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Please ask if you require a translation in a community language, in large print, on tape or in Braille.
Beverage-carton recycling at Purley Oaks

Waxed-card containers can now be accepted at Purley Oaks Reuse and Recycling Centre.

Often generically referred to as Tetra Paks, the cartons typically are used to contain products such as milk, fruit juice, soup and cooking sauces.

The beverage cartons themselves usually comprise:

• Paperboard (typically 70-90%)
• Low-density polyethylene (typically 10-25%)
• Aluminium foil (about 5%, only in long-life or aseptic packages)

The provision of the recycling bank at Purley Oaks, Brighton Road, is part of a £365,000 programme of improvements across the borough’s three reuse and recycling sites that will improve access for customers and increase recycling figures.

Cartons are successfully recycled in large volumes throughout Europe with many countries achieving very high carton-recycling rates. For example, in Germany and Belgium it is between 65 and 70%. The European Union as a whole achieves a 28% carton-recycling rate.

Despite the mix of materials used in their manufacture, the cartons can be successfully recycled and are used in the production of high-strength, paper-based products such as bags and envelopes.

The recycling process for beverage cartons is quite simple and the long fibres obtained mean that less virgin pulp is needed for the papermaking process.

New4Old 2 go ahead

Older people in the borough can look forward to living in bright new surroundings, brimming with the latest equipment and amenities, thanks to a bold new Croydon Council scheme.

Following months of negotiation, the council has recently signed a groundbreaking deal that will provide new first-class facilities on four sites across the borough.

The Caring4Croydon consortium was formed to deliver New4Old, the council’s vision to transform care for elderly and vulnerable people by replacing dated and inadequate buildings with modern facilities conforming to the latest standards.

The scheme has been made possible thanks to the council’s securing financial support from central Government. In total, £38 million of Private Finance Initiative credits will fund the developments.

The new centres will provide 150 residential and nursing places, 40 extra-are flats and 128 day-care places.

All rooms will be bright and airy with en-suite bathrooms, and the centres will have internet links enabling users to maintain contact with family and friends, as well as keeping mentally active; locally sourced and freshly prepared and cooked food, catering for all needs and preferences; fitness suites and healthy-living consultation suites.

Neighbourhood Watch helps make Safer Neighbourhoods

Shirley can proudly boast that Neighbourhood Watch coordinators cover 65% of its area – and that is a figure that helps Croydon’s equally proud boast that it has one of the most successful Neighbourhood Watch schemes in the Metropolitan Police area.

At present, Croydon has about 490 Neighbourhood Watches in operation and Sarah Gardner, Croydon Neighbourhood Watch police liaison officer, is working closely with the 25 Safer Neighbourhood Teams to continue to make improvements.

She said: “Neighbourhood Watch has been around for some considerable time and is a real benefit to local communities by keeping them informed of local police action.

“Communities are also able to take an active part in providing reassurance and assisting the police with reducing crime and the fear of crime in Croydon.

The Met’s borough commander, Ch Supt Mark Gore, said: “Neighbourhood Watch coordinators play an important part in crime reduction and providing reassurance to local communities.

For more information about the scheme and how to set up a watch, contact Sarah Gardner on 020 8649 0168 or email nhwcroydon@met.police.uk

Bensham Manor by-election

Residents in the Bensham Manor ward go to the polling booths on Thursday, 8 February. The election of a new ward councillor follows the resignation of former Labour group deputy leader, Councillor Paula Shaw.

Full details of the nominees are available at www.croydon.gov.uk
Pupils walk the walk

As is often the case, youngsters in the borough are leading the way in environmental awareness and are setting a good example to the older members of the community.

The good example being set is in the numbers of pupils forsaking the family car’s horsepower for Shanks’ pony and other forms of sustainable transport when it comes to getting to and from school.

When implemented, a school travel plan commits that school to carrying out an annual travel survey among its pupils.

As 2006 drew to a close, things were looking very positive with returned results showing an increase of between 3% and 27% in the numbers of pupils walking to school over the first year of adopting a school travel plan.

That’s an overall average increase of 9% of pupils from those schools walking to school. In terms of reduced car use – 10 out of 12 primary schools showed a decrease of between 4% and 19% of pupils travelling to school by car, representing an overall 9% shift from car to other, more sustainable, forms of travel.

St Joseph’s Junior, in Upper Norwood, is the only school to have returned two years’ survey results and its results show a 4% decrease in car use in the first year, and a 3% decrease during the second year.

That equates to a 7% reduction in car use over the two-year period since the introduction of its travel plan.

In terms of walking to school, the top three schools were St. Joseph’s Infants (27% increase), Keston Primary, Old Coulsdon, and Kensington Primary, Thornton Heath (13% increase).

New website for ancient wood

Modern technology has been brought to bear to promote one of the borough’s areas of ancient woodland.

A new website has been launched by the Friends of Foxley who manage, in partnership with Croydon Council, the nature conservation interest of Foxley Wood Local Nature Reserve, located in the Purley/Kenley area.

The group was set up in 1992 when the site had become difficult to walk following the aftermath of 1987’s great storm, which wrought destruction across the south-east.

Nowadays the site is a pleasure to walk, with visitors able to enjoy its woodland, open areas and wildlife.

Springtime in the wood is a particular treat, with wood anemones, celandine and bluebells evident.

The Friends usually work on site on the second Sunday of each month, carrying out work laid down in an agreed management plan, and regularly organise guided walks.

The website www.friendsoffoxley.co.uk has been launched to inform a wider audience about Foxley Wood and its wildlife as well as to encourage more people to join in with the active work.

If you would like more information about the wood or wish to join the Friends please see the website or phone 020 8668 2008.

Thames to replace water mains

Welcome news that Thames Water will be replacing Victorian water mains in and around the town centre has prompted the council to summon utility bosses to Croydon to insist on maximum consideration for residents, businesses and road users.

Thames’ leak-prevention works are due to start in February and will take two years to complete. Inevitably they will mean a lot of disruption.

The council has drawn up a checklist of measures it wants Thames contractors to take and will be monitoring the works to ensure compliance.

From 5 February, work lasting six weeks will begin in High Street, South Norwood, closing the road between Portland Road and Goathouse Bridge.
Active Lifestyles Health Walks

The Active Lifestyles Health Walks launched in September 2001 and have become a popular pastime for many Croydon residents. Eight weekly – and a Saturday fortnightly – health walks take place in a number of Croydon's parks and open spaces.

Each walk lasts about an hour and is led by a trained volunteer walk leader. There is also a volunteer walk leader at the back to ensure that people of all ages and abilities can enjoy the walk.

Since its inception, the scheme has benefited more than 2,000 people in Croydon, many of whom have medical problems such as high blood pressure, diabetes and high cholesterol. Brisk walking has been found to help improve some medical problems, while also helping aid weight-loss and improving general fitness.

One Croydon resident who has attended the walks right from the start is Sheila Budhoo. She feels that the health walks are an important part of her health routine and said: "The health walks scheme is one of the best things Croydon has done and it's free. It has helped keep my weight down and improved my fitness. Anyone can do it at any age."

The Walking for Health Scheme is a section of Active Lifestyles, which also has an exercise referral scheme and a physical activity programme.

For further information on the walks or any other scheme, contact Active Lifestyles on 020 8726 6900. Alternatively, go to www.croydononline.org and check out the events section.

Plugging into Croydon's past

Croydon residents will soon be able to take a unique walking tour of New Addington by downloading to their MP3 player a specially compiled audio commentary.

Linked to the Sunshine in Suburbia exhibition, running in the Clocktower until 24 February, the tour is being produced with the help of pupils from Addington School.

It will feature interviews with members of the local community who have lived in the area for many years and will reveal their insights into the district's past and present.

The free tours, set to be downloadable from March, will be available from the Museum of Croydon website at www.museumofcroydon.com

Marking time

An exhibition celebrating the life of South Norwood's famous benefactor and former resident, William Ford Stanley, is to open at South Norwood Library on Friday, 2 February.

This year also marks the 100th anniversary of the High Street's Clocktower, which was presented to Mr and Mrs Stanley as a gift from the people of South Norwood on the occasion of the couple's golden wedding.

WFR Stanley left a lasting legacy to the people of Croydon; among his accomplishments were the building of Stanley Halls and the former Stanley Technical Trade School.

Once in a blue moon

The search for the council’s next chief executive has begun following the announcement that the present post-holder, David Wechsler, is retiring later this year.

Croydon Council has had just five chief executives in the past 70 years and the advertisement highlights the job as a “rare opportunity”.

It is hoped that Mr Wechsler’s successor will be in post by early summer.

£33 million for a Farthing

Life in the centre of Coulsdon has become a lot quieter of late – and it’s all down to the recent opening of Farthing Way, the new Coulsdon relief road.

Councillor Chris Wright, a local ward member, was in the first car to travel along the £33 million road and declared its opening as being the start of a new age for Coulsdon and its town centre.

Having taken three years to build, the relief road creates a major bypass on the A23 Brighton Road that will remove 80% of traffic from the town’s shopping centre.

The project will make Coulsdon town centre safer by removing A23 traffic and will improve conditions for bus passengers, walkers and cyclists.

The new road, measuring just over one mile in length, has involved:

- 7,500m³ of concrete
- 10,500m of cabling
- 150,000m³ of excavation
- 39,000 shrubs
- 13,500m of white lines
- 200 workers at peak hours

Cllr Wright said: “This has been a major engineering project which, although not yet fully completed, has already had a positive impact on the lives of people living and working in Coulsdon.

“The council has been happy to work with Transport for London in getting Farthing Way opened and is sure it will bring years of benefit for local people.”
Croydon is making it easier for everyone to get a bit of R&R. But the council is not so much thinking of rest and recreation, as reusing and recycling.

The new year has brought a fresh impetus to practical steps that will make it even easier to reuse and recycle unwanted items.

An element of that new impetus is an improvement in the means by which the council can consult with the public, ensuring that what’s delivered is both needed and wanted.

The extra feedback will also enable timely adjustments to be made to those services already running but which might need some fine tuning to get them just so.

In addition, the council is stepping up its street-cleaning standards around the borough and is publishing a charter setting out the kind of performance residents can expect on a host of environmental matters.

The charter includes promises on cleaner streets, safer streets, refuse collection and recycling. If you have mislaid your copy, see it in full on the council’s website at www.croydon.gov.uk

The charter has been delivered to every home in the borough and, helpfully, includes contact information for each of the borough’s streetscene officers who manage the appearance of local areas. It’s the streetscene team members who arrange the clearance of litter and fly-tips, cleansing of graffiti, removal of abandoned cars and who generally take a close, personal interest in the appearance of their patch of Croydon.

To give the new approach a sharper focus, it’s also adopted a new title. Streetscene has been rebranded Your Street Services.

Your Street Services takes care of every job that needs doing to keep your neighbourhood clean and tidy. This includes:

- Sweeping your streets
- Collecting your recycling and refuse
- Repairing pot-holes in the footway and carriageway
- Ensuring overhanging vegetation, such as trees and hedges, gets cut back
- Unblocking gullies
- Collecting dead animals
- Reporting defects
- Removing graffiti
- Collecting white goods

For a full line-up, just look at the online information at www.croydon.gov.uk

This is a deliberate measure that aims to encourage residents to take greater pride in the upkeep of their neighbourhood and ensure that the council’s environmental services are driven by residents’ needs rather than administrative convenience. The target is to provide the cleanest and safest environment possible within defined resources.

So, what’s going to be different?

Well, for a start, the borough’s three civic amenity sites – colloquially called “dumps” – are being overhauled and converted to reuse and recycling centres. The centres, which accept the widest range of materials of almost any such centres in the UK, are used by thousands of residents each month and the number of users is expected to continue growing.
Each of the centres now benefits from user-friendly signing and extra facilities for handling an even wider range of waste. Staff have been briefed to be more forthcoming with their advice and assistance on how items can be reused or recycled.

Unmissable will be the electronic signs capable of giving instant information on recycling trends, and highlighting improvements and new facilities. They are expected to be influential in telling people about initiatives such as themed recycling weeks when the council will be making a special effort to promote recycling of different types of waste, such as mobile phones or Christmas Trees.

The council has already been expanding its fortnightly, boroughwide recycling service to pick up a more varied range of waste from the kerbside.

In some wards, this now routinely includes plastics and cardboard. To ensure only the right stuff is left out for collection, contractors will be trying to keep an eye open for what residents are putting in their recycling box. Anyone who consistently contaminates the materials by using the box for items that should really go in the wheeled bin, may receive help in trying to do better in future.

To make it easy for as many people as possible to join the recycling revolution, mainly in blocks of flats.

The cabinet member for streets and environmental services, Councillor Phil Thomas, believes residents will see a real difference in the way the council goes about expanding recycling opportunities and looking after the streets where people live.

“The improvements we have been introducing will make it easier than ever for residents to get more involved in recycling and to ensure Croydon continues to recycle an ever-growing proportion of its waste.

‘By introducing a charter alongside widespread service improvements we’re saying ‘judge us on what we’re doing’. ‘If our performance isn’t up to scratch we want people to know their rights, know how to contact us and know what to expect as a result.’

Your Street Services contact centre now operates six days a week, including Saturdays. Call any time between 9am and 5pm on 020 8726 6200.

The council’s web site now provides a 24/7 opportunity to report environmental nuisances. Just visit: www.croydon.gov.uk.
New Voice of Croydon rings out

Anybody who has called the council’s contact centre over the past three years and received a taped message informing them of their options can’t fail to have been impressed by the clear, calm and authoritative tones in which the message was delivered.

Those manly tones belong to customer services operative Darren Murray and they will be remembered by one customer, particularly, who asked for a tape recording of Darren’s voice so that she could listen to it at home.

However, while he has lost none of his fluency and continues to offer top-notch service to callers, it is time for a change.

In the latter part of last year, council staff were offered the opportunity to compete to become the new voice of Croydon and, after a rigorous elimination process, the person replacing Darren at the mic is his colleague Akua Abrefa.

Akua has worked in the Taberner House contact centre for a little over a year and is the holder of a degree in music technology, though nowadays she applies her skills to a different sort of keyboard.

She said: “I’m really pleased to have been selected.

“Everybody who applied was given a script and we had to make three recordings and choose what we thought was the best one.”

That recording was then heard by a panel of three judges who were looking for a number of qualities, including clarity, precision and a welcoming, friendly tone.

Akua said: “I was really surprised to be chosen. I thought there was no way I was going to get it – some of my colleagues entered and they’re very fluent.

“I’m proud to be succeeding Darren – his voice is smooth, very smooth, and he’s a hard act to follow.”
Keeping cyber noses out of your online business

If the phrases “advance-fee fraud”, “phishing” and “social engineering” are known to you, you probably have some knowledge of computer safety.

And with most homes now having at least one PC, knowing how to keep unwanted guests out of the vital information stored on your computer is of vital importance.

Many people are unaware of just how much personal and sensitive data can be accessed by those with less-than-benevolent intentions in mind.

Details of addresses, dates of birth, bank accounts, credit cards and any number of facts and figures relating to how a life is lived can be stored on a computer’s hard disk.

There are various ways in which even the relatively unskilled home-computer user can prevent that information falling into the wrong hands.

Your Croydon is not the place for a comprehensive course on safeguarding your computer but by following our basic tips you will have gone some way to keeping the snoopers at bay and protecting your work.

Install and use anti-virus software
As well as continually scanning your computer for viruses, it also checks emails and websites. Some computers come with AV software pre-installed; check and install if yours doesn’t have it already. Once installed, be sure to update regularly in order to fight new viruses as they are launched.

Put up a firewall
A firewall is a barrier between your computer and the hackers out there who are trying to get to your information. It will also offer you some protection against viruses and spyware.

Spyware and how to stop it
Spyware is a small program that can load into your computer, usually from a website, and then send personal information back to its originator. Anti-spyware software can be bought or downloaded.

Stay up to date
New and different ways to attack computers are being developed by hackers all the time. They will often use the operating system itself to gain access, taking advantage of small weaknesses and possible faults. Be sure to keep up to date with the latest patches issued by program and operating-system manufacturers. Regular downloading of patches can also improve security and the performance of your computer and programs.

Back it up
No matter how well protected and managed a computer is, as sure as night follows day, it will crash. Maybe not today, maybe not next week – but it will crash at some time. And the best way of ensuring that all your important information and the work on which you’ve spent hours is not lost is to make a copy of it – back it up. You can back up to CD, to DVD, to a second hard disk, to a key-ring flash drive – just be sure to back it up.

For more detailed help and advice, visit www.getsafeonline.org

Many people are unaware of just how much personal and sensitive data can be accessed by those with less-than-benevolent intentions in mind.
Managing money and dealing with debt

It is a fact of modern life that more and more people are getting into problems with debt as institutions encourage people to borrow, rather than save, for the things we need.

Some companies send representatives from door to door, encouraging people to borrow money at extortionate interest rates. According to recent research published by the National Consumer Council, people on benefits across the UK borrow an estimated £330m a year from doorstep lenders and pay an estimated £140m in interest per year with an average interest rate of 170% APR.

Many people are now using a more ethical savings institution – their local credit union – that aims to help people manage their money and deal with their debts. Croydon Savers Credit Union is a savings and loans cooperative set up five years ago by local people, to provide secure savings and a source of low-cost borrowing.

Originally open only to council employees, membership is now available to people across the borough, and also offers children's savings accounts. Unlike most financial services organisations, Croydon Savers encourages its members to save rather than borrow.

And credit unions received praise at the end of last year when they stepped in to help families that were facing a miserable Christmas following the collapse of the Farepak hamper and Christmas savings club.

Anyone who lives or works in the borough can join Croydon Savers for a small one-off entrance fee for life membership. Members are then encouraged to save anything from £2 per week or £10 per month. This builds up a pool of members' money from which other members can borrow using the unique “Save as You Borrow” scheme.

This pool of savings is used by the credit union to transfer high-interest debts, help clear members' rent, mortgage, or council tax arrears, etc. Others borrow for holidays, school uniforms, household electrical goods or home improvements.

Because it is a member-owned organisation, it has no outside shareholders to pay. Any surplus on the loans business is returned to its members across Croydon to pay a cooperative dividend that rewards both savers and borrowers alike.

Croydon Savers encourages people to save rather than borrow, but recognises that most of us need to borrow at some time.
By referring to the Croydon Counts Index, anybody can check if the council is hitting targets in any of 36 areas of operation, comparing current performance with a baseline figure of the previous financial year.

According to the latest available index, the council is either on target or improving across 26 of the identified headings.

And of those not improving overall, eight have made a small gain since the last bi-monthly report to councillors.

In the area of council-tax collection, over the course of the year the council is looking to collect a minimum of 95.5% of the money it is due. With half the year gone, it had collected 55.27%, putting it on course to reach its target figure.

The level of crime shows a continuing drop with 3,009 being reported, against 3,219 previously and, if the trend is sustained, looks likely to meet the target of a 20% reduction over the year.

Croydon’s residents appear to be taking on board the message that exercise can only be good for them with 29,345 taking part in sport or physical activity at council-run venues, an increase of 3,345 over the previous reading, and on course for the year’s target of 157,836.

Attendance at borough libraries has increased, with the numbers of both physical and virtual visits showing an improvement over the past year.

The council has reason to be proud of its record for the removal of graffiti. General graffiti, requiring removal within 14 days, currently stands at 97.5% – almost two points above the 95.8% target.

And with a promise to remove offensive graffiti within 24 hours of being reported, the council has achieved the ultimate goal of 100%, beating the previous report’s recording of 97.2%.

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Full details of the Croydon Counts Index can be found on the council’s website at www.croydon.gov.uk/candd/464174/464241/cabinet
Anybody walking around the borough who has lifted their eyes above shop-window level can’t fail to have noticed strategically positioned cameras sitting atop columns or mounted on the side of buildings.

The majority of those cameras are part of Croydon Council’s closed-circuit television (CCTV) network – and they are at the forefront of the fight against crime in the borough.

The first 16 cameras were installed in Croydon town centre in the mid-1990s with a view to help tackle antisocial behaviour.

There are now more than 100 surveillance cameras in operation across the borough keeping a round-the-clock vigil on our streets.

Footage is used to help deter criminal behaviour and solve everything from murder and assault to drug dealing and theft and is regularly used as evidence in police prosecutions.

The centre of CCTV operations is a room in Croydon town centre where, via a large bank of TV monitors, a team of officers keep an eagle eye on what’s happening.

The cameras’ unblinking gaze focuses primarily on criminal activity and, in the course of a day, officers can catch anything from would-be muggers and pickpockets to fly-tippers, as well as report road accidents and faulty traffic signals.

Systems officer Norman Whaley has spent the past 14 years overseeing the development of the council’s network of high-tech cameras.

“It’s all a case of knowing what to look for,” says the former soldier.

“CCTV has come a long way in that time, both in terms of the number of cameras we have and what they can do. One thing that hasn’t changed, though, is spotting people causing trouble.

“People’s body language is often a giveaway; it shows if they’re up to no good or that they’re hanging around for no reason. A good example would be someone loitering around a cash machine without drawing money – there’s a chance he could be waiting for the opportunity to mug somebody who’s just drawn some money.
"We’ll keep an eye on the situation and be ready if that’s what happens."

As Norman speaks a store radios through to the control centre via the council’s Safer Croydon Radio system. The caller says a man has run out of the shop carrying several coats which have not been paid for.

The cameras pick the thief up several streets away. He hides the coats behind some bins before sauntering off, unaware his every move is being watched.

A control-room operator radios the police to say that images of the theft are available and that one of Croydon Council’s Street Wardens has recovered the items.

In a separate incident, an irate resident tells council staff, following an altercation, that he has a gun in his pocket.

CCTV tracks the man leaving the building and he is intercepted minutes later by a police armed-response unit. No weapon is found but the CCTV footage will later be used to secure a conviction.

Norman added: “We’ve developed a close working relationship with the police and other enforcement agencies like HM Revenue Customs.

“It gives law enforcement an extra pair of eyes and provides hard evidence in court that secures convictions.”

Incidents are entered on a log sheet detailing the time, location and type of activity taking place. This information helps build an accurate picture of the crime hotspots and the type of criminal activity taking place.

The control room stores its digital images for 28 days before they are automatically erased. During that time, both the police and defence lawyers can request images to use in their respective cases.

It provides an invaluable additional resource to the police who recently used the recorded images in a murder investigation to determine whether or not a number of suspects were in the area at the time.

The next stage in the evolution of the system will, in the next few months, see the installation of specialist software which will aid the tracking of stolen or suspicious vehicles.

Automatic Number Plate Recognition allows suspects’ cars to be tracked across the borough.

Norman added: “Some people think CCTV is very ‘big brother’ but it’s there to look after people, not spy on them. At the end of the day, you only have something to worry about if you’re about to commit a crime.

“The vast majority of people support the idea and it’s very popular with retailers who have a direct link with the control room through the Safer Croydon Radio radio link.

“Our street wardens are also in radio contact and, whenever they call in, computer software automatically tells the control room staff who’s calling.”

Schools can be vulnerable and CCTV now deters would-be criminals tempted by the prospect of breaking into largely deserted grounds at the weekends.

The cameras are linked back to the main CCTV control room which also has an audio link. The controller can speak to the intruder via loudspeakers on site warning trespassers to leave immediately.

The control room is staffed round the clock by a rota of 18 officers who come from a variety of previous professions including the forces and prison service.

There is even a former submariner who must find the subterranean control room a home from home.

“There’s always someone keeping an eye out for your safety” says Norman.

“At the end of the day, we’re here to help and that should reassure people, not make them worried.”
Contact the council

During October 2006, the council’s contact centre took 120,836 calls from customers, an increase from 113,527 received during the previous October.

Despite the increase in call volume, the percentage of calls answered within 20 seconds has made a small increase, up from 72% to 73%.

“One and done” calls, those queries resolved by a customer service adviser without the need to pass the call/enquiry to a colleague, fell from 59% to 51%.

This drop is as a result of taking on new processes, such as social services enquiries, which are more likely to require a specialist response from a social services colleague.

October saw the addition of education enquiries to the services offered by the call centre.

Waiting times at the public enquiry counter, in the housing benefit and council tax office in Fell Road, dropped from 21 minutes to five.

Visit the council’s website at www.croydon.gov.uk to see if the service you require is available online.

You can use computers, free of charge, at your local library, to access Croydon Council services online.
More to the lollipop than meets the eye

Lollipop men and ladies – we probably all take them for granted to a certain extent.

Most of us see them only in the mornings, when we’re on our way to work. Their afternoon shift is too early in the day for most to see them on the way home.

There they are, though, in fair weather and foul, helping our children safely across the road at locations where crossing would otherwise be particularly hazardous.

And that’s all they do – isn’t it?

Jenny Thair is glowing proof that school-crossing patrols, to give them their correct name, do much more than just that.

Mrs Thair recently won the Croydon Champions Award for Outstanding Bravery for her action in preventing two children being abducted from outside Monks Orchard Primary School in June of last year.

Vigilant Jenny noticed a man, who had been acting suspiciously, leap into a car containing two children. Jenny immediately called the police and then confronted the man. Her actions and the rapid arrival of the police meant the man was apprehended before he could drive off or before any harm could come to the children.

Local authorities are under no statutory obligation to provide school-crossing patrols, but many, including Croydon, feel that provision of the service is necessary at certain locations, and do all they can to provide that service.

Croydon Council took responsibility for running the service in 2000 and there have been very few complaints since. Those that have been received have come from people who suddenly find there is no longer a crossing officer at a spot that is usually patrolled.

Unfortunately, for a number of reasons, continuity of service can never be guaranteed.

Resignations, retirements and illness can mean that an officer is no longer available – and there is no pool of reserves from which another can be called.

As is fitting for those dealing with children and other vulnerable people, applicants for the job are subject to stringent checks. Those checks are conducted by outside agencies over which the council has no control, and this can mean that a post goes unfilled for a period, sometimes months.

So, in addition to always being alert while driving, give some thought to the great work that’s being done next time you spot somebody in their fluorescent yellow coat, carrying that familiar over-sized lollipop and helping a flock of young children across a busy road.

There’s often more going on than meets the eye.

Local authorities are under no statutory obligation to provide school-crossing patrols, but many, including Croydon, feel that provision of the service is necessary at certain locations and do all they can to provide that service.

Croydon Council took responsibility for running the service in 2000 and there have been very few complaints since.

Croydon - a place to be proud of
Each of the main business districts in the borough has started the new year with an important addition – a district centre manager.

Appointed at the tail-end of last year, six of Croydon’s seven new managers have taken up their posts over the past few weeks and are already busily establishing contact with the business communities in their area.


A manager for the seventh district, taking in the A23 London Road, is expected to be appointed shortly.

District centre development manager and team leader Sharon Baldwin said: “Their primary role is to assist the business community in their district to achieve economic growth.

“In order to do this, they’ll put into place a business action plan developed by the local business partnership, a group of local stakeholders, which will meet on a regular basis.

“The DCMs will be there to help develop a sustainable economy in a variety of ways without duplicating systems that are already in place.

“Not all have found premises yet but they will be easily accessible, mainly by their local businesses, through the phone and email.

“There will be some interactivity with the public, dependent on the sort of project they’re working on at any given time – such as at local events, or through marketing – but the support of the public will be essential.

“The DCMs will be encouraging a ‘Think Local, Shop Local’ attitude toward the district centre and will keep in touch through regular newsletters and reporting back at Neighbourhood Partnership, and any other community meetings, that would be appropriate.

“They’re very enthusiastic and we’re all looking forward to the challenges ahead and what we can achieve.”

Their primary role is to assist the business community in their district to achieve economic growth.
Croydon’s seven district centres: are New Addington & Purley Way, Thornton Heath, Crystal Palace & Norbury, Purley, Coulsdon & Old Coulsdon, South Norwood and A23 London Road.

There will be some interactivity with the public, dependent on the sort of project they’re working on at any given time – such as at local events, or through marketing – but the support of the public will be essential.
“Fire” is the new cool – according to the latest urban slang dictionary – and Croydon’s top firefighter is keen to let people know that safety awareness is “fire”.

Engagement with the community, particularly its younger members, is a major element of how Cyril O’Brien goes about his work.

As the London Fire Brigade’s borough commander, Cyril’s job entails far more than fighting fires. He’s possibly the best PR man the brigade’s ever had in Croydon.

Brimming with ideas and bubbling with enthusiasm, he believes that “getting them while they’re young” is the best way to instil the correct values and attitudes in teenagers.

He picked up the reins in Croydon last June and has spent his first few months getting to know the borough, the council, and establishing contact with the other emergency services and a number of community groups.

“I’m putting together a strategy of what I want to do in the borough,” he said.

“I want to get into as many of the secondary schools as I can – talking to those pupils is important because they’re the next generation of homeowners.

“If you can get an awareness of fire safety and social issues into them it can only make life easier for them as they get older.”

He has already instigated a number of ideas aimed at getting the safety message across – including producing key rings, wrist bands and tie pins – and his next idea, a fire-safety quiz for schools, with trophies and prizes, is well on the way to coming to fruition.

“Fire safety is everybody’s concern, and I’m going to do all I can to make as many people as possible aware of the dangers and how to avoid them,” Cyril added.

Sally Anne’s name lives on to help others

There can’t be many people in Croydon unaware of the murder, last year, of Sally Anne Bowman, only yards from her front door in a quiet, South Croydon residential road.

The tragic loss of life of a beautiful young woman about to embark on a modelling career filled the pages of local and national press, and sparked a manhunt that saw many of her former neighbours agreeing to undergo a DNA test as part of the investigations to find her killer.

In order to try to prevent further such horrific events, Sally Anne’s family, along with the Community Protection Team, a partnership between Croydon Council and local police, have produced The Sally Anne Alarm.

A small, easily carried device, the alarm emits a high-pitched squeal and is designed to give the user a vital few seconds in which to escape if she should be attacked.

Over the pre-Christmas period, 8,000 of the bright-pink alarms were given away to revellers and clubbers in central Croydon, along with a leaflet detailing the sort of common-sense advice that could save a person’s life.

The leaflet recommends pre-planning of an evening’s entertainment, particularly of the journey home, ensuring only a licensed taxi is taken, and that the driver’s badge and signage are checked before agreeing to travel.

The Community Protection Team can be contacted on 020 8604 7032.

The leaflet, and all its tips and advice can be viewed on the council’s website at www.croydon.gov.uk/sallyannealarm
“It’s changed my life” is just one of the many positive comments that have come from users of the AirText service.

Pioneered by Croydon in 2005, AirText is an early-warning system alerting sufferers of asthma, emphysema, bronchitis and heart disease about levels of air pollution that could be bad for their health.

The alerts are delivered in the form of a text message to subscribers’ mobile phones, typically warning of moderate, high or very high levels of air pollution.

And now, taking the service one step further, Croydon Council is issuing updates via email and voice message to landline phone services.

The joint initiative with the South West London Health Protection Unit, Cambridge Environmental Research Consultants and the European Space Agency’s Promote project is the first of its kind in the world.

And, since being launched in Croydon, it has been picked up by a further 20 local authorities, with more considering adoption of the service.

Clive Simmonds, a scientific officer in the council’s environmental health department, said: “We’re really pleased with the response we’ve had from subscribers; 64% of them have told us that the alerts have meant they’ve changed their lifestyle habits.

“If they’ve received notification of high air-pollution levels, they’ve either decided to stay indoors that day or taken their inhaler or medication with them when, otherwise, they wouldn’t have bothered.

“This is a valuable service and we’d recommend anybody who suffers from asthma, heart disease, or any COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), or anybody who cares for somebody with these conditions, to subscribe.

“An estimated 24,000 deaths and 24,000 hospital admissions are associated with air pollution in the UK every year, so anything that can help reduce those numbers has to be embraced.”

If you, or someone you care for, have asthma, emphysema, bronchitis or heart disease diagnosed by a doctor and would like to learn more about, or sign up to, the free service, contact the council’s environmental health team on 020 8760 5483.

For further information, visit www.croydon.gov.uk/airtext
Under the Sale of Goods Act 1979 (as amended) all goods have to be:
• of satisfactory quality and
• fit for the purpose they were sold.

Under the act, every shopper has statutory rights which can be exercised if the purchased product does not meet these requirements. If a fault is found, the shop must offer:
• a refund,
• an exchange,
• or a repair.

The remedy offered will be at the shop's discretion.

The customer is not entitled to anything if:
• they were told of the defect before purchase,
• it was reasonable to notice the defect before the goods were purchased,
• the goods are not liked or there has been a change of mind about them,
• the goods are damaged after purchase.

While some stores have a well-established reputation for offering a generous returns policy, they are not legally bound to offer this service. If in doubt, the customer should always ask about the store policy before making the purchase.

Pre- and post-shopping advice on goods and services is available from Consumer Direct on 08454 04 05 06. Personal callers wishing to see a consumer adviser can make an appointment through the One-Stop reception at Taberner House, Park Lane, or by emailing an enquiry to trading.standards@croydon.gov.uk.
I was very surprised to find moths on Riddlesdown during the winter. In the middle of the month, I spotted an example of the appropriately named species, early moth. These are found flying in January and February and, in common with other winter moths, the female is wingless. There are only a few species that fly during the winter and this one is quite common. Look out for the caterpillar, it feeds on hawthorn and blackthorn and can be found from April to May. You should also keep an eye open for roe deer; I’ve seen them in Ragged Grove. The feed on buds and leaves of deciduous trees and shrubs, bramble, rose, ivy, herbs, conifers, ferns, heather and grasses.

There are also muntjac deer on the common; these are the smallest British deer, smaller than a German shepherd dog and can easily be mistaken for a fox. It is thought these animals are descendants of escapees from Bedfordshire’s Woburn Park.

Hazel catkins would have put in an appearance during January. Pale yellow and up to five centimetres long, they look quite strange as the trees have no leaves at present. These are the male flowers; the female flowers are tiny red tufts, growing out of what look like swollen buds and visible on the same branches as the male catkins.

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Top-grade service for Croydon’s vulnerable adults

Croydon’s social services for adults has been awarded the maximum of three stars, confirming it as one of the best providers of caring services in the capital.

According to The Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI), which assesses the standard of care given to adults, Croydon Social Services is serving most people well, and there is an “excellent capacity for improvement.”

Councils are awarded an annual star rating, ranging from zero to three stars. A number of factors are considered, including the care and support for vulnerable adults in the borough and the capacity of the council to make improvements.

The council provides caring services for 4,700 adults, allowing them to live life as fully as possible.

The transformation of services – including the New4Old project, which is on target to develop significantly new residential and day-care services for older people – is among the many improvements highlighted in this year’s report.

Other improvements include:

- Timelier responses for referrals and assessments;
- Ensuring the contact centre deals with more referrals at initial contact;
- Establishing good partnership work which delivers on key strategic and joint working objectives;
- The continuing improvement of access to services for black and ethnic minority communities.

The value of the star-rating system is that it helps councils to improve the quality of services it provides to users and carers.
**Council**

Deadlines for public questions for forthcoming full council meetings (all start at 6.30pm). Noon on each relevant deadline date.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
<th>Cabinet member</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday 21 May, 2007 (5.30pm)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Clr Maria Gatland (education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 27 Feb, 2007 (5.30pm)</td>
<td>Monday 12 Feb, 2007</td>
<td>Clr Steve O'Connell (public protection and crime)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 6 Mar, 2007 (5.30pm)</td>
<td>Monday 19 Feb, 2007</td>
<td>Clr Phil Thomas (streets and environment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 13 Mar, 2007 (5.30pm)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 20 Mar, 2007 (5.30pm)</td>
<td>Monday 5 Mar, 2007</td>
<td>Clr Margaret Mead (social services)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

To submit a question for consideration at a full council meeting, email it to council.questions@croydon.gov.uk; fax it to 020 8760 5657; print and complete the form at www.croydon.gov.uk/councilquestion and post it to Ms Wriothesleyell Rehill, Democratic and Legal Services, Taberner House, Park Lane, Croydon CR9 3JS; or call 020 8726 6000 ext 62327.

**Scrutiny Sub-committee**

Deadlines for forthcoming Scrutiny Sub-committee public question sessions. Noon on each relevant deadline date.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 Feb Scrutiny and overview committee</td>
<td>22 Jan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Feb Education &amp; life-long learning</td>
<td>27 Nov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 Feb Safer communities</td>
<td>12 Feb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Mar Clean and green Croydon</td>
<td>19 Feb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Mar Integrated children’s services</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Mar Health and social care</td>
<td>5 Mar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To submit a question to a cabinet member at a Scrutiny Sub-committee Q&A session, email it to scrutiny.public.questions@croydon.gov.uk; fax it to 020 8760 5657; print and complete the form at www.croydon.gov.uk/scrutinyquestion and post it to Scrutiny Public Questions, Democratic and Legal Services, Taberner House, Park Lane, Croydon CR9 3JS; or call 020 8726 6000 ext 62529 or 62315.

**Neighbourhood Partnership**

Neighbourhood partnership meetings (all start at 7.30pm)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Group and venue</th>
<th>Venue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31 Jan</td>
<td>Addiscombe, Woodside &amp; Ashburton</td>
<td>Ashburton Community School, Shirley Road, Addiscombe</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 Feb</td>
<td>New Addington &amp; Fieldway</td>
<td>Rowdown Primary School, Calley Down Crescent, New Addington</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 Feb</td>
<td>Broad Green &amp; Waddon</td>
<td>Salvation Army Citadel, Booth Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 Feb</td>
<td>Thornton Heath, Bensham Manor &amp; West Thornton</td>
<td>Archbishop Lanfranc School, Mitcham Road</td>
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</table>

For information on Neighbourhood Partnerships, visit the website at www.croydon.gov.uk/ neighbourhood, email neighbourhood.partnerships@croydon.gov.uk; write to Neighbourhood Partnerships, Democratic and Legal Services, Taberner House, Park Lane, Croydon CR9 3JS or call 020 8726 6000 ext 62564 or 62396

**Croydon Community Police Consultative Group**

Meetings of the Croydon Community Police Consultative Group are held in the Council Chamber of the Town Hall. All begin at 6.30pm and are open to the public. For further information, go to www.croydononline.org/ccpcg

Forthcoming meeting dates are: Wednesday 21 March 2007

These meetings are to be transmitted using webcasting. They can be viewed at www.croydon.gov.uk/meetingsofthecouncil.

Details of all Croydon Council meetings can be found on the same page.
What's On February 07
www.croydon.gov.uk/leisure

LIVE EVENTS AT THE CLOCKTOWER
Ticket office: 020 8253 1030

Upfront Comedy Club presents International Double Bill
Thursday 1 February
8pm, on stage 8.30pm until 10.45pm
A night of international comedy with US comics Ian Salmon and Marc Theobald.
£10 and £7 concessions

Dune Music presents
BBC Jazz Awards, Rising Star 2006
Andrew McCormack Trio
Friday 2 February, 8-10pm
£11.50 (£7.80 concessions)

TESTING 1, 2, 3
The Search for Croydon’s Hottest Unsigned Musical Talent
Heats: 6, 7, 8 February
Grand Final: Friday 9 February
7.30pm (shows start 8pm)
Heats £3, Final £5

Richard Jordan presents
Dylan Thomas: Return Journey
Thursday 15 February,
1.30-3pm (no interval) and 8-9.50pm
(with interval)
Matinee: £7.80 (£5.50 concessions)
Evening: £11.50 (£7.80 concessions)

Riddlesdown High School in association with Croydon Clocktower presents
Science for All:
Black Holes, Worm Holes and Time Travel
Wednesday 28 February, 8-9pm
Exploring some of the most enthralling ideas in physics. Suitable for everyone aged 14-plus £5 (£3 concessions)

GUIDED WALKS & WILDLIFE EVENTS

Thursday 1 February
Mitcham Common midweek meander

Sunday 11 February
Sunday morning stroll on Mitcham Common

Sunday 11 February
What’s that tree?
Join the Addington Conservation Team on a 1-2 hour ramble through Birchwood

Sunday 11 February
Heath on the Pebbles at Croham Hurst

Saturday 17 February
Go LOOPY in Happy Valley & Farthing Downs

Sunday 18 February
King’s Wood – traces of man’s past

Sunday 18 February
What’s on the Commons?
Take a stroll across the commons and look at changes that have taken place over the past 100 years.

Saturday 24 February
Before the buds burst
Meet the Selsdon Wood Ranger for this late-winter tree-ID walk, suitable for all the family.
For information, go to www.croydon.gov.uk/leisure/events or call the community partnership officer on 020 8726 6900 ext 64952

The Active Lifestyles section runs weekly health walks, lasting about one hour. They are a great way to start exercising while enjoying Croydon’s green open spaces.

Monday
Lloyd Park, tram stop, at 11am and 1pm.

Tuesday
Kings Wood or Riddlesdown, meet at Hamsey Green at 11 am

Wednesday
South Norwood Country Park, at 11am

Thursday
Gravel Hill tram stop at 10.30am
Norbury, station at 1.30pm

Friday
Selsdon Wood, car park at 1.30pm
For further details call 020 8760 0778 or email sports@croydon.gov.uk

FILMS AT THE DAVID LEAN CINEMA

Black Book 16
Deep Water 16
Eight Below 16
Casino Royale 16
Gabrielle 16
Miss Potter 16
Flushed Away 16
Casablanca 16

Bringing Up Baby 16
The Last King of Scotland 16
The Queen 16
Danny The Champion of the World 16
Leonard Cohen: I’m Your Man 16
Bobby (15tbc)
Over the Hedge 16
Ghosts 16
Venus 16

www.croydon.gov.uk/leisure
Croydon Council deals with some 13,000 landsearch requests each year. We are the holders of the Local Land Charges Register and provide a search you can depend on with the speed that you require.

Whether you are buying, leasing or re-mortgaging a property we guarantee to provide you, usually through your solicitor or licensed conveyancer, the most accurate information to complete the conveyancing process. A Croydon landsearch supplies you with vital facts on ‘charges’ or legal obligations on your property as well as highway status and schemes, building control, planning history and such details relating to your new home.

With Croydon Council certification as standard, a landsearch provides you with the right information for your transaction and the highest level of reassurance.

Our trained staff promise ‘to provide the highest quality service, in both reliability and speed’. We have a strong reputation and a proven track record as an accurate, fast and efficient service, on which our customers can always rely.

We focus on developing our service to meet your needs in the biggest purchase of your life.

For more information please call us on: 020 8407 1331