

CLERK'S REPORT ON PARISH COUNCIL ACTIVITIES FEBRUARY 2010

BEACON COURT

Following East Herts' officers recommendation of refusal of the original application, Riversmead withdrew it. The officers were concerned about the overcrowding of the site, the loss of trees, the roof line of the proposed block of flats and the blank wall facing the homes in Trinity Walk. However, Riversmead is intending to put in a revised application very shortly and indeed may already have done so.

Sarosh Dastur, their agent, explained the new proposals to a packed meeting of the Parish Council on 15th February. He advised that East Herts' planners had commented on the revised site plan and that he would be addressing the issues they raised. He also listened to the village's concerns and we wait to see if any of our issues have been addressed.

The revised plan has addressed some of the concerns, in particular the lack of open space by Trinity Walk. This part of the revised plan has been welcomed but concerns remain.

The Consultative Working Party has been re-formed and hopes to meet with representatives from Riversmead by the end of February.

Some of the concerns raised by residents and the Parish Council were not considered planning issues by East Herts. For example, whether the water and sewerage systems could cope with the increased number of residents. The Parish Council will act as a "collecting point" for these problems. If you experience any problems with water, sewerage, electricity, etc, could you let me know the details. We may then be able to get proper responses from the various utility companies as to how these issues will be dealt with should planning consent be given.

You can read the officer's report to the Development Control Committee, the response to the new plan and the site plan on the website.

SCAM LETTERS, PHONE CALLS, TEXTS, EMAILS, ETC

According to the Office of Fair Trading, 3.2 million people in the UK fall victim to a scam involving deceptive unsolicited mailings, phone calls, emails or texts. The scammers will try anything to part you from your cash. Recently the Charity Commission was forced to warn consumers giving money to victims of the Haiti earthquake to be vigilant after it emerged that criminals were trying to take advantage of the public's generosity by sending out scam emails appealing for donations. The most common scam mailings sent to consumers are deceptive sweepstakes, misleading prize draws, bogus foreign lotteries, fake clairvoyants/psychics and "miracle" health cures.

Older people seem more susceptible to scam mailings. Thinkjessica.com was set up after the death of an old lady who had fallen prey to mailings promising her vast winnings if she sent a release fee. Having responded to the first mailing, her details were then put on a "suckers list" and sent all over the world. She refused to believe her family when they tried to explain that these mailings were fraudulent. It is estimate that she sent the scammers around £50,000 before her death five years' later. She was receiving around 30 letters a day from these criminals. A visit to the website shows that she was not alone, many older people are being duped every day. I found the site disturbing but it should prove a useful resource for families in the same position as Jessica's.

A study in the USA reveals that older people are 10 times more likely to remember false information, and believe it's true, than young adults. Researchers also found that older adults who were tested did not remember test information correctly and did not know that their answers were incorrect. The combination of not remembering correctly and being unwilling to admit there is a problem can make older people especially vulnerable to scam artists.

ALLOTMENT RENTS

These are due on 1st April and should be paid to the Allotment Manager, Bob Akers at 65 Trinity Road or to Lynn Bonner at 61 London Road who has volunteered to assist Bob. The rent for a full plot is £25, with a half plot being £15.

If you do not intend to keep your plot for the coming year, could you let Bob or Lynn know as soon as possible please. There is still a waiting list.

BOGUS CALLERS AND DISTRACTION BURGLARS

This month's report seems very gloomy but I hope you think these warnings are helpful. Hertfordshire Police have given the following advice to help reduce the risk of becoming a victim of distraction burglary, or bogus callers:

RULE ONE: If a stranger calls - Not sure? Don't open the door!

If you are not expecting anyone and you don't recognise them, don't let them into your home. Be aware, bogus callers can be very convincing and will often pretend to be representing a utility company; a genuine caller won't mind coming back at a time when you can arrange to have somebody you trust with you.

RULE TWO: If you *are* expecting a caller:

Only open your door when you are happy that you know the person. If you can't see who is calling and need to open the door, use your door chain and ask for identification or a pre-arranged password before you let them in.

RULE THREE: Never keep large amounts of cash at home

If you ensure that large amounts of money are securely in a bank or building society account and any valuable jewellery is safely and discretely locked away then, even if a criminal cons their way into your home, there is nothing of value for them to steal.

BRACELET FOUND IN LONDON ROAD

A bracelet, believed to be gold, was found in London Road in January. If you think it might be yours, please telephone 01992 301792.

NEXT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Monday 1st March in the Mission Room at 7.30pm.

Members of the public are always welcome at Parish Council meetings.

Carolyn Morgan
Clerk to the Council

01992 581994