

Crime slashed by more than 20% across Runnymede

£2.44 per week—the cost of your local council

Good news for Englefield Green Youth Club

Extending Englefield Green's Playground

ELECTION 2008: Re-elect Cllr Hugh Meares and Cllr Marisa Heath on May 1st



On Thursday May 1st Councillors Hugh Meares and Marisa Heath are seeking re-election to Runnymede Borough Council. Hugh was first elected to represent Englefield Green West in 2000 and Marisa became a Borough Councillor in 2003 and then the village's County Councillor in 2006.

One of their key priorities is to ensure that Englefield Green gets its Post Office back.

We desperately need one in the village, not least because we have a large elderly population who cannot get down to Egham. However, on this occasion, it is not the Post Office which is the villain but the fact that the Victoria Street premises were not economically viable without a front shop. There was originally a second post office in Bond Street. The owners are keen to re-open but seem to be coming up against all sorts of formalities and problems. We are working hard to help steer matters in the right direction.

Another important issue facing our village is the future of the former Brunel campus.

After what seemed to be a very promising start of consultation with the village, we have not heard much recently. However, the developers are talking to planners and one of the architects is local, so we are optimistic that eventually a development will emerge which will benefit the village. Your Councillors can only at this stage promise to be vigilant and keep you informed.

Another major issue for Englefield Green is the development of a Village Plan. Other areas in the Borough have already benefited from significant redevelopment funds and there is a growing feeling that it is Englefield Green's turn. We are working with local residents and businesses to develop a formal Village Plan on the basis of which we can ask for some badly needed funding to smarten up the centre of the Village and to improve and regenerate our shopping areas.

On May 1st, please re-elect Hugh Meares and Marisa Heath to the Borough Council.

Above:
Standing for another term

Below:
Your local councillors



£2.44 per week: the cost of Runnymede

At a meeting of the Full Council in February, the Borough Council voted to raise Council Tax by 5% or 12p per week, taking the total cost of Runnymede's portion of Council Tax to £2.44 a week.

An average 12 pence per week rise in our portion of Council Tax for the coming year is remarkable value for money and will allow us to continue to provide crucial 'discretionary services' such as day care centres and dial-a-ride services for the elderly.

Runnymede remaining the sixth lowest taxing of the 238 local councils in the United Kingdom. • **CLLR DANIEL HAMILTON**

What is the Englefield Green committee?

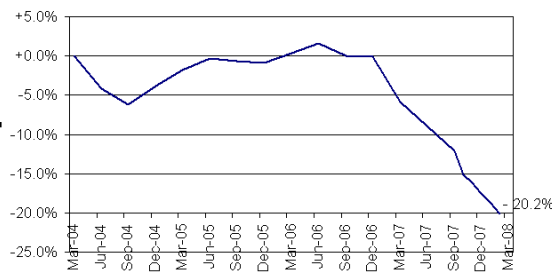
The Englefield Green Committee exists (by virtue of the 99 year Crown Lease under which the land is held by Runnymede Council) to manage the Green and the wooded area beyond. So the Englefield Green Committee is not a parish council nor is it concerned with the management or welfare of the Village. It consists of the six local councillors and two residents selected from the houses around the Green.

The land belongs to the Crown and was set aside for the common use by an Enclosure Act from the reign of George III and those uses include the pasturing of animals. Cricket and football have been played on the Green from time immemorial and the Green had a duck pond until the 1980s when it was replaced by the children's playground. Later on, the Green was one of the first to be registered under Commons Act 1965.

In recent years it has been difficult to balance the competing demands for the space. Whilst walkers promenade the green, walk their dogs and play with their children, footballers also want to play football (although the football club moved away to Cooper's Hill some years ago) and cricketers to use the fine pitch which was only recently re-laid by the Council and is one of the best in the area. Although we have not recently seen any small holders grazing their livestock, it is probably just a matter of time...!

Most recently, the cricket pitch and the pavilion have been the subject of debate. Ideally, from a cricket point of view, all activities which might damage the pitch or the outfield would be avoided. However The Green is not a sports ground; the lease provides for a much wider community use. Another problem the cricketers face is that the Pavilion has been vandalised repeatedly and the area behind the pavilion misused. So, as part of the re-equipment and extension of the playground, it has been proposed that CCTV equipment be installed there and while this would make the area less troublesome, it might prove expensive and intrusive. Councillors would welcome feedback from the village as this debate continues. • **CLLR HUGH MEARES**

Crime falls by 20.2%



Runnymede councillors have expressed their delight at new figures showing that, in the last 12 months, crime in the Borough has fallen by 20.2% from the 2004/5 period. Across the rest of the county, crime fell by only 4.9%.

Congratulations must go to Surrey Police and the Borough Council's *Safer Runnymede* team for the remarkable progress they continue to make in making Englefield Green an even safer place to live. For more information please visit www.saferrunnymede.co.uk • **CLLR DANIEL HAMILTON**

Borough Councillors for Englefield Green East



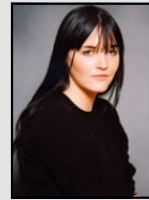
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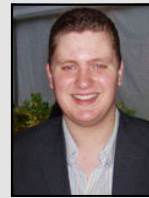
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Surrey County Council's Finances

Surrey County Council (SCC) receives less funding than any other county council with each person in Surrey getting £205 from the Government towards all local Government services. The average person in the U.K gets £595 and if you lived in Manchester you would get £856. This year we have been awarded an extra cash sum of £2 million – less than the actual £3 million we will pay in landfill tax to the Government.

Following the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review last autumn, we received the worst settlement for local government in a decade which worked out at 1% real terms funding increase for councils. The Government expects the CSR increase to enable the overall council tax increase to stay well below 5 per cent in each of the next three years. However, the settlement will not enable us to deliver the new services promised by the Government or meet the increasing cost of waste management and the cost of providing services to a growing numbers of older people. The Local Government Association predict that we will see further inflation-busting hikes in council tax in the coming years which will affect all of us, particularly the low and fixed income earners such as pensioners who have already seen their bills double since 1997.

The money you pay in council tax funds 81% of the services the Council provides and helps pay for things like caring for children, helping vulnerable people, maintaining the roads, and improving recycling facilities.

Nobody enjoys paying taxes and there are many who feel that the council tax is too high, there are also many who argue that the Council should be more efficient. The Council is pursuing greater efficiency gains and looking for innovative ways to provide services, however we cannot protect our residents from the discrimination of this Government and SCC have had to raise council tax again by 4.8% this year. Spending has been increased on adult social care, on the children's service, the youth service, highways, transportation and libraries to try to meet the increasing demand.

Councils within Surrey like Runnymede Borough Council (RBC) are dealing with a growing number of vulnerable and elderly residents and there are some very difficult decisions ahead of us at both County and Borough level. Councils are being left with no choice but to raise council taxes by more than inflation in order to meet the cost of providing these services or they will have to cut the services. At the moment both SCC and RBC are making savings and maintaining services which has not been easy.

Like you, councillors pay council tax and we are fully aware of the increasing pressure that rises have on residents. We can only point to the value for money that we offer you in light of the poor contribution from Central Government. In 2007-08 averaged across the different tiers of local government, Conservative councils charge £55 a year less on Band D council tax bills than Labour councils and £84 a year less than Liberal Democrat coun-

cils. Whilst the Conservative councils charge the least on average they deliver the best quality services so we know we are doing something right despite the odds being stacked against us. Gordon Brown has already doubled council tax and appears to be fiddling future funding to hike it even further whilst the pressure falls on councils to explain the increases and to experience the frustration of seeing what money they do have being spent on unwanted regulations, inspection and red tape.

There are concerns that despite ruling out a council tax revaluation in this Parliament, the Government is continuing to carry out a revaluation by stealth. The Valuation Office Agency has so far spent £13 million on developing a new property tax database – with £3 million having been spent since the supposed postponement of the council tax revaluation in England. We want to see any plans for a council tax revaluation scrapped and more importantly abolish council tax inspector's rights of entry into your homes. Surrey residents contribute greatly to the economy of the UK and yet the Government fails to recognise this or rather ignores it by not putting enough back in with the lowest formula grant per capita.

As your councillors we will continue working to provide the services that you need and deserve despite the financial constraints. • **COUNTY CLLR MARISA HEATH**

Youth Club Update

Surrey County Council (SCC) and Surrey Clubs for Young People (SCYP) have been discussing the potential of SCYP taking over the running of the Corby Drive Youth Club for quite some time. The Englefield Green councillors are keen to see this service continue and develop so that young people have somewhere to go. It is well attended and in 2007 the young people who use the facility drew together a plan for the future of the club and all the positive activities they intend to carry out. IT students at Royal Holloway have offered to teach the young people computer skills and £5,000 has been given from County Councillor Allocation for IT equipment as well as offers of PCs and other forms of support from local residents.

We are delighted that SCYP have finally been offered a 3 year lease from SCC which they wanted to ensure that they take over the running of the Club. As SCYP have indicated that three years at peppercorn rent would be acceptable, it is hoped that the agreement will be completed in the next couple of months. • **COUNTY CLLR MARISA HEATH and CLLR MIKE KUSNERAITIS**

Councillor online

Councillor Daniel Hamilton has launched a blog—an online diary—to keep residents in touch with his work on the Borough Council. To view the website please visit <http://clldanielhamilton.wordpress.com>.



Extending the playground

The extension to the children's play area on Englefield Green has been a long running affair. Originally given outline approval by the Englefield Green Committee in 2006, Runnymede Borough Council started to draw up plans for the extension and to seek the necessary approvals and funding for this project.



Whilst discussing the play area extension, the Committee also considered the long history of anti social behaviour, including damage to the public toilets and cricket pavilion and unpleasant signs of loitering in the area after dark. Lighting and CCTV equipment seemed the best way to stop this.

This additional requirement was not introduced because of any desire to monitor the use of the play area but solely to try and stop this anti social behaviour.

However, a CCTV tower and lighting require planning permission and we are in the consultation period prior to the proposal going before the Planning Committee. If you have views on this play area extension and the associated CCTV and lighting then please make these known through the normal planning feedback channels.

Your Conservative Councillors remain committed to seeing the children's play area extended to accommodate a slightly older range of children. We are equally concerned about the anti social behaviour and damage to Council property in the area which is why we, Safer Runnymede and the local Police believe that CCTV could help control the problem.

Englemede Success!

Local residents have been delighted to learn that a property developer's appeal to overturn the Council's decision to refuse planning application for Englemede on Tite Hill has been rejected by the Planning Inspector.

The Inspector concluded that the development was unsuitable as a result of its "effect on the character and appearance of the area" and impact of the "proposed houses at the rear of the site on the living conditions of people nearby".

Cllr Pat Roberts said: "Your Borough councillors will continue to fight tooth and nail against unwanted, intrusive and damaging developments in the village".



Nirj Deva MEP

Standing up for Englefield Green
in the European Parliament

**Do you have a view on the European Union?
Should the EU be given more or less powers?
Do we need a referendum on the Constitution?**

Make *your* views clear by filling in my online survey at www.southeastsurvey.eu



Student Volunteering

On Wednesday 27 and Friday 29 February, Royal Holloway held 'The Big Spring Clean', which placed student volunteers in the local community and gave them the opportunity to help clean up the neighbourhood. Having attracted much praise with its pilot last year, this year's Big Spring Clean was bigger and better than before.

An army of eighty volunteers descended upon the local area, tidying the grounds of Englefield Green Youth Centre, clearing and trimming plants at Little Echoes Nursery, cleaning up Manor Farm Day Centre, litter picking and recycling rubbish in both Egham and Englefield Green, and planting shrubs in community flower beds.

In addition to the volunteering team's efforts in the local area, some Students' Union societies also took part in the Big Spring Clean. Sports clubs weeded the riverbank at Heathrow Special Needs Farm and prepared the flowerbeds of St Peters Hospital for Spring. The Men's Rugby Club also helped tidy up Lynwood Residential Home in Sunninghill. Overall, the volunteers spent a combined 150 hours in the local community, collecting eighteen bags of rubbish, most of which were recycled.

Runnymede Borough Council was a key partner in the initiative, providing essential materials and resources such as litter pickers, gloves and black bags.

Phil Simcock, Community Action Volunteer Coordinator for the University says, "This aspect of the volunteering programme is great for actively seeing students enthusiastically volunteer to serve the



area in which they live. The projects are requests from local community organisations which require a team of volunteers to meet a genuine need" • **DANIEL LAZARIDES**