

OurView

Why can't our MPs speak for themselves on pay rise issue?

WHEN it comes to the furore over a planned 11 per cent pay hike for MPs, it is important to recognise that this is the brainchild of the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority, not politicians themselves. In fact, MPs have been placed in an invidious position, as they will catch all the flak even though they have absolutely no say or sway over whether the pay rise is implemented.

If IPSA does approve the increase in the face of howls of protest, then that extra cash will start landing in bank accounts in 2015, even if MPs say they don't want it.

But taking all that into account, the responses from the majority of Oxfordshire's MPs to some straightforward questions yesterday was poor at best and deliberately evasive at worst.

They are paid (11 per cent rise or not) to represent their constituents and hold themselves accountable to them.

So, for the county's five Tory MPs to avoid answering one simple question about what they will do with the pay rise did not speak well of their willingness to front up on a thorny issue.

Three of them – Sir Tony Baldry, David Cameron and John Howell – ignored the question and instead parroted suspiciously similar platitudes, which indicates they were regurgitating a party line rather than being frank with ordinary taxpayers who pay their wages. One, Ed Vaizey, did not respond at all.

The level of MPs' pay is a complex debate that has still not been aired properly. A good starting point would be some plain and independent speaking from our elected representatives.

IPSA may yet have a change of heart on the pay increase.

If it does not, then do make sure you fire off a few straight questions of your own when your local MP pitches up on the doorstep asking you to vote for them in less than 18 months time.

A life of ease for all at Yellow Submarine

YELLOW Submarine is a fine charity that does good work supporting people with learning disabilities.

Today we report how it is auctioning off a desk on eBay that it has been able to get a host of musical celebrities to sign.

It's a unique idea from a progressive charity and we hope the auction helps Yellow Submarine live a life of ease.

Ourpolicy

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University Life

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Long way from Brookes' small art school origins



BOOK PLANS: Steve Buchanan, at Oxford Brookes University, and below graduates celebrating their success

Main Picture: OX64027 Damian Halliwell

IN 2015 Oxford Brookes University will celebrate 150 years since it started life as a small art school operating from one room in the Taylor Institution.

The celebrations will be officially announced in March next year with a spectacular Live Friday event planned for the Ashmolean – next door to the Taylorian – and will continue into 2015 with a series of amazing events and activities.

To accompany this feast of festivities will be an anniversary book featuring 150 stories that makes Oxford Brookes great and I've been tasked with managing the production. And what a task!

It's true to say that this type of book usually follows a more traditional format, but ours will be more than just a coffee table book.

It will be a vibrant mix of written stories, photography and illustration, which you can dip in an out of, celebrating the diversity of the university, and it will be something for all to enjoy.

The thought of finding 150 stories terrified me to begin with and, as other universities have a longer history, it was a case of where do you start? My first port of call was to the university's archive.

I've been at Oxford Brookes for four years now and I'm ashamed to say that I'd never frequented this Aladdin's Cave.

Maintained by the archivist, Dr

Steve Buchanan

Publications manager at Oxford Brookes University



Eleanor Possart, it has an abundance of artefacts, from paintings to pottery, gifts from the gods (well, the governors) and, for me, most notably, Chef Ken Hom's absolutely astonishing donation of over 2,000 cookery books.

So what better way to whet your appetite for the Oxford Brookes book than to start sharing some of these wonderful objects and stories with you?

In the next few *University Life* articles, we'll give you a snapshot of the stories from all of Brookes' incarnations.

Some are from the archives, and some from people we've interviewed

and met along the way, so you can begin to get a picture of our distinctive past.

I'll start 25 years ago and my reference point is the Oxford Polytechnic Full-Time Prospectus for the 1989 entry.

A lot is still the same; we're still in the fabulous setting of Oxford, we still have great teaching spaces (and this will be cemented with the opening of the John Henry Brookes building in 2014) and we still thrive on providing the best possible experience for our students.

But upon reading, I saw quite a few obvious differences.

The fashion and haircuts was the

obvious feature that stood out (however, many of our students ironically model similar now) and Dr Clive Booth was at the helm.

In 1989, there were 5,000 full-time students. As we approach 2014, and following many changes to the institution such as taking on Westminster College, we'll have 18,000. There were also 850 members of teaching and non-teaching staff, there are now around 2,500.

There were just two main campuses 25 years ago: Headington and Wheatley.

Now we have five, with Harcourt (home of Westminster College which is now our School of Education), Marston and Ferndale in Swindon.

It will be hidden gems like this that will bring our book to life, but I do need more.

So, do you know a quirky story or an unusual tale about Oxford Brookes?

Or even better, you may have a secret to share or an old rumour that you've kept quiet.

If so, I'd love to hear from you because no matter how big or small, strange or absurd, we'll certainly consider it, as long as it's not photos of students with 80's hairstyle though. We're alright for those.

If you have a story about Oxford Brookes, we'd love to hear about it.

▲ Please contact us on 150years@brookes.ac.uk with all the details.