

# Buzz

## No reprieve for Oaks patients

PATIENTS who had been on 'the list' at The Oaks Medical Centre in Beeston for many years were shocked and angry to receive a letter from the Villa Street surgery asking them to find themselves another doctor.

The letter, sent out towards the end of January, said the list needed to be cut due to growth in the size of the practice over the years and the difficulty visiting some patients because of traffic congestion. Some of the surgery's patients live as far away as Ruddington.

Patients in receipt of the letter were given just four weeks in which to re-register with another "more local" doctor as the Beeston practice enforces its boundary demarcation.

One patient from the Bramcote area was particularly dismayed, not

just at what he saw as the cursory tone of the letter, but because he has used the practice for 45 years and been with the same doctor for 20 years.

"My entire family has been brought up with the same doctor at The Oaks. Now, at the age of 67 and after a couple of quite serious health problems, one ongoing, my doctor literally knows me inside out. Yet I've brusquely been asked to find myself another one.

Another patient said: "My wife and I have suddenly been 'bumped off' the list at The Oaks after 40 years. I'm diabetic and I'm already worried about getting the medication I need.

"My first reaction when I read the letter was one of disbelief. It's not as simple as 'find yourself another doctor' and registering.

There has to be a re-building of trust between yourself and a new doctor, and that might not happen so easily."

The spokesman for The Oaks Medical Centre, Dr Guy Mansford, said that they were not in a position to make any exceptions: "We have a great deal of sympathy with those patients affected by our decision to enforce the practice boundaries, but we have no choice. At one time, the Primary Care Trust (PCT) would let us close our lists to new patients for a few months when they got too long, but we're not allowed to do that any more."

Practice boundaries weren't formalised until the 1990s, when they had to be declared to the PCT. Even so, a surgery might still apply a bit of leniency if a patient moved to just outside

the boundary.

Dr Mansford said: "The practice boundary between Beeston and Bramcote and Stapleford is the A52. If people moved over it, we would have said 'That's OK, don't worry' but we can't do that now. We have had to be absolutely fair in this decision and say: "Sorry, but everyone outside of the boundary is asked to move.

"In reality, we could do with a smaller boundary. We are bursting at the seams with the list at its present size. What would happen if we were to go off with stress?

"We had to find a way of keeping our workload at a manageable level, and this was all discussed with the PCT."

## Snippets

### Charity Fundraising Day

TO celebrate her birthday on January 25, Eileen Hall held an 'Open House' at her home on Stapleford Lane, Toton, raising £453 for the Church of England Children's Society in the process. The money was raised through the sale of light refreshments and at various stalls.

'Log Books' depicting work that has been ongoing in Toton to assist the Children's Society since 1968 were on display and generated considerable interest amongst the visitors.

Unsold items were passed to the Friends of Kenya at Alvaston, Derbys. Mrs Elaine Payne of Toton won the 'Winter Warmers' competition.

### Beeston Library Temporary Closure

BEESTON Library will be closed from Monday, March 1 to allow a number of improvements to be made to the layout of the building and the organisation of the stock. These improvements will include the installation of self-service equipment.

The library will re-open on Monday, March 22.

### Rounds of Christmas spirit

BEESTON Round Table raised a record £4374 with their Christmas float collections in December 2009, and wish to thank everybody who gave so generously. The money will be distributed to needy causes in the Beeston area over the coming year.

Spokesman Andy Guy said: "We have already spent some of this money in producing 80 Christmas hampers for the elderly in need in Beeston. These were delivered in December, each hamper containing an invitation to a Christmas lunch held at Christchurch Hall, Chilwell, on January 16."

## Between you and me...

*BROXTOWE MP Nick Palmer writes his monthly column for the Beeston Express to keep us, his constituents, up-to-date and informed. We would like to remind you, however, that the views he expresses are his own and do not necessarily reflect those of The Beeston Express. If you would like to comment on any of the issues he raises, please write to the address on page 2.*

*The Beeston Express has no allegiance to any political party.*



### What do MPs do?

AS the gruesome expenses scandal winds to its conclusion (in case you missed it, the ruling for me was simply "Dr Palmer has no issues"), I thought it'd be interesting to discuss the more positive side of the coin. What do MPs do?

What you get actually varies a lot, because there are many ways to balance the job. But the basic structure common to nearly all MPs is this:

**Monday:** Travel to Westminster around lunchtime, stay till around 10.30pm.

**Tuesday:** Formal session starts at 2.30pm and continues until around 10.30pm.

**Wednesday:** Start at 11.30am and go on to 7.30pm.

**Thursday:** Start at 10.30am;

go on to 6pm before returning to constituency.

**Friday:** Anything involving schools and workplaces in the constituency.

**Saturday/Sunday:** Surgeries, visiting people at home.

To fit into that structure, you have:

- Around 100-120 letters and emails to answer each day.

- A choice of up to six formal debates on each Westminster day. For example, on Tuesday the main debate was on constitutional reform, but in parallel we were debating child poverty, conflict prevention, seagulls (!?), alcohol fraud and compensation for miners' knee injuries.

- Daily questions to each Minister in turn (PM

Questions being the well-known and rowdiest example – others are normally quieter and more sensible).

- A choice of numerous all-party groups discussing specialist subjects. Also on Tuesday, we had NHS trusts, rural services, space science, drugs misuse, renewable transport, freight transport, classical music on radio, children in custody, the Russian judiciary, skills in retail, occupational pensions, marine engineering, Burma, farm animal welfare and democracy in Pakistan.
- Bill committees. Every law is scrutinised line by line, and if you want to, you can take part in scrutinising a proposed law (Bill).
- Select Committees. Every Ministry is shadowed

by an all-party Select Committee, which calls witnesses, quizzes Ministers and makes recommendations (I'm currently on the Justice Committee, which has just published a 100-page report on prisons).

- Political meetings. Each party will from time to time invite MPs to discuss policy and campaigns.
- Constituency surgeries.
- Door-to-door canvassing/consulting – simply visiting people to keep in touch.
- Local events and helping out in crises (for instance, when the Toton Sidings clearance became known, I rushed round to see the site as soon as I was back in the constituency, then followed up by tracing the new owners and contacting

the Forestry Commission).

As you can see, there's a lot of scope but in practice you can't do everything (which is why the main Chamber is generally more than half-empty).

On an average week day, I'll spend at least half the time answering letters and emails (in many cases referring the details to my staff) and the other half going to meetings, committees or debate. In the constituency, I'll probably spend 80 percent of the time on letters and emails (catching up, as I can't keep up on Westminster days) and 20 percent on local meetings and surgeries. I also try to keep Wednesday and Sunday evenings free for private/family relaxation, but in general work an 80-plus hour week, up past midnight

most nights.

The work is enormously satisfying, because when you're responding to letters you're actually helping to solve people's problems (I rarely get round Sainsbury's without someone thanking me for something, though it's often my staff that solved the problem), and when you're in debates you're helping decide policies that affect millions of people.

The workload is too much to be sensible – whatever you're doing, you feel guilty you're not doing something else. It's a wonderful job, though, and it's so tragic that the scandals have dragged it in the mud.

Whoever is in the next Parliament, I hope that those of us who can stay on will help bring the best side of politics back to the fore.