

## Readers' Viewpoint

### Taxpayer should not bail out councils

COUNCIL tax payers in the Royal Borough will be relieved our wise council has no funds at risk in Icelandic banks – unlike our neighbours in Wokingham and Bucks County Council who stand to lose a cool £5million each.

They may eventually get most of this cash back, but I have little sympathy for them or the countless other public and charitable bodies, who have scandalously risked their funds, while stupidly chasing higher interest rates, at enormous risk. It is, at the very least, unusual to invest public funds offshore, but for months there have been public warnings on these banks, advising extreme caution. These appear to have been wilfully ignored by these 'clever' highly paid professionals – not the usual gullible pensioners. How often are we warned that if the rates appear too good to be true, they probably are?

They have gambled and lost and I hope that they do not expect to be bailed out by the general taxpayer, who did not share in the high interest gains, so should not be asked to help with losses arising from their reckless greed.

Unlike the bank bail-out there is no wider public interest justification, such as saving the entire collapsing banking system.

Let these losses lie where they fell, and let's hope they learn from their expensive education.

JOHN G STEWART  
Woodhurst North  
Maidenhead

### Confused by housing priority policies

I WAS interested to read the article about Filipino chef Maria Damien 'finally' getting keys to an affordable home in Maidenhead after her two-year wait (October 2, page 6).

This article has left me completely confused, however. Despite being born in the town and having lived here all my life and paid taxes since I was 17, I had to wait seven years to get a housing association property and this is only a basic one-bed flat with very poor plumbing and questionable security. A friend of mine had to wait 12 years for the same thing.

What's more, although I now have a fiancé, with a medical condition, and a baby girl, we have been told by the MDHA medical officer that we are 'adequately housed'.

The aforementioned poor plumbing presents an ongoing challenge for rinsing our daughter's bottles prior to sterilisation. My fiancé and myself are continually bruising ourselves negotiating getting ourselves, baby and 'equipment' down the steep and narrow flight of stairs from our first floor flat – ie a heavy pram/pushchair/travel-system – and no, our very small vehicle, and the rough nature of our estate, precludes our leaving this in open view in our car!

I could perhaps understand Ms Damien being a priority if she was in an 'essential' occupation such as a doctor, nurse or teacher. But a chef?

While on the subject, we know one single man who has a two-bedroom house, a pair of brothers who have a three-bedroom place and an unmarried mother of three who managed to get a housing association property, despite never having lived or worked within the borough.

We would, like Maria Damien, greatly love for our daughter to grow up somewhere 'safe and secure'! Perhaps Cllr Knight could drop round our flat for a cup of tea and explain to my fiancé how

all of these people are more important than her and our baby? But excuse the squash.

J DUNN  
Blenheim Road  
Maidenhead

### No excuses for town's rip-off petrol prices

WHEN are the operators of our local petrol stations ever going to be brought to task!

The operators of the Shoppenhangers Road site are pricing their diesel and petrol typically around 2p a litre higher than equivalent Esso sites in Marlow and High Wycombe.

A 2p-3p differential may not seem much but the site from my best estimates, (I have specific industry knowledge of comparable sites in the area), will be selling around 100,000 litres of diesel/petrol a week.

In one year the owners of this site will have netted a tidy £1m extra in sales and at a substantial profit – if the Esso-branded sites at Marlow and Wycombe can run at lower costs and make a profit on fuel, then so can this one.

There can be no excuse that they have higher costs – the Shoppenhangers site will be one of the largest volume sites in the same area so will have good terms and the same cost of delivery – so the extra 2p is really almost 100 per cent clear profit!

If readers want to check for themselves, then as of the morning of Saturday, October 11, Esso sites selling diesel were: Marlow (£1.189) High Wycombe (£1.169 – no doubt because of proximity to Asda) per litre. Shoppenhangers was at £1.209.

It's a safe bet that by the time you read this, this site (nor for that matter the Braywick Road Esso station) will still not be matching these prices. Just to point out it's not just the Esso sites; the Texaco site by Maidenhead bridge is also at £1.209p.

It's about time we had fair and transparent pricing – remember when the wholesale price of fuel went up to around \$145 a barrel they were fast enough to put up the prices, blaming the costs they had to pay to the main petrol companies.

Now that it's down to around \$80 it's hard to believe operators aren't benefiting from lower prices from their fuel suppliers but simply choosing not to pass all of these savings on to us.

The answer is to vote with your 'feet', but don't make an extra journey to save a few pence per litre, it's not worth it. Next time you venture away from Maidenhead, check the petrol prices and buy elsewhere. If you need help on finding a petrol site on your journey then a good point of reference is one of the internet comparison sites like Petrolprices.com (with whom I have no affiliation), but who offer an excellent up-to-date price comparison and mapping facility.

NAME AND ADDRESS SUPPLIED

### Council needs better advice over pathway

MICHAEL Bayley is absolutely right in questioning the advice given to councillors in his letter to the Advertiser last week (Viewpoint, October 9). It is a pity Cllr Burbage did not see for himself the hundreds of boundary walkers who chose not to cross the A4094 twice over a distance of 30m but took the logical direct route to Bridge Gardens.

Hopefully he would have been ashamed to witness the unnecessary extra length of road walking forced upon boundary walkers because his officers prefer to allow Footpath 53 to be used for car parking instead of pedestrians.

The council's ridiculous decision to install a zebra crossing and an anti-skid surface for the Thames Path prompted more criticism than the appalling weather conditions when walkers added their signatures to the Ramblers' Petition to re-open the riverside route. Like Michael Bayley, some of the boundary walkers could recall the days when there was a continuous riverside footpath to Bridge Gardens.

It is also correct there is no need for the council to purchase any land. No change of ownership is required under a Path Creation Order. All that is needed is the right of passage by the public. In view of the number of people who recall enjoying this riverside walk in the past, it should cost only a fraction of the half million or more pounds advised by officers.

It is high time councillors were given good legal and accurate financial advice.

MARGARET BOWDERY  
president, East Berks RA Group

### An advert for schools

I WAS pleased to read headteacher Nick Stevens' comments that he views his Wessex Primary pupils as a 'living advert for the school' and 'it is important how the children look' (Maidenhead Advertiser, October 2, page 27).

It is a shame the same attitude does not apply at Cox Green School from where hordes of unruly pupils obstruct the pavements at Wessex Way shopping area after school. What an advert for the school this mob are – chav ties the norm, smoking their heads off as they litter the area.

For years Cox Green School has buried its head in the sand when it comes to some pupils' pre- and after-school outside activities.

FRANK MORRIS  
Cox Green

## The Advertiser says...

FEW people will harbour sentimental feelings for the 'cinema that never was'.

After a brief fanfare of optimism when it was built nearly 20 years ago it failed even to open and quickly fell into disrepair, becoming the grubby, weed-choked eyesore that has been allowed to blight that part of town for so long.

It was an embarrassment to Maidenhead and bore stark testimony to the ineffectiveness of successive councils in solving the problems of our ailing town centre.

So, at long last it is gone. But before we get carried away in celebration we have to remember the question still remains of what replaces it.

This is a key site in the town. It is integral to Waterways Restoration Group's plan to introduce a navigable waterway into the town centre and this in turn is now an accepted plank of the 'vision' for Maidenhead recently unveiled by regeneration thinktank PRoM.

The waterways group wants a marina basin and waterside cafe on the site.

Its current owners, who allowed the demolition, have already had one plan for an office block thrown out. Now we learn they are to submit plans for another, albeit now featuring a waterside café. But this site is simply too important to be developed piecemeal. We have a vision for Maidenhead now and if it is to mean anything at all it must be acted upon.

Any development of this site must only be part of a wider masterplan for Maidenhead. We've waited this long for the eyesore to go, we can wait a little longer for it to be replaced.

The alternative is to risk laying the foundations for yet another white elephant that will endure for decades to come.

MA601949

## Mr Stubbings says

# "Late sowings mean early crops"

Late October and into early November, is the time when we can start to prepare for tasty vegetables early next year. Crops such as broad beans, peas and onions can all be sown or planted at the end of the month, weather permitting. It's important to choose varieties which can cope with the winter weather – and come through successfully. The best broad bean to sow is Aquadulce Claudia, which if sown in autumn will crop from mid May, at least three weeks before spring-sown crops. For peas, choose an early variety such as Feltham First, Little Marvel, or Meteor.

With both beans and peas, there is some risk associated with autumn sowing, so it's important to do it when the weather is not too wet, otherwise the seeds may rot in the soil before they have germinated. Sow a little more thickly than usual, to allow for losses through the winter – and, if possible, cover with fleece or cloches to provide a little bit of protection.

Autumn onion sets are also available now,

Stubbings Nursery is easy to find. From A4 (Bath Road), Canon Lane Roundabout, follow signs to Maidenhead, then Pinkneys Green and Stubbings.  
Phone: 01628 825454 Website: [www.stubbingsnursery.co.uk](http://www.stubbingsnursery.co.uk)





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