

GOLDSWORTH NEWS

September 2019 — Issue 169



GPCA
Goldsworth Park
Community Association
www.ourgoldsworthpark.org.uk

Autumn edition



Lakeview Fun Day

See Page 6

Lakeview residents manned a well-stocked raffle stall while Isla Robertson (7) got to know a southern white faced owl and the Sing Gold choir gave a foot-tapping performance



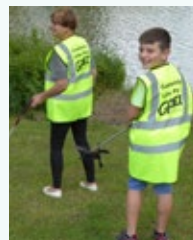
GP Councillor hits out at high-rise development

See Page 9



Woking Council gift GPCA with personalised litter-picking kit

See Page 3



Concerns over dogs, swimmers in lake

See Page 7

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GOLDSWORTH NEWS is the magazine of the Goldsworth Park Community Association and is distributed free to approximately 5,000 homes and organisations throughout Goldsworth Park and the surrounding area.

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Please submit articles for the next edition
to: editor@ourgoldsworthpark.org.uk

GPCA MEETINGS

Meetings of the Community Association
are held at Goldwater Lodge.

Next meeting:

AGM, Wednesday November 6, 7.30pm.

All residents are welcome. If you would
like to be put on the mailing list for
minutes and other information,

Email: chair@ourgoldsworthpark.org.uk
or call 01483 714096.

LOCAL COUNCILLORS

Conservative councillors hold a surgery at
Costa's in the shopping centre on the first
Saturday of the month from 9.30 to 10.30am.

Councillors: Ann-Marie Barker WBC
and James Sanderson WBC (Lib Dem).
Chitra Rana WBC, Saj Hussain SCC & WBC
and Colin Kemp SCC & WBC (Conservative).

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Please read and recycle

Views from the Chair

A FEW days ago, I attended an illustrated talk given by Roger Westcott, our friend From the Lakeside, to the residents and visitors to Brockhill, the Council's showcase extra-care housing facility for frail and vulnerable people.

The talk was about all the improvements that he had made to the lake and its banks with the support of the GPCA and the help of other volunteers. If you follow Roger's column in this magazine, you will have read about the Lake Bank Restoration Project and its achievements.

It made me realise just how much had been accomplished by the Project over the years – the lake has developed from a barren place with crumbling banks and little vegetation to the oasis you see now with banks supported by platforms for fishing, picnicking, etc., and lush reeds, irises and bulrushes providing a habitat for wildlife. And yet it was all done a little bit at a time starting with one platform back in 2007.

The GPCA is now supporting another project, Natural Goldsworth Park, which aims to create a complementary natural habitat of lake, woodland/wetland and meadow, improving biodiversity and sustainability, contributing to well-being, and for the community to enjoy.

We have recently had the good news that Thames Water has agreed funding to enhance the woodland and make a path through the woods so everyone can appreciate the flora and fauna found there.

We now feel that it is time to make a start on the meadow – or one or two small patches of the meadow – to increase the number of wildflowers to benefit bees, butterflies, and other pollinators. The first stage will occur when Serco has cut the grass at the end of the season, when we will be looking for volunteers to come along and help clear the cut grass. Then we can prepare the ground for planting.

If you would like to join in this exciting next step, please let me or Gerry Smeesters know; my email address is below and Gerry's is projects@ourgoldsworthpark.org.uk. You can follow the project at www.facebook.com/Natgoldsworth/

If you have any issues of general concern or would like to be involved in the work of the GPCA, please contact me through this magazine or at chair@ourgoldsworthpark.org.uk
www.ourgoldsworthpark.org.uk

Irene Watson, GPCA Chair



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Best dressed pickers!

COME and join us on our next community
litter pick on Saturday October 12 and get
kitted out with our new personalised high-
viz jackets!

Woking Council has kindly donated the jackets
and picking sticks to the GPCA and as usual will
supply rubbish bags and arrange collection.

Trying out our new jackets and picking sticks
are Goldsworth Park residents Liz Wilkinson and
grandson Ze who regularly take part in our tidy-ups.

The litter pick will start at 2pm, and volunteers
should meet at Goldwater Lodge by the lake. Bring
gardening gloves and wear sturdy shoes.

We all like to see a clean and tidy Park so why not adopt an area close to home to keep
litter free – it seems to be a welcome growing trend.

Failing that, if there are any areas that need a clean-up let us know and we will do our
best on the day to come picking!



FROM THE LAKESIDE – Roger Westcott at Brockhill



GPCA public meeting, July 24

GPCA Chair Irene Watson changed the format of the meeting by taking questions from residents at the top of the agenda to ensure there was sufficient time to discuss thoroughly any concerns raised.

Questions could be submitted in advance and the first issue raised was why there were no benches on the western bank of the lake. The Chair explained that the land on the housing side of the path was privately owned and that the bank on the water side was considered too steep for benches to be safely sited. Possible disturbance to residents was also an issue.

Other subjects raised:

Dog waste bins

Hannah Rees, Woking Council's neighbourhood officer, reported that a new bin had been installed in Bampton Way and WBC would site another close to the bus stop in Sythwood. Some bins were now multi-purpose and needed stickers to show this.

Rat population

A number of residents expressed concern at the number of rats they had seen, particularly close to the lake. Hannah said that she had received no reports of increased rat activity, but hand baiting was ongoing.

Roger Westcott, Goldsworth Park Angling Club secretary, said that not much bait had been taken and that the hot weather attracts rats to the lake for drinking water.

Disabled access

Irene reported that the shopping centre managing agents had agreed to look at a slope into the car park that was causing problems for wheelchair users, but it was unlikely to be a simple fix. The centre owners were considering a full refurbishment of the car park and would ask their consultants to look at disabled access issues.

Noise nuisance

Some residents with properties close to the lake expressed concerns about music noise late into the evening on some days and suspected it may be coming from the Dianthus Building or the community hall. Gary Rima-Muranyi who manages the buildings told the meeting that noise levels during functions are strictly controlled and nuisance noise was likely coming from a private house or from the Wishbone Way car park where car audios were often played at full blast. Complaints about noise should be made to Woking Council which operates an out-of-hours service.

Inconsiderate parking

Surrey County Councillor Saj Hussain confirmed that parking at the junction with Clifton Way and Armadale Road by visitors to Brockhill will be investigated at the next annual review. Concerns were also expressed about parking close to the junction of Clifton Way and Denton Way. Cllr Hussain said this would also be looked at along with parking outside Sythwood School.

Signage

Roger Westcott said that "No swimming" signs at the lake were not working. People were swimming in the lake during hot weather and dogs were being allowed into the water. He had spent an hour fishing on the lake and counted seven dogs in the water and two groups swimming. Hannah Rees said WBC was looking at the signage around the lake and the issue of keeping dogs on leads.

The chair asked about Public Spaces Protection Orders to tackle the issues. Hannah said that PSPO's were being considered for the whole borough, but different rules would be needed for different areas.

Public Spaces Protection Orders deal with a particular nuisance in an area that is having a detrimental effect on the quality of life

for those in the local community. It can prohibit certain things or require specific things to be done.

The Chair told the meeting that there was no news from the Charity Commission on the GPCA's application to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation but hoped to hear in the autumn.

Irene then congratulated Brockhill, Goldsworth Park's sheltered housing complex, on its 30th birthday. She added that perhaps more publicity was needed to advertise the many services Brockhill offered to non-residents.

Finance

GPCA treasurer Tina Hartley reported that the Association's financial statements had yet to be audited and would be presented at the AGM in November. Finances had been streamlined with a move to online banking and more effort was being put into chasing up unpaid invoices for advertising in the Goldsworth News.

The Association had around £30,000 in cash reserves and this amount was comparable with other similar charities.

Natural Goldsworth Park

Project manager Gerry Smeesters reported that Thames Water had pledged £10,000 for a wood-chip path through the woodland to the north east of the lake. Woking Council was in on the discussions and detailed proposals would be published. Planning permission was not required and work could begin in November.

The lake

Roger Westcott told the meeting that following the fox attack that killed the male swan, the female and cygnet were doing well at the swan sanctuary. It was thought that illness at the time of the attack may have left them too weak to defend themselves.

A carp, named Bronzy by anglers, believed to be about 50 years old had died from old age, but there was evidence of offspring from the veteran fish.

Wildfowl were doing well and the grebes had produced a second brood.

The next lake working party would be held in October and all were welcome to help out, not just angling club members.

GPCA fete

Before closing the event Irene said that after a long break of 12 years the Association would be holding a summer event in September 2020. Planning was already underway under the leadership of GPCA social media editor Cathy Salmon who would be pleased to hear any input or ideas from residents.



PARTY TIME – Irene Watson represented the GPCA at Brockhill's 30th birthday party and is pictured here with Woking's Mayor Cllr Beryl Hunwicks (centre) and Julie Meme, the borough's Home Independence Manager

GPCA AGM, Wednesday November 6, 7.30 pm Goldwater Lodge

Funding for woodland walk



NATURAL GOLDSWORTH PARK and the GPCA are delighted to announce that Thames Water will be undertaking and funding management works in the wooded area nearest the lake later this year, writes GERRY SMEESTERS.

The purpose of the work, estimated at some £10,000, will be to create a woodland walk with entry/exit points onto the lake footpath and another onto North Meadow.

This fantastic news follows exploratory discussions started between NGP and TW in early spring 2019, to consider mutually beneficial opportunities to make the woodland habitat more accessible to the community.

NGP Patron Shirley Slocock said this was 'excellent news' and that she was looking forward to hearing more as the details are agreed.

Ian Crump, Field Biodiversity Officer for Thames Water, described the project as 'incredibly exciting'.

Ian added that his ability to persuade his TW colleagues to agree funding was down to the high degree of fit between the NGP project objectives and TW's own biodiversity programme. In particular, that NGP was community led, focused on nature, biodiversity, health and wellbeing and promoted the potential use of the local natural habitat by schools for outdoor classroom activities as well as other community groups which would benefit from access to nature.

The proposed timing of works, in winter, will itself reduce risk to the ecology but a number of preliminary ecology related tasks will need to be undertaken to confirm impacts on current wildlife and botany. Residents in nearby Willowmead Close will be informed about the exact timing and nature of works, whilst general notices will be posted for users of the lake and North Meadow.

The GPCA, TW and Woking Council are fully committed to working jointly towards the most effective outcomes from the TW funding and agreeing the detail of the route for the new walk. The vision of creating a woodland walk in this part of the recreation area has been on the table for some 24 years. In 2019 the GPCA fully expects this

vision to make a substantial leap forward and become reality.

In 2020 and beyond, further general woodland management activity will present the community with opportunities to volunteer for GPCA working parties. We look forward to hearing from those who may be interested to get involved in some way. The GPCA will release news of the project through the NGP Facebook page and Twitter account, as well as on its own Facebook page and at www.ourgoldsworthpark.org.uk

Big Butterfly Count

This survey closed on August 11. I recorded some 14 species, most backed up by photos. The seasonal timing of the survey is not ideal for North Meadow butterflies, as some species had already finished or diminished by late July. In due course all butterfly sighting records will be formally recorded on the national nature database, iRecord.

projects@ourgoldsworthpark.org.uk

Study our dragons and damsels



PARK LIFE – the common darter dragonfly can be seen at the lake

DO you love all creatures great and small, have a keen eye, a camera and a little time on your hands to study one of our most beautiful forms of insect, the dragonfly?

We know we have lots of both dragons and damsels visiting the lake but how many or what species unfortunately we don't know. Having some idea of what's what is very important data when it comes to any work or activity considered in the future on site, ensuring we protect and or improve habitat rather than making a wrong decision.

If this is something that appeals to you and bear in mind it's not a huge commitment, just an hour or so here and there, then we would love to hear from you, by contacting either Roger Westcott via the Goldsworth Park Angling Club or GPCA or Gerry Smeesters, project manager of Natural Goldsworth Park.

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Our community spirit

Revd Malcolm Herbert



Andrew's Church

I'VE just returned home from leading the Sing Gold community choir doing their stuff at the Lakeview Fun Day organised by the Lakeview Community Action Group. A great time was had by all.

One word keeps cropping up in my mind... and throughout this magazine... a publication produced by the Goldsworth Park... Community... Association.

Yes it's that word... *Community*. One of the songs we sing in the choir is that well known number 'Imagine', with the simple line 'Happy Together... whatever the weather!' And the weather really behaved itself at the Fun Day.

Community is something that happens when people come together from a wide range of backgrounds and are able to work together for their own and other people's common good. We see this happening all around us on Goldsworth Park and this magazine shows what is being achieved for the common good when people do come together.

However challenging the task or project, however many setbacks may be encountered on the journey, working and serving together does indeed add to the quality of our life together. Happiness after all is not about getting what we want. Happiness is discovered in working together as community to build up community.

BUT... you knew there would be a catch. Community comes at a cost. You and me carving out time for community building. Not necessarily a lot of time but when and where we can. For me as a Christian, being involved in creating and building community is what the Love of God is really all about.

Back to that song 'Imagine' and the key phrase that unlocks happiness is quite simple 'Me and You, and You and Me... **Together.**'

Malcolm Herbert is a retired priest on the staff of St Andrew's Church. He also leads the Sing Gold community choir and is involved with Andy's Community Cafe.

Lakeview fun in the sun

LAKEVIEW Community Action Group held a successful and enjoyable family fun day on August 17.

The event was well attended by residents and visitors who enjoyed the warm, sunny summer weather.

Popular stalls included well-stocked adults and children's raffle, face painting and the chance to hold unusual pets brought along by Pentangle Aquatics of Knaphill and owls and kestrels courtesy of Berkshire Birds of Prey. The barbecue was manned by volunteers from New Vision Homes, Woking Council's housing partners.



ATTRACTIONS – visitors had a good choice of stalls

Sing Gold, Goldsworth Park's community choir, opened the event with a programme of popular songs.

Local councillors Colin Kemp, Ann-Marie Barker and James Sanderson attended.

Cllr Kemp, Woking representative for Horsell, said: "Events like this are all about bringing the community together."

The Lakeview group, based at the purpose built community centre in Sythwood, organise a number of community events. On Tuesday afternoon they hold afternoon tea for adults and babies between 3 and 4pm. Lift Up Together on Thursdays is a group for people who have issues and would like some support.

On Fridays Little Minions is for children in academic years one to six. Years 1-3 meet between 4.30 and 6pm and years' four to six between 6.30 and 8pm.

LCAG is a charitable organisation working for the Lakeview Estate community. For more information contact Sandra White on 07542 119241.



SNAKES ALIVE – Hasnain (right) and Danyal get to grips with a boa constrictor

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From the Lakeside



■ Roger Wescott is Goldsworth Park Angling Club secretary and fishing bailiff working in partnership with Woking Council to oversee fishing, monitor fish stocks and other wildlife, and keep the area clean and tidy.

I DON'T like to have a gripe but I feel I do need to say how disappointed I've been with the actions of some people during the hot weather.

Where do I start? Firstly some dog owners clearly choose not to follow the rules that are on display round the lake stating dogs must not enter the water, the reasons behind this ruling are in fact primarily to protect the health of your dog and to protect wildlife on and round the lake.

The lake is a balancing pool designed to take surface water and road run-off from Goldsworth Park, as a consequence potentially bringing with it all manner of unhealthy nasties. It has, on occasion, been brought to our attention of dogs becoming ill from ingesting the water and as you know vet bills don't come cheap, so please follow the rules, keep your dog safe and out of the water and on a lead, as requested, round the lake.

This leads me to my next concern, swimming. It clearly states on the notice boards **NO SWIMMING** and yet throughout the hot weather I witnessed people swimming. The signs are there for a good reason, your health and safety. Apart from dirty water the lake is very deep, up to 13 feet in places and even in hot weather remains very cold. Every year we read of deaths from people swimming in our lakes and rivers; it's only a matter of time before we read someone has lost their life in our lake. I don't want to read that, so don't enter the water, stay safe, read the signs.

The signs also state the lighting of fires and barbecues is prohibited, and yet some, it would seem, cannot read. There have been a number of fires caused by foolish people lighting barbecues on the banks which get out of control or are left to burn unattended which cause untold damage. This summer one of the angling platforms has been badly burned and will need some of the framework replaced, costing a lot

of time and money. Please think about your actions as actions lead to consequences.

Woking Council are looking into updating all signs and their positioning round the Park that will hopefully help us all to understand how we should conduct ourselves and enjoy our open spaces in a safe and appropriate way.

My last gripe is fishing related. It has come to my attention that one or two people seem to think it's OK to catch fish from the lake as a food source, this is NOT the case as all fish in the lake are protected by law. Anyone found taking fish from any water for any reason in England, Scotland and Wales without the owners or licenced operators' permission is a criminal offence. All fish caught must be returned unharmed to the water.

On a more positive note the angling club held work parties on the lake in July which were well attended and much was achieved. The platform surrounds were trimmed and top dressed with woodchip, reed beds tidied and briars removed, hedging round the wildlife area cut back and platform 36 rebuilt, all in all a very productive weekend. Thank you to all who took part in helping to keep the lake a beautiful place to visit. Next work dates are Saturday and Sunday October 19 and 20. If you fancy helping then please come along and join in.

Throughout August the angling club held its annual Let's Go Fishing event at our ponds in Brookwood Country Park which again proved to be a great success with more than 80 taking part, all receiving free tuition into the art of angling and a starter kit to hone their new-found skills. A full report will be posted on the club's website.

www.goldsworthparkanglingclub.com

MINDLESS – fire damage to a lake platform



WOKING fire station is holding an open day on Saturday September 14, raising funds for Goldsworth Park's Woking Hospice and The Fire fighters Charity. It's a family occasion at the station on Goldsworth Road in the town centre.



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A personal view

Royer Slater



WHENEVER you look up into Woking's bright blue sky it's likely you'll soon see a jet-propelled tube of people, defying gravity to get from someplace to someplace else.

What type of plane is it? Where has it come from? Where is it going? And how high is it?

Flight tracking websites and phone apps provide the answers in seconds. The most popular is Flightradar24, which provides real-time aircraft information on a map background. And you, dear reader, can join in from the comfort of your own deck chair.

See a plane approaching? Zoom Flightradar24's map on Woking and look for the yellow plane icon moving towards your location. Click it, and you can announce to all within earshot, "It's a British Airways Airbus A320, registration G-MIDT, height 5000 feet, outbound from Heathrow to Rome on flight BA548." All around will gasp that such detailed information is easily available.

Most low-flying jets over Goldsworth Park are heading for Farnborough Aerodrome, operated by TAG Aviation, a multinational

business aviation operator. Farnborough is the largest dedicated business aerodrome in the UK, and it can't have escaped your notice that we now see more of these flights over us. In February 2011 the joint Secretaries of State decided to allow 50,000 annual aircraft movements into and out of the airport, phased in until 2019. (It was just 23,000 movements in 2013.)

According to the FT, Farnborough accommodated more than 3,000 additional take-offs and landings between June and September 2018 than in previous years.

Many Goldsworth Park residents say they find these executive jets intrusive. They overfly us at about 2,000 feet, below aircraft arriving and departing from Heathrow, and above light aircraft (mostly those using Fairoaks Airport).

Farnborough Aerodrome Consultative Committee (FACC) is the forum where the airport managers interact with local public agencies, residential communities and airport users on environmental and other airport issues. Although its members include representatives of several District and Borough Councils and also various residents' groups, there is no representative from Woking!

The wind direction dictates the direction in which Farnborough's sole runway is used for take-offs and landings, so that aircraft take off and land into the wind. In practice the runway is used westerly-facing for 90% of the time — and all aircraft fly over Goldsworth Park on their approach.

Farnborough Airport was recently allowed airspace changes by the UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to create a more

predictable flow of air traffic to and from Farnborough. Councils in the FACC have accepted these in general, as fewer people in their areas are overflown and the routings are designed to avoid direct overflights of Guildford, Aldershot and Farnham. But flight routings always converge eventually just to the west of Woking town centre and overfly Goldsworth Park, Knaphill and Bisley.

The aviation authority suggested there could be an increase in noise for those who already experience noise pollution — that's us, folks! — but there would be "no new people significantly affected by noise."

It's food for thought that the number of executive jet flights typically carrying from two to five passengers (sometimes just one) via Farnborough is increasing. According to the Woking News & Mail, the chief executive of the airport's owners has revealed in the past that jets using Farnborough average just 2.7 passengers. That is the world of highly paid sports people, rock and pop stars and business tycoons!

Meanwhile we, the general public, who fly off on holidays in planes carrying over 100 passengers, and individually have a much lower "carbon footprint", are encouraged to take fewer flights or give up flying altogether to avoid climate catastrophe.

OK, my writing's done, so let's lean back, look up and... look! It's another small jet inbound to Farnborough. Where has it come from... perhaps Paris or the South of France? Spain? A Gulf state? Let's click on this screen to see!

BUSY SKIES – small jets overfly Goldsworth Park to land at Farnborough



Ben's building tips

By BEN LAY of Willowmead Homes

GOLDSWORTH PARK residents often tell me they have problems with their guttering, especially that it overflows during heavy rain.

While I can help by clearing debris from within gutters, there's often an underlying problem: gutters installed originally by the builders on many Goldsworth Park roofs are inadequate for the roof size, so they can't cope with the amount of rain they are expected to drain.

To solve this upgrade them with deep flow guttering, which can cope with the higher water flow. I recommend including a gutter brush, which keeps gutters free of leaves, moss and other debris, so maintaining a good flow and preventing blockages.

In addition, the original gutters on the estate installed in the 1970s-80s are often hard to repair as they are a different size to those now supplied by manufacturers. It is often advisable to replace them with modern gutters, and of the deep flow type.

Willowmead Homes Ltd, founded in 2012, has supported Goldsworth News through advertising for many years. Its proprietor, Ben Lay, has lived in Goldsworth Park since 2009 and can undertake most house maintenance and building works. Contact Ben on 01483 825146 or 0784 2552448, or visit www.willowmeadhomesltd.co.uk



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Anger at high-rise projects

SKYSCRAPERS are not the answer for Woking's future.

That is the view of Goldsworth Park's Woking Councillor Ann-Marie Barker.

With developers Cortland seeking planning permission to build a 39-storey

TALL ORDER – Woking's Victoria Square development



residential and office complex on the site of the former BHS store in Commercial Way, Cllr Barker said: "Concentrating development in the town centre makes sense and protects our green belt, but that does not mean we need a town centre full of skyscrapers.

"When the skyscrapers of Victoria Square were proposed we were told they were stand out, exceptional, buildings for the town. Now they are being used as precedent to build a Woking full of skyscrapers.

"It seems the Council is encouraging developers to go higher and higher. Cortland consulted local people on plans for a 30-storey block on the BHS site last year. Now they have come back with plans for a 39-storey skyscraper, a 30 per cent increase in height."

LibDem Cllr Barker is concerned that the high-rise projects constitute over-development and far exceed the government requirement for the Council to build 292 homes a year, half of which should be in the town centre.

She added: "Skyscrapers will bring their own issues. They will put pressure on local infrastructure and are likely to create a town with limited light and wind tunnels. Affordable housing is a massive need in our

area but most of these developments are not geared to affordable family homes.

"Skyscrapers are not the answer. They are not what Woking needs."

In response, Cllr David Bittleston, leader of Woking Council, said: "We believe it is our responsibility to build homes for those who are most in need, which is why we are committed to delivering more affordable homes.

"Over the last four years, around 45 per cent of all new homes built within the Borough have been affordable, with over half of these homes being new Council properties. That's better than any other authority in the south of England.

"This approach will continue with the Sheerwater Regeneration Project set to deliver 560 new affordable homes over the coming years, whilst the recent £95million central government grant for transport infrastructure improvements will unlock sites for more new homes in the town centre, more than 40 per cent of which will be affordable.

"So by building in the town centre we can build the affordable homes that families desperately need, meet our housing targets and protect our precious green belt."

Cllr Barker's business plan

GOLDSWORTH PARK Councillor Ann-Marie Barker is behind a move that could change the way Woking Council conducts its business.

At a full meeting on July 25 the Council passed her motion to review the current 'strong leader' and executive practice and look at a new committee system of governance.

Addressing the council, Cllr Barker said: "We have had the executive model since 2000 and we moved some years ago to the strong leader model. The committee system is seen as an old system by those that have been around for a long time, but there is now a new revised committee system available and the reason I am asking for the review is to see if that system is better for us in the modern age or if the current system is still best suited to us and our residents.

"I am very keen that we do make council as open and accessible as possible to residents and in the 20th year of the current system seems to be a good time to make that judgement. There are a number of councils that have moved to the new committee system in recent years.

"I would like the review to spend some time understanding the benefits and disadvantages of the system. I would like to see the review start as soon as possible in the autumn."

Six councillors will conduct the review. They are: Cllr Barker and Cllr Will Forster (LibDem), Cllr Melanie Whitehead and Cllr Simon Ashall (Conservative), Cllr Tahir Aziz (Labour) and Cllr John Bond (Independent).

Cllr Barker told *Goldsworth News*: "Residents are increasingly concerned about the transparency of council decisions. Far too much decision making is behind closed doors. The level of debate at Executive meetings shows that those running the Council have made their decisions before any public meeting.

"Taking a look at the committee system is a logical step. It takes away some of the power that is concentrated in one person in the current system. With a ruling Executive making key decisions other councillors can be left feeling disenfranchised. Under a committee system more councillors are involved in decision making and there is greater transparency as to how those decisions are made.

"This is a first step to make the Council more open and transparent to the public."

A number of other authorities have moved to the committee system, including Sutton, Three Rivers, Nottinghamshire and South Gloucestershire.



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Climate emergency

WOKING COUNCIL has declared a climate emergency in recognition of the catastrophe facing the environment.

And a policy that sets out the borough's commitment to reducing its use of avoidable single use plastics was adopted at the July Council meeting.

The policy identifies actions that aim to reduce the use of single use plastics across the Council's operations and the promotion of schemes that enable residents, visitors and local businesses to reduce their use of these plastics.

Cllr Kevin Davis, Woking's Portfolio Holder for Environment, said: "Thanks to increasing media coverage, it's safe to say that we are all fully aware of the threat that plastic waste poses to our environment. In the UK alone, it is estimated that 11,000 plastic bottles a minute either end up in landfill or as litter, too often ending up in our waterways and eventually the sea.

"Our council has a proud record in addressing climate change and its associated causes. Whether it was establishing environmental group, Local Action 21, or pioneering the use of solar energy, our council has led the way.

"Since March 2018, when we pledged to reduce our use of single use plastics as part of WWF-UK's Earth Hour, we have achieved much. Yet there is more that we, our partners and our residents can do.

"By declaring a climate emergency and introducing this policy, we can make sure our borough plays its part in protecting our environment for future generations."

Twin-towns signpost

A NEW sign celebrating Woking's twin towns, and providing nesting space for swifts and bats, was unveiled in Gloucester Square by the Mayor Cllr Beryl Hunwicks.

Woking's twin towns are Le Plessis-Robinson, in France, (twinned since 1992), and Rastatt, a city bordering the River Rhine in south west Germany (twinned since the late 1990s).

The new sign is made of three sections, providing nesting and roosting chambers in the upper section, a middle section featuring finger post style arms pointing to the twinned towns, all on top of an engraved, conical stone base.

The Mayor was joined by councillors and representatives from Woking Town Twinning Association, 51 architecture, (designers of the sign), ThamesWey's Swifts in Woking project, and national expert Edward Mayer of Swift Conservation.

Over the past 20 years the UK's swift numbers have halved. The sign incorporates a system, which plays calls to draw the swifts' attention to the boxes, and features webcams to give an insight into nest life.

UK swifts migrate through Europe to spend their winter in Africa — an annual round trip of some 14,000 miles — before returning to breed in the UK in late spring. The sign's base illustrates this journey. British Trust for Ornithology provided the journey data, and wildlife artist Jonathan Pomroy drew the swifts.

Marlie Roes, Chairman of the Woking Town Twinning Association, said: "Town twinning enables contacts between people of different countries. We are so pleased that our initial idea of a twin-town signpost is now a reality — it will continuously remind us of the special relationship with our twin towns and the possibilities twinning provides. As befits our pro-biodiversity town, and where swift flight lines also connect with the areas of our twin towns, the signpost has the further purpose of providing swifts and bats nesting chambers."



SHOWING THE WAY – Woking's dual purpose signpost and nesting box

Homes to help elderly

UP TO 725 affordable homes specially designed to help older people live independently will be provided within 10 years under plans outlined by Surrey County Council.

The plans will also involve expanding the provision of supported housing for people with learning disabilities or autism to help them exercise choice and control over their daily lives.

The new housing schemes for self-contained homes are designed so that vulnerable people can live independently.

MICHAEL FARLAM

Choir tuning up

WOKING LADIES CHOIR have started to rehearse their Christmas pieces and would welcome new members.

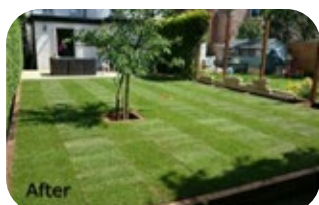
They are holding taster evenings on Tuesdays in September. Choir spokesperson Rosalind Taylor said: "Come along and see how you get on, there's no audition, just fun. We're a friendly bunch and meet between 7.45 and 9.45pm at Knaphill Methodist Church."

For more information email pr@wokingladieschoir.org.uk or call 07977 122676. Subscription applies on joining.



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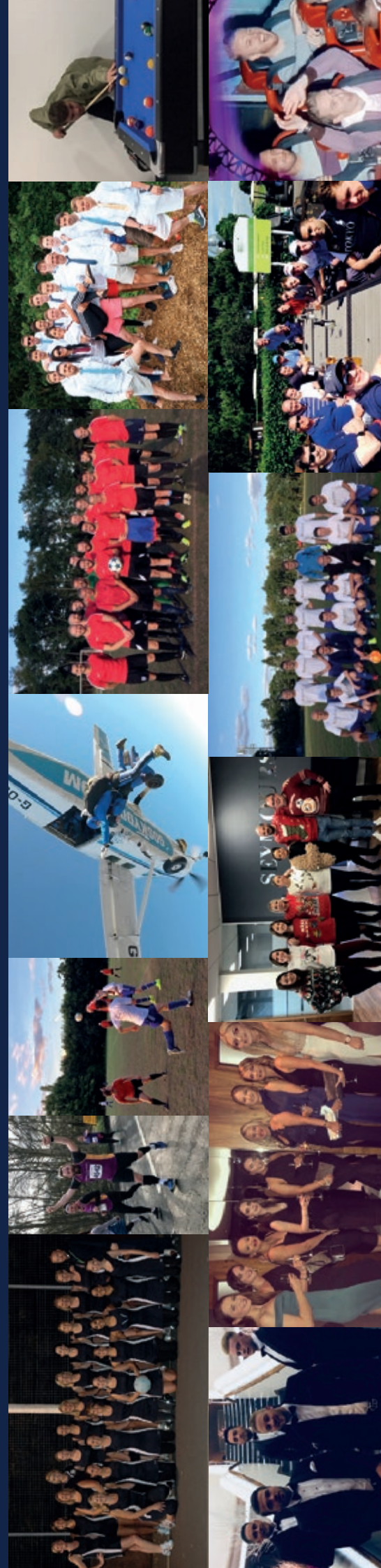
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