

Focus on Whickham North

Issue 158
Summer
2021

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Sold!

Labour council sells off part of Chase Park, calling it "brownfield".



• The 8 Lib Dem Councillors representing Whickham, Swalwell, Sunniside, Marley Hill, Streetgate, Marley Hill, Byermoor, Dunston and Lobley Hill next to the stables in Chase Park which Labour have agreed to sell to a developer.

The main entrance, stables and the depot area in Chase Park, Whickham, have been sold to a developer by Gateshead Council so that the site can be used for house building.

Residents and the media were banned from the meeting on 20th July where the ruling Labour group took the decision in secret.

Over 300 angry residents signed an online petition against the sale but the Labour Cabinet pressed ahead anyway, describing the site as "brownfield".

Cabinet members even claimed it was not in Chase Park and then attacked all 13 Lib Dem councillors when they pointed out that it is within the park wall.

Chase Park is part of our much loved historic centre of Whickham and Labour's decision to sell off part of it for housing has appalled many residents.

Focus Team member **Peter Craig** said, "Residents have told us that they do not want housing in Chase Park. This sale is totally unacceptable. The park belongs to the people of Whickham and is meant to be used for recreational purposes, not housing."

Building inquiry set for November



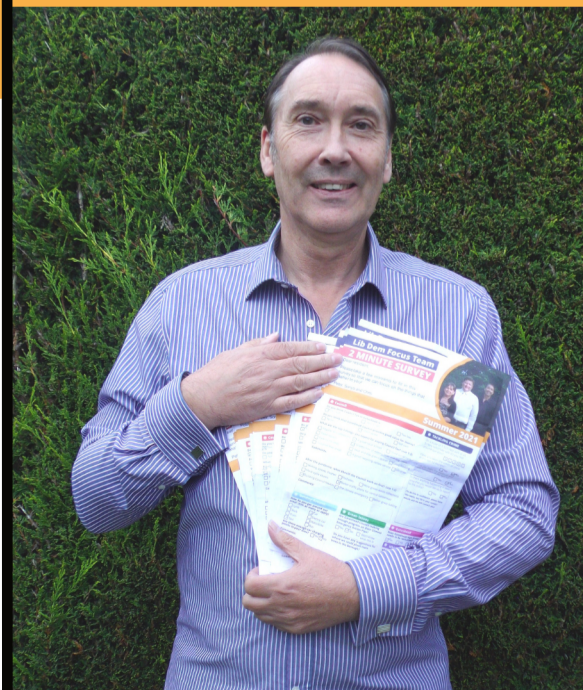
An initial meeting with senior planning officials took place on 23rd July and the inquiry date has been set for November.

Residents together with ward councillors **Sonya Hawkins** and

Peter Craig will be giving evidence to the Planning Inspectorate, who will visit the site during the process.

The Inspectorate will then make their decision as to what will happen to the building. We will keep you up to date as the outcome of the public inquiry.

Summer Survey



We have been carrying out a **Summer Survey** - collecting the views of residents, so that so that we can focus on the things that matter to you!

There is still time to complete a survey if you haven't already.

Please contact one of the Focus Team and we will send you a form.

Liberal Democrats Focus Team - working for you, all year round

Gibside School building to remain in education hands

Plans to sell off the site of the former Gibside School on Burnthouse Lane, Whickham, appear to have been abandoned by Gateshead Council. Your Lib Dem Focus Team had argued that the school should remain for educational purposes.

The site was attractive to housing developers, but now, the council have backed down and will allow Whickham School to take over the building from September.

"This is good news," said **Sonya Hawkins**. "New classrooms were added to Gibside School only 6 years ago and demolishing them would have been a waste of public money. We are pleased that Whickham School will be expanding onto the Gibside site."

Gibside School was extended to cater for the increased demand for children with special educational needs but this turned out to be inadequate. A new site and school were needed and has now opened on the site of the former Saltwell Senior High School in Gateshead.



- Gibside School will continue to be used for education purposes, rather than selling the site for housing.

Community events

We are not sure yet if the Remembrance Day event or the Christmas switch-on will be going ahead this year.

Please check Focus or eFocus for updates later in the year.

If you would like to sign up for eFocus, please let us know.



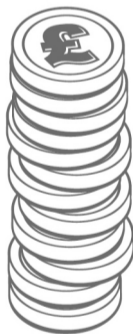
Council reserves continue to grow

At the Council budget meeting in February, Gateshead Lib Dem councillors argued that Council Tax should be frozen to give council tax payers a break. After all, Gateshead has the highest level of Council tax of any Metropolitan Council in England.

Chris Ord said "Lib Dems argued that just under £5m should be used instead from Gateshead's £41m reserve."

Figures reported to Gateshead Council's Cabinet in July showed that Gateshead's total usable reserves have now grown from £41m in April 2020 to £48m in March 2021.

"That's a rise of £7million," said Chris. "We could have frozen Council Tax but still had the same level of reserves."



Bus Changes

Following a reduction in passengers as a result of the pandemic, Go North East have introduced a number of service changes, commencing on 5th September 2021:

- **97** - continues to run every 15 minutes during the day and every 30 minutes after 6pm bus, but has reverted back to terminating at the Metro Centre with no follow on journeys to Newcastle.
- **M6, M7 and M8** services have all been withdrawn.
- **M8** - Following intervention from your Whickham North councillors the M8 has been replaced by the reintroduction of the 643 running a slightly different route to what the previous service offered. The 643 now starts at Metro Centre Asda, serves Metro Centre Interchange, Lambton Avenue, Whickham Front Street, Fellside Road, Broadway, Burnthouse Lane and Hole Lane, terminating at Sunnyside Front Street. This service only runs until mid afternoon in line with the service previously offered by the M7.
- **6** - continues to serve Watergate Estate (Monday to Saturday daytime) and now serves Burnopfield, Lintz Estate, Tantobie and Tanfield Lea, terminating at Stanley, replacing the routes of the M6 & M7.
- **X30/X31** - now running every 20 minutes to Stanley but is no longer extended to Consett once an hour.



Street Surgery:

Saturday 23rd October

10:30 am to 11:00 am

Outside Whickham Library

Virtual Surgeries:

Every 4th Saturday of the month

10am - 11am

Join via Google Hangouts:

meet.google.com/ynm-zpue-rar

or by phone:

020 3937 1322 PIN: 282 579 909#

If you need help to log in just give one of the team a call.



• Between Peter, Sonya & Chris they have 55 years experience of being a ward councillor and are always available to help if you need them.



LIBERAL DEMOCRATS
Focus Team

Write to the team or call them:

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