

Whatever the outcome of their deliberations, it is vital that the School delivers primary education to the whole village this year and every year but, to achieve this, a number of issues need to be considered, including:

- 24 new homes in 2 years means even more demand for places
- the School could consider opening a non-committal register of interest in places so that it can gauge potential intakes in the future
- the laudable inclusion of the Pre-School in the Primary School must be done in such a way that capacity is not compromised
- the Anson Trust must clarify its intentions for the surrounding site as a matter of urgency because the current uncertainty is, it would appear, paralysing investment in the school
- the LA needs to commit to investing in the school's infrastructure regardless of the Anson Trust as any decisions on its plans may take years to be made
- assurances need to be given to charitable bodies such as the Friends of Marcham School that any monies made available by them to the School will be preserved should the school ever be moved.

It is vital for the future of our village community that Viv Hutchinson and the Board of Governors are given every chance to fulfil the school's obligation to the village's children and therefore all interested parties and individuals must work together to this end.

CHRIS HILLIER

** With no sibling at the school already – distance determined by LA based on shortest public route (via roads, street and footpaths) and not as a crow flies.*

ED VAIZEY WRITES...

March has been a quiet month for me politically. This is because it has been a very busy one for me on the personal front. Our daughter, Martha, was due on 29th February, but arrived almost two weeks late, on 12th March. (I will resist the obvious joke at this point as I would lose half my audience.) She weighed what I am told is a healthy 6lbs 3oz, and is, of course, the loveliest baby in the world. Even better, her 18 month old brother Joseph has taken to her from the word go. Martha was born on the same day as the sculptor Anish Kapoor, and the politicians Virginia Bottomley and David Mellor, so she could go either way. However, her delayed arrival meant that I could vote for a referendum on the European constitution, and her choice of birth day meant I avoided the tedium of Alistair Darling's Budget, so she has already demonstrated political flair. (That is not a political point - even his best friends think he is a boring public speaker.) The birth of Martha obviously gives me the chance to wax lyrical about the NHS. Some of the problems with the NHS will
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be familiar to many of you. Every time we had an appointment before the birth, we had to basically give up the whole morning and wait for 3 hours. After the birth, we got the after care that we needed, but were otherwise left to our own devices. My wife was discharged after 2 days, despite having had a caesarean section, because of pressure on bed space. However, during the birth the care was world-class. If I hadn't known better, I would have thought this was the only birth that year for every doctor and midwife on the ward. They were always on hand, incredibly helpful, we never felt in any danger, and they were highly skilled.

I get a lot of letters from constituents concerned about the care they receive. More often than not, they have either been refused treatment (mainly an expensive drug or IVF), or they have had their operation cancelled or delayed. I rarely succeed with the former problem, but have a better rate of success with the latter. Of course, those that get first-rate care don't bother to contact me.

What I do know about our local NHS is that we have some very good people working in our Primary Care Trust, and we also have some of the best GPs in the country. I have been speaking to all of them recently, as they are very concerned about the Government's proposals to set up polyclinics (also known as Darzai clinics) across the country. One is planned for Oxfordshire, and I understand Virgin want to run it. I don't necessarily oppose the idea behind polyclinics, but where I am as one with our GPs is that I oppose the Government imposing them from above, and I cannot see the need for one in Oxfordshire. The GP system in this country is a huge success, providing continuing care to millions of people and also acting as a crucial filter between us and hospitals. We put it at risk at our peril.

On a local matter, and again children related, I have been contacted by parents concerned that they could not get their children into the primary school. I share their concern and agree with their arguments, and along with County Councillor Iain Brown I am lobbying the Council as hard as possible to get changes made.

You can contact me at the House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA, on 0207 219 6350 or at vaizeye@parliament.uk, my website can be found at www.vaizey.com.

ED VAIZEY, MP Wantage (Con)

COUNTY COUNCILLORS' REPORT

I have received letters and telephone calls from Marcham residents about the failure of 8 Marcham children to get a place in the foundation class at the village school. I quite understand the anguish and anger that this situation has caused. I have been

to the school and had a meeting with the Headteacher, and the OCC schools development officer. There are several options that need to be fully explored that may enable the school to alter some of the available space and allow the 8 children places at Marcham school. The final decision will be taken by the school governors, but I will ensure that OCC do all they can to assist the governors and the Headteacher. The school in Marcham is an asset to the village, and must have the confidence to grow and flourish. Within the next few weeks, I will meet with officers and the Cabinet Member for Schools Improvement, Cllr Michael Waine, and find the best way forward. I want those children to attend Marcham school, and thereby secure numbers going forward. It is true that 24 new houses have been built in Marcham recently, and this has increased demand for places, it is always difficult to exactly determine numbers of children coming forward, so I am in favour of having a little more capacity at the school than not enough.

I received a telephone call on Sunday at 5.30pm from a lady in Marcham, alarmed by the fact that floodwater was once again threatening her property. I drove over to Marcham, and observed the progress of flood water under the A415, and in the back gardens of houses. Fortunately no houses were reported as flooded in Marcham this time, but East Hanney and Lyford were not so lucky, with several house flooded again, one house for the third time since July last year!

We are often told that these are "once in a hundred year" occurrences, but seem to be more regular than once in a decade.

If you would like to question members of the Environment Agency, or Thames Water about flooding and other water related matters, there is a public meeting being arranged by the Reservoir Affected Parishes Group (RAP Group) at the War Memorial Hall, East Hanney on Friday 16th May at 7.30pm.

Finally, the results from the traffic trial in Packhorse Lane were a disappointment to many, myself included. I had hoped that after all of the work put into the temporary scheme, the permanent scheme would be adopted. Unfortunately, the responses received by OCC to the questionnaire to all households in the village were not supportive enough to allow the officers at OCC to proceed with it. I will continue to work with residents in Packhorse Lane to try to bring about improvements in future.

CLLR IAIN BROWN

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