

MORE ABOUT "THOSE EXPENSES"

While we are not suggesting that councillors' expense allowances in this Borough are abused, John has gone with a fine-tooth comb through the Council's rules on the topic. He sent 29 queries to the officers responsible, as he found that in many places the rules were vague, obscure or even contradictory. He says, "It's important that everyone is clear exactly what expenses can be met from public money, so that there is no opening for someone in future to bend the rules. In anything connected with your money it's far better to get it right when there is no-one under suspicion, rather than shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted!" Stockton Liberal Democrat councillors have published our expenses on our website (www.stocktonlibdems.org.uk) for all to see. If you'd like a printout of the page just ask us.

LOCAL IMPROVEMENTS

Thank you to all who responded to our request for ideas on spending the limited budget given to ward councillors. As well as making up and lighting the path from **West View Terrace** to **Yarm Road** (*Focus* 149), we have decided to spend on extra dog-dirt bins, street lighting in **back Swinburne/Yarm Road**, a feasibility study on improving **Ashville Avenue** (problems with trees) and (subject to residents' views) parking bays in **Cedar Crescent**. A contribution will also be made to a relay aerial so that mobile CCTV cameras can be linked to the Security Centre; we will then be able to have Council mobile CCTV cameras in trouble spots here. Spending choices are limited this year because Council officers will not take on any fresh planting schemes (bulbs, shrubs, etc.) while the costs of their maintenance are under review.

SNIPPETS

Congratulations to our MEP **Fiona Hall** on her election as Leader of the UK Liberal Democrats in the European Parliament!
Good news - from this month every home in the Ward has cardboard and plastics collected fortnightly by the Council for recycling. Please contact our councillors if you have any problems.
Our councillors have met *Elementis* representatives and received assurances that environmental concerns will be met in clearing the **Urly Nook** site (*Focus* 151).

Contact us any time at:

Your Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Spokesperson: jacquie.bell50@googlemail.com, Jacquie Bell, Freepost NEA 765, Stockton-on-Tees, TS16 9BR

John Fletcher, 3 Hoylake Way, Eaglescliffe. Tel 787652. john.fletcher@stockton.gov.uk

Maureen Rigg, 4 Monmouth Dr. Eaglescliffe Tel 785689 maureen.rigg@stockton.gov.uk

Alan Lewis, 4 Broomfield Ave, Eaglescliffe Tel 784910 alan.lewis@stockton.gov.uk

Or see your councillors at Ward Surgery:

Tuesday 19th October, 6 -7pm, Egglecliffe Parish Hall, Butts Lane

Friday, 6th November, 6.30 - 7.30pm, Trinity Methodist Church, Witham Avenue

Tuesday, 16th November, 6.30 - 7.30pm, Egglecliffe Community Centre, Durham Lane

Friday 4th December, 6.30 - 7.30pm, Trinity Methodist Church, Witham Avenue

Don't forget your MEP:

Fiona Hall can be contacted at 55A Old Elvet, Durham, DH1 3HN, 0191 383 0119, e-mail fiona@fionahallmep.co.uk

Liberal Democrats -Up Your Street



Editors:

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Eaglescliffe Focus

No 153

A Fresh Start For Britain

At the recent Liberal Democrat Party conference in Bournemouth Alan Lewis and Maureen Rigg with Parliamentary Candidate Jacquie Bell were encouraged by the determination to tackle problems at source and bring a Fresh Start for the country.



Nick Clegg,
Liberal Democrat Leader

Given the state of public finances it would be dishonest for any party to go into the election with a long shopping list of pledges and not say how they can be afforded.

The next government will have to make hard choices about spending. Liberal Democrats have set out how we would make those choices to deliver three key priorities:

Create a sustainable economy: Getting people back to work through investment in green economic growth including energy efficiency projects; Breaking up banks so that the risks they take never again jeopardise the whole economy.

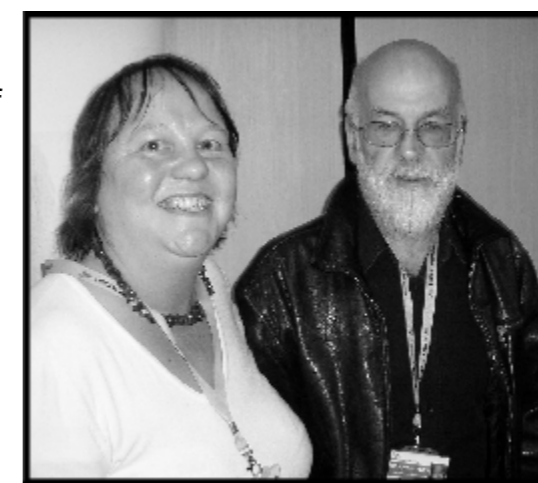
Build a fair society: The best start for every child, through smaller class sizes, extra help for children struggling at school, cutting student debt, training and jobs for young people.

And we will cut taxes for people on middle and low incomes – so that no one pays a penny in income tax on the first £10K they earn – paid for from green taxes and closing loopholes for the very rich.

Clean up Politics: To stop Labour and Tories going back to business as usual after the expenses scandal; Fair votes – so that every vote counts and safe seats are a thing of the past; A curb on

big donations to political parties so that no-one can "buy" our political system.

Jacquie Bell spoke in the Women's Policy debate where she highlighted the problems of carers. She noted the need for respite and support. Jacquie says "The services available depend on where you live and there are problems with pensions for those who cannot work due to their caring role. Childcare has an end date but caring for a dependent adult can be indefinite."



Jacquie Bell & Sir Terry Pratchett

During the conference Jacquie was able to speak with world famous author, Sir Terry Pratchett, on his experience of living with dementia.

Inside:
Egglecliffe School,
Speeding,
Stockton Council changes &
more

Eggescliffe School update

The Government has said NO to funding the rebuild of Eggescliffe School in the next few years. All of Stockton's secondary schools except Eggescliffe, Conyers in Yarm and All Saints in Ingleby Barwick will be included in a multi-million pound overhaul called Building Schools for the Future. Eggescliffe's buildings are desperately in need of improvement to match the high quality teaching and learning that goes on there. That is a high priority for the council but not for the Labour Government so there is no funding yet.



Stockton Council's first plan was to build on the existing playing fields at Allen's West BUT part of that site has a High Voltage Power Cable overhead and there is some evidence linking living under such cables to an increased risk of childhood leukaemia. The evidence is not conclusive but an all party committee of MPs has recommended not building more schools near them until more research is done.

Stockton Council's second idea is to build on Preston Park, in the south field near to Quarry Wood. BUT Preston Park is a tourist attraction, the green heart of the area round it, one of the most visited parks in the Tees Valley and a wonderful venue for a variety of events.

Many people have told us that they don't want the school on the park. They think, and we agree with them, that it

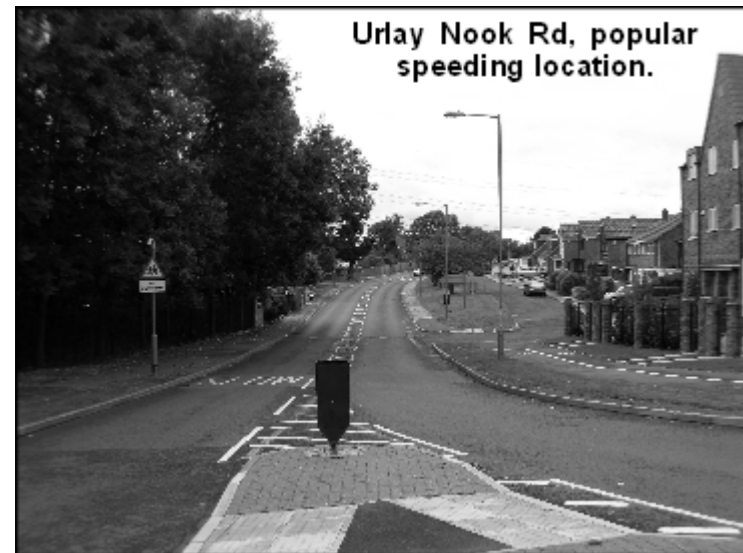
would reduce the value of the park to local people and to visitors.

SO - please let us know what you think of these ideas. If you can think of some other land which might be suitable and available please let us know.

SPEEDING TRAFFIC (Episode 3)

As promised in Focus 151 we now have news of the final conclusions of the Area Transport Strategy group, chaired by Maureen.

1. Safety cameras and police enforcement have been deployed on Yarm Rd and Urray Nook Rd recently but not as often as hoped owing to staff shortages but they are expected to be



increased in the near future. The checks will soon include evenings and nights.

2. Speed checks will be carried out along Yarm Rd to find out where the most frequent speeding problems occur.

3. A mobile speed indicator device which can also record speeds and the time of day will be deployed to help the police to effectively target enforcement especially on Yarm Rd and Urray Nook Rd.

4. The Department for Transport have refused permission for any more signs on the bus lane, claiming that the present ones are adequate. As usual with Government departments they think they know better than local people.

ELECTED MAYOR FOR STOCKTON?

Many of you will know that Stockton has a Civic Mayor chosen each year by the 56 councillors. Apart from chairing council meetings and other such formal tasks, he or she spends a great deal of time visiting community groups and schools, fundraising for charity and representing the Borough in the region and further afield.

We've been privileged to have had two mayors in recent years who were residents of Eggescliffe ward - Suzanne Fletcher, councillor for Bishopgarth & Elm Tree ward and John Fletcher, councillor for Eggescliffe.

Meanwhile the Leader of the council (usually the leader of the largest group or coalition of groups) is also elected each year by the other councillors and he or she is the political leader, leading the setting of policies and budgets.

The Labour Government doesn't think this is a good way of doing things. So from 2011 we have to have either a mayor elected by all residents for 4 years or a leader elected by councillors for 4 years. Both will then choose their own cabinet to share the responsibility.

If we have an elected mayor we can't have a civic mayor also, so hundreds of years of tradition will be lost. If we have a leader we will still have a civic mayor.

If we have an elected mayor there is no way to remove him/her before the 4 years is up. If we have a leader he/she can be removed by a vote of no confidence in the council at any time. We believe that this makes a leader more closely accountable than an elected mayor.

The council has to consult with residents to see which one people prefer, then to hold a referendum. There will be information in Yarm library, Stockton central library and Municipal buildings in Church Rd about the choices. Those who prefer to use the internet can see the information and express their opinion at <http://www.stockton.gov.uk/yourcouncil/38704/newexecutivearrangements/>

GIVE US DECENT HOUSING!

John, Alan and Maureen, frustrated as you are at the length of time that **Witham House** has been empty, have met with *Erimus* and the Council to try to find a way forward. Thanks to the Labour Government's handling of the economy, the housing market has crashed and so the original plans can't go ahead.

The Government has provided no money for replacement sheltered housing – indeed, this Borough will not get a single new council house from the much-trumpeted national initiative to build more.

Government rules mean there cannot be enough money to bring all council housing here up to standard while keeping it under the democratic control of elected councillors, so tenants will be asked to vote on a transfer to Tristar Homes.

All this after **£88 million of rents** being taken by Government over 9 years to go other councils. AND the government sets national priorities which mean OAP bungalows here can't get double glazing for draughty windows!

Fiona Hall MEP has joined Liberal Democrats locally in calling for a fair deal for council housing in the North East where 1 in 4 council houses is below standard but the call has landed on deaf ears at Westminster.



Fiona Hall MEP with Liberal Democrats from Stockton

FOCUS, now in its 23rd year

Campaigning with local people