

Account of Purley on Thames

District Notes 1979

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John Chapman was elected unopposed to represent Purley on Newbury District Council. These are reports he published in Purley Parish News commenting on what was happening at District level.

May 1979

DISTRICT NOTES

Readers of Purley Parish Magazine may have read in the local press that I was elected unopposed for the Purley seat on Newbury District Council. I would like to take this opportunity to thank most sincerely all those who have supported and helped me to this point.

I must now ask you all to help me in the job I have taken on on your behalf. While I get around the village pretty well, I just cannot be aware of everything that is going on which demands that attention of your local Councillor. Please always feel free to contact me and even if it is not strictly a District Council matter I will do whatever I can to help, passing it over to Frank Lewis if it is a County matter.

Each month I will try to let you know what is going on at Newbury which affects us in Purley using the good offices of the Parish Magazine. I take office from 7th May but as I have been sitting in on a number of meetings recently I have already been getting into the swing of it.

The big muddle over announcing the rate for next year has now been resolved and the District rate fixed at 9.7p, a slight reduction from last year's level of 11.25p.

A Council study group is looking into ways to extend and improve the concessionary fares system for the retired and disabled. In conjunction with the Parish Council we are looking at the problems of Purley Beeches and the River Estate to see how better to enforce planning decisions and improve public amenities.

I cannot close without paying a tribute to Bernard Theobald who has served as Councillor for Purley ever since Newbury District was formed, and for many years before that on Bradfield Council. He has now decided to step down to concentrate on his vineyard and other enterprises. We all wish him well and thank him for his many years of service to Purley.

John Chapman,
5 Cecil Aldin Drive
(Tel: Reading 26999)
Newbury District Councillor Elect.

June 1979

DISTRICT NOTES

The first job of the new Council has been to allocate the several committee and subcommittee jobs to the new Councillors. My allocation is to Development Services and Housing Services Committees, to Eastern Area Planning Subcommittee and as Chairman of the Transportation Subcommittee. These will all be confirmed at the Annual Meeting on 22nd May.

The new houses on St. Mary's Avenue are due to be ready for occupation in the latter part of July.

There was a meeting of the Purley Park Property Owners Association on 30th April at which the problems of the Purley Park Estate were discussed with officers of the District Council. The officers were able to explain the limits of their powers which arise from legal restrictions and shortage of resources and certainly not from a lack of good will.

I have been taking up the question of the footpath from the Roebuck to the Thames with both the District and English Councils. We are having another site meeting to make sure all parties have a common understanding of what is wanted. However the prospects for the footpath are not good.

John Chapman
Purley District Councillor

July 1979

8

DISTRICT NOTES

The Council has decided to relax the conditions for the sale of Council Houses in advance of the Government's proposed new legislation. This will give many more people the chance to join the ranks of home owners either by purchasing the house they already rent, or if they wish one of the new houses at Cold Ash which were being built under the previous scheme which offered houses to Council tenants to buy but without breaking up existing estates. It was also agreed to offer to take up to 10 Vietnamese families as a humanitarian gesture.

The survey of properties on the Purley Park Estate is now underway after we managed to get it to the top of the Council's priority list. This will enable properties unfit for habitation to be identified and the occupants offered alternative accommodation. Also it will form the basis for the updated Guidance Plan. It is interesting to note that in the eight years since the first plan was produced the number of undersized plots has been reduced from 116 to 59 and the number of permanent houses increased from 38 to 132 at the end of 1978.

Widder Valley have applied for an increase in bus fares by 1p up to 24p and 2p above 25p. The Council has to decide whether to oppose these increases or reluctantly accept them.

Discussions are taking place with Pangbourne Parish Council to provide a bottle bank in Pangbourne. While this has been accepted in principle, the exact site has yet to be determined.

John Chapman Newbury District
Councillor Purley Ward.

August 1979

DISTRICT NOTES

There will be a special meeting of the Eastern Area Planning Committee on 7th August at 7.00 pm at 26 Bath Road, Reading to consider the Developments in the Dark Lane area.

The question of the supply of drugs etc. by the Pangbourne Surgery has been taken up with the Berkshire Family Practitioner Committee. We are assured that most residents of Purley being more than one mile from a Pharmacy are fully entitled to be supplied by the Surgery.

A uniform set of bye-laws covering the control of dogs on public roads will soon be proposed. Each of the former authorities (before Newbury District was formed) had their own regulations - these will now be all repealed.

An extra £75000 has been allocated to the repair of Council Houses but this will be used for major repairs and painting.

A very hard look is being taken at all aspects of Council expenditure. It is very evident that cuts are going to have to be made and the Government is quite determined that these cuts will be permanent and substantial. Newbury has always been very careful with your money and our rates are among the lowest anywhere - by far the lowest in Berkshire. The Government has been urged to remove many of statutory duties which have been imposed on local councils so that we can make a proper judgement on what are our local priorities for services.

John Chapman
Newbury District Council
Purley Ward.

September 1979

DISTRICT NOTES

The plans for the proposed estate off Dark Lane were duly revealed and generally approved at the planning meeting on August 7th. The quality of the press coverage has been so low that some comment seems called for.

Firstly, the meeting was not about whether or not there should be a development (that was decided last June). Secondly, it was not about whether the surrounding roads could carry the traffic (that is a County affair). It was in fact about the acceptability of the layout and general design of houses and roads within the estate. Many of the changes requested by Tilehurst Parish Council and Tilehurst Rescue were endorsed by the Council but the fact remains that changes can only be made on good grounds, not to suit someone's whims. It is fair to say that none of the committee members is very keen on the development and we will be pursuing the County vigorously on the question of roads. As to the efficiency of Reading Borough's Planning Department, I can make no comment save that the matters under discussion were of little relevance to Reading and they have had over a year to object to the existence of the estate.

Manpower shortages have forced the temporary halt to work on the survey of Purley Park Estate. I am pressing to get it going again, however.

Excavation has now ceased at Westbury Farm and I hope that by the time you read this the heavy lorries will have gone and the residents of Westbury Lane and Glebe Road can breathe again.

John Chapman
Newbury District Councillor
Purley Ward

October 1979

DISTRICT NOTES

I managed to persuade the Housing Services Committee to recommend the appointment of an officer to succeed the one who was doing the survey on Purley Park Estate. It may take a few weeks to make the appointment but I have great hopes that work will start again.

The extra £75,000 that was found for Housing maintenance is to be spent on major repairs to the fabric of our houses. We hope to set up a long term programme to bring our houses up to standard after a number of years of neglect.

The leisure centre at Newbury is now well under construction. A board of managers is to oversee its operations and we hope soon to be able to give more details of the facilities that will be available.

John Chapman
Newbury District Councillor
Purley Ward.

November 1979

no report

December 1979

14

DISTRICT NOTES

The petition for the traffic lights at the bottom of Long Lane was duly presented to the County Council. I have been giving this my wholehearted support and have been pressing the County through my own channels.

A contractor has been appointed to remedy a long list of outstanding defects in Purley Beeches. He has to clear up similar problems at Ford Farm first so we won't start seeing any results for a few weeks.

As residents of Westbury Lane will be painfully aware the digging on Westbury Farm has started again. We are, however, assured that this is to remove the road which led to the far side of the site and that when this work is done the lorries will be gone for good. Then the ponds can be given a while to settle down before stocking with fish in time for next season. I'm sure we will all be glad to have an end to this problem.

The new rate for 1980/81 has still not yet been fixed as we have not yet been told what our rate support grant will be. However if, as we hope, it is about the same as last year we look like being able to hold the District part of your rate somewhere near this year's figure of 9.07p.

I have been pressing for safety railings to protect the footpath from Church Mews to Park Walk and Waterside Drive to Brading Way. The County Road Safety Officer has however decreed that "such barriers could not be justified" and as this is a County matter there is little else I can do.

Most of the time when I am doing my thing on behalf of Purley it seems like I'm knocking my head against a brick wall - one has one's odd small victories but usually all you get are excuses why this and that can't be done. It was therefore a pleasure to be able to go to the last Parish Council meeting to report I had been able to help to get a grant of £2000 towards the new hard tennis courts.

John Chapman: Newbury District Councillor
Purley Ward.

