

Service updates for Cabinet: 24 March 2015

The Council's new textile collection scheme started on 23 March. Collected items are being sorted by the Salvation Army and wearable items will be sold through markets in Eastern Europe, raising vital funds for the organisation. Old, worn or stained textiles will be recycled to make industrial cloths or padding.

The Council's website achieved a 3 star rating in the annual SOCITM Better Connected Survey. The survey rates council websites and awards a score, out of 4, for a range of criteria including content, accessibility and navigation. The score is very positive and marks an improvement from the previous year when 2 stars were achieved.

Councillor Robin Sider gave an interview to Brooklands Radio on Wednesday 18 March. He spoke about being a ward councillor and his role as Chair of the Licensing Committee.

The Council's Bulletin magazine is being delivered to residents from 21 March and can also be viewed on the Council's website.

Legal Services underwent their annual LEXCEL quality accreditation check. The assessor found no issues during the visit and noted 33 areas of good practice.

The Council Tax collection rates (cumulative) up to end February were:-

- Council Tax: 97.6% (97.8% sply)
- Business Rates: 95.99% (97.83% sply)
- Council Tax Support: 77.6% (72.1% sply)

The new call routing system being used by Customer Services has resulted in a 46% decrease in calls.

Young people aged 7-16 are being encouraged to join Team Spelthorne for the annual P&G Surrey Youth Games being held in June. The event is a great opportunity to try new sports or improve existing skills and this year the coaching sessions are being provided free of charge, thanks to sponsorship from local companies.

The achievements of Borough's young people were celebrated at the Spelthorne Youth Awards at Shepperton Studios on Thursday 5 March. The Mayor presented seven 'star award' trophies and twenty one outstanding achievement certificates.

The winners of the World War One art competition for schools were announced on Thursday 5 March. The winning pieces were created Imi Geczy from Buckland Primary School, Preeah Sangha from Staines Preparatory School and Josh Tampai from The Bishop Wand C of E School. A selection of the art work will be on display at the Sunbury Embroidery Gallery from 31 March until 12 April.

Sunbury and Spelthorne leisure centres - operated by Everyone Active in partnership with the Council - have both been awarded 'excellent' statuses by Quest following rigorous assessments which looked at every aspect of the centres operations and management.

The Spelthorne Walking for Health Scheme coordinated by Leisure Services, recently received national accreditation. As part of the scheme, three short walks are led by volunteer leaders each

week with the aim of encouraging residents to be more active and to get out-and-about with people in their local area. The scheme continues to be very popular, especially with those who have had recent health problems.

Up to 33 people from Spelthorne, Runnymede and Windsor and Maidenhead will be able to play a special role in June's Magna Carta celebrations as charter bearers, helping to carry a replica of the Magna Carta during the River Relay on 13 and 14 June. Nominations are being taken from community groups until the end of April.

Spelthorne Council's Community Centres have benefitted from the purchase of new equipment to help them run activities. The Benwell Centre in Sunbury-on-Thames has received a projector which will enable them to host movie days. The Staines Community Centre will gain an indoor bowls mat and the Fordbridge Centre in Ashford has asked for a new oven and so they can begin cookery classes. The Greeno Centre in Shepperton will use their funds for tools and electrical work needed for the Men in Sheds project, designed for men who like to spend time on practical hobbies, making and mending things.

The Independent Living team have started hot-desking arrangements with Surrey Social Services at the Community Centres, making best use of the space available and helping to build good working relationships.

Parties are being held on 23 and 24 April to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Fordbridge Centre in Ashford.

The Council held a flag raising ceremony to commemorate Commonwealth Day on Monday 9 March. Mayor, Cllr Suzy Webb, was joined by veterans from the Royal British Legion, Burma Star and the Jewish Veterans Association as well as residents, councillors and council staff. The Mayor read out a message from the Queen and the Secretary to the Commonwealth, Kamallesh Sharma.

The Queen sent her personal good wishes to everyone who attended a special service at St Mary's Church in Stanwell on Friday 6 March to mark the 800th anniversary of the sealing of the Magna Carta. Local residents and churchgoers Beryl Wilkins and Melanie Cooper led the congregation in prayers. Chair of the Spelthorne Museum, Nick Pollard, read Kipling's famous poem "The Reeds of Runnymede" and arranged a Magna Carta exhibition. Mayor, Cllr Suzy Webb, also read a lesson.