



InTouch

PORTCHESTER – Winter 2020

Saved by the wild geese

BRENT geese helped to save an important habitat from destruction by development.

Land south of Romsey Avenue, Portchester was recognised as an important wildlife area.

It led to residents celebrating victory after a tenacious two-year battle to get plans for 225 homes thrown out by Fareham planning committee.

There was more good news a week later when it was announced Romsey Avenue was excluded from the new Fareham Draft Local Plan and so was land earmarked for 600 homes west of Downend Road.

Portchester Councillor Nick Walker said: “I am sure residents, like me and my fellow ward Councillor Sue Bell, are relieved that their efforts to prevent the loss of this site will be very welcome.”

The committee had received 494 objections from 308 residents and accepted that the open space is an important primary

support area for Brent geese and wading birds – one of only 4 areas in the Borough.

It resulted in 12 grounds for refusal, with councillors adding the important highways reason that it would lead to extra parking restrictions in Beaulieu Avenue and Romsey Avenue, posing a threat to users and road safety.

However, the equally controversial proposal for 350 homes on 20.4 hectares (50.4 acres) at Winnham Farm, Downend, remains in the Draft Local Plan, despite Miller Home’s latest application being rejected by the planning committee in November on high-way grounds.

The proposed new Borough Plan for Fareham received full Council agreement and was published for public consultation.

It covers from 2021 to 2037 and identifies development locations that will deliver

a total of 8,389 houses and about 153,000 sq.m of employment space, and includes 4,858 houses at Welborne.

The plan and consultation comments will be submitted to the independent Planning Inspectorate, which will carry out a thorough review.

If it is found to be sound, it will be formally adopted by the Council; if not, the planners will have to take on board what should be done to make it pass muster.

PHOTO: Councillor Nick Walker (centre) with campaigners Mike Townson and Paul Farrell.



Pandemic emergency budget rules out council tax rise

AN EMERGENCY mid-year budget to manage a predicted £1.1m shortfall caused by the Covid-19 pandemic was agreed by the Borough Council

Fortunately, years of careful attention to finances by the Conservative-run Council means the shortfall can be met from reserves without hiking up council tax.

But the hole in the budget will have to be plugged by charges for services such as coastal car parks and green waste

collection.

Council Leader Seán Woodward said: “We have been prudent with our reserves for a number of years, so have a strong financial standing, but this will still have a very significant impact on what we can and cannot do for the rest of the year and for many years to come.”

Before the pandemic, the Council’s medium-term financial strategy predicted a funding gap of £1.5m over four years.

Plans were in place to overcome the shortfall, but indications are that the pandemic will widen the gap considerably, putting Council services at significant risk.

A 16% council tax rise of £23 would cover the £1.1m funding gap, but has been dismissed as an option.

“Most residents are surprised the Council delivers all services for just £3 per week for the average home, almost the lowest in the country;” he added.

NEWS ROUND

**Connect Youth Group**

It was good to see Connect back at the Parish Hall in October.

Connect is a community youth group geared towards 9 to 13-year-olds.

The Group meets at the Parish Hall on Fridays between 6 pm and 9 pm.

For further details please call Emma in the church office on 02392 321380.

Christmas in the precinct

Thank you to Portchester traders and everyone involved as a tree and Christmas lights will be organised this year for the precinct to bring festive cheer to Portchester.

There has been good news for our precinct recently so please remember to shop local, eat local and support our local businesses.

Join us for tea

You can support your parish church by taking tea there.

St Mary's, Portchester invites people to sample their new winter menu in the tea room or sitting outside. Takeaways are also available.

'Trip Advisor' gives it a 5-star rating and recommends it as a friendly venue offering excellent value.

Covid-19 restrictions are in place. Councillor Sue Bell said: "Support your parish church to make sure it's still there for you and your children in the future."

Election choice

Councillor Sue Bell was selected as Conservative candidate for the Fareham Portchester Division in next May's County Council elections.

Grit bins warning

As winter approaches, it is vital that Portchester residents can access grit bins if we get ice and snow.

If you know of any that are damaged or need topping up, contact Councillors Nick Walker or Sue Bell.

They will inform the County Council which is responsible for filling and maintenance.

Why not "like" our facebook page - In Touch with Portchester West.

Play area upgrades delayed

IMPROVEMENTS to four Fareham play areas have been disrupted by the Covid pandemic.

They include Dore Avenue, Portchester, where tendering should have taken place in the spring with completion by last month.

Councillor Nick Walker (pictured) said: "Officers were unable to go out to tender as planned to appoint a play installation company to carry out the works. As part of the Council's recovery plan, officers have revised the procurement time, and will now procure

a contract for both years 3 and 4 play area improvement works."

This will save on costs and could provide an opportunity to negotiate an improved discount with contractors.

The tendering process will begin in January with works being completed by the end of 2021.

**Get your clubcards ready**

TESCO EXPRESS is due to open shortly in Portchester Precinct

Work has started to convert the former Co-op premises.

It will include a cash machine and will be particularly welcomed by other traders and the elderly.

A Dominos Pizza is also expected to open in one of the units.

Councillor Nick Walker, pictured with Melojane Herbert, Portchester East Conservative candidate for next May's Borough elections, said: "This is positive news for our precinct and will bring a much needed offering for residents."

**'Perfumeless' propagations presented in pixels**

AVID Fareham gardeners didn't wilt under the Covid-19 pestilence.

Green fingers became keyboard nimble fingers as they desk-topped their entries in the prestigious South & South East England in Bloom competition.

Then they followed up with more digital displays in the Fareham in Bloom contest. Judges never got a whiff of perfumes from the blossoms, but they marvelled at the megabytes of exhibits submitted in a virtual gardeners' world.

Two of the 4 independent entries in the South and South East competition – Portchester Crematorium and Portchester Memorial Garden – won gold awards and allotments at Wynton Way and Red Barn were rated 'outstanding'.

Due to the pandemic, the Borough could not enter this competition in which

it has won gold for 16 successive years in the small city category.

For the first time since it began 25 years ago, Fareham in Bloom had to be judged on-line with judges' and public votes.

There were 100 entries in six categories ranging from gardens to window boxes, so there was some tough competition, with winners receiving prizes donated by St Margaret's Nurseries and Fareham Shopping Centre.

Congratulations to the best garden winners, Dave and Pauline Coates from Portchester, and residents of Burnham Wood for the best community floral display.



PHOTOS: The Mayor, Pamela Bryant, presents the award to Burnham Wood residents; Dave and Pauline Coates' winning garden.

Longer interval until new venue goes Live

FAREWELL Ferneham Hall ... HELLO Fareham Live.

But the curtain won't go up at the new £12m entertainments venue until 2023.

Its new name was selected by popular vote in which 49% of the 1,060 responses opted for the change.

It was scheduled to open in 2022, but opening had to be put back 6 months due to the uncertain impact of the pandemic.



The Council decided to delay opening to review the financial implications.

Executive member for leisure and community Councillor Sue Bell said the decision had to be made due to uncertainty in the arts and entertainments industry.

"It would be reckless for us to plough on without considering the impact of Covid-19," she said.

Cash help for voluntary groups

A SPECIAL GRANTS programme has been launched to ease the financial strain on smaller organisations in Fareham hit by the pandemic.

Charitable and voluntary organisations can apply online for a quick one-off payment of £250 to help address some of the financial pressures.

Applications from charitable, voluntary and community groups must show they meet all the following criteria to qualify:

- Provide a community service to residents in the Borough of Fareham.
- Need the funding to help meet extra running costs, or to cover income lost as a direct result of the Covid-19 restrictions.
- Supply a copy of their constitution and annual accounts.
- Provide evidence that they are a 'not for profit' organisation.
- Confirm that no alternative funding is available to meet identified needs.

Suella sees pub safety measures for herself

FAREHAM MP Suella Braverman met Steve McInerney from Star Pubs and landlords Scott and Chloe Armstrong to learn about the Covid-19 measures they are taking at the Wicor Mill on White Hart Lane.

She said it was great that they had benefitted from Government support and were clearly working hard to ensure a safe environment for customers.

"It was a lovely family atmosphere and thanks for the welcome," she said.

In with a share of multi-million major transport shake-up

PORTCHESTER will benefit from a share of £19m allocated to improve local transport links.

Ten new schemes to improve walking, cycling and bus travel in Fareham, Gosport and Havant will be delivered by Hampshire County Council after a successful bid for national funding.

It will complement the £56m awarded to Hampshire Portsmouth and Isle of Wight Councils from the Government's Transforming Cities Fund.

The local transport projects to be delivered by HCC by the end of 2023 include:

- Pedestrian and bus enhancements on the A27 at Portchester district centre
- Pedestrian, cycle and bus priority measures on the A27 Fareham between Delme Arms and Downend Road

Other schemes will be carried out in Havant, Leigh Park, Bedhampton, Gosport ferry terminus and town centre.

Seaside parking charges

FROM next year, coastal car parks at Hill Head, Portchester Castle, Passage Lane and Shore Road, Warsash and Swanwick Shore may charge you to park.

It's proposed that drivers will have to pay £1 per hour up to a maximum of 6 hours between 10am and 6pm. A season ticket for £80 is proposed for regular users.

Interested parties have been notified and there will be a 6-week public consultation starting in January.

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**COME AND JOIN US**

If you support Conservative principles and would like to vote to select your Council and Parliamentary candidates, to attend social and political events or help us by delivering InTouch in your street, then why not join Portchester Branch of Fareham Conservative Association? Please phone Nick Walker or Sue Bell on 02392 384943.

WE SERVE YOU ALL

Whether you voted for us or not, your Conservative councillors promise the highest standards of service to everyone in the community. Contact us any time and we'll respond personally within 48 hours.

4 InTouch with Westminster



Billions more promised for 'second wave' support

Recent weeks have been challenging for all of us here in Fareham.

At the beginning of November the Prime Minister took the difficult decision to impose tougher restrictions throughout England to protect NHS capacity this winter and save lives.

As a member of his Cabinet, I know that this decision was not an easy one and very much a last resort given the scientific data and predictions of a 'second wave' possibly proving worse than the first one.

The Government has been clear that we will do whatever it takes to support you as the situation evolves.

That is why we extended the furlough scheme throughout November so that employees will receive 80% of their current salary for hours not worked.

Business premises in Fareham forced to close have been able to receive grants worth up to £3000 per month and £1.1bn has been provided to local councils to enable them to support businesses locally.

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Suella

BRAVERMAN MP for Fareham



I WAS honoured to welcome the Education Secretary to Fareham College to officially unveil both the new T-Level teaching facilities at the Bishopsfield Road campus and the College's new Civil Engineering Training Centre in Lee-on-the-Solent.

T-Levels are a new two-year qualification for 16 to 19-year-olds, designed in collaboration with employers and businesses to prepare students for work, further training or study.

A 45-day industry placement is at the heart of each course to help young people develop relevant experience in pursuit of their desired careers.

Matched by funding from the Department for Education, Fareham College invested £1m into the new facilities to



Suella is pictured with College Principal and CEO Andrew Kaye and Education Secretary Gavin Williamson visiting Fareham College.

support T-Level courses.

It includes a simulated nursery environment for the Education and Childcare T-Level, and a state-of-the-art IT suite fitted with high-end gaming computers and a 9-screen video wall to support the Digital Production, Design and Development course.

The newly revamped Civil Engineering Training Centre will also support the careers of the world's future construction and engineering experts.

While bolstered by national funding, the project reflects the accumulative efforts of a pioneering collaboration between employers – such as Blanchard Wells – and Fareham College, and will equip civil engineers with the skills necessary to fulfil an increasing demand for regional infrastructure and housing.

Centres win major revamps, then forced to close

TWO Borough leisure centres are to get multi million pound upgrades.

But both were hit by the second lockdown and forced to close for a month.

Work was due to begin this month on a 617 sq metre extension to Fareham Leisure Centre, followed later by improvements to Holly Hill Leisure Centre.

It comes after Everyone Active presented a winning submission for a 10-year contract to run both venues.



Executive members were impressed by the company's plans to invest in new facilities to help deliver more revenue.

The ground floor gym at the Fareham centre will be extended, with new elevations to the roadside. Plus:

- Creation of internal splash pad to add

soft play area

- Refurbishment of dry changing rooms and café area
- Additional parking for 32 vehicles

At Holly Hill, a large pool store will be converted into a sauna and steam room and the foyer will be improved.

to the swimming pool

- New reception counter and refurbishment of the foyer
- New studio space and climbing area on lower ground floor
- Conversion of the squash courts to a

Green waste collection charges to meet Covid cash shortfall

YOU WILL have to pay for garden waste to be collected from 2022.

The Council will impose charges to try to plug the hole in its finances caused by Covid-19 and loss of Government grants.

Until now, the Council has included green waste as part of its fortnightly bin emptying service.

It's used by 40% of households at an annual cost of £336,000.

But two significant impacts have forced a rethink:

1 Enormous pressures on our finances with loss of Government grants and loss of income from coronavirus changes.

2 A recent Hampshire County Council decision to cease sharing material recycling income with borough councils from 2021, which could result in a loss

of £400,000 income for Fareham.

The changes will be introduced in February 2022.

Then, if you want your grass and hedge clippings collected, you will have to buy either a 140 or 240 litre wheelie bin at a cost of £16 or £17 in the first year.

On top of that, you'll have to pay an annual subscription charge of £50 or £60 for the Council to empty them.

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