

LAND SALES - CABINET DEFIES COUNCIL!

In our April edition we told you about the Land Sales Committee's closed door plans to sell off a large number of plots of land and buildings in public ownership to raise the £150 million it had committed for projects such as the £35 million swimming pool in Seven Kings and the multi (but undisclosed) - million pound renovation of the area around the Town Hall. These sales were to include car parks, allotments and property used by charities.

Earlier attempts by Liberal Democrats to challenge this had failed. However, at a full Council meeting on 17th May a LibDem motion to secure a review of past and proposed sales was passed with the support from one Tory councillor and the helpful abstention by six others, all clearly disgusted by a flagrant abuse of power. Council agreed the Cabinet must prepare an assessment of the impact of any proposed sales, consult with members of the public and allow objectors to any sales a fair opportunity to make their case before making any final decisions.

A victory for democracy and plain common sense – you may think!

In fact the Cabinet has only agreed a review of the proposed allotment sales. However, with total disregard for the Council resolution and increasingly strong local opposition, it has announced its intention of going ahead with the sales of the car parks and will limit public consultation to the statutory minimum.

Parking in High Elms, Oaks Lane and Sunset Avenue

The residents' parking scheme in High Elms and Oaks Lane will be starting this summer and is likely to be adopted by Waltham Forest Council for the roads which lead into it.

Meanwhile concerns about double parking and rubbish dumping in Sunset Avenue remain and Area 2 Committee has instructed officers to find a solution.

Liberal Democrats have no wish to stand in the way of progress and the regeneration of Redbridge – we welcome it, providing any schemes put forward are properly thought through, offer benefits to all and do not serve to destroy what is already good. Sales of car parks and other land assets may (and that is questionable) help to regenerate central Ilford but it will also serve to fragment communities in Woodford. Apart from the loss of an important amenity that encourages local shopping and business, the additional and dense housing that will be permitted on the car parks will make for even more traffic congestion and more demand for the limited parking that remains.

Perhaps our three Monkhams councillors, all of whom are in the Cabinet and have been party to the whole series of decisions, can explain to us how these land sales are intended to benefit Woodford Green and the north of the Borough.

See also our petition on the back page in connection with the Charteris Road car park and the Woodford Library.

Graffiti Removal

Due to budget cuts, Council now forces businesses requesting removal of graffiti to pay for it. Last year LibDems in Area 2 secured a £5,000 allocation for this purpose which meant that the cost of this nuisance will not fall unfairly on victims of it.



THOSE TWO JAGS - A REALLY INCONVENIENT TRUTH!

Council Leader Alan Weinberg was forced to make an embarrassing climbdown when he agreed to review a scheme he had supported to purchase two specially adapted mayoral limousines for Redbridge that were to cost in excess of £100,000.

LibDems pointed out that the purchase of these two needlessly extravagant gas guzzling carbon emitting Jaguars contradicted the Borough's stated commitment to make Redbridge greener.

They presented a motion demanding that the Council purchase environmentally friendly vehicles instead.



At least this would have been a greener option

Prior to the debate Councillor Weinberg announced that he agreed with the LibDems and that other options would then be considered.

Unfortunately, it subsequently emerged that the vehicles were in fact ordered last December after consultation between officers and the "appropriate cabinet member" and they cannot now be cancelled without massive penalty payments.

Who that cabinet member was and why Councillor Weinberg did not know is, for the moment, shrouded in mystery.

Ticketing Traffic Wardens to get Ticking Off

It is normal practice in most London Boroughs and in most parts of Redbridge to allow up to 20 minutes for unloading vehicles outside business premises – always assuming there is no obstruction to traffic.

NOT in Woodford, where overzealous wardens with a daily target number of tickets to reach have been slapping on penalty notices without using discretion.



Following complaints, LibDems have asked officers to review the contract for this service and ensure that there is a reasonable and consistent approach to parking offences with clear rules communicated to drivers.

Shake Rattle and Roll

Residents of Chapel on the Green and Kempton Court have had a few sleepless nights recently. A manhole cover on the High Road has worked its way loose and makes an alarming noise every time a vehicle drives over it.

This could result in an accident if it causes a tyre burst and so is dangerous as well as a cause of disturbance.

Residents have tried to contact the Monkams councillors on many occasions but to no avail. LibDems will now take the matter up with the Highways Committee.

Got a gripe, want to get something off your chest or perhaps you have an idea that you think will help make life a little easier for everyone in your area. Please contact any one of the three Focus editors whose details are given on the back page

Safer Neighbourhood Scheme

On Tuesday 12th June the Police launched a local Neighbourhood Watch in Monkams Ward. The Monkams Safer neighbourhood team at Monkams Police Station is made up of a Sergeant, two PCs and 3 Community Support Officers. The meeting was well attended with just under 100 residents who were invited to volunteer as co-ordinators for the neighbourhood watches and members of the scheme. More co-ordinators are needed so, if you can, please volunteer to help make Monkams a safer area.

Attendees were also invited to join Ringmaster, a free computerised messaging system used by Redbridge Police to inform residents about local crimes, eg bogus callers, scams, current burglary trends and car crime. Ringmaster is programmed to send a voice message, e-mail or fax to you. Focus welcomes the increased visibility of police in Monkams and congratulates them for arresting youths for spraying graffiti in the area.

If you wish to join Ringmaster call 0208 345 2634

Keeping the Character of Woodford Green

In response to the attention we drew to planning decisions made on the development of 44-46 Snakes Lane West and, more generally, the consequences of large houses being sold off to make way for apartments, we have received dozens of e-mails and letters asking what pressure can be brought to bear on the Council to ensure that the character of Woodford Green is respected and preserved.

The Council has issued an on-line survey to find out attitudes to conservation of the built environment in Woodford Green. We would encourage you to respond to this.

We are particularly concerned about the proposed sales of the Charteris Road car park and the Woodford Library sites. Although the land sales were originally to a fund a new library building, more apartments and less car parking space will choke the Broadway.



Charteris Road car park on the afternoon of Wednesday 27th June 2007. There is not one space available so the argument that the car park is underutilised just will not wash!

Accordingly, we are asking that you join with us in petitioning the Cabinet member for Planning, Regeneration and the Environment, Councillor Prince, to halt these sales until such time as there is a strategic plan for the conservation and redevelopment of the area on which ward residents have been properly consulted. Return signed copies of the petition overleaf to one of us and we will forward them on

Focus editors Geoff Seeff and Ann Crook discussing with Kings Avenue resident, Rita Girling, how she would be affected by the loss of the parking amenity.



Petition

To: the Cabinet member for Regeneration, Planning and the Environment, Councillor Prince

Charteris Road Car Park and Woodford Library Sites

We, the undersigned residents of the Monkams ward, believe that Woodford Green is defined by the availability of its open space and by the quality and character of its housing and shopping areas. We further believe that excessive development of apartments on infill sites will detract from its attractiveness.

We note with concern the Council's intention to sell off the Charteris Road car park and the Woodford Library sites and call on you to halt the process of sale until such time as you have again consulted with ward residents and prepared a plan for the conservation and development of Snakes Lane West and the Broadway area.

Name (Please Print)

Signature

Address

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Signature

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