

**Spelthorne Borough Council
Bulletin magazine
Winter issue no. 117**

Message from the Leader of the Council

Dear Residents,

Christmas is a time of reflection and, as I look back, it's clear that 2017 has been a year of challenges but also a year of opportunities. Over the years, the continuing cuts in central government funding have become a way of life for this and every other council, and we have become adept at finding new ways to fund our wide range of front-line services.

Perhaps our biggest achievement this year has been to build on the success we have had in investing in commercial properties. These generate ongoing revenue streams which are used to help tackle the cuts and protect services. We think that this strategy keeps us ahead of the game and I can assure you that we will always look to reduce any risks by calling in the right expertise at the right time.

Of course it is not just your Borough Council that has to do more with less, Surrey County Council services are also under pressure. In our article on Page 19, we are seeking to highlight the cuts the County Council are set to make, particularly those which could affect Borough services. These are ultimately decisions for the County Council to make, but we, as the Borough Council, will be using whatever influence we can to protect the services that are important to our residents. We can't promise to plug the funding gap in every instance but I will work hard to fight Spelthorne's corner.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the residents of Sunbury-on-Thames who had to be evacuated from their homes during the Police investigation into the Parson's Green explosion in September; your patience and co-operation was very much appreciated by all the agencies involved. Thanks also to the Spelthorne staff and Staines Rugby Club for pulling out all the stops at very short notice. Residents are reminded to stay vigilant and report any concerns to the Police.

On a lighter note, I am very proud that Shepperton has been named as the most courteous town in the UK by officials from the National Campaign for Courtesy, a registered charity which promotes good manners and respect. I am sure we all agree that these are important values at any time of the year.

My warmest wishes to you for a happy Christmas and a blessed and contented New Year.

Cllr Ian Harvey, Leader of the Council.

Message from the Mayor

Since my first message as Mayor in the summer, my consort Chris and I have represented Spelthorne across Surrey and further afield on both civic and charity occasions. Back home we have been made so welcome at local community events where we have really enjoyed and appreciated meeting and learning more about some of the many volunteers whose generous support and friendship to others is invaluable.

Generally these events also raise funds for charities and I am hoping that recording our year on Facebook (@SpelthorneMayor) will help raise the profile of those organisations. Do please let the Mayor's Secretary know if you would like me to attend your event.

Having fun supporting river activities has included the Dunkirk Little Ships cruise for the Chelsea Pensioners and I was rowed from Docklands to Ham in the spectacular Great River Race. We also learnt how to start a sailing race out on the water.

I was warned the year would whizz by – and indeed it is hard to believe we are already over half-way through my mayoral term and that Christmas is upon us. I hope to visit as many as possible of those centres whose support for people at this time is especially important.

In this season of goodwill, whatever your religion, or not, we send you Season's Greetings and very best wishes for a healthy, prosperous and peaceful 2018.

Shepperton named UK's most courteous town

It's official, Shepperton townsfolk are the politest people in the country. Officials from the National Campaign for Courtesy have announced Shepperton as 'Top Town for 2017' after scouring the country for towns which demonstrate the charity's commitment to good manners, respect for others, courtesy to all and rejection of anti-social behaviour.

Established in 1986, the National Campaign for Courtesy works to encourage us all to be more friendly, considerate and respectful of each other and our environment. Previous award winners include Skipton, Epsom, Shrewsbury and Ilfracombe.

Local councillor and former Mayor of Spelthorne, Cllr Robin Sider, BEM who collected the award on behalf of Shepperton in October said: "When I made the nomination I submitted everything I knew about Shepperton, its ambience and its community, and how friendly and courteous all our Shopkeepers are. You can imagine how thrilled I am about this; it reflects everything that is good about our

shops, our residents, our history, our Village Fair and Big Tree Night, not to mention the welcome everyone receives when visiting Shepperton.”

For more details about the National Campaign for Courtesy visit www.campaignforcourtesy.org.uk

Spelthorne announces more property investments

In response to the reduction in the funding given to local authorities by the Government, Spelthorne is continuing to acquire properties which provide an income to support council services.

In August the Council announced the purchase of an office block at Stockley Park, one of Europe's leading business parks, for £21m. This was followed in September by the purchase of the World Business Centre 4 in a prime location at Heathrow Airport for £47m. Both buildings are occupied by tenants with long leases which provides a secure income for the Council to invest in supporting local services for the residents of Spelthorne.

To help address the shortage of housing in the Borough, the Council has also purchased Benwell House in Sunbury-on-Thames for £9m. Currently an office block, the Council plans to convert it into residential properties. In doing so, the Council is conscious of the pressure new housing can place on local services and infrastructure and will be working to try and address this.

For further details please visit www.spelthorne.gov.uk/propertyinvestments or email Heather Morgan, Head of Regeneration and Growth, at h.morgan@spelthorne.gov.uk or call 01784 446352.

Windfall grants - making a difference

Last winter the Leader of the Council, Cllr Ian Harvey, announced that one-off 'windfall grants' of £20,000 per ward were being made available for community projects.

The Council was particularly keen to hear from organisations which were able to match the Council's financial contribution and encouraged local groups to get in touch with their proposals. Applications came in for a wide variety of initiatives and the Council is pleased to announce that grants have been awarded to seven good causes so far, with many more in the pipe-line.

Among those to benefit is Manor Mead School in Shepperton which contacted the Council to ask for help to purchase new play equipment. The children at the school are delighted with their new play area which has become a key feature of break times.

The School's Assistant Business Manager, Emma Alexander, said: "The outdoor gym equipment is proving very popular with the children (even the staff like a sneaky go on it!). The four different pieces are ideal for children to play on as they help to develop balance and co-ordination and provide valuable outdoor exercise as well as helping some children with their sensory processing - all whilst having fun! Many thanks to Spelthorne Borough Council and Friends of Manor Mead."

Grants have also been awarded to St Peter's Church Hall in Staines-upon-Thames for a new boiler, St Saviour's Church in Sunbury for an extension and the Queen Mary Sailing Club in Ashford which needed some help to purchase 'Zingaroo', a boat adapted for disabled sailors.

A number of area improvements have also been funded by the Council's grants including new benches in Laleham Village, planters in Stanwell Moor and new paths at Cedars Recreation Ground in Sunbury.

Cllr Ian Harvey said: "It's fantastic to see this scheme being so well received by the community and the tangible benefits the money is making to all sorts of organisations. I am delighted that many local groups have already benefited from having some extra funding and facilities."

Applications for windfall grants are now closed. For details about other grants offered by the Council please visit www.spelthorne.gov.uk/grants

Seasonal rubbish and recycling collections

Collection	Scheduled collection day	Revised collection day
Rubbish	18 - 22 December	No change
Recycling	Monday 25 December	Wednesday 27 December
	Tuesday 26 December	Thursday 28 December
	Wednesday 27 December	Friday 29 December
	Thursday 28 December	Saturday 30 December
	Friday 29 December	Sunday 31 December
Rubbish	Monday 1 January 2018	Tuesday 2 January 2018
	Tuesday 2 January 2018	Wednesday 3 January 2018
	Wednesday 3 January 2018	Thursday 4 January 2018

	Thursday 4 January 2018	Friday 5 January 2018
	Friday 5 January 2018	Saturday 6 January 2018

Garden waste collections are finishing for the winter.

For more details check your garden waste calendar or visit <http://my.spelthorne.gov.uk>

Make good use of our kerbside 3 in 1 service

Textiles – please put unwanted items in a tied plastic bag or carrier bag and place it next to your food waste bin. Please do not put textiles in your rubbish bin – they can be reused or recycled.

Small electricals – we can only accept small electrical items that fit in a standard sized carrier bag or a tied Spelthorne clear bag. Please place the bag next to your food waste bin (remove batteries and bulbs but leave plugs and cables attached). Items do not need to be in working order.

Food waste – when using your outside caddy, please make sure you tie bags securely so food cannot escape and make sure there is no loose food in your bin.

Please leave all rubbish and recycling out by 6am on the day of your collection.

To check your collection day, enter your postcode into My Spelthorne at <http://my.spelthorne.gov.uk/>

We offer up to 10 free clear Spelthorne plastic bags per resident, from the Council Offices or Community Centres (for textile or small electrical collection).

For information about all our kerbside collections, visit www.spelthorne.gov.uk/kerbsidecollections

Your textiles are helping local charities

Each year Spelthorne donates a proportion of the money raised from the textiles collection service to a local charity. The chosen charity for this year was the Manna Food Bank in Staines-upon-Thames which received a cheque for £800 in October, presented by Cllr Gething, Cabinet Member for Environment.

Thanks to everyone who nominated a local charity for next year's donation. We received nine nominations and the amount will be shared in October 2018 between two worthwhile local charities, CREST Cancer Support and Home Start

Spelthorne. Keep an eye on our website next summer for details of how to nominate a charity for 2019.

Recycle right at Christmas

Much more waste is generated over Christmas and most of this can be recycled. Please see our handy tips below to help you 'recycle right' over Christmas and into the New Year.

Food Waste

Make good use of Spelthorne's weekly food waste collection service over Christmas and New Year for any waste food (turkey bones, brussel sprouts, satsuma peelings etc). Food waste should be placed in tied plastic bags before being put into your green, outdoor caddy. You can use any plastic bags - carrier bags, pedal bin liners, old bread bags etc - but please make sure food waste isn't loose in your caddy. Your caddy must be put out by 6am on your collection day.

Visit www.lovefoodhatewaste.com for tips on having a waste free Christmas.

Extra recycling

Put in an open bag next to your recycling bin. You can do this anytime of year, not just Christmas.

Christmas wrapping, packaging and cards

Yes please:

- ✓ wrapping paper - unless shiny metallic/foil or glittered
- ✓ sweet and biscuit tins - plastic or metal
- ✓ Christmas cards* and envelopes - unless shiny metallic/foil or glittered
- ✓ Flattened cardboard boxes

No thanks:

- × Foil
- × Foil gift bags
- × Metallic foil or glitter wrapping paper
- × Ribbons or bows and other decorations
- × Crackers
- × Polystyrene

*Christmas cards can also be recycled at many large retail stores

Free Christmas tree collections

Spelthorne Council is offering a free kerbside collection of real Christmas trees from 2 – 26 January 2018.

Simply leave your tree on your property boundary by 6am on your rubbish or recycling collection day – you do not need to call and register.

Please remove from its pot or stand and take off decorations.

Alternatively take your tree to one of the following drop-off points:

- Fordbridge Park, Ashford
- Manor Park, Shepperton
- Old Bathing Station, Fordbridge Road, Sunbury-on-Thames

email neighbourhoodservices@spelthorne.gov.uk or call 01784 446411 for further information.

Winter art open day: Saturday 16 December, 10am-2pm

Come along to the Resource Centre and have fun with your children making winter-themed crafts.

This activity is for families with children aged 3-11 years (a parent/carer must be present throughout).

Entry £1 per child (50p for siblings). No need to book.

Visit www.spelthorne.gov.uk/resourcecentre

Meals on Wheels

We will be providing our usual Meals on Wheels service up to, and including, Christmas Eve, and will have a limited service on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day for those who are eligible.

For more details or to change your usual arrangements, please contact us on 01784 444265 by Wednesday 13 December.

Christmas in Sunbury-on-Thames

The residents of Sunbury-on-Thames are celebrating Christmas with a special event by the Parade on The Avenue from 5 - 8.30pm on Thursday 7 December. Come along with the family and enjoy the festive lights, gift stalls, Santa's grotto and carol singing with the Salvation Army.

The road will be closed to traffic during the event.

For more details email monica@villagematters.co.uk or follow Sunbury Life on Facebook.

Eating out this Christmas?

Christmas is a time to enjoy good company and good food without worrying about food poisoning. But the truth is, you can't tell a restaurant's hygiene standards by how busy it is or clean it appears.

Put your mind at rest by checking the food hygiene rating before you choose where to eat. These ratings are determined by our Environmental Health Officers who inspect all the Borough's food outlets and give a rating out of 5.

Check food hygiene ratings online at <http://ratings.food.gov.uk/spelthorne> or call Environmental Health on 01784 446291.

Council Office - Christmas closure

The Council Offices in Knowle Green will be closed from 1.30pm on Friday 22 December until 8.45am on Tuesday 2 January 2018.

The Council's out of hours emergency number is 01784 451499.

Shepperton Big Tree Night

Come along to the Shepperton Big Tree Night on Wednesday 13 December, a well-established festive family fair which brings in visitors from far and wide.

The event starts at 5pm in the High Street and Father Christmas will be arriving with his reindeer from 5.30pm. The ever-popular carols start at 6.30pm by the main stage and there will also be plenty of other festive attractions including craft stalls and rides for the children.

Entertainment will be provided throughout the evening and a fantastic selection of foods will be available. Purchase a 'golden raffle ticket' for a chance to win over £1000 worth of prizes including £500 in cash, donated by local businesses and residents.

The High Street will be closed to traffic from 4pm, with some side roads closing at 1pm.

For more details, please contact the organisers, Shepperton and District Business Community, by email to secretary@shepperton.biz or visit the website at <http://bigtreenight.uk/>

Spelthorne Sports Awards

The sporting success of local players, coaches and volunteers was celebrated at the annual Spelthorne Sports Awards at Shepperton Studios on Tuesday 10 October.

The guest speaker for the evening was Parkrun founder, Paul Sinton-Hewitt CBE.

Congratulations to the following winners:

Award category	Winner
Active Surrey Coach of the Year	Andy Selves and Alan Povey
Disability Sports Award	Claire Ellis
Sports Club of the Year	Tora-Kai Judo Club
Volunteer of the Year	Emma Poole
Young Sports Personality of the Year	George Sudderick
Young Sports Team of the Year	Ashford Town Albion under 13s
Young Volunteer of the Year	Ellie Frost
Outstanding Service to Sport	Robbie Watson
School of the Year	St Michael Catholic Primary School
Special Recognition Award	Joyce Denny
Special Recognition Award	Harry Jaffer

Sexual health services move from St Peter's

A new provider, Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL), has taken over delivery of sexual health and HIV services across Surrey.

CNWL has three main bases in Guildford, Redhill and Woking which offer the full range of sexual health services. An outreach clinic is also available for Spelthorne residents at Staines Health Centre in Knowle Green offering advice and support, STI and HIV screening and LARC (Long -Acting Reversible Contraception) – this runs on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month, from 3- 6pm.

The drop-in clinic at the Blanche Heriot unit in St Peter's Hospital is no longer available.

For more details visit www.sexualhealth.cnwl.nhs.uk, email sexualhealth.cnwl@nhs.net or call 020 3317 5252.

Sunday 17 December - Free Christmas Xplorer

Xplorer is the perfect outdoor activity for families, offering a friendly navigation challenge that is educational and fun. Using a simple map the aim is to find a number of markers that are located around the park.

Join our free Christmas Xplorer event from 10.30am-12.30pm on Sunday 17 December at Orchard Meadow, Thames Street in Sunbury-on-Thames.

For more information email leisure@spelthorne.gov.uk or call Leisure Services on 01784 4464 33.

Walking for Health

The Spelthorne Walking for Health Scheme is part of an accredited national programme and offers short led walks to encourage people to improve their health and fitness. Designed for beginners, the walks are between one and three miles in length and take place at least three times a week in various parts of the Borough and surrounding areas. Many stay for a drink afterwards at a nearby café.

Visit www.spelthorne.gov.uk/walkingforhealth, email leisure@spelthorne.gov.uk or call 01784 446433 for further information.

Calling all runners

The 2018 Staines 10K will be held on Sunday 13 May and registrations open on 1 February. For information or to register visit www.staines10K.co.uk

Calling all landlords

Spelthorne Rent Assure is a scheme for landlords who would like to rent their local property through the Council.

We asked landlords what would make working with Spelthorne more attractive, took their ideas on-board and launched Rent Assure which offers guaranteed market rent for their property for up to two years. This effectively means that Spelthorne Rent Assure will stand as a guarantor throughout this period. Since its launch last year, the scheme has helped many families move into private rented accommodation and landlords who are using the scheme have told us how well it works for them:

Phil Robins said: “This scheme has proved a perfect one to choose in my experience. Letting to tenants can always be a lottery - they even make TV programmes to highlight the perils that can happen. With guaranteed rent paid direct from the Council, and tenants who treat the property like their home, I would recommend it to anyone. Without having to pay an agency, it really is a no-brainer.”

Rajinder Jassal said: “I have been dealing with Terri Mannian and Sam King. They are both extremely professional and provide excellent service to their customers. They helped me find a good class of tenant and their process was

easy to follow. They are both very helpful and quick to return calls and emails. The scheme is first class. I would easily recommend this scheme to all landlords.”

Michelle Douglas and Beryl Dite said: “Our experience dealing with the Spelthorne Rent Assure Scheme worked very well for us. It’s a good scheme, we have very nice tenants and did not have to pay Estate Agents fees! We would recommend landlords to give this scheme a try. Apart from saving the landlord’s time and money it gives a deserving family a chance to get back on their feet.”

Benefits include:

Guaranteed market rent, paid directly to the landlord

- one month’s rent paid in advance
- six weeks’ bond or discretionary deposit (placed in a protection scheme)
- free tenancy agreements
- property viewings arranged
- free inventory check
- periodic property checks
- tenancy training for tenants
- no agency fees (it’s a completely free service)

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Ian Harvey, who is himself a landlord said: “I would thoroughly recommend the Rent Assure scheme if you are looking for a safe and secure way to let your property without having to pay expensive agency fees. Our team will find suitable tenants and offer support for both parties for the two year period.”

Surrey County Council cuts

Surrey County Council is set to make substantial* funding cuts to a range of services due to the difficult financial position they find themselves in. Whilst this is ultimately a decision for Surrey County Council, Spelthorne Council is determined to oppose cuts which affect our community.

Spelthorne has already had to step in to address a number of cuts made by Surrey County Council to services, including the following:

Surrey County Council cut	Spelthorne action
Night-time street lighting turned off throughout Surrey	Spelthorne has paid Surrey to keep the lights on across the Borough for the next five years
Maintenance of highways verges - 40% reduction in the funding given by Surrey to Spelthorne	Spelthorne will continue to provide the same level of maintenance despite reduced funding from Surrey

Fire stations - Staines and Sunbury Fire station to close and be replaced with one new station in Ashford	Spelthorne spoke out against Surrey's proposed changes to fire services and gained a commitment from Surrey to keep the current fire stations (Staines and Sunbury) open until the new one in Ashford is completed. Spelthorne continues to lobby Surrey to have two full-time crews and two fire engines based at the new station
Personal alarms for elderly and disabled people - from April this year Surrey removed funding for this service for 92% of clients	Spelthorne has stepped in to ensure continued provision of this service

Although more details are needed, Surrey County Council is expected to also reduce funding in the following areas:

Service area	Anticipated impact
Support for older and disabled people	Reduction in subsidies given to Spelthorne by Surrey for services such as Meals on Wheels, Community Centres, Handyperson scheme and the Home Improvement Agency
Recycling	Reduction in the payments given to borough councils for recycling
Charity support	Reduction in grants for charities

Although the exact scale and nature of the cuts is still uncertain, there is little doubt that significant further funding reductions are on the horizon and residents are encouraged to make their views known in the various consultations which Surrey County Council will be running over the coming months, for more information visit www.surreysays.co.uk

Spelthorne Council will also continue to monitor the situation closely and has established a working group to assess the impact of any further cuts.

*Surrey County Council is working to find savings of more than £100m per annum in 2017-18 with further savings to be found in the next few years.

Good neighbours needed

Surrey Community Action is calling on community-spirited volunteers in Staines-upon-Thames and Laleham to help to establish a new good neighbour scheme in the town.

There are over 100 good neighbour schemes across the county providing help for people who need assistance with transport and day-to-day tasks. Volunteers

usually help with a range of activities including shopping, collecting prescriptions, form filling and providing transport for visits or appointments.

For more information, email Surrey Community Action's Voluntary Car Scheme Adviser, Vicki Turton, at vickit@surreyca.org.uk or call 01483 447121.

Do you know a dedicated volunteer?

Do you know an individual who has given a minimum of 12 years' service to volunteering in the Borough and would make a worthy recipient of a Spelthorne Civic Award?

The recipients are selected by an independent body of trustees and the deadline for receiving nominations is 31 January 2018. A presentation evening will be held on 17 April at the Council offices in Knowle Green.

Nomination forms are available from the Trust Secretary, Carol Davies. Contact her by email at candodavies@tiscali.co.uk or call 01784 255432.

The world is your oyster

Surrey Chambers of Commerce recently opened a new office offering international trade services for businesses.

Based in the Council Offices at Knowle Green, the team help businesses export overseas by providing advice and documentation needed to operate in international markets.

Previously located in Woking, the new base will make it more convenient for businesses in Spelthorne and Heathrow to visit the offices and get their paperwork processed the same day.

For more details about the service please email Surrey Chambers of Commerce at export@surrey-chambers.co.uk or call 01483 735544.

Are you eligible for a Council Tax discount?

If you have been diagnosed with a severe mental impairment such as dementia, you may be able to claim a reduction on your Council Tax. If you live with one other person, you should be eligible for a 25% discount from your bill, and if you live alone, the discount rises to 100%.

To make a claim you must have been certified as having a severe mental impairment by a doctor and be eligible for – but not necessarily in receipt of – at least one of the following benefits:

- Incapacity benefit
- Attendance allowance
- Severe disablement allowance
- Disability living allowance (higher or middle rate care component)
- Increase in disablement pension (due to constant attendance being needed)
- Unemployability supplement or allowance
- Constant attendance allowance
- Income support (which includes a disability premium)
- Personal independence payment (standard or enhanced daily living component)
- Armed forces independence payment
- Disability working allowance (based on getting income support inc. disability premium)
- Universal credit (inc. an element for limited capability for work or limited capability for work and work-related activity)

To apply visit www.spelthorne.gov.uk/smi or call Spelthorne's Council Tax team on 01784 451499.

Spelthorne Indie card

Shop and dine at a wide selection of local independent stores and receive discounts with the new Spelthorne Indie card.

Purchase an Indie card for £10 and receive a 10% discount when buying products or services from independent local businesses such as Caffe Gusto, London Stone, Headmasters, Tracy's Florist and Lewis Furniture.

To apply for a card or to register to include your own local independent business, email Ruth Lambert at Spelthorne Council r.lambert@spelthorne.gov.uk or visit www.spelthornebusinessforum.uk for more details.

Heat Surrey

Spelthorne Council has recently teamed up with Heat Surrey, a service designed to help residents heat their homes and save money on their energy bills. Heating and insulation grants are now available for households with an annual income of less than £30,000 after paying the rent or mortgage.

The grants are available for homeowners, private tenants or landlords who have eligible tenants living in their properties. Heating works include boiler and storage heater upgrades and grants towards the cost of new heating installation. In some cases the works are free.

To find out more, call Heat Surrey on 0800 0246 231 or visit www.heatsurrey.co.uk

Award for Ash Link nature reserve

Congratulations to the Spelthorne Natural History Society and the volunteers at Ash Link nature reserve in Shepperton for winning Gold in the conservation area category at the South & South East in Bloom competition which took place in Sussex on Wednesday 20 September.

The reserve was founded in 2012 and is made up of two areas, Nutty Wood and Splash Meadow. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of everyone involved it has now become the first award-winning nature reserve in Spelthorne.

If you are interested in getting involved in local conservation work, please email Peter Routley thepeterroulley@gmail.com at the Spelthorne Natural History Society.

Calling all conservationists

Are you interested in conservation and the management of Spelthorne's common land which includes important sites of special scientific interest such as Staines Moor and Shortwood Common?

The Staines Common Steering Group is looking for new members. If you're interested, come along to the next meeting on 7 December or 22 March 2018 or email neighbourhoodservices@spelthorne.gov.uk for more information.

Meetings take place from 10am - 11.30am in the Goddard Room at the Council Offices in Knowle Green, Staines-upon-Thames, TW18 1XB.

Spelthorne's Community Centres

The Greeno Centre, Shepperton

The Shepperton community and churches are organising a free Christmas lunch for anyone who will be on their own on Christmas Day from 10.30am to 3pm at the Greeno Centre.

A packed programme is planned from around 10.30am until mid-afternoon, with a welcoming cup of tea or coffee, followed by carol singing, games, quizzes and of course, a traditional Christmas lunch. Local transport can be arranged. Carers are especially welcome.

Contact Caroline on 01932 247255 / 07775 901035 or email carolinebutton2006@yahoo.co.uk if you would like to attend or can volunteer on the day (drivers also needed).

Get fit at the Greeno

Come along to Karen's circuit training class, every Monday from 8 January 2018, 2pm - 2.45pm, at the Greeno Centre in Shepperton. Cost £3.

Greeno Centre, Glebeland Gardens, Shepperton, TW17 9DH. Call 01932 246173.

Benwell Centre, Sunbury-on-Thames

Thursday 14 December, 10am-3pm: Christmas coffee morning/fete

Thursday 21 December, 1.30pm-3pm: St. Saviours Christmas service

Downside, Sunbury-on-Thames, TW16 6RT, call 01932 784232 or email benwell.centre@spelthorne.gov.uk

Staines Community Centre

Afternoon teas every Tuesday, 1.45 - 2.30pm (£4 members, £5 non-members).

Line dancing every Thursday, 1.45 - 2.45pm (£3.50 members, £4 non-members).

Staines Community Centre, Thames Street, Staines-upon-Thames, TW18 4EA. Call 01784 463073.

Fordbridge Centre, Ashford

Manicures at the Fordbridge Centre on Thursdays - please call to book an appointment.

Fordbridge Centre, Clarendon Road, Ashford, TW15 2PU. Call 01784 243880.

Community Centre Christmas opening

Benwell, Fordbridge and Staines Community Centres will be open on 27, 28 and 29 December. The Greeno Centre will be closed during this period.

Beware bogus charity collectors

Whilst most charity collectors are genuine, residents are urged to be on their guard against people who may be preying on their good-will. Genuine charity collectors must have a permit from the Council or an exemption certificate from

the Cabinet Office and must only collect money in sealed containers. Money has to be properly accounted for, certified, and returns have to be submitted to the Council. This means that there are safeguards to ensure that people's generosity is not abused and their hard-earned cash is used for charitable purposes.

Top tips for ensuring charity collectors are genuine:

- ask to see the individual's identification, or permit to collect
- check that collection boxes are sealed and display the name of the charity
- ask whether the collection is for a charity or business. Registered charities will have a charity number which can be checked on the Charity Commission's website
- check the name of the charity they are collecting for and be wary of collections that refer to vague causes such as 'families in need', 'sick children' or 'the homeless'

To report anything suspicious, contact the Council's Licensing Team by email at licensing@spelthorne.gov.uk or call 01784 444202.