

# Leigh & West Leigh FOCUS



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★ **SPECIAL CORONAVIRUS ONLINE ISSUE** ★

June/July 2020

**Southend  
Airport**

***While you get some shut eye,  
we'll keep our eye on the ball***



## **CHANGES TO NIGHT TIME AIRCRAFT MOVEMENTS**

For months now residents all over Leigh and beyond have been suffering sleep deprivation due to the overnight movements at the Airport in connection with Amazon flights. The dipping in and out of sleep affects many people, whilst some are able to sleep through it. It is a question of striking a balance to help those worse affected.

Back in 2011 the then Tory administration, against Lib Dem opposition led by Peter Wexham, signed an Agreement with the Airport restricting night time movements to a maximum of 120 monthly. This hadn't been a real problem until last year with the onset of the Amazon flights at ridiculously aggravating times during the night.

Led by Carole Mulroney, your Lib Dem Councillors, working with other groups in the Joint Administration, sought changes from the Airport, not just in terms of the night flights but also their overall environmental effects.

Although we have consistently opposed night flights, we want the Airport to work for everyone because it brings many benefits to the Borough for residents, businesses and visitors, and a balance has to be struck.

After much conversation with the Airport, it was this group of councillors who suggested the spacing of the flights to allow for unbroken sleep and we are delighted to say that this has borne fruit and the flights have been reduced and spaced out with flights at 00:20am and then a clear run until 06:45am each night. That is of course just for Amazon flights, and we have no doubt there will be some times when there will be exceptions to this, and, because it is not possible to write this into the Agreement, things could change, but we will be monitoring activities very closely.

As Carole says "Leigh & West Leigh Lib Dems will always put our residents first. Whether this is over night flights or the Environmental Action Plan the Airport has agreed to at my request. This shows that through negotiation the Airport can change and can move forward to work for everyone.

"I look forward to seeing the Airport's draft Environmental Action Plan and hope that we can now continue on a more collegiate working relationship."

**The news Leigh has  
been waiting for!**

# The Peter Wexham Corner

## ★ More Council Houses for Southend

We can all look back to previous Governments and take a view on what they did well and what they didn't. One of the most frustrating decisions taken in the Thatcher era was the sale of Council Housing stock without the sales money being reused to build more houses to replace them. We all know now it was folly and has created the housing crisis of today.

Recent Governments have made unrealistic pledges to build more homes, but it is not them or Councils who are doing the building. It is developers in the main, and here in Leigh, and across the Borough, we are suffering the consequences.

Now more than ever families need security of a roof over their heads, even if other elements of their lives remain tough to deal with.

Developers build for profit not people and the types of development coming forward are not affordable for many.

The Tories say they are going to overhaul the planning system – and it does need it! But not at any price and for any old development to go through, just to make up numbers.

We are part of a Joint Administration that understands the Borough's housing needs. We are determined to do all in our power to achieve a good home for all who need it. Our housing pipeline of development sites and our use of money the Tories sat on (and potentially lost back to Government) has bought, renovated and let, houses for those in need.

As the economy struggles back from the abyss we need to make sure we take up opportunities as they come along and plan properly for our housing need.

## ★ Living through a crisis

You may not have realised it but many of the additional services which were brought into being by the pandemic have been organised by the Council, working with colleagues in a range of disciplines organisations and volunteers. Logistically it has been a tremendous effort by all.

Over the last ten 'austerity' years Southend Council had to slash its budgets by millions with efficiency savings and changes to services. The same applies to the hospitals, police and the fire service.

In all of the support services, this pandemic has shown a spirit of working together, working outside comfort zones, sharing knowledge and experience.

On behalf of the Leigh and West Leigh Councillors I would like to express our admiration for them all, and for the hundreds of experienced staff who volunteered to come back to work and show their dedication to their professions and to the Borough and their fellow humans.



## ★ Speeding is a hot topic

It has been Southend Lib Dem policy for many years to reduce the speed limit from 30 to 20mph in our residential streets, not just around schools. Distributor roads are different and need to maintain a proper feed through speed to maintain the flow of the highway network.

The Government's own study concluded that 'Based on the findings of this study ... consideration should be given to encouraging traffic authorities to work with relevant partners from the police, health, environment, urban planning, education, and the local community to deliver 20mph limits as part of an integrated approach to addressing transport, community, environment and health objectives.'

We agree with that finding and it is part of Southend Joint Administration's policy to introduce 20mph where appropriate.

Southend Tories don't like this idea with their lame reason that slower cars are polluting. But that argument falls flat in the light of their own Government's policy on electric vehicles and the current impetus to get people cycling and walking. It is going to be even more important that people are safe on our streets and in the environment.

**Local Tories  
out of step!**

## Leigh & West Leigh Wards Councillors' Surgeries ... coming back to Leigh Community Centre as soon as possible!

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# IN TIME OF CRISIS

History will judge how the UK Government handled itself during the current pandemic. We all have our own views. This is how we, in Southend's Joint Administration, have handled ourselves during this trying time.

## The Borough Council machine kicked into action rapidly!

Here are just some of the issues we dealt with –

- Southend Coronavirus Action received and made thousands of calls, supporting 1,100+ households, with over 600 food parcels, 600 shopping deliveries and 550+ medication collections and deliveries. People have also been helped to organise their finances and with befriending
- 120+ rough sleepers were temporarily accommodated, and served over 4,000 meals by Southend Adult Community College
- We supported schools and up to 600 schoolchildren during lockdown and to prepare for wider re-opening
- £35m+ of Government grants paid out to local businesses and a dedicated hardship fund set up for local people
- We opened a 13-bed care unit for older people recently discharged from hospital
- Support for 1,263 children in need
- 200,000 items of PPE secured and distributed
- Previously known domestic abuse sufferers offered support
- Worked with health colleagues and helped care providers
- Supported local COVID testing at Southend Airport
- South Essex Homes contacted 700+ over-70s in council accommodation to ensure their safety and provide reassurance and support. Sheltered housing residents were also frequently reminded to maintain social distancing
- All our waste collections kept going throughout

## We are now looking towards recovery

The Joint Administration will be focusing on six recovery priorities for our town:

- Economic focus on a stronger and safer town
- Green City and climate change
- Travel and Transport
- People and communities
- Major projects
- How we learn and recover as an organisation

Carole Mulroney is leading on Green City and Climate Change and working with the Cabinet member for Travel & Transport on that priority.

Some areas will take a while to recover, like our parks and gardens. The easing of the lockdown has also seen a huge surge in litter problems, mainly brought about by the continued closure of hospitality venues.

Many of you have raised this issue and it is something that Carole is particularly keen to overcome. Throwing more bodies or bins at it is not the answer – people still leave their litter when a bin is right next to them.

**STOP PRESS – GOOD NEWS!** One key move agreed in mid-June, will see the police close and lock Leigh Library Gardens at night in June and July to stop groups gathering, causing a nuisance (and leaving litter). The gates will be opened again at 7.30am.

***Carole Mulroney, Peter Wexham, Ashley Thompson, Beth Hooper and Katie Kurilecz say:***  
***"We're always here for you!"***



## Can the Trust be Trusted?

On 1 April, although the pandemic had begun, Southend Hospital became part of the Mid and South Essex Hospital Trust, so Southend residents can expect many of their services to be provided at Basildon or Broomfield hospitals. At the same time Cllr Beth Hooper was approached by concerned residents about the quality of PPE available to staff at Southend.

As your local councillors, we wrote and sought assurances from the CEO at the Trust that the PPE was of the right standard across all 3 hospitals, an issue highlighted in a BBC Panorama programme at the end of April which indicated staff had been put at risk because of the lack of high quality PPE. We received that assurance but have nevertheless kept an eye on this issue ever since.

Unfortunately, we are now aware that a significant number of critical care beds at Southend are to be transferred to Basildon. Currently, Southend has 14 beds across the Intensive Therapy and High Dependency Units but as of early July this will reduce, and staff will have to work at Basildon on rotation at a new 'super-COVID' ITU accommodating up to 26 COVID positive patients in preparation for a second wave.

The worry for all of us is that Southend Hospital is gradually being dismantled, as we feared would happen under the Trust's Sustainability and Transformation Partnership plans, and that there will be a move to transfer blue light, A&E, renal and respiratory care to Basildon.

As your representatives on the Council, and as we did before, we will do our damndest to keep services in Southend, wherever possible.

**Supporting  
our NHS and  
care homes**

# Katie Kurilecz says "Let's reinvent the wheel"

I am always on my bike, but now lots more of you are too and everyone is realising the benefits of cycling and walking. We've all also noticed the improvements to our air quality over the past few months.

Cycling is a great way to get around Leigh and wider Southend and it is a way we want to promote for the future as it cuts down car journeys, frees up parking for those who need it and is also great exercise, something we have all learned to appreciate the need for in recent months.

That is why I am really pleased to see that the Joint Administration at Southend has made an application for the Government funding for cycle networks which has been announced.

If you've dusted off your old bike or bought a new one during lockdown, keep it up. If you haven't discovered it already, start with the Prittlewell Green Way – a dedicated cycling and walking route linking Leigh with central Southend. There is also a dedicated cycle track on the seafront and the Council is hoping to do much more.



**Katie says:** "Check out [forwardmotionsouthessex.co.uk](http://forwardmotionsouthessex.co.uk) for helpful advice.

"Here's to using our two wheels instead of four to get around our wonderful community!"

## ★ Road resurfacing: Ashley Thompson

Despite the ongoing crisis, the work of the Council goes on, reports Cllr Ashley Thompson.

**Lymington Avenue** (below) and **Ronald Hill Grove** are the latest roads in Leigh to be resurfaced. I'm lobbying hard for further improvements to Leigh's roads.



Lymington Avenue  
before and  
after

## ★ Southend Tories try to halt recovery

Coronavirus has knocked even more stuffing out of our high street businesses. So with the Government falling over itself to get the economy going, why are Southend Tories so anti schemes that will stimulate our local economy!

The Joint Administration are continuing with work they started to improve Southend High Street. The money is allocated in grants for the London Road / Victoria Plaza area, we are at design stage.

But the Tories have done yet another U-turn and condemn it as a waste of money. So who is really supporting the economic revival of Southend? SIMPLES – WE ARE.

## Here to help! LEIGH & WEST LEIGH LIBERAL DEMOCRAT TEAM

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