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**Billingham North Ward**

**FOCUS**

No 103

**Editors:**

**Cllr Lynne Apedaile (Marsh House ward)**

**Cllr Colin Leckonby (Marsh House ward)**

**Keith Dewison**

**01740 645216**

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**COUNCIL TAX**

The 4.13% rise includes the Fire and Police precepts, but not the parish precepts. The council Tax for the year 2005-06 will be:-

Band A: £804.48, Band B: £938.56,  
Band C: £1,072.65, Band D: £1,206.72,  
Band E: £1,474.88p,

The Liberal Democrat Councillors wanted more money put into youth workers in the community when the budgets were set. However the Labour group said the money needed to be spent on surveying Council reception points, and that £50,000 wouldn't make much difference to youth work.

We think that it would have made a much needed difference and regret that the other Parties did not support the move. The budget included £1.75 million to prepare for the modernization of Billingham town centre and anticipated works for the Forum.

The Government injected £1 billion into local authorities this year to keep the council tax increases below 5%. They only did that because this could be election year for the Government. The Local Government Association have warned the Chancellor that he would have to earmark an extra £1.5 billion for councils in the Budget to avoid a "massive hike" in the council tax this time next year. So we need to watch what the Chancellor will do!

**CANDIDATES**

**CHOSEN**

Liberal Democrat Councillors Colin Leckonby and Lynne Apedaile have been unanimously selected to stand for the Billingham North Ward in the Stockton Council Election on Thursday May 5th. They are joined by well-known Billingham resident Keith Dewison. Lynne says: "I'm delighted we have Keith standing with us in Billingham North. His experience of working with the residents association will be a real asset." Keith is looking forward to meeting as many residents as possible over the next few weeks, listening to problems and working with Lynne and Colin to resolve issues.



**BILLINGHAM FORUM**

The expected cost of the Forum was discussed at the Cabinet meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup> February. A figure of £24 million was disclosed. The Gateway Project would have cost £21 million, but no funding was ever obtained. Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott's Office has just announced that some funding is now available for refurbishing Leisure and Sports complexes that cost over £20 million so the Council might get some help from there for the Forum. Keith, Colin and Lynne will press Stockton Council to explore this route for funding the refurbishment of the Billingham Forum.

**Liberal Democrats - the REAL alternative**

## DERWENT HOUSE & HIGH GRANGE HOUSE

Officers of Stockton Council's Housing Service have recently visited Derwent House and High Grange House to discuss with tenants possible ways to improve their housing.

Liberal Democrats support Stockton Council's commitment to the provision of quality housing for older people across the borough.

Sheltered housing schemes were never handed over to Tristar Homes like other council houses. This is because neither Tristar Homes nor Stockton Council can access the funding needed to improve sheltered accommodation to the high standard older people deserve.

Registered Social Landlords (often known as Housing Associations) can however access additional funding so Stockton Council are looking into a partnership with a Housing Association as a way forward.

The Council will work with the residents to draw up a list of improvements needed to bring the housing up to the desired standard. Several Housing Associations would be then asked to consider this and then draw up proposals.

Eventually it is hoped a partnership can be agreed. The residents would be involved in the process and when an agreement is reached all residents would have the final say through a vote. The transfer of sheltered housing schemes to a Housing Association would only be possible if the majority of tenants said yes.

Lynne, Colin and Keith urge sheltered housing residents to become involved in the process and get the best out of the system. Please remember your vote will count.

## BILLINGHAM TOWN CENTRE CONSULTATION

Lynne, Colin, 2 Conservative and one Independent Councillor attended a consultation session for Councillors. Only one of the 8 Labour Councillors from Billingham attended the same meeting. Councillors gave their ideas for improving Billingham Town centre.

Shoppers and visitors to the Town Centre as well as residents and community groups have also been consulted.

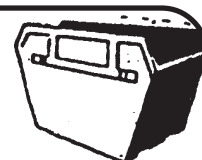
Lynne and Colin said in FOCUS 86 that *the people of Billingham should be given a clean sheet of paper and they should be holding the pen.* We are both glad to see this now seems to be happening. The survey could also be completed on-line on the Stockton web site, so Keith, Colin and Lynne hope that everyone found a way of having their say. The next stage is for the developers to bring some proposals forward. Billingham Liberal Democrats will be looking very closely at them to make sure they reflect what people have told us they want.

**Tunstall Avenue Bus Stop.** The sign has now been fitted to the existing post on **Tunstall Avenue.**

**Casson Way Fence.** Due to the efforts of Lynne, Colin, Keith and the residents the garden fence has been repaired and the residents feel much safer.



### SKIPS



The next community skip will be on 6<sup>th</sup> April on the grass at the side of 45 Newbury Way.

## WARD SURGERIES

Lynne and Colin will be holding ward surgery (no appointment needed)  
from **6.30 – 7.30pm**

**11<sup>th</sup> April**      **Low Grange Community Centre**

You can contact Lynne, Keith or Colin at other times by telephoning **Lynne** on **01740 645216** or **Keith** on **01642 533289** or **Colin** on **01642 872896**.

e-mail: **lynne.apedaile@stockton.gov.uk** or **colin.leckonby@stockton.gov.uk**

You can also write to **Lynne Apedaile** at **2 Sunderland Rd, Wolviston TS22 5LZ**,  
**Keith Dewison** at **26 Kennedy Gardens, Billingham TS23 3RF**  
**Colin Leckonby** at **73 Tunstall Ave, Billingham TS23 3QD**.

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