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CABINET TO DECIDE ON FUTURE OF EAST GREEN

Councillors this week guaranteed that a consultation into the future of local authority care home, East Green in West Auckland, would be fair and thorough.

At a meeting of Durham County Council's Cabinet, members agreed to seek the views of residents, carers and staff on the proposed closure of the council-owned residential home.

The home is just one of several in the area who's future is in the balance, with care homes in Shildon and Ferryhill also under threat of closure or major changes.

The consultation will run from Monday, February 1st, to Friday, April 30th, and the council will now begin the process of setting up a dedicated phone line and email address.

Everyone affected by any changes to provision will be invited to give their views and all feedback will be taken into consideration before any decision is made, say cabinet members.



East Green Care home could close following consultation events.

Councillor Morris Nicholls, Durham County Council's Cabinet Member for Adult Services, said, "During a 12-week period we will not only be seeking the views of those currently living in local authority homes, but also their carers, family members, staff and other relevant individuals and organisations."

"Once the process is complete, we will then take some time

to collate and consider the feedback we receive so that we can make a fully-informed decision on the future of the services we provide.

"We are concerned that there has been some speculation that closures are inevitable and that the consultation will not be as full, fair, thorough and comprehensive as it should be. I would, therefore, like to stress that we are genuinely seeking people's views and that we will be taking those views into consideration when making any decision on the course of action to take."

Rachael Shimmin, Durham County Council's Corporate Director of Adults, Wellbeing and Health, said, "We are very much aware that this is an extremely emotive issue and one on which many people will want to give their views. "We would like to assure people that they will have a fair opportunity to get involved in the consultation and that their opinion will count."

Councillor Nicholls went on to say that, "An increasing number of older people are now choosing to remain in their own homes rather than move into residential care. This is reflected in a significant decrease in demand for residential places, with some local authority-run homes in the county operating at around 50 per cent occupancy."

SCHOOLS ARE MOVING ON UP

Two schools in Bishop Auckland are celebrating after being named as among the best in the country for improving pupils' levels of achievement. The figures on secondary school performance at GCSE were published last week by the government.

Half of Durham County Council's 36 secondary schools are in the top 10 per cent of schools nationally for their value added scores, which measure the progress pupils make from starting secondary school, aged 11, to the time they sit their GCSEs, aged 16.

And seven of those schools, which included King James I Community Arts College and Bishop Barrington School, were among the top 100 nationally for their value added scores, showing that pupils there made some of the highest and fastest levels of progress in the country.

Overall, Durham County Council has seen dramatic increases in the percentage of pupils achieving five or more

GCSE qualifications at grades C or above.

The improvement in the average point score shows that more pupils in Bishop Auckland are achieving more qualifications.

Councillor Claire Vasey, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services at Durham County Council, said, "I am absolutely delighted with these results, which show that pupils, schools and the county council are successfully and relentlessly driving up standards in educational attainment."

"This type of improvement is not easily achieved. It is the result of a great deal of hard work and commitment from everyone involved - from the pupils themselves, their families, teachers, school governors and the staff who work to support schools."

"I am very proud of their achievements and delighted that more and more young people are getting the qualifications they need to realise their ambitions."

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YOUTH GRANT COMPETITION

Bishop Auckland Town Council is inviting youth groups in the town to enter a competition whereby they could be given a grant of up to £3,000.

The competition is open to established youth groups working within Bishop Auckland Town Council area, and new groups intending to establish themselves with a youth project in mind.

Organisations are invited to apply for a sum of money up to £3,000 to fund a project which will enhance the experience/skills/creativity/ enjoyment of the young people involved, and will create a lasting benefit.

Up to three awards will be given annually at an Awards Ceremony in May, and one of the conditions will be that the winning groups keep a record of their projects in order to

give presentations about their progress the following year. The public will be invited to these awards.

In order to qualify for a grant, a project will have to be submitted by two adults from an established organisation for young people of any age between five and twenty. Applications will have to be fully costed.

Each application will be given equal treatment, whatever the sum applied for, and each will be assessed anonymously.

Applications forms are available from the Town Clerk's Office at The Four Clocks Centre, by calling 01388 609852 or by email at btac@btconnect.com and from the Town Hall.

They should be returned to the Town Clerk's Office by Monday, March 22nd.

CASTLE'S FUTURE HANGS IN THE BALANCE



The Church is looking to sell the 12th century palace.

The future of Auckland Castle is in dispute, after some Church officials have said the bishop's palace should be sold.

One such dignitary is the former Bishop for Urban Life and Faith, the Rt Rev Stephen Lowe, who believes that the castle is a prime asset which should be disposed of in order to provide greater pastoral care for people living in cities.

He wrote in a recent book, "If the Church spends excessively

on bishops and their houses there is going to be less in the way of cross-subsidisation and selective allocations to the dioceses, and thus the money demanded from poorer parishes will be greater."

The reverend is one of many of the opinion that it is not appropriate for the modern Church to keep such properties, and it should be sold for an estimated £2 million.

The Bishop of Durham,

however, opposes the proposal, and is insistent that he and his successors should continue to occupy the six-bedroom apartment in the 90-roomed 12th century palace.


It has been suggested that the castle could be turned into a hotel, apartments or museum, although there are concerns that buyers may be in short supply because of grade 1 listed status and the presence of tombs and a chapel.

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CLOTHES THEFT ACCUSED TO FACE CROWN COURT

Mr Peter Matthews, of John Terrace, Coronation, is to face a Crown Court Trial, after being accused of stealing £461

worth of clothes from a Bishop Auckland store. Matthews is said to have taken the clothes from Internationale

on August 16th last year. Bishop Auckland Magistrates granted him bail until Friday, January 29th.

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ASSAULTS DENIED

Anthony Jacques, currently of Railway Street, Bishop Auckland, pleaded not guilty to two charges of assault when he appeared at Newton Aycliffe Magistrates' Court recently.

The 30 year-old is accused of assault by beating and of occasioning actual bodily harm on a woman in Bishop Auckland on November 27th. It is alleged that after a disagreement with his partner, Jacques had grabbed her by the arm, banged her head against a brick wall and bitten

her finger. The defendant denied the facts of the case and his solicitor claimed that there was also an element of self defence in the matters.

Jacques pleaded guilty to a further charge of criminal damage arising out of the same incident.

He will return to the court on April 14th and was released on bail, conditions of which include him residing at his bail address, not entering Woodhouse Close Estate and not contacting the alleged victim.

STARS IN THEIR EYES CHARITY NIGHT

A Stars in Their Eyes Charity Night is to be held in The Belvedere WMC on Friday, January 29th.

The show will feature 24 individual performers and acts aged 9 to 60 years-old.

Each act will perform songs and dances across a two hour show, and there will be a guest appearance by the local trio The Northern Boyz.

The night will also include Stand Up, Sit Down Bingo and a Raffle. The event is being held in aid of Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital.

Doors open at 7.00pm, with the show starting at 8.00pm and finishing at 11.00pm. Admission is £3.00 on the door.

For any further details, contact Jan on 07801089339.

TEENAGER HIT BY CAR ON DURHAM ROAD

A young girl had to be rushed to hospital last week, after being hit by a car on Durham Road.

The incident occurred at around 8.45am on Thursday, January 14th, when a Vauxhall Corsa hit the teenager.

The road was cordoned off for an hour and a half, causing severe disruption to traffic.

The girl, along with a female passenger, was taken to the University Hospital of North Durham where they were treated for their injuries.

ADVICE SURGERIES

MP for Bishop Auckland, Helen Goodman, is to hold two advice surgeries in the coming weeks.

The first is scheduled to take place on Friday, February 5th,

from 5.00pm to 5.30pm at Cockfield WMC.

The second will take place at Shildon People's Centre in Main Street, from 5.00pm to 5.30pm on Friday, March 5th.

FINAL DEMOLITION OF OLD COLLEGE BUILDINGS BEGIN

The final demolition of the old Bishop Auckland College buildings, built in 1958 on Woodhouse Lane, has begun.

Contractors have moved onto the site to pull down and clear the last block standing, which was the original Technology area that housed the science laboratories, drawing offices, woodwork, brick, electrical and motor vehicle workshops. When the site has been cleared the area will be landscaped and used for further car parking.

The new College on Woodhouse Lane has been built in 2 stages. The first phase was opened by the Princess Royal in January, 2008, while the second phase was opened for students in September 2009.

A third phase of the College's new build programme, a brand new Skills & Employment Centre, opened in November 2009.

In total over £40m has been invested.

Principal Joanna Tait, (who is retiring from her post in March this year) said, "After three



The final stage of demolition at the college.

years we are now coming to end of an ambitious and much-needed new build.

"It is with great pride that throughout the period we have maintained our services and

commitment to our students.

We are now in the process of organising the official opening of phases two and three, which everyone is looking forward to."

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

Are you interested in researching your family tree and need some guidance on how to get started?

Then why not drop into the Library in Bishop Auckland Town Hall on Thursday,

January 28th, between 10.00am and 12noon, or 2.00pm to 4.00pm, when staff will be available to offer help and point you in the right direction, guide you through the basics and show you on-

line facilities available.

No appointments are necessary.

For further information, call Eileen or Hazel at Bishop Auckland Library on 01388 602610.

BUS SERVICE CHANGES

From Monday, February 1st, the schedule for the 4A and 4B Bishop Auckland to Shildon circular bus services will change.

On Monday to Friday the first 4B service will leave Bishop Auckland at 9.30am, the first 4A will depart at 10.00am.

No 4A or 4B services will run between 2.00pm and 3.30pm on weekdays during term

time, however, buses will run at this time during school holidays. A new bus service will run between Bishop Auckland and Newcastle's Eldon Square. The X23 Go North-East service will depart from Bishop Auckland Bus Station at 7.10am and, after stopping at various towns along the way, will arrive at Eldon Square at 8.40am. The return service will leave Newcastle at 5.15pm, calling at the same stops before arriving back in Bishop Auckland at 6.40pm.

Arriva 5/5A services will change from Sunday, January 31st.

On Sundays and Bank Holidays Arriva will operate a 5 service from Henknowle Estate to Durham, the service begins at 8.44am and runs hourly until 9.44pm. The Monday-Saturday services will remain unchanged.

The above changes will not affect the Go Ahead no. 21 service, which runs between Bishop Auckland and Newcastle via Durham.

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JOIN THE SPONSORED CALORIE BURN



Samantha Pascoe, Andrew Lawson, Adam Millward, Julie Tyrrie and Veronica Spoons.

A community gym in Tindale is celebrating the New Year by inviting members, old and new, to join in with a fundraising get-fit exercise.

Fit and Healthy Gym at the Aucklandgate Centre, Tindale Crescent, is ran by members of the local people; after consultation with residents in the area, goals are set and trained volunteers do their best to meet the community's stated needs.

The gym is self-funding, its chairperson, Samantha Pascoe said, "All our income is generated by ourselves through fund raising, sponsorship, grants and through our members themselves."

It is with fundraising in mind that the gym has come up with its latest initiative; a sponsored calorie burn. Members will ask friends, family and colleagues to sponsor their attempts to burn off 5,000 calories between

the beginning of February and the end of March.

Samantha said that people should not be put off by the perceived scale of the task, as a 'little by little' approach would reap great rewards. Speaking of the challenge, she said, "This is very achievable, as the rowing machine, treadmill and bike will show calories burnt, and the easyline toning equipment used for 20 minutes burns 140 calories."

Sam said that new members and volunteers of all abilities would be welcomed with open arms. She said, "This is a place where people can feel comfortable with themselves. "All the volunteers make people feel very welcome, very comfortable. In this environment there is no competition about who looks best."

The gym has been running for two years and is part of the legacy of the Wellness on

Wheels program. Julie Tyrrie, an employee of Durham County Council who works with the gym, said that the gym did it's best to offer, "Affordable, low-cost exercise on peoples' doorsteps."

Veronica Spoons, a member, spoke of her positive experiences of the gym. She said that exercising there was a good way to meet new people and added, "It is a good way to socialise with people."

All money raised by the scheme will be re-invested into the gym, to buy new equipment for the use of the local community.

The gym is currently open Monday to Thursday between 9.30am - 10.30am and 6.00pm-8.00pm, although the gym is looking for volunteers who can help expand the service.

If you would like to become a member or volunteer at the gym, call Samantha Pascoe on 01388 603780.

ANIMAL SANCTUARY FUNDRAISER

Kayshill Animal Sanctuary, at Bildershaw, is holding a charity night at Middlestone Moor W.M.C on Rock Road, Spennymoor on Saturday, February 13th, from 8.00pm. The evening will feature a performer, who will be

singing lots of songs from the 60's.

Tickets to the event cost £6, and there will be a free light buffet as well as a raffle and quiz. For more information or tickets, contact organisers on 07817880770.

DUE IN COURT

Adam James Ridley of Edgar Grove, Bishop Auckland faces four charges relating to road traffic offences in Dent Street, Shildon, on November 28th. The 23 year-old is accused of taking a vehicle without

the owner's consent, driving whilst disqualified, driving without insurance and failing to provide a specimen of blood for laboratory testing in the course of investigating matters.

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BISHOP AUCKLAND HERO BROUGHT HOME

A soldier was this week repatriated to Bishop Auckland after he was killed in a bomb blast last Friday. Thirty year-old father of two, Corporal Lee Brownson was killed in a blast near Sangin in the infamous Helmand province; the blast also claimed the lives of two of Cpl Brownson's comrades. The tragedy is further compounded by the fact Cpl Brownson's widow is currently expecting the couple's third child. Family and friends paid glowing tributes to Cpl Brownson, painting the picture of a loving man who put the well-being of others before himself. A Facebook page dedicated to Cpl Brownson has received thousands of messages of condolence.



Cpl Lee Brownson was sadly killed in Helmand Province in Afghanistan.

Mrs Brownson has encouraged people to show support for troops deployed in Afghanistan by donating

towards an online appeal that was organised by 3 Rifles. To make a donation visit www.swiftandbold.org.

All the staff at The Bishop Press send our deepest condolences to Cpl Brownson's family and friends.

SEVEN YEARS FOR FATAL BEEHIVE ATTACK

A 26 year-old man who was convicted of the manslaughter of Bishop Auckland man, Stephen Wilson, has been

sentenced to seven years in prison. Maurice Rowell, of Hardisty Crescent, denied the charge but was found guilty of

attacking Mr Wilson, also of Hardisty Crescent, outside of The Beehive pub in August of last year.

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Letters to the Editor

This correspondent writes regarding dog fouling in the Etherley Dene area of Bishop Auckland.....

Dear Editor,
A host of residents have been complaining and reporting the amount of dog fouling in the Etherley Dene area of Bishop Auckland to Durham County Council.
Excessive dog fouling has been reported, especially on the footpaths leading from the playing fields behind Champion Drive, leading to Escombe Junior School, which is used daily by local residents and children.
Residents have also been reporting dog fouling on the

children's playing field, and also on the footpaths in Clover Drive and Snowdrop Way.
Durham County Council have been informed and assured that the local wardens would be monitoring the situation and, if found to be necessary, to put more signs up to remind those people responsible that they should pick up their own dog foul and place it in the dog bins provided.
A concerned resident.
Name and address withheld on request.

Send your letters, on any subject, to 3 - 4 First Floor Offices, Shildon Town Council Building, Civic Hall Square, Shildon, DL4 1AH. Alternatively, email bishoppress@yahoo.co.uk, or leave it t the Town Hall or Woodhouse Close Library. Please include your full name, address and contact details, and state if you would like to remain anonymous.

CRIME WAVE HITS LOCAL LIBRARIES

During the month of February there will be many crime related incidents in the libraries in the west of the County, including Bishop Auckland.
But don't worry, the perpetrators have all been welcomed in - published crime authors, all experts in their chosen field.
On Wednesday, February 17th

at 7.30pm, a Murder Mystery 'Dance of Death' event will take place at Bishop Auckland Library, ran by author, Roz Southey.
Places are limited and admission for each event costs £1.00. For more information on this event and those at other local libraries, call Bishop on 01388 602610.

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BISHOP AUCKLAND 5 SOUTH SHIELDS 1

Bishop Auckland FC played their first game in five weeks against South Shields, the side who hammered them 8-1 earlier in the season.

Bishops were hoping to put on a much better display this time around, and the return of Wayne Gredziak and Amar Purewal after a broken leg and foot, respectively, was a major boost.

Two minutes into the game, the Bishops made a nightmare start with Ord failing to clear a ball to the corner of the box. The ball was lifted in over Jeffries head and Stephen Ramsey headed the ball in from close to the line.

After the early goal the game went quiet for about 20 minutes until Bishops made a crucial breakthrough, equalising on 20 minutes. Emson turned and shot and Shields 'keeper Nicki Lawson could only parry the ball into the path of Wayne Gredziak who made no mistake with the rebound.

There were chances at either end as the half wore on, but neither side capitalised and the score remained 1-1 when the

whistle blew for half time.

Bishops started the second half brightly and the first big incident came on 49 minutes when Emson curled a cross just over the leaping Gredziak. The ball ended up with Shields captain Graham past the far post and he controlled the ball with his hand before hacking it to safety. Although Bishop were adamant they should have been awarded a penalty, Referee Traynor was unmoved.

Bishops did not have to wait long for a goal, and they took a 2-1 on 52 minutes. A right wing corner was swung in by Emson, Salvin deflected the ball with his foot and it looped into the top corner of the net.

Bishops continued to attack, while Shields looked increasingly nervous. Despite numerous chances it wasn't until the 61st minute that Bishop extended their lead. Salvin pushed the ball through to Gredziak who pushed the ball under the advancing Lawson and into the net to make it 3-1.

The Shields defence at this

stage was in tatters, bickering with each other and the match officials. Bishops kept the pressure on.

After a couple of minor scares in the Bishops defence, it was the Two Blues who were once again in the ascendancy as the chances came thick and fast. Bishops made sure of the victory after 82 minutes. Tyson Masters made it 4-1 when Emson slid a pass between two Shields defenders and the striker pushed the ball past the 'keeper and just inside the far post.

Masters, in his penultimate game for the club before he departs for his homeland, was replaced by Harry Drummond with five minutes remaining. Three minutes before time Bishops added a little sparkle to the result, Gredziak passed to Emson who hit a cross shot from 20 yards low into the far corner of the net for 5-1.

A superb attacking performance in the second half with Bishops made amends for the November drubbing as Bishop helped themselves to three more points.

TAX OFFICE TO CLOSE

Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has confirmed that the Bishop Auckland Tax Office is to close, leaving the 19 people employed there uncertain about their future. The office is just one of 130 due to close, after HMRC said it would be of benefit to customers to close smaller offices and bring staff together in larger teams. However,

the Public and Commercial Services Union has stated that up to 1,700 jobs could be lost as a result.

PCS General Secretary, Mark Serwotka, said, "Access to tax advice across the UK will be damaged by the confirmation of these closures, which will hit businesses and the public, as well as taking jobs out of communities in a recession."

BISHOP'S GOT TALENT (WE HOPE...)

Bishop Auckland FC manager, Colin Myers, has organised another fundraising evening for the club, which will take place in the clubhouse at West Auckland FC on Saturday, January 23rd, starting at 7.00pm.

The current Bishop Auckland squad and management team are going to display an array

of previously hidden talents to a panel of distinguished judges and the audience.

Admission is £5.00, which includes pie and peas and entry to the raffle.

Tickets can be obtained on the door. To put your name down for a ticket, contact John Cowey at coweyhome@tiscali.co.uk.

TICKETS UP FOR GRABS

The Bishop Press has a pair of tickets up for grabs to see Killers tribute band, the Fillers. The event will take place at Shildon's Civic Hall on Friday, February 5th, and also features two support bands. To win the tickets, worth

£10 each, simply answer the following question: Who is the drummer with the Killers?

Email your answers to bishoppress@yahoo.co.uk, or send them by post to 3-4 First Floor Offices, Shildon, County Durham, DL4 1AH.

NOT GUILTY PLEA ENTERED

Gary King of Woodhouse Close, pleaded not guilty to a charge of assault when recently he appeared before Newton Aycliffe Magistrates. The 45 year-old is accused of assaulting a woman in Bishop

Auckland on 14th November 2009. King admits being at the scene but denies what is alleged. The defendant was released on unconditional bail and will return to the court on April 22nd.

IMPROVE YOUR LANGUAGE AND MATHS SKILLS

People in the town can brush up on their maths and English skills by calling into the local library next month.

As part of a national Festival of Learning event, 12 libraries across the county are challenging residents to take a literacy or numeracy mini test.

Skills for Life and IAG tutors from Durham County Council will be visiting the

libraries during the next couple of weeks and inviting members of the public to sit a mini test.

Anyone who takes the test can then register to take a national adult literacy or numeracy qualification, equivalent to a GCSE, and may also be offered help to improve their basic skills.

Julie West, Interim Lifelong Learning Manager, said, "This

is an opportunity for people to put their skills to the test and gain a nationally-recognised qualification.

"Our tutors will also be on hand to offer information on local courses where they can improve their skills."

Lifelong Learning and IAG tutors will be visiting Woodhouse Close Library on Thursday, February 4th, from 10.00am to 4.00pm.

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