



Liberal Democrat FOCUS

On
Alcester
ward

From your local Liberal Democrat Councillors

Tory parking charges plan for Alcester slammed

Lib Dem Councillors have refused to back proposals by Conservative-run Stratford District Council to bring in charges for parking in Alcester, in car parks that are currently free.

District Councillors Susan Juned (Alcester), Lynn Bowring (Kinwarton) and County Councillor Nina Knapman are strongly against the proposals. 'We believe they are ill conceived and will do all we can to oppose them', said Nina. 'We do not believe that a case can be made to justify this change. The main aim of the administration at the Council appears to be to raise revenue'

The proposals cover eleven car parks throughout Stratford District - all outside Stratford Town - that are currently free. A number of charging options are being looked at, with minimum charges ranging from 20p to 60p, or alternatively a free period followed by a minimum charge of from £1-00 to £5-00.

The business climate is tough and likely to get tougher. We do not believe that putting charges on our local car parks will help in any way. Indeed, in both Stratford Town and Warwick, when customers could no longer park free because of the introduction of on-street charges, many businesses complained that trade had suffered.



Above: Nina and Susan check out a car park where charges could be brought in.

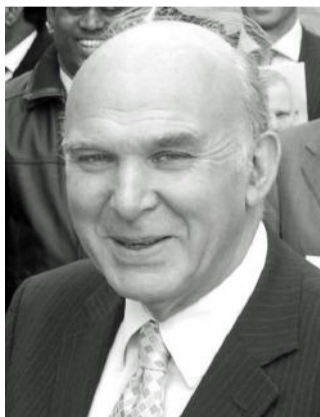
Lib Dems call for tax cuts for hard pressed families

Tax cuts for ordinary people would be the Lib Dem's priority, promised Nick Clegg at the party's national conference in September.

His aim is to boost the economy by cutting taxes from the bottom up - ordinary people first. Identity Cards and some defence spending no longer relevant to the needs of today's armed forces would be cut and there would be a switch to green taxes,

Locally the Lib Dems have always been the party pressing to keep Council Tax low. Since they took over the running of the District Council in 2000, the Conservatives have more than doubled the district's Council Tax.

'With inflation at its present level, times are hard for many people. The Council has a duty not to make things harder. Council Tax should be kept as low as possible', said Cllr Hazel Wright, Leader of the Liberal Democrats on the District Council.



Above: Vince Cable, Deputy Leader of the Lib Dems. Ex Chief Economist at Shell and according to many commentators, right on all the economic issues.

Rubbish!

'FIASCO' AND AN 'UTTER SHAMBLES' were just a few of the words used by the local press to describe what happened with the changes to the Council's household waste collections. The Lib Dems have demanded an enquiry by the Council into why things went so badly - and expensively - wrong.

Cllr Hazel Wright, Leader of the Lib Dems on the District Council, said, 'it's vital to increase re-cycling but it doesn't help when changes are introduced with so many problems'.

Problems included -

- three changes of plans in as many months
- both the units intended to take waste for re-cycling - at Ufton and Ettington - weren't ready
- not enough wheelie bins, with thousands of households having to wait to move on to the new system

The Lib Dems believe residents should have been consulted before changes were made. But the Conservatives thought they knew best. Even simple suggestions from the Lib Dems were voted down - such as asking someone from Warwick Council to come and talk to Stratford about the lessons they had learnt when they changed to wheelie bins earlier this year.

And there are more changes still to come:

- in November green garden waste collections will stop
- in April the weekly collection of the grey bin will become fortnightly and the fortnightly collection of garden waste will start again, with kitchen waste to be added to it in alternate weeks
- smaller bins will be made available

If you want to register to have your bins changed for smaller ones (120 litre, versus the 240 litre current bins) please call the Council on 01789 260925.

Fiasco really isn't too strong a word to use when it comes to the new refuse collections...

...the constant uncertainty on the Council's part, the persistent changes, the total confusion, the sheer lack of public communication displayed throughout, it is an utter shambles.

Editorial in The Stratford Observer, 17th July 2008.

Energy Efficiency Centre celebrates tenth birthday

Warwickshire Energy Efficiency Advice Centre (WEEAC) has celebrated 10 years of providing a range of free energy advice and information services to the general public. They help you make your home use less energy, have lower fuel bills, be more comfortable and have less of an adverse impact on the environment. The Centre is also able to give advice on grants that are available to eligible householders and advises housing associations on the energy efficiency of their rented properties.

The Centre was set up as a charity when the Liberal Democrats were running Stratford on Avon District Council in 1998.

Susan Juned, who is the Chairman of the charity, said, 'with rising fuel costs, the advice the WEEAC can give is needed even more now than it was when we set it up ten years ago'.

For more details and advice call 0800 988 2881



Above: Susan celebrates ten years of energy advice to Warwickshire.

Volunteers wanted to help boost local food

A group of local volunteers is helping Coventry University and the Campaign to Protect Rural England get a clear picture of our local food chain in Alcester and the area around.

The group was told of the importance of thriving local food production and the need for more research about how it is produced, distributed and sold.

'At a time of economic crisis it is important that we support our local small businesses and ensure that a choice of shops and businesses remains in our high streets', said Susan Juned, who is coordinating the activity for the research team along with Nina Knapman. 'The information gathered will be used to promote local food production, local shopping and fresh affordable food sourced, where possible, from the local area'.

Volunteers are needed to distribute survey questionnaires and gather information. To find out more contact Susan Juned or Nina Knapman or leave your details with Carol Lane at Venue Xpresso.

Alcohol restriction passed

Nearly 3 years after she first proposed it County Councillor Nina Knapman is delighted that finally the alcohol restriction areas in Alcester have been agreed.

'It has taken far too long to get through Stratford District Council to this stage', Nina said. 'We know that a great deal of anti-social behaviour from people of all ages is fuelled by alcohol. This will give the Police extra powers to deal with alcohol-related incidents in Alcester.'

It will not be used to stop those who are enjoying a drink responsibly from carrying on doing so. I hope that the order is now put in place as swiftly as possible'. Signs will be placed around the town and parks so that everyone is made aware of the restrictions.

Advice Surgery

Nina Knapman, Lynn Bowring and Susan Juned will be holding a Councillors' surgery for residents of Alcester and Kinwarton on

SATURDAY 8th November
from 10 a.m. to noon
at Church House, Butter Street

Please come along and discuss any problems you might have. If you wish to discuss something and are unable to be there, do call us on any of these numbers:

Councillor contact details:

Lynn Bowring (District Councillor, Kinwarton) 488562

Nina Knapman (County Councillor) 764319

Susan Juned (District Councillor, Alcester) 762751

Environment Agency flood 'fact sheet' gets it wrong

A recent report from the Environment Agency on flooding in Alcester significantly underestimated the problem, according to Councillor Nina Knapman.

The flood bulletin stated that 'about 70 properties were affected by flooding in Alcester and the surrounding area' - but as residents know to their cost the total was at least double that number at over 140 properties affected in Alcester alone. The number of affected properties in Alcester was reported to the Agency in a report put together by Susan Juned and submitted to the Environment Agency, the District Council, the County Council and the House of Commons. The numbers were checked immediately after the event by visits to all affected properties.

The Environment Agency fact sheet also stated that the flooding was mainly caused by surface water collecting behind the flood defences which was also incorrect.



The flooding in the centre of Alcester in 2007

Why the flooding happened

The flooding was caused by river water overtopping the defences at Gunnings Bridge and behind Malin Court which then was unable to drain away for many days. Tree trunks wedged under the bridge may have contributed to the overflow.

The Environment Agency has agreed to part-fund two new pumps in Alcester with one at Gunnings Bridge and the other in Bleachfield Street. However, this requires at least £100,000 from the County Council along with the £60,000 already promised by the District Council.

More work is still required upstream of Alcester to slow the quantity of water flowing downstream and to prevent the river overflowing the flood defences in the first place. Alcester also needs serious investment in its storm water and sewage drainage system.

Nina Knapman as the County Councillor has been lobbying Warwickshire County Council for the additional funds. The Environment Agency will review the position in January next year to see whether the scheme will get the green light to go ahead.