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The next edition of Your Croydon will be published on Wednesday 26 March 2008. Commercial advertising is welcome, but inclusion of an advertisement does not indicate council endorsement of any products or services mentioned.



Controlling planning is vital for Croydon's future

With house prices still sky high, many young people – and their parents – will be wondering how on Earth they will ever manage to get a place of their own in Croydon.

That's why it's so important that the council continues to meet housing targets for the borough. With more units of affordable housing, at least there's a chance for some youngsters to remain living close to the family home. But this house building should not be at the expense of the character of our much-prized suburban character. That's why we consider it so important that locally-elected representatives should have a major say when local people seek their support over planning proposals.

Last year, Croydon Council refused about 420 housing applications – well over half of those submitted. Unfortunately, that often allowed powerful applicants to lodge appeals which, increasingly, are being allowed by Government-appointed planning inspectors. During 2007, applications involving almost 300 new homes, which the council originally refused, were later permitted on appeal. So, even when local representatives take account of local circumstances when deciding a local planning issue, they can be overturned by a largely anonymous bureaucrat with no knowledge of our borough – a worrying erosion of the democratic principle.

That's the background to a very important debate that took place in the Town Hall recently. Here's what the motion said:

"This council is dismayed that the Government's Planning Inspectorate and the Mayor of London continue to overturn decisions made by the locally-elected members of the planning committee. Neither the Planning Inspectorate nor the Mayor offer any right of appeal or understand the needs and desires of our local community. Accordingly, we call upon the Government to uphold the democratic decisions made by the elected members of Croydon's planning committee."

If this issue affects you, you can see the whole debate for yourself on our webcast.

We believe the planning committee has been entirely right in putting the interests of local people first. This is not nimbyism; it's about protecting residents from aggressive developers who are being encouraged to prey on our borough and change its characteristics.

Development of rear gardens is a national issue and the solution rests with the Government giving councils more effective tools to support residents who regard this trend as harming traditional community qualities. National planning policy doesn't go far enough in discouraging the development of back-garden and backland sites. New housing should be assessed in relation to the character of residential areas, the amenities of adjoining occupiers and the excessive strain yet more unsuitably located housing places on public services including schools, hospitals, GP surgeries, road usage, as well as energy consumption, water supplies and sewage capacity.

Where we're not in direct conflict with national planning regulations and policies we refuse speculative applications that we consider inappropriate or will result in unsustainable pressures. But that risks costs being awarded against the council.

It's no wonder voters feel disenchanted and don't go out to vote. They feel that local democracy doesn't work. That's why we feel so strongly that local planning matters should be left in the hands of locally elected people who know the area and have a democratic mandate.

Mike Fisher Leader of the council

Mu Fisher

Council's boost to recycling spend

£4.75m impetus for Croydon's ambitious green programmes



Nowhere in the country is investing as much as Croydon to improve recycling services for residents.

Croydon Council believes that the extra £4.75m it has earmarked for environmental investment in 2008/09 is unmatched by any other local authority.

The biggest part of the additional spending, £3m, will meet the higher running costs for the expanded and upgraded services, while the remaining £1.75m will be spent on providing new plant and equipment.

The additional steps are designed to make it easier than ever for Croydon residents to recycle, and the council has set its short-term sights on achieving a recycling rate of 30% in the next year.

Environmental initiatives introduced last year have seen the volume of recycled waste in the borough already climbing toward an expected 23% in 2007/08.

Just two years ago the rate was 16.1% – one of the lowest in London.

Now, the council is planning to give recycling fresh impetus by extending kerbside collection services of plastic, cardboard and green waste, as well as upgrading the borough's neighbourhood recycling centres and developing estates' recycling service.

In addition, it will continue to trial kitchenwaste collections to 2,500 households.

These improvements will help Croydon meet an ambitious target of at least 40% of household waste being recycled or composted by 2010.

In producing a new waste strategy and recycling plan for the next three years, the council has published its intention to manage waste through a hierarchy that gives top priority to minimisation and reduction. This is followed by reuse, recycling and composting, and then energy recovery. Only when all of these avenues have been exhausted will disposal in landfill sites be considered.

Serious money spent on play

Major playground refurbishment programme launched

An average of £50,000 is being spent on each of nine playgrounds across the borough in a major refurbishment programme.

Residents recently gave their views on a number of options put forward for each of the playgrounds undergoing work. As a result of that consultation, the planned improvements will include installing new play equipment, fencing and seating.

The nine playgrounds to benefit will be:

- Ashburton Playing Field
- King George's Field
- Milne Park
- Norbury Park
- Rowdown Fields
- South Croydon Recreation Ground
- Thornton Heath Recreation Ground
- Waddon Ponds
- Selsdon Recreation Ground

Work is expected to begin in March with completion by the school holidays in April.

The start of refurbishment works coincides with a review of Croydon's playgrounds, which recommends management and upkeep improvements to 28 of the borough's 55 children's playgrounds.



On the whole, playgrounds were found to be in a satisfactory condition but it was felt that some needed particular attention.

The aim of the refurbishment programme has been to highlight and prioritise those areas in most need of attention, and to take action to improve facilities across the borough.

Further Big Lottery funding has been secured to improve two other playgrounds in the borough. South Norwood Country Park and Coulsdon Memorial Ground are both set to undergo extensive works this summer.

Last autumn, playgrounds at Rotary Field and Purley Way Playing Field (pictured above) were refurbished and a new play area was installed at Higher Drive Recreation Ground.

Alsop effect still being felt

Council's steps to maintain momentum of architect's vision

Will Alsop's Vision for Croydon has sparked levels of interest in the borough that have not been seen for many years.

Back in December, *Your Croydon* featured aspects of the internationally renowned architect's futuristic designs for the town centre which saw, among a raft of far-sighted proposals, extensive use of the Wandle as a focus for leisure.

The extensive publicity generated by the Alsop work, in both the national and professional press, has had a positive impact on how the development and property investment sector perceives Croydon.

Maintaining the Alsop momentum, during March the council will again have a large stand as part of the London Hall at MIPIM, the foremost international property exhibition, and efforts are focused on ensuring the council's presence at the event is maximised.

Later in the year, the council plans to boost even further the media profile by holding an event at the New London Architecture (NLA) centre, focusing on recent development proposals for the town.

The locale of the NLA, just off central London's Tottenham Court Road, will make it easier to attract participants from development companies, professional advisers and funding institutions, and maintain the council's profile among key decision makers.



Littering targeted by

new bins

A total of 30 new litterbins have been placed around central Croydon as the first phase of a programme that will see more of the distinctively designed bins positioned in district centres across the borough.

Black, with gold lettering and trim, the bins have been sited in locations where litter has been a particular problem and will go a long way to improving street cleanliness. They are part of Croydon Council's continued commitment to make the borough a safer and more pleasant place in which to live, study and work.

Over coming months, areas such as Thornton Heath, South Norwood, Upper Norwood, New Addington, Selhurst and Broad Green will also be reaping the benefit of having the new bins installed.

They have been provided as a direct result of residents and businesses asking the council about the possibility of having more litterbins on the streets.

New-design litterbins will be making Croydon's streets a lot tidier



Walking for a healthy lifestyle

It's time to get into those stout shoes and start filling your lungs with fresh air

The Active Lifestyles Walking for Health scheme was launched in September 2001 and has become a popular pastime for many Croydon residents.

Currently eight weekly walks, and one every first and third Saturday of the month, are held in a number of Croydon's parks and open spaces.

Each lasts about an hour and is hosted by two trained volunteer walk leaders – one at the front and the other at the rear of the group to ensure that people of all ages and abilities can come along and are not left behind.



Since its inception, the scheme has benefited more than 2,000 people in Croydon, many of whom have medical problems such as high blood pressure, diabetes and high levels of cholesterol.

Brisk walking has been found to help improve some medical problems, while also helping with weight loss and improving general fitness.

The Walking for Health scheme is a section of Active Lifestyles, which also has an exercise referral scheme and a physical activity programme.

For further information on the walks, or any other Active Lifestyles scheme, call **020 8726 6900**, or visit www.pro-activesouthlondon. org/activelifestyles

Croydon's youth to air their views

Do you have ideas as to how the police can make Croydon a better place for you?

UK Youth Parliament is planning to give you, the youth of Croydon, an opportunity to talk to local police and councillors about different issues that affect you.

It will be a chance for you to ask questions and to air your experiences, good or bad, with the police.

Think you are treated unfairly? Want to hear the other side of the story? Want to know how you can play an active role in helping the police understand young people better?

These issues, and more, will be addressed when about 50 young people are invited to Your Youth, Your Vision, to be held on Friday, 14 March.

The event will be exclusively for young people to talk to the police and other people involved in making decisions about safety.

You will be able to ask questions and give your views on how young people are treated.

Come along to the Your Youth, Your Vision conference, re-establish your rights as a young voice living in Croydon and, most importantly, gain a better understanding of how to make Croydon a safer place!

For more information, or to book a place, email helen.clark@croydon.gov.uk





Three-star Croydon "improving well"

Audit Commission finds council has no significant weaknesses

"Croydon Council is improving well'."

That's the finding of the independent public spending watchdog, the Audit Commission, in its annual "direction of travel" assessment for 2007.

Service users and residents can be assured by the commission's judgement that improvement levels can be sustained and that the council has no significant weaknesses.

The verdict has been welcomed by the council, particularly since the purpose of the direction of travel indicators is to give local people an annual assurance as to whether councils are meeting their responsibility to secure "continuous improvement".

The conclusion is part of a wider comprehensive performance assessment which has taken account of Croydon's top marks for use of its resources and has confirmed that the council has maintained its status as a three-star council.

Meanwhile, the majority of the Audit Commission's report is favourable to Croydon.

It states: "Croydon Council is improving well.

"Outcomes for citizens continue to improve in many services identified as priorities by the council.

"Recycling and other environmental indicators have shown significant improvement in the past year.

"Adult social services, housing, secondary school attainment, transport services and benefits processing have all improved.

"The council makes effective use of its resources and has some notable practices to share with other councils.

"The priority of keeping the council tax low has been achieved and the council's financial position continues to improve."

An area in which the commission felt the council could improve was residents' satisfaction levels with sports facilities, a problem it is facing head on with the renewal or replacement of leisure centres.

Dancing to the rhythm of Fairtrade

Croydon was London's first fairtrade borough and, once again, is celebrating this important movement

A salsa party organised by students from an Upper Norwood college for local primary school pupils is among the events planned to mark this year's Fairtrade Fortnight in Croydon.

Students at Westwood Language College, in Spurgeon Road, have invited 150 Year 5 students to the dance and rhythm party.

To keep energy levels high, the students will prepare Fairtrade snacks and drinks for their guests and teach them salsa moves to the sounds of a samba band.

A speaker from the Fairtrade Foundation will also be present, to speak to pupils and parents about the importance of Fairtrade, a worldwide movement guaranteeing farmers and traders in developing countries a fair price for their goods.

In March 2003, following campaigning by residents, Croydon became London's first fair-trade borough. Today, the borough has more than 100 outlets offering Fairtrade products, from shops and cafés, to churches



and workplaces – including Fair Enough, Croydon's first fair-trade shop, in Church Street.

Fairtrade Fortnight is an annual awarenessraising event, organised by the Fairtrade Foundation.

Croydon's Fairtrade Community Network, supported by Croydon Council, is organising a number of events in the borough until 9 March.

For further information on local events, email rosashea@hotmail.com

or contact the Fairtrade Foundation on **020 7405 5942**, website **www.fairtrade.org.uk**

For a free guide to Fairtrade products in Croydon, call **020 8760 5791**.

Energy-saving roadshows

Love your energy bills and your planet

Following recent announcements of price hikes to domestic energy bills, many people are giving serious consideration to the ways they can reduce that part of the household budget.

With such concerns in mind, Croydon Council's home-energy advisers are staging a series of roadshows, aimed at assisting residents to cut their bills – and help the environment at the same time.

Visitors to the energy-saving roadshows will be able to learn about easy ways to save energy at home, reduce electricity and gas bills, and achieve a smaller carbon footprint.

And, as a little incentive to make that final push, make a pledge to save energy at home and you will receive a free energy-saving light bulb (subject to availability).

The energy-saving roadshows will be on:

- Thursday, 6 March, from noon to 2pm – Tesco, Brigstock Road, Thornton Heath
- Thursday, 13 March, from noon to 2pm The Co-Op, Central Parade, New Addington
- Tuesday, 18 March, from noon to 2pm
 Housing Conference, Fairfield, central Croydon



New Addington plans get go-ahead

Multi-million pound contract marks start of major regeneration programme

Plans that will see the transformation of the centre of New Addington into a vibrant shopping, residential and social hub have come a step closer with the signing of a binding £80m contract.

Croydon Council's partner, supermarket giant Tesco, has submitted a planning application that should see the redevelopment of Central Parade.

Pending approval, completion is scheduled for 2010, with the finished development providing residents with a new community centre, library, swimming pool and housing, in addition to a supermarket and underground car park.





Continuation of existing facilities, including the Addington Community Association and library, will be possible in temporary accommodation while the rebuilding work is undertaken.

A significant promise of the scheme is Tesco's provision of more than 300 jobs, with as many as half resulting from a Tesco Regeneration Partnership.

These partnerships – which have seen success at other sites across the country – focus on providing jobs for the long-term unemployed following training aimed at giving people the basic skills to work in a retail environment.

It is expected that as many as 160 jobs will be created for those who have been unemployed for six months or more.

Some 300 residential units are planned, with 60% being for private sale, and the remainder being made available for affordable housing, providing accommodation for key workers and those looking to get on the housing ladder.







We need to build on the hard work put in every year by those already dedicated to the cause and encourage the rest of the borough to get behind the campaign.





Britain in Bloom is organised by the Royal Horticultural Society and is the largest campaign of its kind in Eurone.

Last year, Croydon achieved its best results in the London in Bloom awards. This year, it is honoured to have been nominated to represent the capital in Britain in Bloom, but to rise to the challenge ahead we need your help.

Calling all residents, community groups, businesses and schools – our success in this prestigious competition relies on everyone joining together to help make Croydon stand out from the crowd.

From the northern-most tip of the borough to the most southerly point, we want to get Croydon blooming.

We need to build on the hard work put in every year by those already dedicated to the cause and encourage the rest of the borough to get behind the campaign.

Britain in Bloom is organised by the Royal Horticultural Society and is the largest campaign of its kind in Europe.

Finalists from London in Bloom, one of the 18 competition regions around the UK, go forward to compete in Britain in Bloom.

The event aims to bring horticultural skill and enthusiasm together in order to achieve one common aim – to regenerate local environments.

As in previous years, the council will run its own Croydon in Bloom competition and will enter the London in Bloom awards but, this year, extra efforts will be made to achieve additional success in the Britain in Bloom competition.

Last year, Croydon was named overall winner of London in Bloom in the Large City category which applies to towns with a population of more than 200,000 people, receiving a silver gilt award (the highest award presented). And it gained third place for its floral displays.

It is this success which has prompted Croydon's nomination for Britain in Bloom where it faces competition in the same category from other major cities across the UK.

Judging for the campaign is broken down into a number of areas ranging from individual frontgarden displays to the participation of business and commercial developments and permanent landscaping around the borough.

But the campaign is about more than just flowers and plants, the judges will want to see evidence of good conservation practices, a high standard of general cleanliness across the borough and a strong sense of community involvement at every stage of the campaign.

To boost this year's campaign, the council has committed a sum of £155k which will be used for capital initiatives only.

This is likely to involve installing permanent items of street furniture which can incorporate floral planters, and barrier and hanging-basket structures.

The funding for filling and maintaining such planters and baskets would be sought from external sources and sponsorship opportunities and the council is working closely with Croydon Business to achieve this.

Official judging for Britain in Bloom takes place during the first two weeks of August, when a party of judges will visit the borough for a guided tour, during which they will be shown examples of excellence in each of the categories.





"By engaging others who aren't yet involved, we can make this a real boroughwide effort."

Separate London in Bloom judging will take place in the first two weeks of July. In addition, as part of the Britain in Bloom judging process, an unannounced visit is made to each nominated location between 12 April and 4 May.

Although these dates may seem a long way off, work must begin now to plan ahead. Green spaces officer Barry Lambton is one of those leading the project.

He said: "For Croydon to build on its success at last year's London in Bloom awards and to stand a real chance of achieving gold in this campaign, we need to get all sectors of the community involved.

"We want to encourage everyone, from keen gardeners to novices, to take pride in their local community and environment, and to think about how they can use their green fingers to make their local area more attractive.

"Neighbours and groups can get together to improve a communal area and businesses can do their bit to make their properties stand out."

Over coming months, the council will be working with everyone from schools to friends' groups, and allotment holders to large businesses to raise the profile of the campaign.

Barry added: "We already have many areas to be proud of around the borough and lots of good works going on with the help of volunteers and conservation aroups.

"By engaging others who aren't yet involved, we can make this a real boroughwide effort."

A number of events will take place in the run-up to the final judging in August, including district-centre cleanups, and community and school projects.

Croydon's efforts in this year's event will have lasting benefits for the whole town well beyond the lifespan of the competition, by promoting pride in the borough and enforcing the message that Croydon is an attractive and appealing place in which to live and work, and to visit.

For more information on Croydon's bid to succeed in Britain in Bloom, look out for future articles in *Your Croydon* over coming months.

For more information, email parks@croydon.gov.uk or call 020 8760 6900.

Entry forms will be available from April but, if gardeners want to apply before that date, their details can be taken and entry forms sent when available.



To boost this year's campaign, the council has committed a sum of £155k which will be used for capital initiatives only.



Over coming months, the council will be working with everyone from schools to friends' groups, and allotment holders to large businesses to raise the profile of the campaign.

Croydon in Bloom categories:

- Front Garden Award
- Hanging Basket or Container Award
- Community Garden Award
- Business Premises Award
- Pub & Restaurant Award
- Hotel and Guest House Award
- Town or District Centre Award
- Best Conservation Project
- Certificate of Excellence
- Best Allotment Site
- Best School Garden

The council will receive an increase of just 2% in 2008/9, well below the rate of inflation and the lowest increase of any council in the country.

The 2008/9 budget contains a record level of efficiencies of about £12.068m, approximately 5% of the council's budget.



Helping to melke comellies to melke to

Despite little help from Government, we're keeping this year's council tax increase to less than £1 a week

Council tax bills will increase by 3.64% in April, the lowest increase for six years. For a typical Band D home, that's just 95p a week.

Of a household's council tax charge, Croydon Council's part will increase by 3.99% – keeping the promise to residents never to increase its bills by more than 4%.

However, the figure is still higher than leading councillors would like due to the inadequate level of funding Croydon receives from central Government.

The council will receive an increase of just 2% in 2008/9, well below the rate of inflation and the lowest increase of any council in the country.

All the extra money raised through council tax will pay for improvements to services including:

- the introduction of nine extra Neighbourhood Enforcement Officers to assist the police in the fight against crime and antisocial behaviour;
- a multi-million pound investment to make it easier for people to recycle;
- £500,000 to improve attendance and behaviour at our schools and attainment in the key subjects of English, science and maths;
- extra investment for care of some of the most vulnerable people in Croydon who have disabilities or mental health problems;
- funding to keep Purley Pool open until the new leisure centre opens at Waddon and to redevelop Thornton Heath library; and
- investment to strengthen the performance of the council as a whole.

To deliver these improvements while keeping the increase in band D council tax below £1 a week, Croydon Council has had to make itself much more efficient – as recently recognised by the independent Audit Commission.

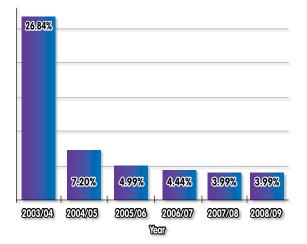
The 2008/9 budget contains a record level of efficiencies of about £12.068m, approximately 5% of the council's budget.



Examples of ways in which the council is improving its performance include:

- collecting more of the money it is owed. This year, the council is on course to collect 96% of the council tax it is owed, compared with 93.9% in 2005/6;
- taking a tough approach to fraud the council's Corporate Anti-Fraud Team is on target to deliver £1.35m of savings this year;
- reduced sickness absence from an average of 8.7 days a year per full-time employee in 2005/6 to 6.47 days a year now, the lowest rate in London;
- checking to see whether it is cheaper to contract a private company or charity to provide a service than employ council officers to do it;
- streamlining the organisation. The council is in the process of reviewing its management structure, which should deliver savings in excess of £500,000.

In addition, the council has announced a five-year draft capital programme of £255m including funding for the regeneration of Coulsdon, South Norwood and Waddon, extra money for maintaining our roads, and investment in our call centre and One-Stop receptions.







Don't park in a residents' bay if you don't have a resident or a visitor permit



Probably the most controversial service offered by the council is parking control – read on to learn how to stay on its right side

Penalty charge notices (PCNs), to give tickets their correct name, are issued primarily as an incentive to drivers to keep the highways clear for moving traffic.

It is a commonly held belief among a huge majority of motorists that the issuing of parking tickets is nothing less than a money-raising exercise by cash-strapped local authorities.

Many believe that parking attendants are sent out at the beginning of their shift with firm instructions to issue as many parking tickets as they can.

Penalty charge notices (PCNs), to give tickets their correct name, are issued primarily as an incentive to motorists - be they the drivers of cars, vans or lorries - to keep the highways clear for moving traffic.

In addition to keeping the borough's roads from becoming horribly snarled by inconsiderately parked vehicles, parking attendants (PAs) and their support team provide a vital service in ensuring the safety of pedestrians, including children, the elderly and the disabled.

Over recent months, the introduction of mobile PAs has seen much better coverage of the borough's outlying areas.

Previously, those areas away from the busier district centres might have been patrolled far less frequently, possibly lulling motorists into believing that inconsiderate parking was not frowned upon.

With the advent of moped-riding PAs, the concerns of residents have been addressed far more quickly.

As a result, for example, a call about a car blocking a drive, or of one being parked on, and blocking, the footpath of a residential street, can now be dealt with in a matter of minutes.

That sort of prompt attention is likely to make the erring motorist think twice before again flouting the rules.

Parking restrictions are in place for clear safety reasons and go a long way to preventing the roads becoming congested, the pavements blocked and damaged, and from forcing children, as they leave school, to cross a busy road from between parked cars.

Illegal parking can be dangerous and damaging. An all-too-common by-product of vehicles parking on pavements is the disintegration of the footpath's sub-strata.

Not being designed to take the weight of a car, van or lorry, the below-ground layers collapse, resulting in the footpath breaking up, leaving a fractured and hazardous surface that can prove difficult to pedestrians, particularly to mothers with buggies, wheelchair users and the elderly and infirm.

A common complaint from motorists who receive a PCN is that they "were only parked there for a couple of minutes".

Prime among the modern PA's equipment is the digital camera, often used, in the event of an appeal, to produce time-stamped photographs proving that the offending vehicle had, in fact, been illegally parked for longer than might have been claimed.

It is not pleasurable to issue PCNs and, to reiterate, is not done to help fill the council's coffers.

Parking is controlled to allow people to go about their business, whether on the road or on the pavement, safely and in a timely fashion. To help motorists keep their windscreens PCN-free, *Your Croydon* has produced a quick picture guide to parking restrictions in the borough.



Don't park on the footway unless there are clear signs the road is exempt



Don't park on double yellow lines at any time – hazard lights do not change the rules!



Don't park in a residents' bay if you don't have a resident or a visitor permit



Don't use a disabled bay if you don't have a disabled badge – misuse carries a hefty fine



Don't stop on the zig-zag lines at the entrances to schools – again, you could face a hefty fine



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www.advantagehealthcare.com

Entities of the filter of the little of the

How the new Local Housing Allowanes could after you.

On 7 April, a new and simpler scheme for working out how much housing benefit is due to a customer comes into effect.

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) will affect the following:

- customers who rent from a private landlord and who make a new claim for housing benefit on or after 7 April 2008
- existing private tenant customers who move or have a break in their housing benefit claim on or after 7 April 2008

Who doesn't it affect?

- customers who rent from a housing association, from the council or who have a registered rent
- customers who live in private rented property and who are in receipt of housing benefit before 7 April 2008

What are the key features of the new scheme?

- LHA claims are not referred to the rent officer; LHA replaces the rent officer referral system
- LHA ensures that entitlement will be the same for customers with similar circumstances living in the same area.
- it ties to a customer's accommodation needs, not the rent paid
- the customer can find out their benefit eligibility before renting a property
- the customer can decide how much of their benefit they want to spend on renting a property
- the customer will find out about their benefit more quickly than before
- inbuilt safeguards allow payment to be made directly to landlords of customers likely to have difficulty managing their affairs or who are likely to fail to pay their rent.

How does it work?

Your Local Housing Allowance rate is calculated by comparing:

- the number of people in the household with
- the number of bedrooms you need, according to a set size criteria and
- the area in which the property is located
- Single claimants under 25 years of age will be entitled to only the shared accommodation rate of LHA even if they are renting a self-contained one-bedroom property.

How can I find out the Local Housing Allowance rates?

Local Housing Allowance rates change at the beginning of every month, and these will be available from 7 April 2008:

- on the council's website at www.croydon.gov.uk
- by ringing the contact centre on 020 8726 7000 to hear an automated message
- at our public enquiry counter in Fell Road, Croydon.

What do I need to do?

If you have a claim in payment and you are not moving – nothing!

If you don't have a bank account you may want to open one, enabling a standing order payment of rent to your landlord. You can open a basic bank account at any high-street bank.

For further money advice, contact the Citizen's Advice Bureau or the Financial Services Authority.

The council has leaflets available from the contact details below.

Can I have my benefit paid direct to my landlord?

The council will pay benefit directly to you unless it is felt that you are likely to have problems in paying your rent to your landlord or if you have consistently failed to pay your rent in the past.

If you do not use your benefit to pay your rent, your landlord may take you to court or try to evict you an you may lose your home.

Where to get more information

If you want to know more about the changes and how they might affect you:

- visit the council's website at www.croydon.gov.uk
- visit www.direct.gov.uk
- visit www.moneymadeclear.fsa.gov.uk
- send an email to croyhben@croydon.gov.uk
- phone the housing benefit contact centre on **020 8726 7000**
- visit the public enquiry counter in Fell Road, Croydon



tor London

What will your vote in the GLA election, getting closer by the day, achieve?

On 1 May, Croydon goes to the polls as part of the Londonwide elections to vote not only for a Mayor, but also for a new Greater London Assembly, the body responsible for deciding the future development of the capital.

Croydon is in the Croydon & Sutton constituency for the GLA. The other borough in this constituency is neighbouring Sutton, with Croydon the lead borough.

In the elections, you will be choosing a candidate to represent the constituency on the GLA. You will also be voting for a Londonwide Assembly member and the Mayor of London.

When you arrive at the polling station, you will be given three ballot papers.

One of those papers will enable you to vote for the Mayor of London.

The other two papers will be for to vote for your constituency assembly member and for a Londonwide assembly member, who will represent the capital as a whole.

2004 Constituency assembly member results for Croydon & Sutton

Candidate	Party	Votes	Votes %
Pelling, Andrew John	Conservative Party	38,085	26.05%
Gauge, Steven Howard	Liberal Democrats	28,636	20.13%
Fitzsimon, Sean Eamonn	Labour Party	25,861	18.18%
Feisenberger, James Rosewell	UK Independence Party	15,203	10.69%
Khan, Shasha	Green Party	6,175	4.34%
Campanale, David Bruno	Christian People's Alliance	4,234	2.98%
Hussain, Waqas	Respect	3,108	2.18%



CENTRE VIEW

Move into Whitgift Street, Croydon from £51,000*



Tower Homes offers you the chance to purchase a one or two bedroom apartment of your own through our part buy, part rent scheme.

Do ALL of these statements apply to you?

- . My total household income is at least £30,500
- . I live in Croydon or arn on the housing waiting list in Croydon
- . I do not have any outstanding County Court Judgements
- * I would like to know more about Centre View

If the answer is YES, please register your interest.

centreview@lqgroup.org.uk 020 8294 5047

Please ensure that you have completed an application for Housing Options

www.housingoptions.co.uk







CROYDON COUNCIL

Heremisers is 30% share in a new 1 bestroom apartment valued at 5 to 2000, monthly for the scheme will be given to local authority and housing association insmitts and flows on the waiting list in the besough of Creydon. Your home is at risk if you fail to keep up repayments on a mortgage, met or kinn recurred on it. Please make sare you can efford the replyments before you take out a mortgage. All details are correct at feel of going to press January 2009.

Rats - the uninvited guests



"The council is doing what it can as regards the question of climate change, with the introduction, and expansion, of a number of recycling programmes."

Increasing numbers are being reported – but we can all help deal with the problem

It is an oft-quoted "fact" that, while in London, you are never more than a few feet away from a rat.

While the situation isn't nearly as grave in Croydon as in some of the capital's inner-city areas, it's true to say that there has been an increase in the number of rat complaints received by the council.

The good news for local residents is that, unlike many local authorities across the country, Croydon is keeping up the pressure in the war against vermin and provides a free-of-charge rat-treatment service.

A number of reasons have been identified for the increase in the rodent population.

One of those concerns a decision by water utility companies to abandon the policy of routine baiting of their sewage systems.

Nationally, water companies no longer carry out such routine baiting; Croydon, however, has an agreement with Thames Water to bait the main sewers in areas with the highest reported surface rat activity.

This targeted method of baiting is more effective and a better use of resources.

The good news for local residents is that, unlike many local authorities across the country, Croydon is keeping up the pressure in the war against vermin and provides a free-of-charge rat-treatment service.

Other reasons for the growth of rat numbers include:

- Charging policies a growing number of councils are charging householders for rat treatments and, consequently, more residents are resorting to ineffective do-it-yourself measures, or not bothering to treat at all. As previously indicated, Croydon provides free rat treatment to all residents in the borough.
- Overfeeding of birds many residents who feed wild birds put more food out than is necessary, attracting rodents.
- Street rubbish litter, discarded fast-food containers and fly-tipping.
- Composting and changes to fortnightly refuse collections – Croydon Council maintains a weekly refuse collection.
- Derelict properties long-term empty properties can provide a perfect habitation for vermin.
- Climate change a succession of mild winters and hot summers has provided ideal conditions for rats to thrive

The council's public sector housing director, Shayne Coulter, said: "We can and do take steps to deal with most of the identified causes of the problem.

"However, people feeding wild birds is difficult to deal with unless we can obtain specific evidence. The same can be said of the increase in fast-food litter.

"The council is doing what it can as regards the question of climate change, with the introduction, and expansion, of a number of recycling programmes.

"At the end of the day, we can all do a little bit to help – and all those little bits, when added together, can make a real difference."

Getting about









Revised guide makes travelling easier for those with disabilities

Croydon has many great things to offer.

There are hundreds of shops and places to eat and drink, and beautiful parks and recreation and community facilities to visit.

It has great transport links too, with fast routes into and out of central London, as well as extended tram and Underground links due by 2010.

For some people, however, navigating around the borough can be difficult and things that most of us take for granted, like getting on and off buses or finding an accessible toilet, can be a problem.

The Partnership Group for Adults with Physical and Sensory Disabilities – comprising Croydon Council, Croydon Primary Care Trust, Mayday NHS Trust and voluntary organisations such as Croydon Disability Forum and Croydon Voluntary Association for the Blind – has produced an accessible transport information guide.

An Easy Guide to Accessible Transport in Croydon is the new and improved version of a guide produced by the group in 2004. In addition to being shorter, the new edition is much easier to read.

The guide will engender confidence, in older people and those with disabilities, in finding and using suitable transport. Everyone should be able to feel independent, safe and confident in choosing the right transport for them.

The guide provides advice on how best to travel by bus, train, tram or car, and includes information on personal transport and advice on the type of card or pass to use,

and places to eat and drink, and beautiful parks and recreation and community facilities to visit.

There are hundreds of shops

and, for car users, where to park. It aims to help people get from A to B using the best method for them.

The guide has been approved by the Better Understanding Group, a body of volunteers with learning disabilities, who have made sure it is easy to read and understand.

Since its launch in 2002, Croydon Mobility Forum has met to review and make recommendations to improve access and facilities for older people and people with disabilities in and around Croydon.

Any feedback and advice about changes to the guide will be made through this forum.

An Easy Guide to Accessible Transport in Croydon is available to view and print from the Croydon Mobility Forum page on Croydon Council's website at www.croydon.gov.uk/cmf

Printed copies will be available from libraries, One-Stop receptions and by phoning **020 8726 6500**.







In the last edition, Frazer asked if anybody could remember why bunting was being flown from the old Grants department store in his photograph from 1981. Several readers have pointed out that it was possibly in celebration of the marriage of Prince Charles to Lady Diana Spencer.

This month, renowned local photographer Frazer Ashford revisits the Whitgift Centre

The Whitgift Centre was the place to be in the early 1970s.

It was the heart of Croydon and had been built on the 12-acre site left vacant by Trinity School of John Whitgift when it moved to Shirley in 1965.

Boasting 200 shop units and a large public house (The Forum) in a two-level pedestrian precinct connected by escalators, a moving pavement and circular ramps, all serviced by underground roads, it was hailed as one of the most modern shopping centres in the UK.

It was the height of shopping luxury, but, never standing still, has grown and developed over the years.

Today, it has changed beyond all recognition from its original layout.

The main changes have included the division of the large open areas into covered shopping avenues, offering many more shops and restaurants, all under one roof.

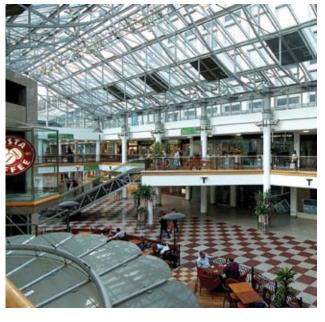
This month's modern picture was taken from the same spot as the black and white image, or as near as I could get, and really shows just how much has changed.

The Forum and the walking pavement have gone, and, protected from the weather, it all looks so much more inviting and friendly these days.

To many, the Whitgift Shopping Centre – as it is now known – still represents the heart of Croydon and, thanks to the major surgery it has undergone over recent years, is likely to continue to do so.

For more examples of Frazer's work, visit www.frazerashford.com





The main changes have included the division of the large open areas into covered shopping avenues, offering many more shops and restaurants, all under one roof.

Finding Croydon's best bar, bar none

It's opening time again for a scheme that has been a major factor in the reduction in drink-fuelled crime in the town centre

A Croydon Council initiative that has been applauded and copied by local authorities from as far away as Queensland, in Australia, has been launched for its fifth year.

Commended as a model of good practice by the Mayor of London, Croydon Best Bar None 2008 gets under way during March at The Black Sheep Bar, overall winner of last year's award, in High Street, Croydon.

All of the borough's pubs, bars and clubs have been invited to take part in this year's campaign, run in conjunction with the Metropolitan Police and the London Fire Brigade.

Each competing establishment will have to prove it is committed to the health, safety and well-being of its customers and will undergo a rigorous joint audit conducted by the council's licensing department, and police and fire officers.

Among points to be checked will be door policy, health and safety, staff training, customer care and ways of dealing with disorder.

The standards demanded by Best Bar None are way above the legal minimum and not all businesses will be able to meet the exacting criteria on the first attempt.

Those reaching the required standards will be presented with a certificate and plaque, incorporating the campaign's distinctive logo, at a glittering ceremony later in the year and will join a growing band of Best Bar None accredited pubs, bars and clubs.

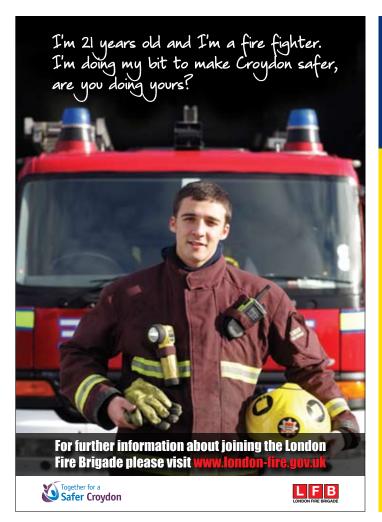
Other award winners in last year's contest were George Street's The Brief, which won the best-pub award, and Pop World, in Park Street, winner of the best-club medal. Additionally, 19 other establishments from across the borough were accredited.

Trade feedback indicates that, this year, the number of businesses applying for accreditation could double.

An independent panel of judges will select the overall winners and runners-up, and these will be announced at the ceremony, as will an award decided by members of the public.



Those reaching the required standards will be presented with a certificate and plaque. incorporating the campaign's distinctive logo. at a glittering ceremony later in the vear and will join a growing **band of Best Bar None accredited** pubs. bars and clubs.





A dozen of the capital's local **authorities** participated in a mystery survey during National **Customer Service** Week last October.

Top scores for call centre

Council staff prove they are efficient operators

The first-rate customer telephone service offered by Croydon Council has been recognised with a top score across London boroughs.

A dozen of the capital's local authorities participated in a mystery survey during National Customer Service Week last October.

The staff were scored against eight separate criteria on how well they handled the customer's enquiry, on environmental services, and the information given in the answer.

The questions covered 10 areas of the service asking a variety of questions on environmental issues that are important to customers Londonwide.

They dealt with such issues as: how to dispose of a washing machine, what to do about graffiti, and a range of recycling questions.

Croydon ranked overall joint first with 94.2%, the lowest borough achieving 79.8%

Below are a few examples of the scores attained by Croydon staff against the average.



Criteria 2007 2007 Score for Group average Croydon (%) (%) they handled the Was the call jargon free and easy to understand? 98 94.25 97 Was the call handled confidently? 88.5 95 87.33 Were you actively listened to and empathised with? 92 Did you feel the call was personalised? 87.25 given in the answer.

The staff were scored against eight separate criteria on how well customer's enquiry, on environmental services. and the information



It is important that **panel members** feel confident to ask probing questions of the education authority. headteacher. governors and parents to establish facts and issues.

Play a part in borough education

Panel members wanted for school admission and exclusion appeals

Are you interested in education in the borough?

The hearing of admission and exclusion appeals is important, voluntary work which is demanding, but can be rewarding.

The school appeals panel needs people who are clear thinking, discerning, confident of speaking in public situations, have good analytical skills and can exercise judgement and detachment from emotional issues.

A further requirement is the skill to get at the facts and decide what weight should be given to the cases made by each side.

There are two types of admission appeals, one concerns children in reception years, and the other is for pupils in years three to 11

The panel must decide, within a legal framework, whether an appeal against permanent exclusion from school should be upheld or rejected.

A solicitor from the council's legal team attends these hearings. The panel considers the cases made by the headteacher and a representative of the aovernors who upheld the head's decision to exclude at the pupil disciplinary committee.

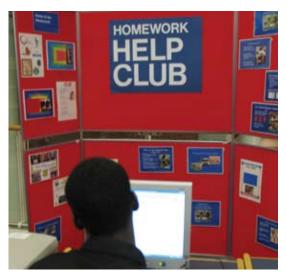
The panel also considers the case made by the parents or quardians as to why they are appealing the exclusion.

It is important that panel members feel confident to ask probing questions of the education authority, headteacher, governors and parents to establish facts and issues.

Comprehensive training is provided and travel expenses are reimbursed.

Please apply if you feel you fit the requirements. Because of under-representation, the panel would especially like to hear from black and mixed ethnic applicants.

If you are willing to give your time to this important and worthwhile civic duty, contact Barbara Costello by email at barbara.costello@croydon.gov.uk or by phone on 020 8760 5768 extn 64919.



With the school work building up and exams looming on the not-too-distant horizon, parents and children in Croydon will be glad to hear that help is at hand.

At libraries across the borough, Homework Help Clubs are being run that offer support and guidance to young students in a relaxed atmosphere away from the pressures of the classroom.

As well as two in Croydon's Central Library, clubs are also held in Ashburton, Broad Green, Norbury and New Addington libraries, meaning that many youngsters are not too far away from what could prove to be valuable help.

Experienced staff are on hand to help the children with their homework and, should they need it, with the computers.

The children have access to books, reference material, a photocopier and other library facilities, and parents are welcome to join in, as well.

Popular with the many children who attend the clubs, one said: "It's quiet and I don't get too distracted.

"I can use the internet and get all the help I need here."

Free to join and open to anybody aged nine to 16, the clubs aim to encourage children's greater self-confidence in tackling their homework and, through this, the development of self-esteem.

"The clubs provide a safe and welcoming environment for children to use, complementing the school day, encouraging children to enjoy learning and helping children in Croydon to aim higher."

HELP after hours

Most children can benefit from a little assistance with their studies, and that's where the Homework Help Club comes in

Caroline Woodcock, Croydon Libraries' study support coordinator, said: "The clubs provide a safe and welcoming environment for children to use, complementing the school day, encouraging children to enjoy learning and helping children in Croydon to aim higher."

For more information, email caroline.woodcock@ croydon.gov.uk or call 020 8726 6900

Homework Help Club hours

<u>Term</u>

Broad Green:

Tuesday & Friday 3.30-5.30pm and Saturday 2-5pm

All other clubs: Tuesday & Thursday 4-6pm and Saturday 2-5pm

Half-term & Easter holiday

Broad Green: Monday, Tuesday, Friday & Saturday 2-5pm

Central: Monday to Saturday 2-5pm

All other clubs: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday & Saturday 2-5pm



to anybody aged nine to 16, the clubs aim to encourage children's greater self-confidence in tackling their homework and, through this, the development of self-esteem.

Free to join and open

The children have access to books, reference material, a photocopier and other library facilities, and parents are welcome to join in, as well.



Council

Deadlines for public questions for forthcoming full council meetings (all start at 6.30pm) Noon on each relevant deadline date.

Meeting Deadline

Monday 21 Apr Monday, 7 Apr

To submit a question for consideration at a full council meeting, email it to council.questions@croydon.gov.uk; fax it to 2020 8760 5657; print and complete the form at www.croydon.gov.uk/councilquestion and post it to Questions for the Council, Democratic and Legal Services, Taberner House, Park Lane, Croydon CR9 3JS; or call 2020 8726 6000 ext 62327

Scrutiny

Deadlines for the forthcoming scrutiny and overview committee public question sessions. Noon on the relevant deadline date.

	•	· · ·	
Meeting		Deadline	Cabinet Member
11 Mar	Community services	3 Mar	Cllr Steve O'Connell (safety and cohesion)
18 Mar	Health and adult social care	10 Mar	Cllr Margaret Mead (health and adult social care)
1 Apr	Scrutiny and overview	24 Mar	Cllr Gavin Barwell (resources and customer services)

To submit a question to a cabinet member at a scrutiny sub-committee Q&A session, email it to scrutiny.public.questions@croydon.gov.uk; fax it to 020 8760 5657; post it to Scrutiny Public Questions, Democratic and Legal Services, Taberner House, Park Lane, Croydon CR9 3JS; or call 020 8726 6000 extn 62529 or 62315.

Neighbourhood Partnership

Neighbourhood partnership meetings (all start at 7.30pm)

Meeting	Group and venue	
12 Mar	Coulsdon East and Couldon West	Woodcote High School, Meadow Rise
19 Mar	Norbury and Upper Norwood	Salvation Army Hall, Westow Street
2 Apr	Fairfield, Heathfield and Shirley	Venue to be confirmed

For information on Neighbourhood Partnerships, visit the website at www.croydononline.org/neighbourhood_partnerships/, email neighbourhood.partnerships@croydon.gov.uk, write to Neighbourhood Partnerships, Democratic and Legal Services, Taberner House, Park Lane, Croydon CR9 3JS or call **020 8726 6000 extn 62564 or 62396**

Croydon Community Police Consultative Group Partnership

Meetings of the Croydon Community Police Consultative Group are held in the Council Chamber of the Town Hall. All are open to the public and begin at 6.30pm. For further information, go to www.croydononline.org/ccpcg

Forthcoming meeting dates are: Wednesday, 12 March; Thursday, 15 May.

Details of all Croydon Council meetings can be found on the council website at www.croydon.gov.uk/meetingsofthecouncil



These meetings are to be transmitted using webcasting. They can be viewed at www.croydon.ukcouncil.net/site/webcasts.php

What's On

www.croydon.gov.uk/leisure

Croydon Clocktower, Katharine Street, Croydon Ticket office: tel:020 8253 1030 Email: ticketoffice@croydon.gov.uk Text: 07771 837121

David Lean

1908-1991

Live events at the Clocktower

Wednesday 12 March

In the Darkness

8pm £10 (£7.50 concessions)

Friday 14 March

Mr Sole Abode

8-9pm £10 (£7.50 concessions) Presented by Madrugada & Makin Projects

Saturday 15 March

Potted Potter

2-3.05pm, 4.30-5.35pm & 7.30-8.35pm £8 (£6 concessions)



A Perfect Ganesh

8-10.30pm £10 (£7.50 concessions)

Wednesday 26 March

This is MODERN

7.30-8.45pm £10 (£7.50 concessions)

Exhibition

Until 3 May

1001 Inventions: Discover the Muslim Heritage in Our World

Mondays to Saturdays 11am – 5pm (Closed Friday 21 & Monday 24 March) FREE

Guided Walks in March

Sunday 2 March

Winds on the vanishing heath

Thursday 6 March

Morning walk on Mitcham Common

Tuesday 11 March

Spring has sprung at South Norwood Lake

Wednesday 12 March

Any sign of spring yet?

Saturday 15 March

Woodland Easter hunt - New Addington & Happy Valley wildlife trackers

Sunday 16 March

Sunday afternoon walk on Mitcham Common

Sunday 30 March

Butterflies and bees

DAVID LEAN - MARCH

:March 08

David Lean Centenary:

This month, we celebrate the centenary of the birth of the man whose name we proudly carry above our doors - David Lean, one of the most outstanding figures of British film history.

A much sought-after film editor during the 1930s, David made his debut as a director with In Which We Serve in 1942

He went on to direct such acclaimed films as

Brief Encounter, Great Expectations, The Bridge on the River Kwai, Lawrence of Arabia, Doctor Zhivago and A Passage to India.

To mark his centenary, The David Lean Foundation has generously funded the restoration of ten of his films by the BFI National Archive and Granada International, and a number of these will be included in our forthcoming schedules.

We begin this month with his classic masterpiece Brief Encounter, one of cinema's greatest romantic films.

Before The Devil Knows You're Dead (15)

Juno 12A



The Kite Runner 12A

I Am Legend (15)

The Comedy of Power PG

The Bucket List 12A

The Diving Bell and the Butterfly 122

4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days (15)

The Savages (15)

Brief Encounter PG

Closing the Ring 12A

Children's & Family Films

Bee Movie

The Golden Compass PG

Thomas and the Magic Railroad 🛝

Matilda PG





For further information of these and other walks and wildlife, go to www.croydon.gov.uk/leisure/events or call the community partnership officer on **020 8726 6900 ext 64952**

Contacting Croydon Council

We're making it easier for you to contact us

OUR TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Housing	☎ 020 8726 6100
Environmental Reporting	☎ 020 8726 6200
Registration Services	☎ 020 8726 6300
Children, Youth, Families & Schools	☎ 020 8726 6400
Social Services for Adults	☎ 020 8726 6500
Business Advice & Council Partners	☎ 020 8726 6600
Life in the Community	☎ 020 8726 6700
Planning & Building Control	☎ 020 8726 6800
Leisure & Continuing Education	☎ 020 8726 6900
Revenues & Benefits	☎ 020 8726 7000
Streets & Transport	☎ 020 8726 7100
If you're not sure who you need to speak to,	
call our general enquiries number	5 020 8726 6000

website: www.croydon.gov.uk

Email: contact.thecouncil@croydon.gov.uk SMS: In your text put the service you need plus your message. Send to 60660.

