

Season's Greetings to all our Readers!



THE BIG CLEAN!



Local Liberal Democrat Councillor Gareth Kane with newly pruned shrubs at Breamish House in Battlefield. He has got the ball rolling on a big clean up of Council estates across the ward.

Gareth Kane secures clean up of Council estates across the area

Following questioning from local Lib Dem Councillor Gareth Kane and Shieldfield and Battlefield residents' groups, it has emerged that the 'Service Level Agreement' between the Council and Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) has not been honoured for several years. YHN has agreed to carry out a major clean up of the Council estates in the area, starting at Breamish House (see above) and working through St Ann's, Melbourne Court and into Shieldfield.

"The Council is meant to maintain these estates on behalf of YHN, but seems to have simply stopped doing it. The Council ignored my questioning on this for many months, but when we asked YHN about it, they realised that no maintenance was taking place." said Gareth Kane. "YHN have said they will talk to the Council about future maintenance. It may be this will lead to a reduction in the agreed standards, but any maintenance is better than no maintenance at all which we have at the minute."

Gareth's 'Al Capone Strategy' for back lane dumping

We reported in the last edition of Focus that we had called for a crackdown on student landlords tipping rubbish in the back lanes of Heaton and Shieldfield every summer. Local Lib Dem Councillor Gareth Kane has now formulated what he calls the 'Al Capone' strategy to ram the message home to landlords by making them prove they've complied with waste laws.

"When Al Capone went to jail it was not for his gangster crimes, but for not having proper tax documentation for his ill-gotten gains." explained Gareth "In the same way I want the Council to inspect landlords' and letting agents' waste documentation. Under law, they have to be able to prove that they have disposed of all waste properly and keep the documents for 3 years. If they've just chucked everything in the back lanes, they won't have any documents to show. This will be much easier than catching them in the act."

Gareth has secured initial agreement with senior Council staff to try this new approach and we hope to see it in action before next summer.



Action: Local Liberal Democrats Stephen Howse and Cllr Gareth Kane got 'No Dumping' signs placed in Heaton and Shieldfield back lanes last year.

Just how is this FAIR?

Newcastle Council Chief Executive

Current salary: £150,000

Pay RISE: £24,000

Newcastle Council Care Assistant

Typical current income: £16,000

Pay CUT: £3,000

Just weeks after voting through a whopping great pay rise for the best paid at the Council, the Labour administration has proposed swingeing pay CUTS for 1800 of the most essential and lowest paid staff.

"Five years ago, Labour assembled a 'Fairness Commission' of the great and good to explain the meaning of the word 'fair' to them – we thought that should be pretty obvious," commented local Lib Dem Councillor Gareth "But clearly Labour councillors still don't get it – you don't need a fancy commission to see this pay proposal is outrageously unfair."

STOP PRESS: Following an outcry and threats of industrial action, the Council management have announced they are reviewing the pay cut proposal.



Bin Dispute Over?

The Labour-run Council claims that the long-running unofficial industrial dispute by bin men is over with 99.8% of collections being made each week, but either all of the 0.2% that are missed are in our area (like these bins in Shieldfield) or the problem is rumbling on. Please keep reporting unemptied bins to the Council and ourselves (see over).



Gareth Kane at Milton Close in Shieldfield which was at risk from being split off from the rest of the Milton estate before Gareth and ex-Cllr Stephen Psallidas argued for it to stay.

Changes for Ouseburn Ward

The Boundary Commission has now published the new political map of Newcastle for 2018 onwards. Despite being one of the wards which triggered the review as student numbers pushed the population over the upper limit, the changes to Ouseburn have not been as radical as most of the rest of the City.

Your local Lib Dem team has argued hard to keep our traditional communities together. We managed to stop St Ann's Close, Tarsset Street and Breamish House being lost to Byker Ward, and Falconer Street/Shieldfield Green moving into the new City Centre 'Monument Ward'. We tried to keep the north end of Shieldfield – Chester Street, Chester Crescent, Harrison Place, Gladstone Terrace and Milton Close – from being put into South Jesmond Ward where they would be remote from other residential areas. Unfortunately, of these streets the Commission decided only to keep Milton Close with the rest of Shieldfield.

The new Ouseburn Ward will also lose the Manors Campus, the Manors' Business Park and the area of the Quayside west of Argyle Street, Tower Street and the Millenium Bridge.

"This situation is far from ideal, particularly the split in Shieldfield," commented local Lib Dem Councillor Gareth Kane "Rest assured I will continue to represent all residents right up to the moment the new ward boundaries come into force at the May 2018 local elections."

It has emerged that the Council has quietly persuaded the Commission to remove Heaton Park from the ward. This intervention has raised our suspicions as it has no impact whatsoever on voter numbers. "We will be watching the Park like a hawk to make sure the Go Ape private ropes course proposal doesn't raise its ugly head again." added Gareth.

Sad News: Ian Preston

We were very saddened to hear of the sudden death of former Labour Councillor for Ouseburn, Ian Preston, aged just 29. Ian represented the Ward between May 2011 and October 2012, before stepping down to take a job in London.

"This is tragic news," commented local Councillor Gareth Kane "We may have been on different sides politically, but Ian was a really nice, genuine guy and we were always able to work constructively together for the area. Our thoughts go out to his friends and family."

Local Priorities for the Year Ahead

Local residents have been consulted on local priorities for our area via a survey and this year's single Ward Committee meeting in October. The five priorities are:

- **Local Environment:** tackle fly tipping, clean streets, good quality green space & parks;
- **Activities for Young People:** activities for young people, raising skills;
- **Parking:** managing high density of car ownership and pressures from commuters;
- **Noise and anti-social behaviour:** including dealing with student noise;
- **Reduce Social Exclusion & Isolation:** support new communities & older people, reducing isolation & loneliness;

"The first four of these haven't changed much from the residents' priorities set back in 2010." said local Cllr Gareth Kane. "I asked for the fifth to be added as I am growing increasingly concerned at the number of people I come across who are lonely in their own homes."



Gareth Kane at the PTS building on Stoddart St, the site of the latest student accommodation block approved for Shieldfield, despite Gareth's objection. Other student blocks were approved recently at Uptin House and in Manors Business Park.

Athletics Proposal for City Stadium

The Newcastle Athletics Development Association has drawn up proposals to bring a functional athletics track back to the City Stadium for the first time in decades. A low fence would go around the track to provide some security when children's groups are using the facility, but otherwise access to the centre field will be open to the public.

"Our initial reaction to this proposal is positive; we have always worked to promote exercise in our area," commented Gareth Kane "When we ran a consultation on the Stadium back in 2010, local residents told us that while the Stadium could do with some improvements, they wanted it to remain an informal activity area, so we've made it very clear to the Association that the Stadium must stay open to all."

You can see full details here: <http://newcastle-athletics.org/cityStadiumProposals.php>



Local Lib Dem Councillor Gareth Kane out running on the City Stadium. He has welcomed the proposal to bring the athletics track back into use.

News Shorts

- As we go to press, we are still awaiting the results of the Parking Permit proposals for the Heaton part of the ward.
- Roadworks are starting on the Stepney Bank/ Stepney Road 'DIY Streets' project to make the area more pedestrian/cycling friendly. We'd like to thank everybody who has taken part in the project.
- Senior Labour Councillors have now publicly acknowledged that their much vaunted 'single point of access' Envirocall system has collapsed. A review is being carried out to get it up and running again.
- YHN has offered to manage the opening and closing of the games area on Napier Street – local residents were getting disturbed by noise from it being used very late at night.

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I would like your help with the following issue(s):

Issue:

Name:

Address:

E-mail:

Send to Cllr Gareth Kane, 157 Stratford Road, Newcastle, NE6 5AS, or e-mail us at gareth.kane@newcastle-libdems.org.uk

Note we may use your e-mail address to contact you about this and other local issues unless you request otherwise.