



Welcome to the December 2009 edition of **UPDATE**, our briefing paper for Parish and Town Councillors in Hambleton.

Money Advice Line



Hambleton's 'Money Advice Line' offers a free, independent service to all residents in the district through a range of specialist advisers.

The advice given depends on what problems the caller has with everything treated in the strictest confidence. The offer to call straight back is always given so the client is not paying for a long phone call. Sometimes basic general advice may be all that's wanted and for that they may not need or want to give their name.

More often, callers need help to deal with a money problem. An initial chat will find out what they need help with, so that an appointment with the most suitable adviser can be made.

How one person was helped:

Fred, aged 62, called the Advice Line because he was worried about his council tax arrears. After losing his full-time job a couple of years ago, he had only been able to find part-time employment, earning £100 per week.

Fred did not think he would be entitled to any benefits because he owned his own house. To make ends meet over the last few years, Fred had been paying some of his household expenses from his credit cards and was unable to make the minimum monthly payments. Fred was so worried it was starting to affect his work. He had never been in debt before and was embarrassed about it.

Based on what Fred had said contact with a Pension/Benefits specialist was made who visited Fred and helped him to claim Pension Guarantee credit of £30 per week to top up his earnings and claim full council tax benefit. He was also introduced to a specialist debt adviser, who is helping him to deal with his council tax arrears and other debts.

"It didn't solve all my problems overnight but I feel in control now and that's helped me to think straight," he said "Finding out I was entitled to these benefits was a real bonus – I'm glad I phoned the Hambleton Money Advice Line."

Offices Closed for Christmas

District Council offices in Hambleton will be closed for ten days over the festive period. However emergencies will still be handled – and the floodlines will be on standby.

The offices in Northallerton, Easingwold and Stokesley will close at 4.45pm on Thursday December 24 and re-open for business at 8.45am on Monday January 4.

The telephone contact centre will close at 4.45pm on December 24 and reopen at 8am in the New Year.

All emergencies will be dealt with via the main switchboard throughout this time – 0845 1211 555. The floodline can be contacted at all times on 01609 767028 / 767029.

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Parishes Online

Parishes are being urged to keep a special area of the district council's website dedicated to them up to date.

Each parish now has a slot on www.hambleton.gov.uk to log information on their work.

Anyone who has not done this yet should contact communications officer, Richard Angell, on 01609 767252.



Older Driver Roadshow



'Older drivers' who want to improve their skills and make driving a more enjoyable and stress free experience are being invited to a special roadshow in the new year.

Hambleton Community Safety Partnership is joining forces with North Yorkshire County Council to target drivers aged 50 and over at the February 10 event. They will receive advice on:

- Eyesight requirements
- The law and the older driver
- Licensing requirements
- Winter driving
- Driving alone
- Medication and driving
- Driving at night
- Saving money

The free event takes place at the Civic Centre, Northallerton from 10am until 3pm. Presentations take place at 10.15 am, 11.45 am and 1.30 pm. To book a place call Community Safety on 01609 767280 or email Tracey.horseman@hambleton.gov.uk

Adopt Your Phone Box

Local communities could soon be able to adopt their red telephone box under plans announced by BT.

Thirty little used public payphones across Hambleton have been identified and a programme to allow Town or Parish Councils to consider adopting them for just £1 drawn up. BT has placed consultation notices in each of the kiosks earmarked for 'adoption' and written to affected town and parish councils.

The consultation is not about the removal of the kiosk structure and the listed status of these kiosks is not being challenged. BT has given assurances that any red kiosks that remain 'unadopted' will not be removed at this stage. It will however continue to monitor the use and costs of the provision of all public call boxes and their associated services and may consult on this in the future.

The District Council is not seeking to adopt any phone kiosks under the proposed scheme but should a Town or Parish Council wish to adopt a kiosk the District Council will support this decision.

The options available to Town or Parish Councils are:

- Agree to the removal of the payphone service to allow adoptions to proceed
- Object to the removal of payphone service and not allow adoptions to proceed

Should Town or Parish Councils agree to adopt the kiosk BT will remove the telephony service.

To enable the District Council to submit an informed response to the BT consultation it is gathering views from Parish Councils affected by the proposals – responses are needed by Monday January 11.

The removal process can be viewed at: www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/uso/uso_statement/removals.pdf

A plain English version is available at: www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/uso/uso_statement/uso_plain_english/removing_callboxes.pdf

For more information contact Peter Cole, Community Link Officer on 01609 767212 or peter.cole@hambleton.gov.uk

School Re-opens with Shared Water

Tenants of a small housing scheme in Chop Gate are sharing their water supply with the nearby school, allowing it to re-open following a temporary closure.

Bilsdale Midcable Chop Gate School was forced to close when its own private water supply arrangements became unsafe. This resulted in the children having to travel daily to their sister school five miles away.

But when Home Housing was made aware of the issues faced by the school, discussions began with North Yorkshire County Council to see if it could help provide the school with a safe supply.

A small playing field separates 14 homes from the nearby Bilsdale

Midcable Chop Gate School which has just 19 pupils. The village is so remote that it does not benefit from access to a mains water supply, so when Home Housing built these new houses it had to provide a private supply using a bore hole, pump and storage tank.

Home took specialist advice to ensure there was capacity within its water supply system to supply the school without affecting the tenants supply in any way. And having consulted with the residents connections were made and the school re-opened its doors to the children of the community early this month.

This initiative shows just one of the potential benefits of a small scheme of local homes for local people in rural

communities. If your parish at risk because of the lack of affordable homes, if young people and families are forced to move out of villages to find accommodation and if this is having an impact on your village shop, post office, pub or school, the District Council can help. It has a programme to deliver small, rural housing developments that are affordable, and for local people.

The Rural Housing Enabler, Amanda Madden, is happy to meet with parishes to discuss this and offer help and support to research local need and promote rural housing solutions.

Contact her on 01609 767048 or Amanda.madden@hambleton.gov.uk

Help for Homeowners

Recent government statistics show that the number of repossessions of mortgaged homes has increased – although the overall number was not as high as had been previously predicted.

But there is free help and advice available to anyone with mortgage difficulties. Hambleton District Council can advise homeowners on where to get help as part of their close working with independent advice agencies such as the Housing Advice Resource Project (HARP) and the Citizens Advice Bureau.

In many cases the matter can be resolved by negotiating a repayment schedule with the mortgage lender but, even if the lender won't accept an offer of payment and proceeds to court for possession of the property, an offer of payment can be made to the court and is in most cases accepted.

Legal advisers from HARP stress the importance of attending court to defend possession proceedings – non attendees will find a possession order is likely to be made in their absence.

If additional help is needed there are several Mortgage Rescue Schemes set up by the Government to help homeowners stay in their homes. Details of all of these schemes are available from the District Council's Housing Options Team on **0845 1211 555**.

For free legal advice on housing, welfare benefits and money issues call HARP on **01845 521458**.

Hambleton Citizens Advice Bureau can be contacted on **0845 122 8689**.



Support to Develop Play Spaces

A unique partnership to support the development of high quality play spaces across Hambleton has helped bring over £500,000 into the district in the last two years.

The Hambleton Play Partnership has helped schemes ranging from £100,000 projects in the market towns to £10,000 schemes in villages – as well as everything in between.

And an audit of play areas which have received support from the partnership in the last 18 months found that 46 individual schemes have benefited.

A team of district council Play Rangers is now auditing all play spaces in the district so that the quantity and quality of them can be assessed. This work should be completed by the end of this month and will be used to help target areas of need in the future.

Play spaces can be traditional play grounds, skate parks or sport facilities as well as more natural environments such as a wood, hedgerows, grassland, heathland, rivers, verges and village greens.

The Partnership wants communities for be proactive in promoting 'natural play spaces' to encourage children to use them. Parish Councils are responsible for the majority of 'play spaces' – artificial or natural – in Hambleton and are therefore a key partner to help achieve these objectives.

Members understand that not all areas of open space are suitable for children to play on but encourages Parish Councils to think about the spaces they have that can be used and actively promote them.

The 'Hambleton Play' email network has also been set up to support Parish Councils – as a member of the network you receive updates from Play England on national and regional initiatives, information on new legislation and funding opportunities, as well as Play Partnership meeting minutes.

If your Parish Council is interested in joining the Hambleton Play Network contact Lisa Wilson, Lifestyles Manager at Hambleton District Council on 01609 767149 or lisa.wilson@hambleton.gov.uk

For more information visit:

National Children's Bureau – www.ncb.org.uk/cpis

Play England – www.playengland.org





Have a Say

Hambleton residents have another chance to quiz their councillors next month – at the next round of Area Forums.

The five forums – one for each of Hambleton’s market towns and the surrounding areas – are helping the District Council improve its community

engagement and provide the basis for more local delivery of its services.

Councillors can meet with the people they serve with residents able to ask questions.

They should be tabled at least ten days in advance of the meetings in order that they can be answered. And anyone wishing to speak at the meeting should also make that request beforehand. For more information or to table questions call 0845 1211 555.

The meetings are at:

Stokesley	Jan 18	7pm	Town Hall
Thirsk	Jan 19	6.30pm	The Old Courthouse
Northallerton	Jan 20	7pm	Civic Centre
Bedale	Jan 26	7pm	Bedale Hall
Easingwold	Jan 28	7pm	Galtres Centre

Festive Trees

A kerbside collection of Christmas trees will take place during week beginning January 18.

Householders are asked that they place trees under six foot beside their green wheelie bin – bigger trees should be chopped up and placed inside the bin.

Unfortunately last year – despite publicity – some residents left trees at old collection sites in car parks and village halls. Additional resources had to be found to pick up these trees. However this year any materials left at these sites will not be collected – the responsibility for clearing the site will fall on the landowner.

Posters have been included with this newsletter for display around your parish – should you want anymore copies please contact the recycling officers on 0845 1211 555 or 01609 788105.



Allotment Survey

Parish Councils are being asked to help map allotments across the district.

The district council is undertaking an audit on provision, availability, demand and quality of allotments in Hambleton.

The information gathered will then be used to map current provision and inform future land allocations in the district’s new Local Development Framework. It will also assess the quality of allotments to help target future investment and to find out what support Parish Councils may need in the future to provide and maintain good quality allotments.

What parishes should do:

- Complete the enclosed Allotment Survey whether you manage allotments or not – this will help us find out what is currently available, what the demand is and what support, if any, you would be interested in to either establish new provision or improve existing provision
- If your Council manages any allotments complete the enclosed Allotment Audit for each site managed to help us determine the quality of the allotments
- Return the survey and audit in the freepost envelope by February 28

For information contact Lisa Wilson, Lifestyles Manager on 01609 767149 or lisa.wilson@hambleton.gov.uk

A large print version of this newsletter is available on request