

FOCUS

Putting People First

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Edited by:
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Number 166



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A FAIR TAX FOR ALL??

Council tax bills will be arriving in a few weeks, and already the press predictions are of a very high rise. Because of how Westminster distributes money from general taxes and tells local councils what to spend it on, your Borough Council has very few choices. As council tax is charged per house, with a reduction for single people, a pensioner couple on low income but above the benefits level pay the same as a high earning younger family living next door in the same size house. Liberal Democrats say that this is unfair and have launched a campaign to have the tax system changed to one based on ability to pay, such as a local income tax.

A proposal supporting the change was put to Stockton Council this month but defeated by the other parties. However, Lib Dems including Fiona Hall, Euro candidate for the North East, continue to campaign.



Suzanne and Fiona Hall collecting names on the "Axe the Tax" petition in Stockton High Street.

FRIENDS OF NEWHAM GRANGE PARK

An initial meeting has been held, and the launch is planned for **Wednesday 28th January, 7.00 p.m.** at Medina House, Medina Close (just off Elm Tree Avenue). Do come along if you want to have a say in the future of the Park, or just want to find out more. If you cannot come to that meeting but would like to be involved in the future contact Suzanne or the Council on 397526.



- PLANNING CHANGES AT LAST

Big changes are on the way in the planning system in Stockton. Soon the venue for meetings will change to one where photographs and videos can be projected for the whole committee to see a site. Members of the public will have the **right** to speak to the committee about their objections and concerns. More of the minor applications will be delegated to officers, leaving the committee free to spend time on the major ones.

These changes, most of which were first called for in *Focus number 10 in 1982* by Suzanne, have just been agreed by the Council.

New Recycling arrangements

Stockton Borough Council is taking over the Blue Box & Bag recycling scheme in February. This should help us to sort out problems more quickly. New calendars have been issued as the fortnightly collections will be on the same day as the wheelie bins. Cardboard will no longer be collected from homes, as this is uneconomical, but may still be taken to SITA recycling centre at Haverton Hill.



PLANNING APPLICATIONS

1. **St. Marks School fence.** There is an application for green steel fencing to make all the buildings on this site more secure. Let Suzanne know if you would like to see the plan.
2. **Stockton 6th Form College** have an application for housing in part of their grounds, but the exit is proposed to be onto the Ring Road, not Bishopton Road West.

DOG BINS

The Council have asked Suzanne if extra bins are needed for the area, and she has asked for them to be put in places you have asked her for. These are on parts of the path from Darlington Back Lane to St Marks School, also the Barrington Ave / Biddick Cl area.

SNIPPETS



Old yellow markings on **Barrington Avenue** pavements have been chased up so repairs are done There has been no progress on the dropped kerb crossings on **Bishopton Road West** pavement, and Suzanne has been asking the Council to get on with finishing the pedestrian refuge at the junction with **Elm Tree Avenue** ... a chicane to stop motorcyclists on the path from **Ferndale / Harewood Crescent** over the bridge to **Brundall Close** has been asked for Suzanne has asked for the seat on the bus stop by **Whitehouse Drive** to be repaired ... no decisions yet on a number of salt bins requested requests for shrubs to be cut back in **The Vale** made

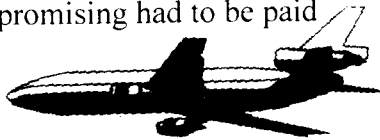
POLICE BUDGET.



Suzanne has been asking for facts on the proposed police budget. Councillors in Stockton not on the Police Authority had not been given these. It now seems that the Police Authority wanted a meeting, but their letters to the Council leader went unanswered till Suzanne put down a formal question on the issue!

At the last General Election Suzanne stood for parliament on the policy of providing 6,000 extra police - but paid for out of (properly costed) savings on Government spending. Labour didn't tell you that the police they were promising had to be paid for out of your savings!

Airport name



Whilst the row about the name rumbles on locally, Liberal Democrat MP s have been raising the issues in Parliament of pollution from aircraft, night time flights over residential areas and the importance of good public transport links to airports.

EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

On June 10th the country goes to the polls again to elect Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). This is NOT a referendum on whether to be part of the European Union, but it is a chance to choose people to represent us in the European Parliament. We need the best possible MEPs for the region to make sure that our voice is heard in Europe. **Fiona Hall** is our Number 1 candidate, and she has already successfully helped the Coble fishermen of Saltburn and Redcar, campaigned for safer streets and the safe disposal of toxic waste including the so-called 'Dirty Ships', and more.

Problems, Queries, Ideas & Views.

Suzanne will be holding her ward surgeries at **Elm Tree Community Centre**

17th February and 16th March

Young people 4.30 to 5.30 pm

adults 6pm to 7pm



Suzanne can be contacted at other times by telephoning 786456 or

writing to 3, Hoylake Way, Eaglescliffe,

faxing 657138 or e-mailing: sfletcher@cix.co.uk

You can write (no need for stamp) to:

Liberal Democrats, FREEPOST NEA 765,
STOCKTON-ON-TEES, TS16 9BR

LOCAL POLICE NEWS

PC Kieran Rafferty is the local beat officer, and there are now 4 Police Community Support Officers covering Elm Tree as well as some other areas. These are Sarah and Emma as before, and also Tracy and Michael. You can make contact by dropping a note through Medina House letter box or ringing 306604. If you want a response to an incident call 326326. 999 is for emergencies.

Writers corner



Elm Tree is on the literary scene with 3 residents having published works. Geoff Pattison has written 3 books, in memory of his wife Alma, and all proceeds are to the Butterwick Hospice. There are 2 books of *poems* and "*Snowy, the story of a snowman*". Contact Geoff at 1 Norwich Avenue, Tel 899813. Ron Restall has had "*Just a lad from the village*" published. This is a story of his life growing up in post war Billingham, and is available at the Tourist Information Centre in Stockton library. Alan Betteney has written a book "*Shipbuilding in Stockton and Thornaby*" and it can be obtained from him at 35 Fairwell Road, preferably ringing first on 582479.

SKIPS The next skips will be :

Thursday 29th January, Mosston Road

Wednesday 11th March, Elm Tree Community Centre car park.

You can ring 391959 to check before taking rubbish there.

You can contact the SITA recycling centre for disposing all household waste on 202300.

If you are taking items there in a van you need to ring about a permit first.