

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

David Jones

Emsworth Cottage Hospital

Emsworth's rumour machine may not be unique, but it is nevertheless, very efficient. For those who are not switched in or on, the current hot topic is, again, our Cottage Hospital. There is now a real threat of it being closed to in-patients 'in the near future'. I am told that no final decision has yet been taken by the East Hampshire Primary Care Trust, but the inference is that such a decision at least could, if not should, be expected!

This situation is despite all the assurances that we have been given over the last few years that no action would be taken over the Cottage Hospital until alternative arrangements had been made. These were first in the form of the new Oak Park Hospital in Havant and then with the development of a 48-bed 'facility' to be operated by the Social Services in the grounds of Emsworth House beside Havant Road. Oak Park Hospital will now not open before 2008 and completion of the development behind Emsworth House is not expected before early 2006. There could therefore be a gap of at least six months before the replacement of the 15 beds for in-patients in the Cottage Hospital become available.

The problem is due to significant overspend by the East Hampshire Primary Care Trust during the last few years coupled with firm instructions from Central Government's Auditor General Department to 'balance the books'. This in turn means paying back the debt and operating within budget, as well as meeting numerous performance targets!

Even if further rumours reach you first we will publish any news, including the short-term consequences, on our notice board as soon as we receive it.

Parking in Central Emsworth

The Borough Council have now been responsible for street parking for two months and some of you will have received unwelcome messages under your windscreen wiper blades! Of more general importance is any change in the impact on the fragile balance of parking and our shops. We are working closely with the EBA and expect to have discussions with HBC shortly to consider any necessary short-term measures, pending the major review to be undertaken in October 2006 when their traffic officers will have established a database of 'behaviour' in the Borough.

The South East Plan

As I have commented previously, the new planning system now being introduced justifies the ERA setting up a new sub-committee to concentrate on studying the draft SE Plan and its likely impact on HBC and Emsworth. Pete Izard and Jo Dyer have agreed to become ad-hoc members and undertake this work. We shall thus be better prepared to anticipate changes that the new regime may force on us and for us to consider what action we should take.

Please note: the speaker at the July QGM will talk about the impact of the SE Plan (for more details see page 2).

Market Town Initiative

Brendan Gibb-Grey

Many residents will remember the public meeting that was held in the Community Centre towards the end of 2004, to discuss the Market Town Initiative. This is sponsored by the Countryside Agency and supported by Hampshire County Council and indeed our own Borough Council. Emsworth has been selected as one of three communities in south Hampshire to be considered for substantial funding to ensure the vitality of local services, housing, jobs and education.

Progress since that meeting has been rather slow because a coordinator to work in Emsworth and the other identified market towns is still to be appointed. I understand this will happen by the end of June and the selected person will begin work helping us to prepare a funding bid. It is vital that the process involves as many people as possible to bring real and lasting benefits to our community.

Read the next issue of The EMS to keep track of this important project.

Praise for staff at Victoria Cottage Hospital

Virginia Wilson-Smith

My friend, Lois O'Reardon, died in the Cottage Hospital on March 10th, 2005. She asked me to write a few lines in The EMS, to thank the staff for their loving care and attention during her last days.

Lois could not praise highly enough the dedication, sensitivity and sympathetic care she received from all the staff and she wanted everyone in Emsworth to know how wonderful they were to her.

Their care gave her comfort and eased the rigours of her final illness.

Parking Supervision

Brendan Gibb-Gray

Residents and visitors to Emsworth will have noticed the impact on parking supervision and enforcement since Havant Borough Council assumed responsibility for this matter from the Police in April 2005. Parking attendants now patrol streets and car parks enforcing the regulations. No longer are our streets clogged up with people leaving vehicles parked for long periods of time in one position, sometimes dangerously, but there are two areas of concern to residents, visitors, business people and service providers alike.

The first concerns the permitted free parking time of 30 minutes for "on-street" parking. Many people complain that this is simply not long enough to carry out a visit to shops and services. A total of 160 enforcement notices were issued in Emsworth during May and this is discouraging customers according to business people who are complaining of a drop in sales during the last couple of months. If this continues, it will have a serious long-term impact on the ability of businesses to survive in Emsworth.

As will be seen elsewhere in The EMS, Emsworth came in the top 10 of towns/villages that could still be described as 'home towns'. Emsworth is a treasure and deserves the full support of our local authority to help it survive and prosper.

The second issue affects a small but significant minority of people living near the centre of Emsworth, on both sides of the A259, who do not have a garage or "off-street" parking. They complain that they have to constantly move cars to keep one or two steps ahead of the parking attendants.

It was intended to review all aspects of the new regulations in 18 months time, but these two issues require urgent attention now. I am pleased to say that meetings have been arranged between your councillors and council officers during the coming weeks to discuss and improve the new arrangements. I will keep you informed of developments.

Whose Line is it Anyway?

Brian Edwards-Picknett

The story begins - one morning in March with the appearance of notices on lampposts declaring proposed amendments to street parking regulations.

To satisfy their concerns, residents of Church Path held a meeting to voice their various opinions using Cllr Brendan Gibb-Gray as a willing sounding board.

During the ensuing few weeks, residents passed their comments to the Council.

The story continues - at a follow-up meeting, arranged in Church Path's Parish Room, at which Brendan produced two traffic officials, Martin Leach, Havant Borough Council Traffic Engineer and Kevin Joiner, local Traffic Sergeant, to give their thoughts regarding the proposals and to hear further feedback.

The room was filled - standing room only - in a good-hearted spirit of community and the audience was treated to an opening cabaret - the manic rantings of one non-resident who was capably handled by Brendan.

Reassurances were given by Kevin regarding emergency access and Martin Leach was keen to stress that both he and the Council wanted to listen to and accommodate residents' concerns rather than impose restrictions for their own sake.

The story ends - that same evening in May with Martin and Kevin leading a Pied Piper road walk punctuated by much finger pointing, discussion, questions and answers and shows of hands.

As a result amendments were made to the proposals - additions to and removals from - leading to a mutually acceptable settlement and a standing ovation for Martin and Kevin.

Yes, it sounds quirky but Emsworth works!
It restores faith in local democracy doesn't it?

Shopmobility Emsworth

The Shopmobility scheme provides scooters to people with disabilities or those with short or long-term mobility problems. Scooters provide independence and access to shops, services and social amenities. Tuition and delivery are free in Emsworth.

The scheme is supported by Havant Borough Mobility Service, the Emsworth Business Association and Emsworth Pastoral Centre.

For more information call: Shopmobility Emsworth 07949 889513 or Tony Roberts 02392 428494 or Bruce Hailstone 01243 373777 Monday to Saturday between 9am to 12 noon.



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