

Park Hill Residents Association NEWSLETTER

Issue 124

Keeping you up to date with local news and services www.phra.org.uk

Spring 2016

The Neighbourhood Meeting 2016

FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON IN PARK HILL

Come to the Neighbourhood meeting (formerly known as the AGM)

When and where? Thursday, 12 May 2016, 8.00pm
St Matthew's Church, Chichester Road

What's happening? The Residents' Association:
what it's been doing and what it plans to do

Question and Answer Session:

Our MP, local Councillors and Police Safer Neighbourhood Team have been invited. Find out the answers to the questions you want to ask. Let's hear your views on the area you live in.

How long? Ninety Minutes with refreshment break.

We need your subscription please!

Subscriptions for the coming year to the Residents Association are now due. The subscription remains at £3. We have nearly 400 members and we are very grateful to them for their support. But we represent 2,600 households and we'd like to have more of you as members.

Please join the Association if you aren't already a member – or renew your subscription if you are a member. Here is what your subscription does and how you can pay it:

What happens to your subscription?

- It helps cover the cost of this Newsletter, three times a year. The money from advertisers does not cover the full cost of producing and printing the Newsletter.
- It helps with special projects such as new trees and our new website.
- It helps cover the running expenses of the Association, such as hiring the hall for the AGM and refreshments there.

How can you pay your subscription?

- To a Road Steward; at the Neighbourhood Meeting on 12 May; you can send your subscription of £3 to our Membership Secretary using the form on page 8 or you can pay your subscription by internet transfer. The sort code for our bank account is 30-92-45 and the account number is 01330171. (The account is held with Lloyds TSB, George Street, Croydon. Please give your postcode as a reference.)

Thank you for your help!

Inside:

Page 5

Our New Website - Work in Progress

Last year we asked residents what was important to them locally and what they wanted to know more about. Turn to page 5 to read more about the new website we are developing.

Page 6

Croydon Opportunity & Fairness Commission

We look at the findings of this Commission chaired by the Bishop of Croydon, The Rt Revd Jonathan Clark and what it proposes.

Page 8-9

Park Hill Personalities

We talk to Ujjal Ghosal, Committee member, about his life and his work on the Association's new website.

Pages 11 & 12

Here & There

Read more local news about the HM The Queen's 90th Birthday, Croydon Council Tax, the latest on Fairfield Halls, redevelopment of 30 Fairfield Road, Open Air Films, Cotelands fencing and Council Surgeries.

This newsletter is distributed to 2,600 households in the Park Hill area.

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NEXT CONCERTS

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OUR NEW WEBSITE: A report on work in progress

Last year, we asked residents what was important to them locally and what they wanted to know more about. We also asked them how they wanted to receive that information. In the light of what they said, we've been developing a new website for the Association which seeks to provide the information people asked for, in an easily accessible form.

On the new website, you'll be able:-

- To keep up-to-date with local news as it happens – not just three times a year
- To publicise coming events in the community
- To send in your own news and views
- To send in photos you'd like to share with the rest of the community
- To ask us questions
- To place orders for advertisements – either in the Newsletter or on the website
- To pass on your recommendations for people who provide services of various kinds such as tradesmen and shops (We're also thinking about a market place of goods and services local residents can supply to each other)

We shall still produce the printed Newsletter three times a year but the website will complement the Newsletter, providing immediate access and giving people the chance to have their say and get involved much more than before. We want to provide a service that meets people's needs and so we shall be glad to have your suggestions on what might be added to the website as it develops.

The new website should be available in May. We hope to launch it formally at the Neighbourhood Meeting on 12 May. In the meantime our existing website will continue. Our address will remain the same: www.phra.org.uk

If you have information which you'd like to see on the website when it opens – for instance an event in May or June, questions you'd like answered or a recommendation for a tradesman – log on to the existing website – www.phra.org.uk and leave a message on the 'Contact Us' page.

We are grateful to Committee members Ujjal Ghosal and John Chambers for the work they have done on this project. We are looking now for someone to take on the continuing management of the website, making sure that the website is kept up to date and that queries from local residents are dealt with. This should not be too onerous a job but we need someone with the necessary skills and experience. If you can help, please get in touch with our Chair, John Ingman – his email address is john.ingman@blueyonder.co.uk

The success of the website depends on local residents using it. In the past, we have had very little feedback on our work and have had to rely on our own contacts in the community. Now anyone with access to the net can get involved. We want to hear from you and look forward to doing so.

FAMILY FEST 2016 PARK HILL RECREATION GROUND, SATURDAY 4 JUNE 2016

Croydon's only festival dedicated to children and families returns to Park Hill Recreation Ground on Saturday 4 June from noon onwards.

Highlights will include:

The Big Dance Bus – a double decker bus with pop up dance floor and music.

Professional dance groups – including Indian dancers, dancers from local dance schools, West End professionals and Morris dancers.

Activities in the community garden – opportunities for local children to build bug and bee hotels, learn from Croydon Bee Keepers and their glass bee hive, plant flowers and vegetables, and learn about garden ecology from experts.

Community groups such as clubs and associations – especially those which cater for children and young people or are linked to gardening - are invited to take stands at the event so that local families can see what is available locally

for them and their children.

There are also opportunities for individuals to volunteer and help with the activities.

For more information, contact:

friendsofparkhillpark@outlook.com or www.facebook.com/FriendsofParkHillParkCroydon - and see, too, the Big Dance website – www.bigdance.org.uk/bus



CROYDON OPPORTUNITY AND FAIRNESS COMMISSION

We look at the findings of this Commission chaired by the Bishop of Croydon and what it proposes.

The Croydon Opportunity and Fairness Commission was an independent group appointed by the Council and chaired by the Bishop of Croydon. It was set up in January 2015 and made its final report earlier this year.

What was the Commission set up to do?

Croydon offers many people opportunities to live and work well. But it faces many challenges – families struggling to make ends meet, social isolation, anti-social behaviour and poor housing. The Commission sought to understand these challenges and bring the people of Croydon together to build a shared vision and use all the talents available to create a fairer and better place to live. They wanted Croydon to be a place where everyone, regardless of background, could get on in life and be supported through tough times.

In the course of its work, the Commission talked to over 3,000 local people in various ways and gathered the views of young people through a Young Fairness Commission led by young people.

What did the Commission find?

Croydon is a place of contrasts – deprived to the north and much better off in the south. Broad Green and Selhurst have some of the poorest neighbourhoods in the country. House prices are beyond the reach of many people. Croydon is becoming more deprived compared with other parts of London because the higher cost of housing in inner London is forcing many of the poorest families to move out of central London into outer areas like Croydon. At the same time, the Council's resources have been cut - by 2019/20, the Council's budget will have been cut by 74 per cent. And the spend per head in Croydon is much less than in neighbouring Boroughs - £378 compared with £637 in Southwark and £586 in Lambeth.

What does the Commission suggest should be done?

Volunteering: Employers and in particular the Council should encourage staff to volunteer with an entitlement of say three days a year. Responsibility should be devolved to neighbourhood centres to manage things like anti-social behaviour, parking rules and the local environment.

Job opportunities at fair rates of pay: Businesses should sign up to paying the London Living Wage (which is significantly more than the minimum wage). The Council should set up a service to encourage applications from local people for local jobs and help them get the skills they need.

Children with special needs: There should be more help for pre-school children so that they are ready for school and more help for children with developmental and emotional needs.

Tackling social isolation: People should be helped to manage in their own homes with support from neighbours. One survey found that 48 per cent of Croydon residents would be willing to do more for their neighbours.

Housing: Local residents should be encouraged and paid



to offer shelter to homeless people. There should be a new fund to make temporary loans to local residents who don't have a deposit for a rented property or are facing short-term problems with benefits. A Good Agent and Landlord Charter should be developed.

Moving to a high wage, high skill economy: Business rates for firms which pay the London Living Wage should be reduced. Debt advice should be available more readily. There should be more child care options, with support from the Council, employers and developers. The First Step programme should be developed that every person at college who wants it, can be offered work experience.

What now?

The recommendations have gone back to the Council to consider and the Commission is to meet again in October 2016 to look at how their proposals are being implemented.

The Commission's report is based on a thorough assessment of major problems facing people in Croydon. These are not problems which can be solved simply. Even the summary of their report runs to five pages. Many of their proposals will need money to implement, even though they may yield savings in the long run. Some seem optimistic – such as getting neighbours to help with the care of the elderly and encouraging residents to take in homeless people.

When the Commission was set up, there was a good deal of criticism on the grounds that the money involved could have been spent better. But the Commission has worked hard to grapple with major problems and its efforts are to be welcomed. It is to be hoped that, having commissioned this work, the Council will now do as much as it can to take it forward.

You can read the report in full on the Commission's website www.opportunitycroydon.org

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Park Hill Personalities:

We talk to **Ujjal Ghosal**, Committee member with special responsibility for IT, about his life and his work on the Association's new website.

When Ujjal Ghosal arrived in Britain from India for the first time, he was astonished to be driven by a woman taxi driver, to find that traffic rules were routinely obeyed and then to be greeted by two extra-large Doberman dogs at his bed and breakfast in Edinburgh. Clearly, he thought, this was an odd place.

Fifteen years later, he is more at home. He has found the British to be generally open-minded and approachable. He enjoys working and living with them – even though in his experience, they are not as punctual as he was told when he was young, can be impatient in public and are, at times, fierce in defending their personal space.

His own space goes back to West Bengal, to the railway town of Kanchrapara – 30 miles North of Kolkata (Calcutta) where his father was a photographer and owned the locally popular 'Ghosal Studio' – the first photo studio of the town. Pictures were a family tradition – his great grandfather had been a noted artist and teacher who was head of the local Art College. Ujjal was able to draw but from an early age his passion was physical science. At the age of nine, he told a surprised teacher that his ambition was to found a scientific institute for fundamental research.

After attending College under the University of Calcutta and gaining a degree in Physics, he in fact got a Masters degree in Physics from the Indian Institute of Technology at Kharagpur. This is one of just sixteen (five at that time) elite institutions of this kind in India and there is intense competition for places at them through nation-wide examinations (the pass rate in 2012 was 2 per cent). Although he was preparing for further studies with US Universities, he went for an interview with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), one of the largest companies of its kind and part of the Tata Group, one of India's biggest firms, when they came to the IIT campus for recruitment. As fate would have it, they offered him a job. Ujjal, though somewhat uncertain, decided to take the offer when his mother pointed out that he could always go back to college later.

So he put his plans on hold and went to work with TCS – first

in India. He liked the work and continued there for 8 years – starting as a computer programmer, he worked in various roles such as systems analyst, project manager and eventually as a business analyst. The first assignment outside India was in 2001, in Edinburgh. Outside work, he enjoyed this lively city and its social life with new friends. After nine months, he went back to India before returning to Britain in 2003 – this time to Bristol. More assignments across the length and breadth of England followed with major companies mostly in the financial services sector. While in Bristol, he developed an interest in short film-making, joined a film club and did a few short courses. In later years, he ended up producing, directing and being a crew in a number of short films & documentaries, including a futuristic film about life in Britain in 2040 and the impact of climate change.

In 2008, Ujjal decided to resign from TCS and set up as an independent consultant (business analyst). About that time, his parents began looking for a suitable bride for him in India, and through an online matrimonial agency, he was introduced to Rimava Choudhury, daughter of a businessman based in Assam (a place known for its Tea estates). They exchanged photos and spoke over the phone but he did not see her until 2 days before the wedding.

Ujjal stresses that whilst this was an arranged marriage, both parties were free, if they wished, not to go ahead. Parents, especially in urban India, aren't dictators but many still hope that their children would settle with someone of their choice, of similar background and financial status.

It was at this stage that he and his wife came to live in Park Hill. Ujjal named his company – Rimava Ltd – after his wife. His business focuses on offering wide range of analysis to help organisations make better decisions and benefit from change:



understanding the present situation, establishing the root cause of an issue, defining feasible & profitable solutions, and creating a model for the future state. As Ujjal points out, businesses have lots of information about what they do in different forms. They need to learn how to use this so that it informs their decisions. He enjoys the challenges of this task but like most self-employed people finds it harder to deal with the constant demands of clients. 'You can never turn away business', he says.

Eventually he had lived in Britain long enough to qualify for permanent residence and recently he became a British citizen. Where does he see himself in five years' time? Interestingly, he starts from a firm perspective – that the goal of life is not simply to make money but to achieve happiness. He sees happiness as being able to choose – what to do, where to do it, and with whom. He doesn't see himself now as reviving his scientific ambitions but he does see himself as helping others achieve their ambitions – as he says 'giving back what I know through consultancy or teaching'. Ujjal is happy to assist local business owners needing some help in overcoming their businesses' current challenges and obstacles*. He is also developing a programme to coach people to develop a successful career as Business Analysts. On the other hand he is attracted to using his skills in a new field like property development.

Ujjal is unsure whether his future lies in India or Britain. He still misses the vibrancy of life in India – the colour, the warmth, and the circle of family and friends. He remembers with affection growing up in a relatively small town and the time he spent as a child in the village of his maternal grandfather. On the other hand, he recognises that both India and he have changed a great deal. He enjoys working in Britain, and the cosmopolitan buzz of London – and being able to take for granted things like

reliable electricity supplies and clean water.

In the meantime, he enjoys spending time with his wife and four year old daughter ('the best behaved child in her nursery') and working with the Residents Association in developing a new website. It is nearly two years since Ujjal came to one of our AGMs and volunteered to help. He was soon on the Committee, full of ideas about how we could do more with the website. He then worked on a survey to find out what people wanted from the Association and from this he developed proposals for a new website which have now been worked up by a contractor under Ujjal's guidance. (Details of the new website are on page 5). This is a major step for the Association and it would not have been possible without Ujjal's input.

We thank him for all he has done and look forward to continuing to work with him.

* Ujjal can be contacted on www.ujjalghosal.com

Your PHRA Committee:

CHAIRMAN - John Ingman
Tel: 020 8681 2355 email: john.ingman@blueyonder.co.uk

ADVERTISING - Andree Dyer - Tel: 020 8688 5488

NEWSLETTER EDITOR/PUBLISHER - John Chambers
Tel: 020 8686 5657 email: jc@jca-design.com

Other members are: Patricia Bonham, Fiona Nicol (Membership), Ujjal Ghosal (IT), Bill Smart, David Stanton (Treasurer) and Robert Webb (Secretary).

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Membership Application Form

I/We wish to join/renew membership of Park Hill Residents Association and enclose a subscription of £3 to cover the membership to March 2017.

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Address.....

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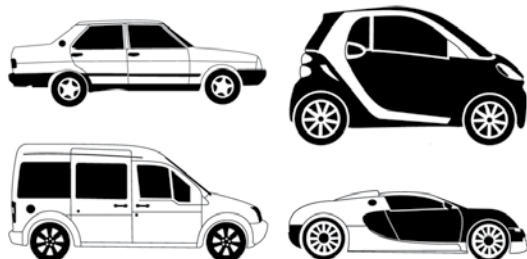


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Here & There – A Round-up of Local News

HM The Queen's 90th Birthday

HM The Queen will be 90 on 21 April. To celebrate this event, St Matthews Church in Chichester Road is holding a bring and share tea party on Saturday 30 April from 3.00pm onwards to celebrate The Queen's 90th Birthday and warmly invites everyone to join in.

Bring along a cake or some savoury nibbles. Tea and entertainment will be provided. Be part of Park Hill's celebration of this special occasion.

Stanhope Road Street Party 2016



After the success of the 2015 Stanhope Road Street Party (pictured left Local MP Gavin Barwell with Erik Meyer, one of the organisers) there will be another annual BIG LUNCH Street Party in Stanhope Road on

Sunday 12th June 2016, co-inciding with the Queen's 90th birthday.

Leaflets will be dropped around adjoining roads nearer the date with more details, and Stanhope Road will be closed from mid-morning onwards, between Chichester Road and the Fairfield Path.

Sports Hall at Archbishop Tenison's School

Archbishop Tenison's School in Selborne Road propose to build a sports hall at the rear of the hard play area at the west side of the school, backing on to Engadine Close. The building will be about 9 metres high. At the back of the building there will be a green wall of plants which will soften the appearance from the houses in Engadine Close.

This is the second application by the School for a sports hall on this site. The School say that they have taken full account of the criticisms made of the earlier application and have worked closely with the Council Planning Department. They say that the new Hall is badly needed – at present indoor sports have to take place in the Assembly Hall which is often required for other uses such as exams.

You can look at the plans on the Croydon Council on-line planning register and give your views. Just Google 'Croydon planning on-line register' and follow the links. Then insert the name and address of the school.

We'd be glad to hear your views: e-mail our Chair, John Ingman on john.ingman@blueyonder.co.uk

Having Problems Remembering Which Bins Go Out When?

We all find it difficult to remember which bins go out for collection when. But help is at hand.

Go to Croydon Council's website – www.croydon.gov.uk – and press the panel marked 'Bin Collections'. Enter

your address (with post code.) That will take you to a site where you can see the various bins and when they will be collected next.

Council Tax

Council Tax in Croydon is going up from 1 April by nearly 2 per cent. In fact, Croydon Council is increasing the Tax by nearly 4 per cent – but this is offset by savings in the amount payable to the Greater London Assembly – what is known as the precept.

How does this work? Croydon Council is increasing the basic rate of Council Tax by 1.99%. This is the maximum level they are allowed to increase it without holding a referendum. Then in addition they are adding 2 per cent more to cover the costs of social care for adults such as help to the elderly and disabled. The Government has allowed Councils to make this extra increase because it has cut the help it gives Councils on social care. Taken together, this makes an increase of 3.9 per cent. But Boris has come to the rescue because the amount paid to the Greater London Assembly for things like police and transport has fallen by 6 per cent. As a result, the net increase in Council Tax will be 1.89 per cent.

The increase will still be above the rate of inflation. In the Council elections last year, Labour pledged not to increase Council Tax by more than the rate of inflation. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Newman, however, says that things have changed!



Fairfield Halls

Fairfield Halls will close on 15 July for (at least) two years whilst the building is refurbished. Despite strong local opposition, the Council insisted on going ahead with its plan to redevelop the site in

a way which compelled the closure of the Halls. It is high time that the Fairfield Halls are redeveloped – after fifty years, they badly need new investment. However we are not sure that the Council has the capacity carry through a scheme of this kind. It is not clear where the money is coming from and we suspect that the timetable is too ambitious. We'd like to know more about the Council's plans for the Halls once they are re-opened. So in all, we are sceptical that the Council can deliver on this one.

30 Fairfield Road

The Council has approved plans to redevelop this site – which is at the end of the row of four houses in Fairfield Road by the roundabout – ignoring our objections. Developers had proposed that a single house should be replaced by a three-four storey building of nine flats – eight with two bedrooms and one with three. There would be two car spaces.

Here & There (Continued)

We said:-

The new building would be too tall. The top floor would be significantly higher than the neighbouring houses and is out of keeping with the surrounding area.

The car parking spaces were quite inadequate for nine flats. The residents will park their cars in nearby streets, adding to the pressures on street parking.

We objected to the piecemeal development of this site. There is already one development approved at no 24 (see below) and we think it would be much better to redevelop the whole area - nos 24-30 Fairfield Road - rather than put forward one-off schemes like this.

However the Council has approved the plans – and work has started on the new development in the garden of no 24 Fairfield Road which was approved some time ago.

Cotelands Fencing

The Council has refused planning permission for the fencing round Cotelands which was put up last year. The Management Company for the estate did not seek planning permission for the fencing before erecting it. But fencing of this height needs planning permission and the Management Company had to apply for what is known as retrospective permission – that is, permission for something that has already been done.

The Council turned down the application on the grounds that the fencing did not respect the open aspect of the estate nor the character of the street scene. We understand that the Management Company are appealing against this decision.

Councillors' Surgeries

Please note that local Councillors are now available for consultation only on the **second** Saturday of the month from 10-12 in the mornings (except in August) at St Matthew's Church, Chichester Road. (Previously they were there on the second and fourth Saturdays).



Open Air Films

From 28 April, films will be shown from Thursdays to Sundays on the top level of the multi-storey car park next to the railway at the back of College Green. Entry to the site will be free and there will be a bar and a food stand. Films to be shown include Labyrinth, The Martian,

Pulp Fiction and Jurassic World. Further details from: www.lostformatsociety.co.uk

Consultation on Future of Libraries

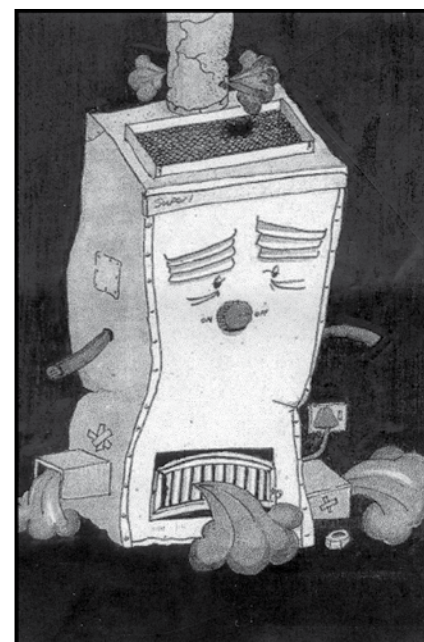
The Council wants your views on Libraries in Croydon. They are mounting a six-week public 'engagement' including an on-line survey and focus groups. The information gathered will contribute to an Ambitious for Libraries Plan to be published later in the year. Details of the exercise are available on: getinvolved.croydon.gov.uk

We think that what Croydon's Libraries need is quite simple – more money. But this is a chance to put forward your views.

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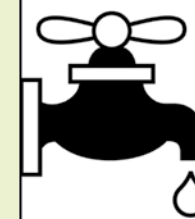
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