

The Wentworth Estate

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Dear Resident

I am pleased to confirm that the Wentworth Estate Roads Committee (“WERC”) has decided that there will be no increase in the overall Road Rate payable by Wentworth residents this year. This is the first time for many years that we have been able to freeze the Road Rate. Moreover we have been able to allocate additional budget for 2018 for activities much cared about by many residents including measures to study and then address some of the traffic issues on the Estate.

We are however reviewing interest charges on the small minority of late payers and would encourage you to look at direct debit if you do not do so already as it reduces our admin costs. Funds will be debited in January.

The biggest issue I inherited when I became Chairman in February 2017 was the ongoing litigation with the Wentworth Club and with the European Tour in respect of the monies paid by the Club to WERC for the holding of the tournament. Put simply, a considerable majority of residents supported the tournament, but an equally overwhelming majority of residents believed that the amount paid of £14,000 per annum was simply not adequate. As I shared with all residents who attended the AGM in June, I am pleased to confirm that we finally managed to settle this litigation. Settling any litigation without taking it to court requires compromise, but nevertheless the final financial terms of £110,000 per annum plus indexation from 2018 onwards, and a payment of just over £250,000 in mid 2017, in respect of 2016 and 2017 and a contribution to costs, represented a considerable improvement on what had been there before and was a good deal for residents. The deal was a 10 year deal. Our legal costs before VAT were very high at slightly over £300,000 + VAT, and although only £30,000 +VAT of these were incurred while I was Chairman, anyone who has been involved in litigation knows how much costs can overrun from original expectations and how difficult it can be to stop the train. Moreover the issues were legally complex, as the case was not just about money but also about WERC’s rights over land and covenant rights, capping the period to build the tournament every year, requiring permission for any major changes to the tournament and about contractors’ working hours. Anyway this is all now behind us and it has been a time to rebuild good relations

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with the Club and the European Tour knowing that their financial contribution to our community is now more significant and that there is a much more solid contractual relationship.

The Estate has gone through a lot of change in the last few years, however one of these is that there has been less rather than more development on the Estate. There have been less planning applications in the last two years, and we estimate that building activity is almost two thirds down on its peak in 2013. There are now 21 building sites including extensions against 57 in 2013, and of these there are 12 new builds of which 3 are for larger houses with basements. We introduced new rules for planning applications which came into effect on 1 January 2017. These gave WERC greater control over building sites with more conditions attached to approvals, designed for example to stop the scenario where developments were taking years and creating eyesores. While virtually all residents accept that continual improvement of the Estate requires property development, with the related construction noise and lorry traffic an inevitable consequence, no one enjoys seeing an unfinished building site next to their property for many years. The new rules were designed to address this, and give the Committee the contractual right to fine those not complying.

Activities in the next year will include ongoing improvement of our roads and verges, and continuing to help as we can with residents' concerns about security. There has been a large recent increase in crime in the whole of North West Surrey with burglaries up by 90% in a year. We held a forum on security in July which was attended by over 100 residents, and which had speakers from the Police as well as from Cannons Security. The overwhelming advice was that residents need to take more steps in their own properties to make it difficult for criminals, for example locking up ladders which could otherwise be used to burgle a neighbour's property, not making it obvious that you are out or travelling, and reporting suspicious activity to Cannons or to our Estate Office. Many people feel passionately about the appropriate solution, but the professional advice will not always back that up. For example there have been more burglaries recently on other prestigious gated estates than on ungated Wentworth; after all stealing cash and jewellery only needs a rucksack not a car. Our number plate recognition software on the Estate together with the vigilance of our Estate Office successfully brought some criminals to justice earlier this year – the police logged the number plates captured in our system, and the criminals were caught while committing another crime in the same vehicle in East Anglia.

We are in the final stage of selecting independent consultants to perform a study of the Estate. The study will cover a wide range of issues from traffic calming measures, traffic by non-residents through to the Estate to the case for and against gating, especially as we have 18 separate entry points to the Estate. The police advice is to look very carefully at cost/benefit. There will be much more communication on this subject over the next few months, and we have set up a liaison committee with the Wentworth Residents Association to try and get to a solution that has as much community acceptance as possible. There will also be some disruption which we need your understanding over - for example if there is a study of how many non-residents are driving through the Estate it will be necessary for that study to be effective to

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introduce checkpoints in certain places to check whether drivers are in fact residents or not. This will not happen until January.

Last but not least, to save administration costs, the cost of membership for the Wentworth Residents Association is also itemised on the attached invoice. While this is not compulsory whereas our Road Rate is, we would urge you to pay it and support the Wentworth Residents Association at a time that they have more issues than usual to deal with. This includes defending the rights of Wentworth residents against a Council that seems determined to proceed with a major "Garden Village" at Longcross without seeming to care too much about the effects on residents of Virginia Water including the effect on traffic, as evidenced by their recently removing the Virginia Water representative from the Planning Committee. This same Council that last year sold off the Bourne Car Park, a car park given to the Council in 1962 by our community for parking purposes, without making alternative parking arrangements. This was something on which WRA lobbied successfully (with some political lobbying by WERC also behind the scenes) to make the Council find an alternative. Please at this important time do therefore support or continue to support WRA with your own money rather than applauding them but expecting their activities to be funded by other residents' money !

The Committee and I take this opportunity of wishing you all a very happy Festive Season.

Yours sincerely

John Wisbey
Chairman