate residents – and together let's make sure it's a good one!



Pictures tell the story

PICTURES tell a thousand words, or so they say. These pictures tell the story of local people with widely differing standards and ethics in life – from those who care and take pride in where they live and those that don't.

Each of them was recently photographed on our estate and, as you can see, they

graphically tell the story of our residents' contrasting attitudes towards their own home environment.

Linda Coote, Chair of Alpha Road Residents' Association said: "The first picture (below, top) is a lovely example of how pretty our estate could look, even in winter, if more people were able to spend a little time and effort in keeping the place tidy and cultivating some of the green spaces we are lucky enough to have.

"The second picture (bottom

left) is an example of how some people in a particular row of houses have allowed their domestic waste to get out of hand.

"It's not necessary, it encourages rats and other vermin and frankly looks and feels like we are living in the middle of a rubbish dump in a Third World country," she added.

"The last one (bottom right) is an example of deliberate fly tipping, which potentially carries a huge fine. Alpha Road Estate now has the worst reputation for

littering and fly-tipping among all of the estates in Kingston – shame on us!"

To the people that care, your Residents' Association says: "Keep it up – we appreciate you making our surroundings more pleasant. To those that don't – and you know who you are – take some responsibility in managing your waste properly and stop ruining the environment for the rest of us.

"If appealing to your better nature doesn't have the desired effect, be aware that the council has no hesitation in issuing fixed penalties of £300 to offenders. Ultimately, you may be prosecuted under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and end up with further fines and a record to boot."

Residents who need to dispose of bulky items should call RBK's contact centre on 020 8547 5000 or use the online request service. Landlords should use the commercial removal services available.

To get our estate looking spick and span for the start of 2014, your Residents' Association persuaded the Estate Manager and RBK's Head of Caretaking to arrange for its thorough 'deep clean' so hopefully, by the time you read this our neighbourhood should be looking pristine.

Please let's all do our bit to keep it that way!

There are people who care...



Those who don't...



...and others who are just plain anti-social



So many residents, but so few take an interest

MORE than 1,500 people live on the Alpha Road Estate, the vast majority of whom benefit from the hard work and commitment of its Residents' Association, whose volunteers have attracted thousands of pounds worth of improvements to the estate.

So it was very disappointing, when the Association held its well-publicised annual general meeting a few weeks before Christmas, to find that the event attracted a mere 13 residents, nine of whom were existing committee members, just

A personal message from LINDA COOTE, Chair of Alpha Road Residents' Association

one more than the minimum required to continue the RA's existence.

Despite advertising the event widely by posters and a door-to-door letterbox drop across the whole estate, and a personal invitation to a free buffet to each household, we came perilously close to having to suspend the entire association.

Had this happened, all of the improvement projects currently being led by the RA would have been jeopardised.

port by participating in our events and turning out to public meetings.

It would also be useful to hear from anyone who could support our fundraising activities this year, particularly around building the fund for the Community Centre – part of which will need us to make formal grant applications.

If anyone has experience of working in the fund-raising area, we'd love to have them on board in the coming months, to help us with this.

Please contact me at linda.coote@tiscali.co.uk if you have this kind of experience and can spare a bit of time to help.



What a waste of resources

RESIDENTS of Alpha Road Estate have expressed their mounting frustration about the total lack of community facilities in Surbiton Hill – while spacious public properties in the area have remained locked up and abandoned for many years.

So limited are local community facilities that the estate's residents' association has to rely on the generous but unsuitable offer of accommodation in the New Prince public house on Ewell Road, where it holds monthly meetings against the backdrop of music, live TV sporting events and typical pub banter.

And yet two major public amenities on the estate – the former public house, The Angel, on Howard Road and the ex-NHS mental health resource centre at

South Place (pictured above) – have stood derelict and unwanted for at least three years, their locked doors hiding accommodation that would be perfect for community use, according to RA Chair Linda Coote.

She said: "We are very grateful to the New Prince's publican for allowing us to use part of their lounge for our meetings but inevitably it's far from ideal because we cannot expect paying customers to be quiet while we conduct our business.

"That's why our residents feel deeply unhappy and frustrated that publicly-funded resources like the NHS mental health centre are abandoned and locked up when we have nowhere to hold meetings, social activities and a range of other community activities."

Who's Who on RA committee

THE annual general meeting of the Alpha Road Estate RA was held on November 7 at the Christian Centre, King Charles Road.

The following officers were elected or re-elected:

CHAIR: Linda Coote,
email linda.coote@tiscali.co.uk

DEPUTY CHAIR: Aileen Hill-Smith
tel: 020 8390 1076

TREASURER: Heather Pooley
email: hevpooley@blueyonder.co.uk

SECRETARY: Charles 'Dooney' Doel
email: dacddooney@yahoo.co.uk

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:
Alasdair MacFarlane, alimac1964@hotmail.co.uk

John Mounsey, tel: 020 8399 4205

Linda Parsons
Gill Edgeworth

SUBSEQUENT to the AGM, two more residents, Sally Pearson and Dave Kavanagh volunteered to help and have now been co-opted to the committee, joining other newcomers Linda Parsons and Gill Edgeworth, all of whom are warmly welcomed.

Sadly, we've lost Linda and Martin Evans, who recently resigned from the committee.

With 10 members, plus the council and Federation officers who attend meetings on a regular basis, the main committee is probably now big enough.

But we'd dearly like to have a group of additional volunteers who would be happy to take on small specific tasks during the year, such as joining the gardening group, offering to deliver newsletters, being a 'block' or street representative, helping at the proposed Fun Day or joining 'litter picks'.

If you can give just a couple of hours to the RA on an ad hoc basis, please contact one of the committee members so we can record your details for the future.