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Park 120th anniversary
picture special**
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THE CHRONICLE

Issue 41
Oct 2021

FREE

SOS: Save Our Services as council facilities branded not fit to use



Photo: Lee Bolton



Unsafe: Trumble Gardens



Clocktower: target for ASB

CHILDREN staged a protest appealing for Croydon Council to 'Save Our Playground' after a toddler was injured on one of the last remaining pieces of equipment in Grangewood Park.

In a damning indictment about the state of the council even Labour councillors have been unable to get action over issues of health and safety and have said Trumble Gardens is not 'fit for use' by residents because it is unsafe.

After six years under Labour control, Thornton Heath still has the worst levels of flytipping in the whole borough according

to the council's waste provider and at scrutiny committee the problem was blamed on north Croydon being 'densely populated'. (P12)

No action was taken to remove flytipping and graffiti from Thornton Heath's history Clocktower and it was left to a private cleaning company to remove it as it emerged the council plans to cut its neighbourhood enforcement teams by two thirds. **>P10 -11**

THE Parchmore Centre which was at the forefront of black activism and became a model for a world wide church movement - putting the community first - has closed.

The community programme at Parchmore Methodist Church ended last week after over 50 years at the heart of life in Thornton Heath.

The centre had provided facilities for vulnerable adults offering a Lunch Club for 74 elderly people and worked with the council's Gateway service on a Food Stop providing meals and welfare support for those facing the risk of homelessness.

At at one point the centre according to its web site was offering a wide range of activities to over 1,700 people a week from some 52 different groups.



End of an era for Parchmore

The centre had only recently been refurbished to offer more facilities but appears to have been impacted by Covid and financial issues attaching some blame to the council for pulling its staff from the welfare project.

Parchmore vicar Rev Nadine Wilkinson said that church services continue and

hirers of the hall are returning but that the "community development programme in its current form has closed" and that service users had received information about "alternative sources of support"

Many of its regular groups have also been displaced including the Guides and Brownies who were due to celebrate the packs hundredth anniversary but are now looking for a new home. The cost of hiring the hall has also increased with many groups not able to afford the new fees.

According to accounts filed with the Charity Commission,

Parchmore's income has consistently decreased since 2016 to just over £200,000 and in August 2020 reported expenditure of £194,895 with an operational surplus of £10,800.

Rev Wilkinson said: "Croydon Council has **>P7**

OAP exhibits at Royal Academy

AT the age of 85, former primary school teacher Esme Alexander, from Thornton Heath, has been selected from thousands of hopeful artists to show a painting at the prestigious Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition.



>P3

Rapper's gift of free school uniforms >P9

Labour deselected popular councillor

THURSDAY'S referendum has caused a huge rift in the Croydon Labour camp with Bensham Manor ward councillor Jamie Audsley deselected from standing in the 2022 local elections in May.

He led a group of party members launching the Labour for Mayor campaign and it was well known that he was hoping if the vote favours an executive mayor that he would be selected to be Labour's candidate.

In an internal statement sent to colleagues seen by The Chronicle Cllr Audsley launches a scathing attack on the nameless powers behind what he describes as a 'politically motivated' decision to reject his application to stand for the party in May.

An internal survey of Labour members in Croydon, saw a narrow margin wanting a directly-elected mayor. However, when asked what governance model should the Croydon Labour Group support in the referendum they opted for the current leadership option which meant that supporters were whipped not to speak out in favour of the DEM model. **>P12**

HIGH STREET



Thornton Heath app launched to drive economic growth

A DIGITAL town hub platform which aims to generate economic growth for Thornton Heath will be unveiled over the coming weeks.

The goal of the online app is to help local communities take greater ownership over the kind of information that's essential for healthy town centres.

The apps, known as Digital Town Hubs, have been developed by tech company Loqiva based in Crystal Palace and is part of the wider South London Partnership's InnOvaTe Project which aims help people live better and healthier lives.

Working in partnership with Croydon Council, local businesses and organisations Loqiva has already

developed two apps as part of a pilot scheme for High Streets In South Norwood and Purley.

Residents will be able to download the free app which provides a wide range of features including local news and offers.

Local businesses can register on the hub to upload events, offers and send in-app messages to draw in customers. Community groups will also be invited to join too.

The hub will be managed by the Thornton Heath Community Action Team (THCAT) which has rebranded its logo (pictured left). It will also be unveiling a new website next month.

Tilly Pollard THCAT's social media Ambassador said: "This is such an

exciting opportunity. The hub will help businesses to connect directly with residents without the filters or advertising costs of social media."

The digital town hub initiative will also provide select local businesses with sensor devices to help measure footfall in their business and throughout the area to better understand customer data.

If your business would like to be one of the first 20 businesses on the platform, then please get in touch right away at action@thorntonheath.net

The app will launch to residents by the end of November 2021.

Learn more about the app at the next THCAT meeting on October 13.

Proud2Be: Black History month in Croydon

PROUD2BE is the theme of Croydon's Black History month which features author Kemi Bamgbose who will be in Thornton Heath to share the inspiration behind her children's book: *When Mr Mandela Came To Town*.

Aged 11, Kemi took the day off school to see the newly elected, President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, on his historic trip to Brixton joining with thousands of others for this momentous occasion, in July 1996.

Kemi's book partly based on her experiences aims to educate and inspire children about modern Black British history.

Croydon Libraries will host a programme of activities starting with Semi's event for children aged seven upwards at Thornton Heath Library on Saturday (Oct 9) at 11am.

Kemi said: "I remember my Mum and Dad saying we could take the day off school to go and see Mr Mandela in



Brixton – which you will never hear from African parents!

"Yet, they knew how monumental the occasion would be and didn't want us to miss out despite being so young - I was 11 at the time. I specifically remember my dad saying 'this experience will be better than any book you will ever read' And it couldn't be truer!"

Croydon's Black History month was launched party at a Business Xchange Hub last Friday (Oct 1) which saw musical performances, dance, and DJs. Hosted by speaker, writer and podcaster Debra Chosen, and featured music from DJ Sound Supreme, Afrobeats performer Silvastone, and Norbury Manor Girls choir.

Organised by Croydon BME Forum in partnership with Croydon Council

the month long programme honours the borough's black communities' achievements, contributions, heritage and culture.

The huge range of events includes an intergenerational fashion show, poetry readings, live music, theatre, inspirational speakers, a networking brunch and thought-provoking discussions, there is something to appeal to all ages and interests.

Andrew Brown, Chief Executive of the Croydon BME Forum said: "Our theme this year Proud2be was chosen as we wanted to celebrate all the things that we are proud of. Proud be Black, proud to be a woman, proud to live in Croydon. Whatever you are proud of we want you to celebrate with us this year during Black History Month."

The Museum of Croydon has also produced a learning pack for children, which includes information on singer Stormzy and Sislin Fay Allen, Britain's first black female police officer, who both lived in Thornton Heath (museumofcroydon.com/black-history-in-croydon-learningpack).

To book tickets for Kemi's reading ring the library on: 020 7884 5185 or email thorntonheathlibrary@croydon.gov.uk

Fire in tower block



ELDERLY residents of a tower block were left frightened and in the dark after a fire broke out on the fifth floor.

Firefighters issued a warning after it emerged the early morning blaze had been caused by candles.

The fire started in the bedroom of one of the 66 flats in the Garnet Road tower which offers housing for retired residents including occupants in their 90s.

The block was thrown in to darkness with the electrics shutting off the lifts, telephone and lights not once but twice.

The fire brigade were called just after at 7am and had the fire under control in just under two hours.

One man was taken to hospital. Fire investigators believe the fire was caused by a tea light candle.

Firefighters had to return just after 2.30pm for a sprinkler alarm as all the flats were fitted with them after the Grenfell Tower tragedy but later that same evening the power room flooded and the electrics shut down but thankfully engineers were able to restore power relatively quickly.

A London Fire Brigade spokesperson said: "Candles are one of the most common causes of fires in the home all across London."

Ear biter jailed



A THORNTON Heath man who bit part of his victim's ear off in an assault in Dorset has been jailed for two years.

Richard Dale Crawshaw, 42, admitted a charge

unlawful wounding at Bournemouth Croon Sept 22.

The charge related to an altercation in a Weymouth street with a man in his 20s at around 11am on May 11 and during the struggle he bit the victim's left ear - tearing a piece off.

Chronicle celebrates

IT'S hard to believe but The Chronicle has been going for five years. The first edition was just four pages and 2,000 copies which was handed out to coincide with Thornton Heath Festival in September 2016.

Local newspapers are in decline so not only was it a challenge to set up a newspaper but to keep it going without significant funding has been the biggest test.

It's meant that much of what we have managed to achieve has been through blood, sweat and free labour!

In the early days The Chronicle wasn't printed by Iliffe Printing Press and the first Christmas edition which was eight pages and 4,000 copies had to be hand folded!

Now we have a team of volunteers who distribute door to door and until recently we were able to put copies in the newspaper stands in Tesco. Sadly, Tesco work with a distributor who pays them to use these bins and that company wanted to unreasonably charge us to provide this FREE newspaper to the community so we have had to adjust and just as I folded the newspaper at the beginning I am now standing out Tesco distributing the newspaper!

When The Chronicle's original design Vân Dang moved we were fortunate enough that Jo Dawson stepped in putting her own stamp on The Chronicle.

Over the years we have covered hundreds of local stories and we hope we have been a force for good in giving our culturally rich and diverse community a voice.

We'd love to be able to carry on providing you with free local news for another five years but in order to do that we need a lot more support.

One way you can help is to advertise or support our GoFundMe appeal campaign: www.gofundme.com/f/support-local-newspapers. If you would like to get more involved in shaping the future of The Chronicle please get in touch. Editor, Andrea Perry



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Print circulation 5,000 copies.
Readership: circa 10,000

Esme, 85, has painting selected to feature in prestigious Royal Academy art show



TURN FROM PAGE 1

THE Thornton Heath pensioner captured from a black and white photograph this scene of her late mother Priscilla Elizabeth sitting in a garden in Ghana.

During lockdown, fashion designer and illustrator David Ross, who volunteers his time with Thornton Heath charity ASKI, ran on Zoom art work shops for older people.

Esme wanted to recreate the memory she had from that day in Ghana and decided to recreate the scene in acrylic paint from the photograph.

The budding artist remembers being 15 or 16 when the photograph was taken and said: "I remember the colours she was wearing, a navy blue dress embroidered around the neckline."

Out of this Esme developed the art work which David suggested she should submit to the Royal Academy.

Esme's painting was successfully selected from thousands of entries



to feature in the RA's Summer Exhibition 2021 coordinated by renowned artist British-Nigerian Yinka Shonibare.

The unassuming pensioner said about her achievement: "Well it is nice to be acknowledged at some point in my life for something!"

She admitted that her mother would have been 'proud' of her accomplishment.

Subtitled "Reclaiming Magic" the exhibition focuses on works by "previously invisible" artists, with an emphasis on pieces by and of people of colour and first-time entrants who can quite easily find their entries next to work by the likes of Grayson Perry or Tracey

Emin, who were at a star studded preview night.

Esme attended the champagne reception along with other artists who feature in the show, including: comedian Harry Hill and painter Sally Muir, rubbing shoulders with the stars ahead of the opening on September 22.

Esme paints every weekend with the Vale Art group in Streatham and every free moment she has she paints as it relaxes her and she feels in her "comfort zone".

Esme said: "I got interested in art when I was at teacher training college. I knew I had the skill and every now and again I would do something but it was not until I was well in to my retirement that I picked it up again."

The exhibition also gives artists the opportunity to sell their work but Esme has chosen to keep the painting and plans her own private viewing at her Thornton Heath home.

She admits to having built up quite a collection of paintings over the years and says she best enjoys landscapes and paints wherever she finds "interesting or takes her fancy".

She added: "I could have sold my painting but I decided not to as I am thinking of having my friends around to show them all the paintings I have done over the years."

The RA exhibition runs until January 2 and you can also browse the artworks online <https://se.royalacademy.org.uk/2021/artworks> or if you are a friend of Esme you might get an invite in person!



Appletastic times in the park

THIS evocative image has captured the essence of the apple harvesting season as the fruit is pressed to make juice ready to drink.

The traditional scene wouldn't look out of place in a rural setting but was actually in Thornton Heath in Grangewood Park.

Kay Michael who organised the event and borrowed the press was joined by fellow growers Sofia Zervudachi, Susheela Ramanathan and Hannah Miller.

The women are part of the Ross Road Food Growing Group and the Edible Gardens project in the sunken gardens in Grangewood Park, which was created following a Crowdfunding appeal led by Ruth Miller, who captured this evocative image.

The apples came from local trees including allotments and gardens. Grangewood Park has its own orchard and had a bumper crop of plums, apples and pears this year which were picked and eaten by passing park users including the grateful squirrel population!

If you would like to become involved in either the food growing or edible gardens email: friendsofgrangewood@yahoo.co.uk

Shop to become pop up gallery

A CHARITY shop on the High Street is set to be transformed in to a pop up gallery featuring local artists and makers.

Croydon Shared will be partnering up with the Salvation Army, Thornton Heath, to hold a series of artist takeovers and events from October until December.

Croydon Shared, is a collaboration by artist PINS and designer Samantha Warren, co-founder of Scene In Croydon. During lock down the creatives set up community gallery on Instagram.

Samantha's series of prints including of Thornton Heath, celebrate Croydon



Photo: Vân Dang

debunking many of the negative messages.

While PINS, is a well known sketch artist who has earned an international reputation for his original art concepts. More recently PINS, had a show at Croydon Museum and has been working with Samantha designing street banners.

A third Thornton Heath artist and photographer Wesley Baker, of CDN is also involved in the project Thornton Heath based creatives and makers would like to be involved, please get in touch croydonshared@gmail.com

Park features in GB Bake Off

EAGLE eyed Great British Bake Off fans spotted Grangewood Park in the introduction to one of the contestants in the Channel 4 show.

Trinidadian-born Jairzeno Paris who is head of finance at the Cystic Fibrosis Trust lives locally with partner Graeme, an ex-RAF serviceman and their greyhound rescue called Maxi who loves the park.

Sadly, Jairzeno, a keen runner who only started baking in 2014 because he was fed up with bakes that didn't deliver on flavour, was the second to leave the tent after his Tall Ship 3D biscuit showstopper failed to impress judges Paul Hollywood and Prue Leith.



Undeterred he said: "I was half expecting that result because if you look at the showstopper compared to everyone else's mine was quite basic."

However, if you are fan of Jairzeno's Caribbean inspired spicy bakes then check out his signature dishes on his Instagram page.

COMMUNITY



120 YEARS

Photos: Taylored Photography miss.pinkers@gmail.com



▲ Mr Bubbles and his bubbles

▼ Trickery from magician Mr Amigo



Old Time Music Hall entertainer Jennie Dash with a floral display created by Cheryl Johnson



Pat Stannard of the Croydon 44th Scouts (above), said: "It was a privilege to be there representing the Scouts. Such a lovely event, a lot of hard work by your team but well worth it. A great sense of community. Proud to have lived here for the past 60 plus years."



Art in the Park's Karen Barnett children's workshop

Adrian Dennis's wife Flim is pictured cutting the ribbon on the memorial bench to her late husband supported by local councillors.



Artist Vân Dang created a chalk doodle trail



Facepainting by Sarah Haram

GRANGEWOOD



Storytelling with Vanessa Wolf



Liz Woodhouse enjoys afternoon tea

A MAGICAL day in Grangewood brought the community together to make the park's 120th birthday celebrations a day to remember.

There was magic, juggling, face painting, children's story telling and bubbles galore all served up with a large helping of cake and ice cream!

The sunken garden was transformed with music to chill out to from London ska band the Skamonics and Thornton Heath resident DJ Beatnik.

The weather was glorious for enjoying a cream tea on the lawns of the old mansion and an array of stalls offered an eclectic mix of local makers selling artwork, clothes and candles, along with information on the areas history and conversations to be had on how to grow an edible garden and be sustainable.

Jennie Dash, a local resident and performer posed as Lady Edridge, who was the mayor's wife who opened the gates to the park in 1901, and entertained with Old Time Music Hall songs from those days.

Children enjoyed a number of workshops from Art in the Park and poetry from Croydon's Poet Laureate and local resident Shaniqua Benjamin.

Kwilindi Whittingham said: "What a great afternoon and good to see everyone so happy and enjoying themselves."

Volunteers had worked tirelessly before and after the event to prepare the park for the special occasion which included mowing the grass in the sunken garden as it hadn't been cut since April under the council's revised cost cutting grass mowing regime.

Nettles were strimmed, greenery pruned, graffiti painted over and litter picked.

Having filled over 12 bulk bags with green waste - tables and chairs were ferried in kindly loaned by St Paul's Church to recreate the cream teas which had been served up in the park's bygone years when it was host to Croydon's first museum and had thousands of visitors each day.

Sarah Newton said: "What an amazing day! We had lots of fun helping with the kids with set up and met so many fantastic people do stuff to help make the event special for a green space they love."

Crockery and cutlery were kindly donated and boxes filled with sandwiches, cake and of course scones, jam and cream were provided by local baker Heidi Tompson and served up by volunteer Sue Ahmed.

Park events were put on hold during Covid but The Friends were determined not to allow the park's birthday celebration to pass unmarked and raised £600 through a crowdfunding appeal to be able to pay artists.

PARK

Dijana Cakaric said: "This was community spirit at its best!"

The lockdowns saw the park rejuvenated and it is now once again bustling and busier than it ever has been with hundreds turning out to join the birthday celebrations.

Lou Killengray said: "I have to say, the community vibe was incredible. We moved to the area in January when I was 37 weeks pregnant. The park was a daily outing to keep me healthy. It also became a key spot for meeting other new mums in the area and, I have no doubt, it saved my sanity and nurtured my mental health at every visit. We love it.

"The party really showed us what a lovely community we've found ourselves in, something that was hidden from us during the lockdowns."

Richard Holdsworth said: "We came with our toddler and baby. Can't thank the organisers and contributors enough, a really lovely celebration. You should feel extremely proud for helping so emphatically to bring our community together."

Karen Barnett who week-on-week provides activities for local children with Art in the Park ended the day with a spectacular procession while all those attending sang Happy Birthday to Grangewood Park.

Chair of The Friends of Grangewood Park Andrea Perry said: "The atmosphere on the day was magical. The feedback we have received has been so positive. We did the park proud but none of it could have been achieved without the wonderful support of the community and our amazing band of volunteers."

The day also saw the unveiling of two new park benches; one dedicated to the late Alderman Adrian Dennis, a Freeman of Croydon who was the ward councillor for Thornton Heath for 20 years and a second bench remembering those we lost locally during Covid.

COMMUNITY



FOR more than a century St Paul's Church has sat at the heart of the community providing a sanctuary for those in need, for prayer and for celebrations.

And in many ways, as it reached its impressive 150th milestone, the pandemic has seen it delivering one of its most important roles, at the forefront of the NHS vaccination programme.

As society has changed so has the church. In its heyday the then vicar carried out in one day alone, 53 baptisms. Since January, 44,000 jabs have been administered with over 20,000 people passing through the doors of the Thornton Heath church including a visit from Camilla, The Duchess of Cornwall.

There was further well wishes at the anniversary dedication festival eucharist with letter from Her Majesty The Queen, in which she wrote: "I send my best wishes to all concern for a most memorable and enjoyable gathering making this notable milestone in your history."

The church survived bomb damage in the Second World War and has been there for the community at the start of life and the end. Over the years it has also overseen the weddings of hundreds of local couples but with less marriages taking place in church the last was in 2015.

Gill Borthwick's connection with St Paul's began 40 years ago when she and husband Paul moved to Thornton Heath.

She said: "We started to look for a church and came to St Paul's just at the end of Rev Douglas Turton's time in the late 80s. The church was going through a real sense of bereavement with losing a vicar who had been here and was well liked and then being hit with the news that a young churchwarden, David Corner was killed by an IRA bomb in Victoria Station and the funeral was one of the vicar's last duties in February 1991.

"Understandably, the church was in a double bereavement, but as we started to get involved, we were welcomed and made to feel really comfortable, and instantly knew this was where we wanted to be.

"After 13 years of waiting, we were blessed with our first child in November 1991, and she was baptised at the church. That child, Kirsty, is now ordained herself and in her first year of curacy.

"As our family grew, our love for the people in the church grew and they became a second family. The girls loved to get involved and we have pictures showing them at an early age helping with the cleaning and moving things around when building works were about to happen. We got more and more involved - both in the services and in the community events and my husband got confirmed.

"Over the years my husband was Churchwarden for 13 years. During Rev Martin Jewitt's time he encouraged me to explore a vocation in the church and God pointed me towards being a Lay Minister (Reader) and I was licensed in 2005. I was also taken on as a Parish Administrator during Martin's time and that remit has broadened to include Community Coordination as I firmly believe that the church should be at the centre of the community not only providing space for activities but also active in the community.

"It was such a joyous occasion to celebrate 150 years of worship and service. St Paul's has had its ups and downs, just as the area has, but through it all it has remained as we first found it friendly, welcoming and caring. People care about the church



Bishop and Rev Thompson pictured with Patience Nigye, Chloe (10) and Cara

and the community."

More recently, prior to the pandemic, the church has been forefront of Social Prescribing programme working to improve the health and well being of older people.

In August, St Paul's held a special thanksgiving service to recognise all the hard work of everyone involved in the vaccine roll out with certificates presented to volunteers and a Strawberry Tree planted to remember all those who have lost loved ones during Covid.

The dedication eucharist on Saturday (Sep 25) was conducted by Bishop of Southwark Christopher Chessun and among the church leaders was former vicar Martin Jewitt who served the church for 11 years and is now retired. The service was followed by a buffet feast provided by the congregation to mark the special occasion and also celebrate the news that the church has been awarded a £15,000 grant from the Marshalls charity to enable essential roof repairs to be carried out.

The church has had 16 vicars in its 150 year history with Revd Derrick Thompson the present incumbent arriving three years ago. He said: "As a newcomer to the area I find it hard to imagine those first days of St.Paul's church when most of the surrounding area was still fields with only a few houses around where St. Paul's now stands, especially as the area is now so densely populated. Meetings actually started a year or so earlier, with the parish being formally created and the original building commenced in 1871. Although we are not sure, we think it was at that time that St. Paul's was made a 'Crown Parish'. That means that the patron of St. Paul's is the Sovereign and it was a great encouragement to us to receive a letter of congratulations from Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, for our 150th Anniversary Celebration.

"Although St.Paul's attendance is not what it once was I often reflect on the fact that where there used to be one Church, four churches are now meeting giving different expressions to how we worship God. This is something I rejoice in as we reflect the diversity of the community we live in and serve.

"It has also been the place of many happy occasions, especially weddings and Christenings. One of the things that the last eighteen months has taught us is that we never know what is around the corner.

"My hope and prayer is that St.Paul's will be one of the many churches in Thornton Heath that will continue to meet those needs for decades and centuries to come."



Local NHS workers plant



WHEN the church was first built the area was mostly open countryside with only four houses and in between singing the choir boys played around on the haystacks by the church.

In the early part of the 20th century it was standing room only with hundreds attending services day and night.

The need for a church was first discussed in 1852 because Croydon was not adequately provided for in religion and there was a grand plan to build 600 new churches.

In 1868 in the Parish Room of the former hall, in Norfolk Road, the original church stood made of corrugated iron.

The curate of All Saints' Church, Upper Norwood, The Revd R M Browne started services and was a leading figure in getting the permanent church built.

In 1871 plans were drawn up to build the new church which cost £3,500 and the decision made to dedicate the church to St Paul.

The first baptism was recorded on September 17, 1871 and first marriage took place on August 19, 1872.

The church was consecrated on July 6, 1872 by the Bishop of Dover and later that year the Archbishop of Canterbury visited and preached.



By 1901 the original church building was added to due to the growth in the area of both houses and population.

Morning and evening the church was crowded and if you didn't get there early you didn't get a seat, as attendance numbered 600.

There have been many restorations to the building over the years.

Two of the large windows were blown out during the second world war and the coloured stain glass replaced in 1948 with plain glass.

But if you look closely enough in one of the windows you can still see a small piece of red glass remaining.

In 1986 there was a radical plan to reduce the church in size and build homes around it but this was strenuously rejected.

In August 1999 the rationalisation of the building was discussed again culminating in a major reorder in 2011 which you see today.

Electric bikes to patrol the beat



INSTEAD of on foot Thornton Heath's Safer Neighbourhood Team can now be seen whizzing around on e-bikes as they patrol the beat.

Ward councillors from all three wards: Thornton Heath, Bensham Manor and West Thornton, contributed to buying the e-bikes which were funded from their council Community Ward Budgets.

The 10 bikes have enabled the officers who are based at Windmill Road to spend less time travelling to the wards they patrol on their patch.

They e-bikes are increasingly being used by community officers as they are great on hills, handy when pursuing other electric devices like e-scooters and enhance community engagement.

An e-bike is a bicycle with a battery power 'assist' that comes via peddling.

Ward sergeant Andy Smith welcomed the 'amazing bits of kit' adding: "We are now more mobile, more visible and more reactive than before."

Our picture taken at Spurgeon's College which is on the Thornton Heath ward, shows the SNT officers, ready for action.

The bikes were presented at a ceremony attended by local councillors Karen Jewitt, Humayun Kabir, and Janet Campbell.

Met launches diversity recruitment drive

A RECRUITMENT drive across London to get more women and people of colour to join the police force is being launched in Thornton Heath this month.

It comes at a time when the Met is under intense scrutiny after the conviction of former firearms officer Wayne Couzens for the murder, kidnap and rape of Sarah Everard.

The Met is also under pressure to become more representative of London and has a target that half of the Met's officers should be from a Black, Asian or minority background by 2022.

The campaign is being led by Chief Superintendent Jeff Boothe who speaking at the Croydon Safer Neighbourhood Board said only 15 per cent of the police were BAM, whereas the population of BAM people in London was 45 per cent.

In Thornton Heath, the number is even greater with over 36 per cent Black and 25 per cent Asian along with one of the largest Afro Caribbean populations in the country.

Chief Superintendent Boothe said he was looking to involve local communities to get the message across explaining that recruits could also work towards a degree as part of the training given to them.

The fully funded degree or graduate diploma provides a competitive salary of circa £30,000 while you train.

The senior officer also advised that the Met were implementing policy and procedures to ensure these new recruits were welcomed and looked after, so each would have a mentor assigned to them that they could rely on.

They were also holding exit reviews if people left to establish the reason why they were leaving, so they could change policy if needed.

The first recruitment event will take place in Thornton Heath between 21 to 24 October by the clock tower next to Tesco from 10.00am to 8.00pm



Man found stabbed

POLICE were called at 2.35pm (on September 15) to reports of a man stabbed at an address in Brigstock Road above Tesco supermarket.

The Air Ambulance landed in the Iceland car park after police and paramedics found the victim, believed aged in his 60s, suffering a stab injury. He was taken to hospital by land ambulance for treatment.

A woman, aged in her 40s, was arrested on suspicion of Grievous Bodily Harm.

It is believed both parties are known to each other. Enquiries into the circumstances continue.

Woman goes berserk in Co-op

A WOMAN reportedly armed with a hammer and screwdriver was arrested after trying to attack people in Green Lane Co-op.

Police said they were called at 4pm to reports of a woman causing damage inside the shop.

Eyewitnesses said that the incident happened at school home time on September 14 and staff had locked the suspect in the shop and called police.

A Met police spokesman said: "A woman, in her 20s, was detained and arrested for robbery, affray, possession of an offensive weapon in a public place and criminal damage." Police said no one was injured in the incident and enquires continue.

End of an era for community model at parchmore

TURN FROM PAGE 1

withdrawn all staff who were working in services offered in partnership with the community centre. In an unpredictable funding environment, a small local charity cannot continue to assume all the associated liabilities and risks and must review its offering to ensure it is able to sustain its mission."

In the 1960s with congregation numbers dwindling, a new vision began to emerge at Parchmore and a decision was made to transform the way the church worked and find out what the community actually needed; particularly its young black members.

In 1968 building was reborn as the Parchmore Church and Youth Centre with a designated area for activities for young people.

That partnership, which went on

to become a model for the Methodist church across the world became known as the 'Parchmore approach'.

In the early 1980s racial disturbances and tension with the police and young people following the murder of Terry May saw Parchmore at the forefront of events with extremists threatening to burn down the building.

It led to the establishment of a forum which sought to influence community policing and training as well as campaigning for better education and youth provision of young black people.

The late Princess Diana famously made what some saw as a controversial visit to Parchmore in 1983, in the wake of these events and hundreds lined the streets to welcome her.

In 2018 the pre-school which served hundreds of children and parents in and

around Thornton Heath for half a century was forced to close because of funding but the future looked bright for Parchmore.

A newly expanded lunch club was launched offering freshly cooked meals alongside health related exercise to older people.

In April 2020 the food stop opened offering help to the most needy in the community and the building was refurbished with a £14,000 grant from the council.

But Covid hit and the council's precarious financial situation seems to have impacted on the sustainability of the project despite weekly attendance increases of 500 per cent.

In March last year an annual grant of £72,000 from the Croydon Council expired and was replaced by a new annual grant of £40,000 awarded from

the Croydon Community Fund for three years, which led to a reduction in staffing levels.

Cllr Karen Jewitt said she was 'sorry' to hear of the closure of the community programme and provided this response from the council

"The Parchmore took the decision to end their food stop on 1 September, partly because the welfare rights team were no longer working from there. They have lots of information as to where to signpost existing food stop residents to as well as alternatives for anyone approaching them

"Our community resources delivery lead has been off since the food stop ceased and I would imagine that they will try and find alternative partners who may be interested in a food stop in that area to meet the needs of that locality"

COMMUNITY



Mula cake magic provides fun, food and lifeskills for hundreds of kids

A SUMMER holiday kids club provided activities, life skills, hot meals and a tons of fun as can be seen by the happy smiles on the faces of these local children.

The Mula Cake Kids Club run by Dexter Simms had 114 children register with 90 per cent of families on free school meals.

Each day the club catered for 30-40 children with activities such as cake baking, fashion, business, fitness, arts and craft and more.

The children aged eight to 13 got to do gardening and pet animals including a rabbit, snake and chickens.

The club provided hot food three times a day and the children enjoyed different cultures of food and snacks through out the holiday.

They were also taken on trips to a fun fair, museum, cinema and to the seaside with two coaches full of 96 children and parents visiting Little Hampton.



The activities culminated in a presentation day with children performing and showing off the skills they had learned to councillor Alisa Flemming, Cabinet member for Children, Young People and Learning and Head of Education Shelly Davis.

Cllr Fleming was moved to tears and as she expressed her gratitude to the efforts of volunteers saying she could see there was a “lot of love and team work” and “everyone coming together to make this an exceptional summer.”

The event also saw the the recipient of the Summer Camper of the Year announced with Dexter and the winner Jolie invited to dinner with the Mayor Councillor Sherwan Chowdhury who had been unable to make the presentation.

Dexter said: “I am so highly grateful that after seven years of running the Mula Cake Kids club it I still reaching higher nights and providing so many opportunities or young children, start up companies and

for people to be employed. It makes me smile every time I think about it.”

Croydon helped deliver summer activities across the borough with funding from the Department for Education’s Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme, which aims to encourage young people to lead healthier and more active lifestyles during the holidays.

Dexter who also runs a community hub and Mula Cake clothing business on London Road in Thornton Heath, added: “As much as it was a fight to receive the promised funds which lead to myself funding the club for the first and final week we are still grateful that with the help of Croydon Council and the HAF funding we was able to provide a holiday club for so many children.”

More half term activities are planned for October 25-29 which unfortunately aren’t receiving government funding.

Book via www.mulacakekidsclub.com or email info@mulacakekidsclub.com

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Tracey Davis the 'amazing woman'

CREDIT: Read the full interview
in Woman and Home.

THE volunteer behind an organisation supporting young mums and vulnerable adults has received national recognition for her outstanding contribution to improving lives.

Tracey Davis, Managing Director of Guiding Hands was one of the winners of the Woman and Home Amazing Women Awards 2021 announced last month.

Each year the magazine searches the county for women who inspire, motivate, trailblaze, and campaign.

The awards are for women over 50 who are making a difference in all walks of life from brilliant entrepreneurs to inspirational celebrities and asks readers to 'help us shine a light' on community heroes.

Tracey, received the Community Hero award for the south-east and south-west England in recognition of her work supporting families.

In an interview the 51-year-old who founded the Community Interest Company, Guiding Hands, which celebrated its 10th anniversary in August, said: "I spend 80 percent of my time working with Guiding Hands, so it's fantastic to be recognised for it personally.

"It's a wake-up moment that you are impacting others' lives. I can't thank everybody enough for 'seeing' me.

Tracey who won this award for making life easier for struggling mums said the woman who most inspires her are mothers: "Seeing the vital role they play in shaping the next generation motivates me for the work that still lies ahead."

She said her proudest achievement was her children adding: "But I'm also proud of the mums I have helped over the years. I'd like to close the widening gap between those who have support and those who don't."

When asked what her shout-out to midlife women was she responded: "Do 'me time'. Get together with friends at least once a month, and also binge-watch a series with your children—it's important bonding time."



Rap artist donates free school uniform

A RAP artist provided over a hundred free school blazers and book bags to children at a Thornton Heath school.

Recording artist Jords, real name Jordan Edwards-Wilks, who grew up in the Croydon was inspired by Marcus Rashford's campaign against child food poverty and he hopes the donations will, "ease the burden on parents" who struggle to afford the cost of uniforms.

He surprised children at Paxton Academy on London Road on their first day of term after the summer holidays arriving with a film crew and dozens of brand new uniforms.

Head teacher Theresa Moses said: "The families are really appreciative. They can't believe that it is a gift. They are so happy."

Speaking on BBC London children expressed their gratitude with one saying: "I feel very great about it and the fact that it's for free because the other blazers were like £70."

While another said: "It feels great that my mum and dad don't have to pay for it."

Jords co-founded the Free School Uniform initiative with Jamahl Rowl, a digital marketing manager, with the aim of providing free school blazers to hundreds of children from lower economic backgrounds.

The school has 50 per cent of students living in households that can be described as within the top 25 per cent most deprived in the UK and 94 per cent within the top 50 per cent.

In February The Chronicle reported that 127 of the 195 children at Paxton, which is part of the Wandle Learning Trust, were receiving Free School Meal vouchers to use in local supermarket during lockdown.

The school friends launched the enterprise last month as part of Pickni Uniforms and have also partnered with QPR Community Trust on a school uniforms recycling scheme encouraging parents and carers to donate old or unwanted uniform to be recycled or rehomed. The scheme seeks to cut annual landfill waste from the textile industry by 350,000 tonnes.

Further information on the FSU initiative can be found on www.pickniuniforms.com

Free SEND walk-in advice sessions

A WALK-IN session offering free independent and confidential advice for Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) is being held in Thornton Heath.

On the first Tuesday of each month charity SOS! SEN will be holding their regular monthly free walk-in SEN Advice Centre from 10.15am to 12.15pm at the Salvation Army Centre at 66 High Street.

The first session was on Tuesday (Oct 5) and there will be two further this year on November 2 and December 7.

SOS! SEN is a friendly advice service for parents and others looking for information and advice on Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). SOS!SEN concentrate on helping people to find their way through the legal and procedural maze which is so daunting to so many who try to obtain satisfactory provision for a child's special needs.

To find out more visit their website:

<https://www.sossen.org.uk>

Other activities taking place at the centre include:

- **Extra Time for the Over 50's** – Thursdays from 10:30am to 12:30pm. The Extra Time Club for the Over 50's run by the Palace for Life Foundation meets on Thursdays and provides a chance to socialise and take part in different activities for the Over 50's in a relaxed and friendly environment promoting happier, healthier ageing through informal physical activity while at the same time combatting social isolation and improve people's quality of life.
- **Baby and Toddler Group Session** For ages zero to four takes place on Wednesday 10am to 11.30am and Friday 10am to 11.30am and 12.30pm to 2pm. The sessions are free.

For more info phone 020 8665 0327 or email thornton.heath@salvationarmy.org.uk

Thornton Heath play street returns

THE Livingstone Road Play Street allowing children to play without traffic for a few hours returns on Sunday October 10.

Sue Ahmed who runs the Play Street went in to battle with the council after it revealed plans to charge £234 to allow the scheme to go ahead but the council did a u-turn under public pressure.

Play Streets were first trialled in Croydon in 2015 and the Livingstone Road scheme has been running since 2018. This is the first and only one of the year. The next will be in March 2022 running the second Sunday of each month until October 2022.

The road will be closed to through traffic between 1.30 to 4.30pm but residents have stewarded access at 5mph. The event is run with the council and www.londonplay.org.uk

Help find missing pup

CAN you help police trace this nine-week-old Chihuahua?

The pup went missing from Woodville Road at 1.30pm on August 28.

The distraught owner is desperate for information on the whereabouts of her beloved dog.

Thornton Heath Safer Neighbourhood have appealed for information in locating the tan coloured puppy.

If you know anything please contact the SNT on 07843 291138.



Children's clothes bargains

GET your children's Autumn wardrobe ready by shopping at Croydon's biggest baby and children's nearly new sales and pick bargains from just 50pence!

The Mum2mum Markets are held at the Oasis Academy Coulsdon School and are very popular with local parents. You can book stalls to sell on all the items the kids have grown out of, or go along and shop, great quality nearly new, saving a fortune instead of buying new.

There are three events left this year on each Saturday: October 9, November 6 and December 4 from 10am to 4pm. For more information visit: www.mum2mummarket.co.uk

PARKS

THE council earmarked £99,000 to replace the playground which is over 40-years-old over 18 months ago but say they don't have the staff to roll out the project.

In the meantime more and more bits of equipment in the Grangewood Park playground have been removed or boarded up because they are dangerous.

Parent Dan Green, has been complaining to the council about the state of the playground for some time but it was only when his three-year-old daughter was injured that the council responded to his emails

Sky hit her face when she slipped and fell while walking up the slide because there are no longer steps to climb up it.

Dan said: "The way the council have removed the access to the slide, the only way to use it is to climb up the actual slide. Sky slipped and hit her face. Her mouth was bleeding. It was very frightening."

He organised the protest which saw dozens of children and their parents turn out in support of the action. Within the last six weeks a rope climbing frame was also removed but only after multiple complaints because two of the runs were broken and exposing sharp pieces of metal.

The Friends of Grangewood Park who have been campaigning for many years for

Children demo to save 'dangerous' playground

TURN FROM PAGE 1



a new playground wrote to Chief Executive of the Council Katherine Kerslake in December offering to take on rolling out the project which could be delivered within months.

In the latest email from the council they have said they are "still committed to delivering these improvements" and aim to have a new playground delivered in "Spring 2022", although this is dependent

on recruiting an officer to do the consultation and procurement process.

The parks department has been savaged by council cuts and previously said it would deliver the playground in spring and then summer 2020.

Dad-of-two sons Spencer Brown, who lives on Ross Road said: "I think it is really depressing how they (the council) have gradually boarded it up and tried to make

it so you can't use it but you can any way so it's dangerous and counterproductive."

Mum-of-two Melanie Ellison said "I definitely think if the council has got the money and there is support in community, then what can we do to make things happen?"

Ellie Winters, 12, held up a banner saying 'I've been her for seven year's and 'nothing changes; while her father Grant said: "We have all been screaming and asking them (the council) to do the playground and it has been one excuse after another."

In a letter to The Editor of The Chronicle Vania Singh aged seven wrote: "The playground needs to be improved by getting a ladder up to the big slide and it could do with a repaint because the paint is crumbling off.

"We also need more equipment for the toddlers and in between like a sand pit. I think we can have a fun run to raise the money we need to fix up the park.

"The park is very important because it's 120 years old and people need it to get fresh air, walk their dogs and have fun!"

- £275,000 has been set aside from S106, contributions paid by developers for the Playground Investment programme for the initial regeneration of three playgrounds including Northwood Road.



Cabinet has final say on park lodge sale

THE council's Labour cabinet will have the final say on October 18 whether green space will be sold in Grangewood Park.

Despite a petition of almost 5,000 signatures and objections to the council selling Heath Lodge and associated land in the park the council is forging ahead with auction of the site.

This is the third time the council has tried to sell the lodge, which it has run down over many years of abandonment. In February 2020 it did a major u-turn on the sale because of public pressure promising not to pursue its sale and instead work

with the community on alternative uses.

Now though, because it is in such a financial mess it is selling as many of its assets as it can.

If the cabinet approves the proposal the lodge and land will be sold at a Savills auction in December or February with all the money being consumed to pay the council's debt rather than investing in the park's crumbling infrastructure.

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Trumble Gardens not fit for use

TURN FROM PAGE 1

BENSHAM Manor ward councillors have raised serious concerns about the condition of Trumble Gardens but have seen repeated requests calling for action about the state of the tennis courts ignored for months.

It has become so bad that local councillors Jamie Audsley, Alison Butler and Humayun Kabir questioned whether the historic green space is even 'fit for use' by residents.

Concerns for the safety of children using the park date back to June because of the level of overgrown grass, shrubs and broken glass.

The gardens, were created on the site of

houses which were destroyed in a Second World War bomb strike and named after Alderman Trumble.

The fencing surrounding the tennis courts which are managed by the council's leisure provider Better is in a state of disrepair; broken and with jagged edges on display.

The councillors wanted a plan to make Trumble Gardens safe and organised and led a litter pick in July to try and clean up the green space.

James Perkins, who is the new head of Environmental Services at Croydon Council, said he was waiting for an update to review the level of damage to



the courts with a view to its repair but that was in June. Three weeks ago in an email seen by The Chronicle the three councillors asked Muhammed Ali, who is the cabinet member for Cabinet member Sustainable Croydon: "Could you now take personal responsibility for ensuring this ongoing hazard is quickly addressed?"

"More broadly Trumble Gardens now requires a proper deep clean for it to be fit for use for residents as rubbish and litter have built up to such an extent that a general clear up won't cut it."

Cllr Ali hasn't responded and is still to answer how much not cutting the grass so regularly throughout the borough saves.

At last month's Croydon Safer Neighbourhood the grass cutting situation was raised because it was putting children at risk playing in these open spaces, because knives and other dangerous items, along with dog mess could be hidden in the grass, the meeting heard.

HMO permission refused but council offer licence?

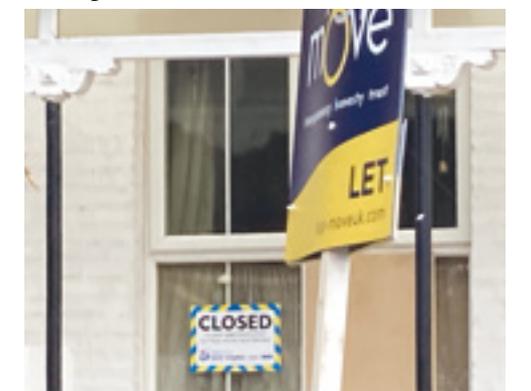
A FAMILY home which was carved up in to a HMO without permission in a bizarre twist could still be granted a licence by the council.

The council's planning department refused permission for the 10-bed HMO at 97 Melfort Road but it could still get a licence while facing enforcement action for breaching planning.

The anomaly has outraged residents who have seen total of 14 Houses of Multiple Occupancy created on Melfort Road over a distance of 800 yards, housing a total of 92 tenants.

The council introduced legislation in Thornton Heath last year to stop family homes being turned in to HMOs with the Article 4 direction now requiring planning consent for change of use.

The Melfort Road family home was brought in 2019 for £415,000 by Mussarat Khan who appealed to the Secretary of State against Croydon's decision but it was upheld.



Meanwhile 12 intercoms have been fitted to the front of the property and at the rear a detached outbuilding been constructed without the necessary planning permission.

An application has now been submitted for change of use from residential to a children's home.

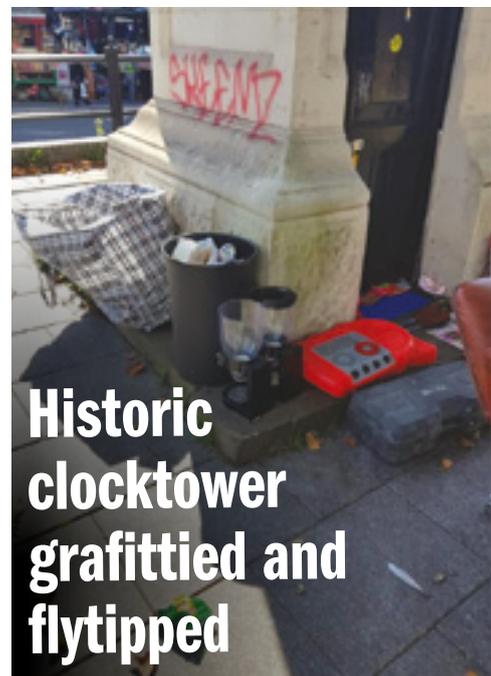
In another Thornton Heath street an occupant living in a HMO in St Paul's Road was removed after months of anti social behaviour. A closure order was granted at Croydon magistrates court.

This will close the venue for three months and "hopefully provide some well deserved respite for the local residents," police Tweeted.

Berwick Lodge, is owned by a South Croydon businessman who recently applied to build more houses in the back garden of the historic house but it was refused by the council.

Our picture shows the closure notice at the property.

A mountain of rotting rubbish in what is meant to be the bin area has also been ignored for months despite repeated complaints to councillors.



Historic clocktower graffitied and flytipped

RESIDENTS have been gobsmacked by the latest antics at Thornton Heath's historic clock tower which has been graffitied and turned in to home from home by the latest group gathering there.

Even by Thornton Heath standards the bizarre trail of clothes, shoes, a tool box, swivel chair, coffee maker, and cooking hob have been a surprise addition to the council's regeneration of the area.

Worst still for days on end the council seemed incapable of removing what was being reported as a fly tip by multiple residents which meant it should have been removed within 48 hours.

A large rock which was placed at the Clocktower by the council was daubed with the words 'Shan' while benches installed as part of the regeneration were graffitied with the words: "SAS Clocktower" though it may have been a misspelling and should have read 'SOS'.

Even the poor old clocktower which has stood there since 1900 hasn't escaped being graffitied.

As the council prepares to make even more cuts including axing further Neighbourhood Safety Officer jobs a councillor

told The Chronicle that the council was now 'non functioning'.

There are no longer staff to deal with many of the situations being reported.

Councillor Karen Jewitt responding to complaints repeatedly reported the issue to council officers but it is unclear whether the council were removing the items or whether more was just being added to the Clocktower jumble trail.

At one point a council enforcement van turned up to observe the situation but the officer didn't get out to challenge any of the behaviour.

Eventually The Street brothers who run We Clean Windows Ltd took it upon themselves to remove the mess. Sadly the graffiti won't be removed because since it shut down its anti graffiti team the council only removes 'offensive' graffiti.

Over the past few years the Clocktower has become a magnet for anti social behaviour with drinking, shouting and fights breaking out. At one point a group of 16 routinely gathered drinking all day. Last May, during one all day session the Clocktower door was set fire. The area was in a No Drinking Zone but last year the council consulted on the future of Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) in the borough.

Hamida Ali, now the council leader, said previously: "Public Space Protection Orders are an important tool to help the council and police tackle antisocial behaviour and improve public spaces for everyone."

It's unclear what the result of the consultation was or if it was ever implemented. The police have also repeatedly asked the council for the chairs to be removed but it has fallen on deaf ears.



Scene of hit-and-run

A 62-YEAR-OLD pedestrian was taken to hospital after hit and run in Thornton Heath.

Police were called at around 8.15am on Monday (Oct 4) to the junction of Milner Road and Parchmore Road. The victim's injuries are not life-threatening but police say the driver of the van did not stop at the scene.

Police are appealing for any information to be directed to 101 quoting CAD 3142/04OCT.

Walkers made the sad discovery that a man had hanged himself from an arch in Thornton Heath Rec last month.

Police were called just after 7am on Sunday (Sept 26). Officers attended along with the London Ambulance Service but the 53-year-old man was pronounced dead at the scene.

The death is not being treated as suspicious and a report will be prepared for the Coroner.



Political rivals go head to head in war

Labour rejects outspoken councillor from re-election after he backs DEMOC

TURN FROM PAGE 1

In leaflets distributed by the campaign supporting DEMOC (Directly Elected Mayoral of Croydon) Cllr Audsley was quoted as saying: "This referendum will be about the best system for our town - not about whether you support Labour or Conservatives. As a Labour councillor I support changing the system to have a directly elected mayor!"

Once the Labour whip was in place he says he ceased any communication on the topic but the councillor who has represented Bensham Manor since 2014, was told that his application had been rejected because he had not declared that he had campaigned for DEM and that he had broken the Nolan Principles, the guide to conduct in public service. This means that he is 'ineligible' to stand in May's elections and would not be able to pursue a seat for a further four years.

He then lost his appeal against the decision despite cabinet colleagues speaking in support of him.

Supporters in the Bensham Manor ward have sent an open letter to MP Steve Reed and London Region Labour HQ.

In a covering note to the letter, Peter Durrans, the secretary of the Labour Party's Bensham Manor branch, states that "the explanation given for rejecting the application by Jamie Audsley is unsound, unjust and, therefore, unacceptable".

An advocate of citizenship politics Cllr Audsley has been outspoken about the former administration's lack of ownership and honesty following the council's well documented bankruptcy.

In the statement he says: "I campaigned in good faith to put our community first, taking the view that

after the catastrophic failure of leadership at Croydon Council, a Directly Elected Mayor can improve our town and the quality of public life for communities across our borough."

"While it will be for others to judge, I believe I have worked hard for our community and local ward over nearly eight years, taking action to support our community to get organised on many local issues, tackling unfair working conditions across the borough and supporting many to get involved in Croydon politics.

"I received no real reason for my application being unsuccessful, apart from an alleged lack of transparency about the issue of a Directly Elected Mayor. Having been open on this issue as all are aware, the irony is not lost on me.

"I appealed the decision to reject my application but unfortunately this was not successful. I was not provided with any explanation as to the reason of the panel for not upholding the appeal - arguably this is contrary to the obligations of decision makers and lacks transparency itself.

"I therefore feel that the decision to reject my application is politically motivated.

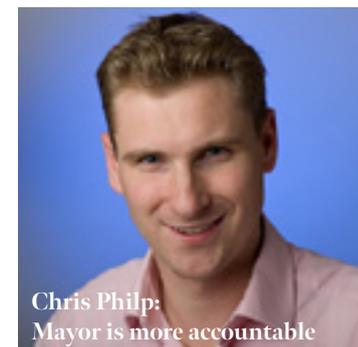
"Sadly, as when challenging the previous administration with independent thought, the experience of myself and others who have stood up for what we believe during a period of open discussion and debate, is to have been met with a similar political culture. A culture that continues to damage Croydon's communities."



Jamie Audsley caught in the crossfire



Steve Reed: Mayor will cost £3million



Chris Philp: Mayor is more accountable

Croydon MP's Steve Reed and Chris Philp clashed while debating on BBC London Vanessa Feltz radio show about whether Croydon should have an elected mayor.

Croydon north MP Reed accused Croydon south MP Philp of voting for cuts imposed on the council which had led to its financial crisis and said that the Conservatives were not interested in 'democracy' and were trying to 'suppress voter turnout'.

Chris Philips hit back saying that other councils had the same financial settlements from the government as Croydon but hadn't gone bankrupt. He blamed the disastrous Labour leadership and property speculation for losing tens of millions of pounds with a 'tiny Town Hall clique' responsible.

Steve Reed said: "They've (Conservatives) cut Croydon Council's funding, the government grant funding by over three quarters. That's the primary reason the council got into financial problems.

"Now, If we elect a mayor, then the costs for it, I've looked at what happens in other councils, the average mayoral salary is £85,000 a year.

"Times that by four over their term in office, the average mayoral office costs half a million pounds a year times that by four over four years, the cost is £2.75 million. That could only be paid for by a council tax

hike, cutting street cleaning, cutting care for older people, closing libraries or closing a youth or closing youth centres."

The MP, who is Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government added: "The other problem is you can't get rid of a failing mayor, whereas a council can get rid of a failing leader, so when the mayor of Tower Hamlets and indeed later the mayor of Liverpool were arrested on very serious fraud charges, the council did not have the power to remove them from office so they stayed in post.

"A leader in similar circumstances can be removed by councillors and replaced. I don't understand why you'd want to spend nearly £3 million on another politician when we could prioritise that money for public services that people rely on.

"The reason they're (Conservative Party) is promoting this model is they think they can't win the council elections next year under the current system, that's why they're trying to change the system. They're not interested in democracy, they're interested in rigging the system to suit themselves, even if that costs Croydon taxpayers £3 million pounds."

MP Chris Philp, responded to accusations about the council's funding from government: "In terms of trying to blame that for the Croydon Council's bankruptcy, every other London borough

Labour claims that DEM plan will waste millions on 'fat cat'

ALL the current directly elected Mayors in London are Labour which is why some may say it is surprising that the party hierarchy are so vehemently against having one in Croydon.

The main reason of course is that the majority who voted to trigger the referendum are in the Conservative supporting south where the campaign started. Coupled with a low turn out in Labour strongholds the party fears that a 'for' vote would see a Tory Mayor voted in next May's local election,

So the local Labour party has pursued a hard line against a DEM making it about the Tory cuts - claiming it is

a plan to waste millions - and urging residents to vote for 'local services' and not a 'fat-cat mayor'.

Despite this, Croydon Labour is facing apathy within its core electorate, particular in the north, who have been worst affected by the council's financial situation which has significantly impacted on 'visible' frontline services.

Labour has blamed the council's fortunes on the government funding settlement, saying its financial circumstances are caused by a 76 per cent cut and broken promises on extra support during the pandemic, which it says drove up the council tax. The government had to step in to bail out Croydon to the tune of £120million after it went bankrupt last November. This was despite repeated warnings to the Labour administration over many years from external auditors about the precarious state of the council's finances.

The council, also, in a bid to budget for shortfalls in funding, made poor investments in commercial properties including; shopping centres and the Croydon Park Hotel which it is now having to sell at a loss of £10million.

This coupled with protracted scandals over the cost of the refurbishment of Fairfield Hall and its disastrous venture in to house building with Brick by Brick

has been damaging and made worse by the Regina Road housing scandal which saw the Labour management of the council castigated on national ITV news.

The bankruptcy has resulted in cuts to all services but are particularly

impacting on the vulnerable and have left communities complaining they are not being listened to.

However, a Croydon Labour News referendum special posted through residents doors fails to take ownership for any of these failings and seems out of step with reality.

Leader Hamida Ali blames Croydon Conservatives, who haven't been in power for six years, for leaving Croydon with a £1billion debt.

She claims to be 'fighting for local people' and lists amongst her achievements stabilising the council's finances even at a cost to jobs and services.

The leader also cites saving the regular bin and recycling collections despite some residents recycling now being incinerated and increased reports of missed recycling collections which the council is saying is down to the impact of the HGV driver shortage.

Croydon Central MP Sarah Jones is pictured next to a message which says Labour has called on the government to bring in tough new laws to crack down on anti social behaviour and noise nuisance, but even with the current legislation the council no longer has the resources to even remove graffiti or pursue noise complaints in the borough.

IN CRISIS

of words

particularly outer London boroughs, have precisely the same financial settlements from the government as Croydon but Croydon is the only one that's gone bankrupt.

"And the reason for that, is the disastrous Labour leadership under the leader model, which is engaged in property speculation that went disastrously wrong and lost tens of millions of pounds, and the council didn't listen.

"That is why we need to change to a directly elected mayor chosen by the people who will actually listen rather than the failed leader that led us into this situation that simply has not listened, not just on council finances, but on planning on residents living in third world squalor."

He added: "The critical point for me, whether it ends up being a Labour Mayor, a Conservative mayor or somebody else, is that because of their mandate, because they're selected directly by the public across the entire borough they will have to listen to the public - instead of simply keeping 20 or 25 councillors happy behind closed doors.

"That accountability, means the elected mayor will listen to the public, not a tiny Town Hall clique and that is that is what led us to this awful situation."

During the debate and while speaking against the directly elected system at a recent Thornton Heath Community Action Team meeting Steve Reed said he was "not anti the mayoral system," and it was good in Lewisham and outstanding in some places but he said it was 'not appropriate' for Croydon in the current circumstances.

He told THCAT that he favoured the cooperative model of Lambeth, where he had been leader, doing things with people not to people, with power and decision making opened up to those on the receiving end of services. He put forward some possible ways to do that including:

- A Community Trust for Grangewood Park like the one at Crystal Palace which is delivering improvements.
- Tenant led social housing with managers accountable to the tenants who are able to get rid of them.
- Community Regeneration Boards for each area.
- Community energy generation organisation, owned and funded by the community.

Thornton Heath retains borough's worst flytips title

A REPORT to a council scrutiny committee has revealed what we already knew six years ago Thornton Heath has the worst fly tipping in the borough.

The administrations Don't Mess with Croydon campaign seems to have made little dent in the war on flytipping, according to the report to the Streets Environment and Homes Scrutiny Sub-Committee. Thornton Heath had the highest number of 'removed' flytips in 2020 at 3,029, followed in fourth by West Thornton with 2,383 and sixth in the league table Bensham Manor with 1,683.

A heat map of the most recorded flytips, which are predominantly in north Croydon, states the cause is because it is more 'densely populated' than the south and does tend to have more 'street cleaning issues'.

Grange Road, Parchmore Road and Cotford Road are all identified as being some of the worst streets for fly tipping in the whole of Croydon.

Another graph shows that the 'overwhelming' number of flytips contain household rubbish dumped by residents and not builders or trade waste.

Fixed Penalty Notices for littering and fly tipping have also reduced significantly due to the reduction in staffing over the past year with just 244 FPNs issued this year compared with 927 for the whole of 2018.

The South London Waste Partnership (SLWP) was formed in 2003 between the boroughs of Croydon, Kingston, Merton, and Sutton and the contract with waste provider Veolia was renewed in 2018.

One graph shows the number of fly tips in Croydon

Read The Chronicle's comprehensive guide to help you decide how to vote in the directly elected executive mayoral referendum.

Voting takes place on (Oct 7) from 7am until 10pm.

SINCE 2007, English local authorities have been able to create an elected mayor by resolving to do so in full council.

However, the majority of referendums on creating elected mayors have resulted in 'no' votes.

There are 15 directly elected mayors in England including four in London: Hackney, Lewisham, Newham and Tower Hamlets who are all Labour.

There are also six directly elected Metro mayors, created under different legislation from local authority mayors. The best known is Greater Manchester's Andy Burnham, a former Labour MP and Conservative Andy Street in the West Midlands, the former Managing Director of John Lewis.

In December, Liverpool's directly elected mayor Joe Anderson was arrested on suspicion of conspiracy to commit bribery and witness intimidation. The Labour Mayor had planned to run for a third term but despite maintaining his innocence didn't stand for re-election.

In May, Liverpool made history by choosing the UK's first directly elected black female mayor Joanne Anderson.

However, her historic appointment may be short-lived, as she has said she would campaign to scrap the mayoralty and a referendum will be held in 2023 on the continuation of the role.

Tower Hamlet was similarly rocked by a scandal of vote rigging and accusations of fraud under its disgraced former mayor Lutfur Rahman, but when residents were given the opportunity to return to the 'leader and cabinet' model they voted overwhelmingly to continue with an executive mayor with more than 63,000 voters.

The turnout was almost 42 per cent for an electorate of 202,000 in the borough who wanted to keep the position which has been in place for 11 years.

Why do we need a referendum?

IN CROYDON, a campaign group DEMOC (Directly Elected Mayor of Croydon) led by seven residents' associations in South Croydon triggered the referendum having gathered a 21,000-signature petition. The minimum threshold for a valid petition is five per cent of local government electors registered in the local authority's area.

The population in Croydon is 385,000 and 270,000 people are eligible to vote in the referendum. The petitioners included South Croydon Conservative MP Chris Philp and officials from the Croydon South Constituency Labour Party.

The mayor will be in power for four years and cannot be removed by the council but only on resignation, disqualification or death, when a by-election is held.

The procedures for abolishing a local authority mayor are the same as those for establishing one.

Abolishing a mayor comprises of a 'change in governance arrangements'. This may be driven either by a referendum or by a resolution of the full council.

What is a directly elected Mayor?

DIRECTLY elected mayors are the political leaders of the council and have overall responsibility for council policy and the delivery of services. Mayors appoint a cabinet of no more than 10 councillors and decide their portfolios. The cabinet can be made up of different political parties.

Councillors provide an important role in holding the executive to account by examining and questioning the decisions made. Only the full council can decide the budget and annual plans of key services.

The directly elected mayors are elected by the 'supplementary vote' system, with each elector asked to choose their first and second preference for the position. Voters' first preferences are counted and if one candidate gets 50 percent of the vote, then he or she is elected. If no candidate gains 50 percent of the vote, the two highest scoring candidates are recounted to determine the winner, this time including second preference votes from all other (eliminated) candidates.

What is the cost of having a DEM?

THERE would be NO additional support costs for a Mayor than currently exist for the Leader but a Mayor would be paid more as recommended by the Independent Panel on the Remuneration of Councillors in London.

The Mayor of Newham, for example, gets £86,000 per year compared to the leader of the council in Croydon, which in Tony Newman's time was £54,000 but bearing in mind that he also oversaw the council going bankrupt which cost the borough millions. Since the council's financial collapse, Newman's replacement, Hamida Ali, has decided to pay herself slightly less after having to make hundreds of job cuts, increasing the council tax and asking the government for a 120 million bail out. A report considered by council in February 2021 estimated the costs arising from a referendum as anything between £400,000 and £650,000. The additional cost of adding the Mayoral vote to the ballot is estimated as between £210,000 and £293,000 every four years from 2022.

Who could stand to become Mayor?

ANY person can stand for election as elected Mayor, provided they satisfy the eligibility and qualification requirements for standing as a councillor.

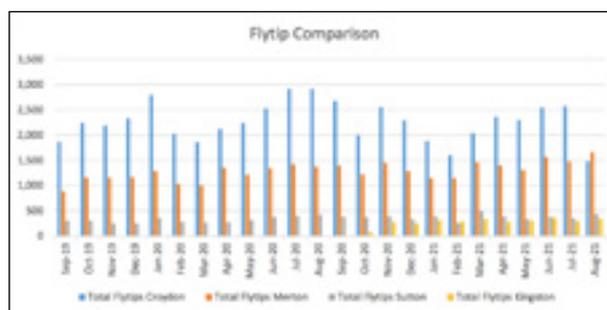
The candidates will likely emerge from the existing political parties but are unlikely to declare until a result has been announced. Those in the running could include existing members of parliament who can also become local authority mayors and retain their position as an MP.

Contenders could also feature existing councillors like the current Conservative opposition leader Jason Perry.

How does the present governance system work in Croydon?

THE majority of local authorities use a governance system in which the councillors elect a council leader from among their number but the mayor is directly-elected by the voters to lead the council. In the case of Croydon, Tony Newman was leader of the Labour group for 15 years and council leader for six. He survived a no confidence vote with all Labour councillors except one supporting him and he only resigned as it began to emerge just what a deep crisis the council was in.

Accusations then emerged of a culture of bullying and fear at the council. His successor Hamida Ali was voted as leader by Labour colleagues but secured only 22 votes to 19 to sole rival, Alisa Flemming.



is over three times the number in neighbouring Kingston and Sutton and more than half that of Merton.

The report reveals that Veolia is planning a flats above shops project scheduled to start next year, which will also differentiate between true flytips and residents, who live in these properties but have no containers to dispose of waste except on the streets.

The report goes on to state that changes to the management and focus of the service by the council set out in an improvement plan in April was "showing real promise at being able to deliver improvements in the service".

However, it adds: "The driver shortage has hindered this, while the ability to attract and maintain HGV drivers remain the improvements are on hold. Veolia are currently able to complete all collections by the end of the week but not all are to schedule with delays to services."

COMMUNITY



Music Relief celebrates decade of working with young people

Photo: Majeangphotography

A YOUTH charity which has been working with young people in the borough for 10 years has held an open day to showcase its work.

Although The Music Relief Foundation has been in existence for a decade, in December 2019 it moved into the Healthy Living Centre located within the Thornton Heath Leisure Centre.

However, the global pandemic hampered their usual face to face activities and so they wanted to use the open day to announce to the community in Thornton Heath that they are in the area and open for all to utilise their services.

Chair of Trustees - Jonathan Bob-Amara said: 'MRF is an organisation that has the community at the centre of all its activities. Building bridges that ensure that a holistic approach is taking in supporting young people'.

Special guests included CeCe Sammy-Lightfoot, a British vocal and performance coach and patron of the Foundation and the Mayor of Croydon, Councillor Sherwan Chowdhury.

CeCe said: "I have worked with many different charities across the UK but Music Relief Foundation is a particularly special charity that I am passionate about as the entire team has the local community and local young people at heart. That is where real change can be made."

The successful open day on Thursday (Sept 30) was attended by community groups, community builders, families, schools and colleges.

The event informed the audience of Music Relief's past, present and future activities and also took the opportunity to ask for donations <https://localgiving.org/donation/music-relief>

In November, Music Relief will be kickstarting their MRF Music School for everyone aged six to 100 and providing after school support in maths, English, science and mentoring support for Key stage 1-4 - <https://music-relief.org/family-and-community/>

Founder and CEO - Magdalene Adenaike, said: "As a grassroots community birthed from my own personal pain 22 years ago my desire is to ensure that everyone is treated with respect and dignity and every voice is heard and young people and families from less privileged backgrounds get equal rights to opportunities that are offered'.

Check out their website and keep updated with all their services www.music-relief.org or email info@music-relief.org



SPOOKY fun is being planned for children with a Halloween and Pumpkin Trail in Thornton Heath.

Last year's popular pumpkin trail in Grangewood Park returns on Halloween weekend of October 30 and 31.

Organisers need volunteers to carve the pumpkins and hide them ready for children to come and look for them with their parents with rewards for found pumpkins. There will also be prizes for the three best carved pumpkins. For more info contact friendsofgrangewood@yahoo.co.uk

Mum Heidi Tompson is also creating a list of streets where residents will be putting up scary decorations and giving away Halloween goodies on October 31. If you want to be added then direct message Heidi or Suzie Woos via Thornton Heath Local Facebook page. The list will be released nearer the time.

Learn to crochet with Jo

A TEXTILE designer is running a craft group teaching local people how to crochet.

Jo Bodley who lives in Thornton Heath and has had patterns published in knit and crochet magazines including Inside Crochet, both in print and online, is sharing her skills at ASKI, on Tuesday mornings between 10am and 12midday.

Jo said: "We meet to share ideas, techniques and resources. It is for all levels of ability, from beginners to more experienced, my goal is to help everyone achieve something they are happy with."

Jo has also designed knit and crochet patterns for a frog toy called Lily which is being sold to raise funds to improve services for children with cancer.

The frogs are available at the Chartwell Children's Cancer Trust charity shop at Croydon University hospital in aid of the Lily Pad Appeal.

It costs £3 to attend Jo's sessions at ASKI, 33 Brigstock Road, with the opportunity for beginners to start out learning how to crochet the frogs and make baby's hat.

A free pattern of the frog is available on Jo's blog: jobodley.blogspot.com



One year milestone for shop

AN ENTREPRENEURIAL mum who had the courage to pursue her dream and set up a new business during a pandemic has celebrated a year in business.

The home fragrance and gift shop Sam's Scents and Aromas opened at the end of August 2020.

Samantha Collins said: "It is such a relief that we managed to survive the lockdowns and be able to open again. We are very grateful to all our customers and thank them very much as without them we wouldn't be here."

The shop at 724 London Road is also a collection point until October 31 for The Pyjama Appeal, a UK charity, that collects brand new pyjamas for poorly children in hospital this Christmas.

The new pyjamas for the age range from newborn up to 18-years-old are then shared between local hospitals, hospices and women's refuges.



Why I Love Thornton Heath

Ashleigh Zempashi explains why she loves Thornton Heath



I moved to Thornton Heath almost eight years ago and honestly, had my concerns because of its reputation. I need not have worried.

As a child, my father was in the army. We moved around a lot and settled in Croydon 23 years ago. I continued to move around the borough, especially during my early adulthood. Nowhere ever really felt like home. I was never particularly close with neighbours. Never liked an area enough to want to stay.

Moving to Thornton Heath was like a breath of fresh air. My neighbours were friendly from the very start and not just ones next door. My family have a great rapport with lots of residents on streets nearby, on the school run, in local shops... it's really quite

refreshing! There is such community spirit here and some wonderful people.

I love Thornton Heath for its incredible artwork. My family helped to paint Bensham Manor Passage a few years ago and it makes us smile every time we walk through it. There are so many amazing pieces across the area. It's a joy to look at and know that somebody here cared enough to make it happen.

I think a lot of us focus on the negatives far too much in life. Every area has its negative attributes, but I can overlook them to a degree here because of the people. The people working in the allotments behind our house, who are always happy to speak to our children over the garden wall. The lady from the 'yellow shop' on Bensham Manor Road, who gives them little treats for free and asks how we all are. The staff in Tesco who make the effort to be friendly and familiar, no matter how their day is going. The amazing residents who report flytipping, litter pick themselves, take care of the planters and parks. There are so many fabulous people here. People make a place. And I've finally found somewhere I don't want to leave.



School children learn how to be climate change champions

SCHOOL children have immersed themselves in learning about how they could become climate change champions as part of the Great Big Green Week.

Last month communities across the country came together for the week long activities during September 18 to 26, the largest event for climate and nature ever seen in the UK.

Downsview Primary and Nursery School, in Biggin Way, is committed to raising awareness about the climate change challenge and hosted a Great Big Green Fair which was a culmination of week of eco learning.

Children in the youngest years planted seeds in the hope of growing their own vegetable garden as well as learning about recycling, by making new paper from old paper.

There was nature walk around the school and fallen leaves were collected to create art work while other pupils enjoyed a mini beast hunt, seeking out the creepiest crawlies they could find.

After their walk and discussions, the children wanted to write an Eco Pledge together.

Older years learned about the advantages of using solar energy and the impact of fossil fuels on the environment and wildlife and investigated different types of renewable energy.

Further up the school pupils discussed crude oil, its uses and the impact of oil spills on the environment and local communities focusing on the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill which effected thousands of miles of ocean and coastline across the Gulf of Mexico in 2010.

Students also looked at renewable energy, plastic pollution and up-cycling materials learning how plastic does not decompose and how single use plastic destroys our environment.

As a year group, they decided everyone needs to reuse and recycle more.

At the Eco-Fair pupils, staff and other members of the public celebrated how communities and organisations are taking action to tackle the climate emergency and protect green spaces. Downsview received a grant from the charity 'The Climate Coalition' to host the event.

Head teacher Meghan Pugh said: "For Downsview to be asked to be a part of this event was a very prestigious honour. Their hope was to raise the profile of climate change and show why it is relevant to the community and local decision makers.

"The school also wanted to give a platform to small, local sustainable businesses to promote their products and ideas, and for the community to explore different



ways of consuming that help protect the planet and protect ourselves."

For more information about the sustainable companies who were involved in the Eco fair visit www.downsview.croydon.sch.uk/great-big-green-week

OPEN DAYS

Downsview will be hosting open days between 9am and 10.30am on November 3, 17 and December 2. Headteacher's welcome talk at 9.15am, no registration required.



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SPORT

The squad of 1976 reform to raise funds for bowel cancer charity

THIS is the moment the Thornton Heath United squad of 1976 were reformed 45 years on after a player tracked down all his former teammates to raise money for a bowel cancer charity.

Michael Taylor, 73, decided to set up the event to support Bowel Cancer UK after his partner Jacqui was diagnosed with the disease 18 months ago.

Michael enjoyed a playing career in non-league football of more than 60 years and was part of the management team for Surrey FA for five years.

He has written a book about his experience called 'Non-league Football: A Rollercoaster Ride' with the proceeds



also going to the charity.

Michael said: "It was quite difficult to track everyone down from the old team photo, but once I got going and started making phone calls, people knew other people, and I was able to find others on Facebook.

"We feel very humble that we can all get back together again and we can get this picture taken.

"The fact is we need to get the message out to people to be aware of how important it is to do the screening test when it comes in the post.

"Men are more stubborn and less likely

to take their screening test, so I want to spread this message out to people, so they can know how serious it is. The quicker it's caught the better.

"Jacqui received her bowel cancer screening test in the post. I was very guilty myself of not always doing the tests when they came, but Jacqui felt she should do it. We were shocked when the results came back

"It been a very difficult time for us. She's been on several different treatments, but none of them have been working.

"Jacqui helped me so much to put this book together over the two years it took me to write it, so I wanted to donate the profits to help others like her who are

living with this disease."

During his career in non-league football, Michael who now lives in Hastings, enjoyed a number of roles including being a player, scout, coach, and manager.

Luke Squires, director of fundraising at Bowel Cancer UK, said: "We're so grateful that Michael is donating the proceeds of his book sales to the charity and holding these fundraising events.

"It's only because of people like Michael supporting the charity we can continue to save lives and improve the quality of life of everyone affected by bowel cancer."

Bulls back with a bang in 150th year



STREATHAM-CROYDON have returned to league rugby after 18 months with a bang, fully intending to celebrate their 150th year in style.

This commenced with an anniversary dinner celebration at Twickenham Stadium, with speaker Ryan Jones MBE – Welsh international and British and Irish Lion, entertaining over 150 guests.

The men have had an excellent start to their league campaign, with three wins on the bounce, writes Millie Ross. The first was a comprehensive victory at home against Wandsworthians which they won 70 to 0. The second saw more tries conceded but still a bonus point victory 57 to 20 against Old Paulines who were potential title contenders.

This weekend they put 80 points on Woking away from home, conceding just five. Excellent leadership from captain Freddy Green combined with the experienced support of Charlie Pattihis and former Captain Adam Barnes has worked well with the new player/coach perspective of Jesse Mackewn and the excellent contributions of new Fly Half Adam Sheehy.

They are hoping to maintain this momentum going forward. The men's second 15 have put in a couple of valiant performances but are suffering from a lack of numbers, so are keen to welcome new players down to help with this.

The ladies league season is slightly delayed from the men's, but they opened well with a 52 to 0 victory against Guernsey Ladies, who have proved a difficult opposition in the past. The ladies will travel to Guernsey in April to close off the season. The next league game is against Heathfield and Waldrom on October 17. The ladies second team is gaining great momentum and have put in a couple of friendly games against Belsize Park and Old Emanuels. They are also continuing to grow and keen to recruit players to enable this – all levels welcome.

The juniors are back to full strength after the summer break and training with gusto on a Sunday morning from 10 to 12. This includes a flourishing junior girls side, which held their first under 15s Friday Night Lights tournament in September, hosting over 80 girls from local schools competing in a round robin format.



Rams need points on the board

AFC CROYDON Athletic's season has got off to a topsy-turvy start with the team conceding bucket-loads of goals to make games an uphill task. Despite some promising football at times, it's points The Rams need on the board, writes Seán Ryan.

Kevin Rayner, first team manager said: "The season hasn't gone well to date, mainly due to injuries. We've had a couple of abysmal performances but gradually we are getting things together. Our league form has slowly picked up, we've picked up points from the teams around us including Balham FC, Frimley Green and Camberley Town so there's plenty of time to start climbing the table.

"We aim to finish in the top half. We've got a really good cup tie to look forward to versus Dulwich Hamlet. We can enjoy that game and then turn our attention to picking up points and looking up in the table.

All fixtures can be found at www.afccroydonathletic.co.uk. The club is always on the lookout for new sponsors and were pleased to welcome the team from The Cronx – Croydon's favourite brewery to a game last month.

All enquiries should be directed to sryan@afccroydonathletic.co.uk

The Junior Section of the club continues to thrive as its 14 teams kicked off their respective season last month. The bar is high given the various successes in the league/cup last season but they hope to replicate such accolades.