

Councillor's report: Mik Sabiers

South Acton Labour councillors' update

Welcome to the February update, this month has been all about the budget, but there have also been an outing for the Acton sword at the Crayle service, an NHS rally, surgeries, canvassing and a catch up with the local police team.

It all starts at Ruskin Hall

My month started off at the Ruskin surgery, held every Saturday at the Labour party's Ruskin Hall (Church Road, Acton) where most of the Acton Labour councillors deal with cases on a rotating basis. At the surgery we deal with a wide variety of questions covering anything that the council has some responsibility for, queries range from updates on planning to housing, recycling and more. A councillor is always there from 11 to noon every Saturday. I'm next at the surgery on 4 March.

Sword wielding at the Crayle service

The start to the month also saw the annual Crayle service Held at St Mary's by Morrison's. It was good to be joined by our MP Rupa Huq and Ealing mayor Cllr Patricia Walker and a number of Acton councillors. The Crayle service or sermon is



preached every year to mark a bequest from the Crayle sisters - Ann and Sarah - back in the 1700s. The event was extra special this year as not only did the mayor and MP give a reading but we managed to get the Acton sword to come with the Ealing mace. Former mayor Phil Portwood enjoyed wielding the sword for all to see (and without any injuries thankfully), and afterwards some of us repaired to the refurbished Kings Head which is now a hotel and pub (left).



South Acton police team. The latest quarterly results are mixed, there has been a slight rise in burglaries in the ward (up to 23), but conversely there was just one reported robbery. Theft of motor vehicles (11 reported, down 1) and from motor vehicles (17 reported, down 9) has generally remained at similar levels, with mopeds a key target for thieves. Our ward priorities remain unchanged, but one of the new innovations is that means there's a greater and more effective focus on enforcement and catching criminals rather than paperwork has been the roll out of body worn cameras filming arrests, altercations and more. This has led to a reduction in complaints as well as the ability for police to send through evidence rather than go to court in person, again freeing up the team to fight crime.

Less rubbish, more recycling and changes to council tax

On Thursday 9 February I chaired the latest Overview & Scrutiny meeting looking at the budget and reviewing the waste and recycling service. The latter has been a regular feature of OSC since we outlined the intention to move to alternate weekly collections. Scrutiny has been key in making sure not only the roll out worked but that issues are quickly ironed out, there's still more to do but there have been strong wins.

Recycling tonnage has risen by 12 per cent, waste has decreased by some 20 per cent and in total the Ealing recycling rate has shot up six percentage points to break the 50 per cent barrier. The current rate in Ealing is now 52.72 per cent. Find out all the details in the report to OSC here: <http://tinyurl.com/hvmjfxf>

The other key item on the agenda, and also at cabinet the following week and council this Tuesday was the budget. Local government has borne the brunt of the austerity agenda which despite a new prime minister continues. Yvonne as cabinet member for finance highlighted how we faced £168 million in cuts and £25 million more is on the way, making a grand total of £193 million in cuts. At the same time the pressure on adult social care is piling ever higher, and after years of freezes many councils are now saying enough is enough and moving towards council tax rises. In Ealing we have decided that we have no choice but to take the 2 per cent Tory social care precept, which means there will be an extra £2.3 million for adult social care, this is not enough, but recognising that people are still seeing squeezes in their pay packets we have used some reserves to allocate an extra £13 million to deal with this crisis, rather than raise bills. It is also worth noting that to support policing the London mayor Sadiq Khan has allocated a small rise in his share of council tax.

Full council passes the budget

After scrutinising the budget the main point I raised was how council tax is not fit for purpose in terms of funding, sadly I did not get to outline my comments at full council this week, just as I was about to speak the mayor ended the debate after a number of odd interventions from the Tories who either didn't like the detail (Young), didn't agree with the management of finances (Stafford the elder), didn't understand council funding (Proud) or just really were on a different planet (Sumner). The Lib Dems were more circumspect outlining a litany of reasons why the budget concerned them but ignored their role in supporting Tory cuts in the 2010-15 Con-Dem coalition. There were strong



speeches on the Labour side highlighting the hard work that has gone into balancing the books (Johnson), how Ealing has found £15 million more for social care (Bell), the £10 million pressures in children's services (Rai), the hypocrisy of the Tories (Hynes) and how Ealing had innovated (Mason). The end result was that the Tories backed the Labour proposal to freeze the core council tax, but to accept the 2 per cent adult social care precept, that means there will be a slight rise in bills this year, equivalent to an extra 41p a week on the average bill. The social care crisis is a national crisis and one that needs a central government solution, sadly the May government wants to throw the issue at local government without adequate funding, that is why we've levied the Tory two per cent for social care, as *councillor Johnson said: "Looking after the borough's most vulnerable people is one of the vital things we do, and most costly. We cannot turn our backs on this who need us, so we have no choice but to pass on the government's social care precept."*

Backing #OurNHS

We have also been out pounding the pavements and knocking on doors to talk to residents about the pressures on our local NHS services and the threat to our A&Es. Last week saw an oversubscribed public meeting to look at what's next for our local NHS, people are worried that services are being run down and that accessing the NHS will get harder. The campaign to save our local NHS continues, and Julian as council leader announced that he will be leading a section on the #OurNHS march on Saturday 4 March. Don't allow the NHS to be undermined and ultimately destroyed by the Tory government. Say no to the STP, say no to the Tories say yes to the NHS, because it's #OurNHS. You can find out more here: <http://www.ournhs.info/> and put the date in your diary, make your banners, hold them high and March to save #OurNHS On 4 March.



Coming up

And on that note it's time to finish, My last meeting of the month is Audit committee next Tuesday, while the next month has a packed schedule as I have two OSC meetings, two school governor meetings, two canvassing sessions, but only one surgery at Ruskin Hall. The other big item will be the South Acton ward forum on Wednesday 22 March, we're at the Armenian Centre on Mill Hill Road, do come and join us for the latest updates and as ever if you have any questions just drop me a line.

Warm regards

Mik

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