

Report to TWRA from Cllr. Linda Gillham

This has been a busy year at RBC and locally. As Independents we have been delighted that one of our group Cllr. Alan Alderson, an Egham Councillor, has been Mayor since last May.

As Mayor Alan has not been able to attend committee meetings so the rest of us have taken on the extra workload. Runnymede Council has changed its strategy in the last couple of years and in order to replace the grant that used to come from Central Government the Council has invested in property that will bring in a good return from rents. Much of this property has also contributed to a "place shaping" agenda and this can be seen in Addlestone with the new shopping parades, apartments for rent and buy, hotel and cinema all nearing completion.

Exciting plans for Egham are also emerging. Many of you will have visited the recent consultation at Egham Leisure Centre which will see the whole facility replaced with new gyms, studios and most importantly a new swimming pool, training pool and other much wanted leisure opportunities.

In Egham too, a planning proposal is emerging to replace the tired shops in Station Road North with an exciting mix of shops, a theatre and The Italia Conte drama school. The car parking will be re-sited and the whole entrance to Egham will be transformed. Above all there will be plenty of student accommodation above the shops which hopefully will free up some of the family homes in Egham currently used by students and will bring an active night time economy to Egham High Street.

Virginia Water is also changing with a revitalised station, car parks and plans for a new war memorial that will remember lost residents from all recent wars.

These proposals have involved Councillors in many extra meetings and briefings at a time when we have also been trying to keep up with the many consultations coming from the 3rd runway proposals. I will be the Independent representative on a new working group which will respond to all the consultations and fight for the best we can for local people. You will receive updates via the TWRA news e mails.

I have also attended workshops about the River Thames scheme which you will hear about today and new proposals for collecting waste and recycling across Surrey.

For me the most exciting venture this year has been to see the Thorpe Neighbourhood Forum designated and many people from business, residents and local organisations all working together in a most productive way to achieve a good Neighbourhood Plan. We are delighted with the success of our Open Event this weekend and the positive and encouraging feedback we have received. Everyone is giving up their time for free, for Thorpe and it is great to see how many people care about our future. We are the first area in Runnymede to produce a Neighbourhood Plan so we are all learning as we go along but we are immensely proud to be forging the way, ahead of others.

I was first elected in 2000 and then we were part of a debt free Council that provided services to its residents. That has changed completely and the role of Councillor now requires far more knowledge gained from briefings and training and the confidence to look at doing things differently in a world where budgets are getting tighter and the Government is constantly moving the goal posts. I feel honoured to be your elected representative at this exciting and fast moving time in a Council that has adapted to austerity without having to cut services to residents.

Thank you for your support!