



Independent

WESTOE WARD NEWSLETTER

January 2008

Councillor ALLEN BRANLEY

off to the TOWN HALL!



THERE ARE NO LENGTHS to which your Independent Councillors will not go to attend to business on your behalf! Seriously though what have Independent Councillors been up to in the last few months? There are a considerable number of issues they have raised in Council meetings.

- South Tyneside Homes – Alliance Councillors supported a motion to review the Labour

representation on the Board as they appears to be using too much political influence in the operation of the ALMO resulting in many of the managers leaving the organisation.

Mowbray Park

LIKE MANY OPEN SPACES this park has been plagued by vandalism and anti-social dog walkers. Your Independent Councillors have had the Police, the Community Wardens, the Anti Social Behaviour team and Dog Wardens involved in an attempt to tackle the problems.

Following up a suggestion of the residents we are now working with Westoe Crown School and the Council to try a different approach. The school will 'adopt' the park and work with a Friends of Mowbray Park group that the Council will set up. We are hoping that if teachers, pupils, council officers, residents and your councillors all work together we can prove that park can be protected and enjoyed by all.



If you want to discuss anything in this Newsletter or to raise any other issues please contact:

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- Formal questions to the Council – they have asked questions on the missing ballot boxes, the mysterious blogger who is using Council equipment and time to make libellous remarks, election fraud, the amount of money spent on external consultants, the part played by Cllr Iain Malcolm in the payment of remuneration package of £5.956 million pound paid to the Chief Executive of the Newcastle Airport, fixed penalty notices for dog fouling, and the inspection of South Tyneside Homes to name but a few.

- Called an Extraordinary meeting of the Council to discuss among other things the security of the local elections bearing in mind the Council [or someone] 'lost' 18 ballot boxes in May 2007

- Supported the campaign for the protection of Gypsies Green – the Independent candidate for Horsley Hill ward, Gordon Finch, is the Chair of this group

- Attempted to establish a Cycling Policy in the Borough to promote responsible cycling, cycle ways and reduce cycling on pavements

- Called for the Council to lead the way in attempting to get businesses in the Borough to ban the use of plastic bags.

The Independent Alliance Councillors are the only councillors who are working together to form an active opposition to the Labour group and to propose the actions and ideas that the majority of people in the borough want. As well as this they are working in wards across the borough with the Independent candidates who will be standing in the local elections in May 2008. Look out for our campaign team in your area. We are not waiting till May to find out how you feel!

ELECTION FRAUD?

AFTER THE LOCAL ELECTION in May 2007 18 ballot boxes containing rejected postal votes were 'lost'! This would never have come to light if the Independent candidate in Beacon & Bents had not asked to see them as part of a High Court action he took about the running of the local election.

We have had no explanation from the Council as to how this happened and the only explanation they offered six months after the event is ludicrous to say the least. This was presented to the court and the Council applied to keep the press and public out. The result was that the court case was dismissed because application was to view the rejected postal votes. You can't view what no longer exists. Because the court case was dismissed on a technicality Mr. Khan now faces the large legal bill of the Council! The law is an ass!

Independent Councillors asked questions in a full Council meeting and were effectively told they would not get answers and they could not ask any supplementary questions!

The Independent Alliance are not going to give up the struggle to get to the truth and have called an Extraordinary meeting of the Council to debate the whole issue. We will be producing a borough wide leaflet to explain all the details of this scandalous affair as we feel the electors of the Borough should know the facts. We are also determined to ensure that all of our votes are counted in the next election.



THE PUBLIC DEMAND TO KNOW



COUNCIL MEETINGS have become lively events recently as members of the public, incensed by the Council's high handed approach to public opinion, have made their presence felt! For the last few meetings written questions have been submitted by members of the public, a thing almost unheard of.

You would think this would be welcomed favourably but alas experience at the two meetings has proved otherwise. The public have been told:

- To go to the Library to find out the information
- That they are being organised by one person, Cllr Allen Branley got the blame!
- That they are trying to disrupt the Council meeting
- That they can't have the answers

This is highly insulting to the people who have taken the time and trouble to submit questions and turn up at the Council meetings. It is an insult to their intelligence to suggest they can not ask questions for themselves and it is against everything we know as democracy to deny them information. But perhaps democracy only exists in Democracy Week in this Labour dominated Council!

FED UP WITH SOUTH TYNESIDE HOMES?

TALK TO THE INSPECTORS!

MANY TENANTS OF WHAT WAS COUNCIL HOUSING are becoming increasingly frustrated at the inability of STH to undertake even the simplest of tasks such as carrying out minor repairs, collecting rent and dealing with queries. People who are homeless or who have been on waiting lists for rented accommodation for years are also experiencing difficulties. Such poor levels of service and customer care are likely to result in STH failure to yet again get the two star rating it needs to unlock millions of pounds worth of funding. Everyone who pays Council Tax in South Tyneside has contributed to the pool of houses that STH now manages and so all of us will be losers if this money is not forthcoming.

Even though the formal inspection takes place in March the inspection is now 'live' which means that the inspectors may take a 'mystery shopper' approach to take a look at STH any time now. The inspectors would like to hear from you about your experiences good or bad. They will be interested in the service provided on repairs, dealing with queries, allocating homes to new tenants and implementing the Decent Homes programme. This is your chance to ensure that your views, opinions and complaints are heard so if you have something to say, say it now and say it to the inspector. The lead inspector's contact details are:



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