

FOCUS

CREWE SOUTH WARD

Flag Lane to Broadleigh Way
Queen's Park to the railway station

www.crewe-nantwichlibdems.org.uk

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM YOUR LIBERAL DEMOCRAT COUNCILLORS - September 2009

CREWE TOWN COUNCIL?

The "Voice for Crewe" petition was signed by nearly 4,000 people during the winter. It has triggered the "Community Governance Review" which began in August.

Will Crewe definitely get a Town Council?

No. More than 10% of electors in Crewe signed the petition, so Cheshire East Council must carry out the Review. But Cheshire East councillors will examine all options, and must be satisfied that most people in Crewe want a local council.

What other options are there?

Existing neighbourhood action meetings and tenants associations could be used to give residents a stronger voice in local government, but these would lack the authority of elected bodies. A more serious alternative is to divide Crewe into several "parishes" with a Council for each.

Is it just local politicians who are pressing for a local council?

No. Business leaders, the head of the University, and the editor of the "Crewe Chronicle" all support the bid.

How soon could Crewe have a council?

If the Review decides in favour, elections will be held in May 2011. An election for all the seats on Cheshire East Council will take place on the same day.

How do we take part in the Review and public consultation?

Make sure that you return your voting paper when it is delivered to your home. You are asked to say "yes" or "no" to a council/councils in Crewe. You can then say whether the town should have a single council or be divided into four parishes, each with its own council.

What happens to the Mayor?

With a single council, the person who chairs the meetings will be Mayor of Crewe. With several councils, one will take over Crewe's mayoral regalia - probably the one whose area includes Municipal Buildings - and the person in the chair will be styled Mayor.

CHRIS DAVIES RE-ELECTED



Liberal Democrat Chris Davies was re-elected to the European Parliament in the June Election. Since Chris was first elected in 1999 he has built up a formidable reputation for hard work and become the best known of the representatives of the North West of England constituency. Turnout for the election in Cheshire East was over 30% - better than many commentators were expecting. Sadly Royal Mail failed to deliver the Liberal Democrat election leaflet in much of Crewe & Nantwich.

Inside this edition of "Focus" ...

- **South Cheshire College**
 - **Back entries**
 - **Contacting the Council**
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- **Competition results**

THE NEW MAYOR OF CREWE

On 11th May, councillors for Crewe wards met as the “Charter Trustees” and elected Dorothy Flude as our town Mayor. David Cannon and Betty Howell were pleased to support our Labour Party colleague in Crewe South ward. We belong to different parties but that doesn’t mean that we disagree about everything!

All three of us see the Charter Trustees as a temporary arrangement until a town council is established in Crewe. Cheshire East Council has begun the “Governance Review” which must be completed by March next year. (See the front page). At present all the towns and villages in Cheshire East have local councils except for Crewe, Macclesfield, and Wilmslow. The Conservative leadership of Cheshire East Council is quoted as supporting a uniform pattern of first tier councils across the area.

SOUTH CHESHIRE COLLEGE: PARKING

Since the May edition of “Focus” we have been studying the Travel Plan for the College. This was developed before planning permission was given for the new building. Staff and students are encouraged to use alternatives to private cars, and this we welcome.

But... the interests of residents in the neighbouring streets are not protected simply by hoping for fewer cars in future. Parking generated by the College is a problem now, and threatens to get worse. We are not convinced that the assumptions behind the parking provision on the college site are realistic, or up to date. **We shall explore the need and scope for more spaces.**

Regardless of whether more spaces can be created on the site, the college authorities have no powers to prevent parking in the side streets. The Travel Plan may in practice increase off site parking. **For these reasons, we shall investigate a properly enforced residents’ parking scheme for the streets nearest the college site.** At present, the area does not fit all the guidelines published by the former County Council for such a scheme. But co-operation by the Cheshire East Council in this way may be exactly what is needed to make the College Travel Plan work.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR BACK ALLEYS?

All the older streets in Crewe have passageways to give entry to the backs of the houses. Some of these have never been given a hard surface, and these are “**private streets**”: any maintenance work is done by the house holders. A small number of alleys have modern standards of lighting and drainage, and these are **maintained** by the local Highway Authority which is now Cheshire East Council. **But most of the passageways in Crewe South Ward are in a kind of limbo, the result of a dispute that goes back to the 1990's.**

The alleys in question all have a hard surface, mostly paved with brick. They were paved in the last century by the former Crewe Borough Council. The Council used an Act of Parliament allowing them to undertake the work and charge the cost to the owners of the houses which benefited. The cost of later maintenance was borne by the Council.

In 1974, Crewe Borough Council was abolished. Most of its responsibilities passed to the new **Crewe & Nantwich Council.** But maintenance of roads and pavements was taken over by **Cheshire County Council.** The two councils treated back alleys differently. To the Borough they were public streets and the Council continued to clean them. To the County they were private streets and the Council did not maintain them. **But for twenty years after 1974 no maintenance work was needed, and no-one was aware of the problem .**

Many householders in Crewe South have “search” documents in their deeds stating that all the passageways next to their house - back and front - are maintained at public expense. However, the County Council claimed there is no documentary evidence that Crewe Council used the correct legal process to “adopt” the newly paved passageways. The County said the search documents are incorrect.

Whatever the County Council officers might have thought, this problem will not go away. Although many of the passageways are still in good condition, others are in a very bad state of repair. **It is utterly unrealistic to believe today’s householders are going to somehow arrange repairs, and wrong to expect them to do so.**

This issue brought members and officers of the County and Borough Councils head to head in dispute. Now Cheshire East has taken over from both councils and provides all local services. **The new Council should take a reasonable approach to the documentary evidence and take responsibility for all the paved passageways. We will campaign for this in the coming months.**

There are many related issues and lots of arguments that can be used in this dispute. But it is a dispute, and can end only when Cheshire East Council accepts that these passageways were maintained by the local authority in the past. **Please get in touch with us if you want to know more about the background to the dispute or want to help in the campaign to resolve it.**

CONTACTING THE COUNCIL

Since the beginning of April, all local government services have been provided by one Council - Cheshire East. For many people that simply brings reality into line with what they already believed. “The Council” was responsible, and the distinction between Cheshire County and Crewe & Nantwich Borough was not one they wanted to grapple with. But too many people have known the frustration of being passed from one council department to another when they are making an enquiry.

That ought not to happen now, if the right information is given in Council publications. There have been two editions of “Cheshire East News” so far, delivered house-to-house across the council’s area. The information provided in them is a good start, but not as complete as we would like. We hope that this will improve, and we will also try to fill some of the gaps with “Focus”. We also want to know how you get on when you make an enquiry. Let us know your experience - good or bad - by using our contact details on the back page.

Many of us prefer face-to-face contact when making an enquiry. In Crewe we have several starting points. The **Access Shop** beside Municipal Buildings in Earle Street, **Municipal Buildings** reception, **the Library**, and **Delamere House** reception. For information specifically about Planning matters, there is the Help Desk at Municipal Buildings.

For telephone enquiries, the central number to use is **0300 123 5500.** Many of us have found the “**Streetwise**” service provided by Crewe & Nantwich for refuse and street cleaning enquiry very helpful. This is still available on **0800 387491.**

If you have a home or office computer - or use public facilities such as those in the Access Shop or the Library - then the Council’s web site is developing into a very good source of information. **The address is www.cheshireeast.gov.uk.** The “**Do it online**” section of the site, offers a range of reporting and application services.

If you prefer to make a suggestion, a complaint or a compliment in writing, then the postal address is: **Cheshire East Council, Customer Centre, Market Place, Macclesfield SK10 1EA.** Alternatively “Do it online” through the web site (see above).

Neighbourhood Action Meetings Crewe South
Alexandra (south of Nantwich Road)
10th Dec 6.30 p.m. at St Andrew’s Church Hall, Bedford St
Contact: Dawn Clark T. 537339
E-mail: Dawn.Clark@cheshireeast.gov.uk

St John’s (north of Nantwich Road)
28th Oct 7 p.m. at Ruskin School Dining Hall
Contact: Clair Edwards-Steele T. 537432
E-mail: clair.edwards-steele@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Don't lose your vote!

At this time of year, **voter registration forms are delivered to every home** on behalf of the Electoral Registration Officer for Cheshire East. It is the local council that keeps the voting register up to date for use in all elections - local, national, and European. There **will** be a General Election next year: no Parliament can last for more than 5 years, and the present one was elected in May 2005. So **make sure your name goes on the Register if you want to vote next year**. You may also find that you need to be on the Register for credit checks and other purposes.

HOW TO GET IN TOUCH WITH US

Please get in touch with us to take up any of the issues in this newsletter or anything else that you are concerned about.

Telephone or e-mail is the quickest way:

David Cannon T. 650279

E-mail david.cannon@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Betty Howell T. 584689

E-mail betty.howell@cheshireeast.gov.uk

(Please do not use our old Crewe & Nantwich e-mail addresses as messages may not get through to us)

If you prefer to write a letter, then you are welcome to use our Freepost address: (you don't need a stamp)

**Crewe & Nantwich Liberal Democrats,
FREEPOST NWW1448A,
CREWE CW2 5BG**

If you write, please give an address or telephone number so that we can get back to you. We recognise that there are some situations where people need to give information anonymously, although this is usually more appropriate for the police than for councillors. Anonymous letters of comment or complaint are mostly a waste of time for all concerned because there is no way of finding out whether the letter writer is genuine.

THE FOCUS COMPETITIONS

In the last edition we gave the answers to the Wordsearch in the March issue but did not announce the winner. We can now congratulate **Ivy Rigby** whose entry was drawn out of the bag by **Chris Davies**, our MEP, when he came to Crewe in May. Ivy lives in the northern part of the Ward.

The Wordsearch in the last edition asked you to find street names within the Ward and discover the odd one out. Most entrants correctly identified "Nantwich" (Road) as the correct answer. The others were all children's names: Arthur, Amy, Frances, Stewart, Catherine, Edward, Neville, Ernest, and Lewis.

We congratulate **Karen Robinson** whose entry was the first drawn. Karen lives in the southern part of the Ward.

Look out for more competition in future editions of Focus.

Do you like what you read?

We hope you like receiving "Focus" from us at intervals through the year. It is our way of "reporting back" to the people we represent on the Council. We bear the cost of printing from the allowances we receive as councillors. For the delivery we rely on the help of volunteers. Some are Liberal Democrat Party members, others simply want to keep up the delivery in their area.

We have welcomed several newcomers to the delivery team this year, and are very grateful for their help. If you are willing to join them, please ring Robert Icke on 668135. Rob is our Local Party Secretary so he is also the person to talk to if you want to join the Liberal Democrats or find out more about the party.