

All letters, including those sent by email, must include a name and address which can be withheld from publication on reasonable request. Please keep letters brief, those tackling local issues get priority

# OPINIONS

Sunday except for those that serve hospitals up to 7.30pm, and cut the bus subsidy for all other routes which could mean some 29 bus routes being cut completely, seven days a week.

They are now planning to reduce the spend on buses by £2.2m out of the current budget of £3.8m – some 58 per cent.

Heartless Herts Tories want to cut the only means of transport for tens of thousands of residents, whether to get to work, hospital, shopping or just going out.

This will leave tens of thousands of people without access to public transport when they need it.

We cannot allow this cull of our public transport service to happen and we will be fighting from now until next May, when the final decision is made, to stop this.

In the meantime we urge residents to respond to the consultation when it comes out in January, and sign our petition and others which may be raised.

**Stephen Giles-Medhurst,**  
Liberal Democrat group leader,  
Herts County Council

## Tests can reveal undiagnosed HIV

The Public Health England HIV in the United Kingdom: 2014 Report, released this week, shows that there are nearly 110,000 people living with HIV in the UK.

Approximately a quarter of these are unaware of their infection, and

this shows just how important it is to increase testing both locally and nationally.

We're calling for people in Hertfordshire to consider taking a test, especially with National HIV Testing Week starting on Saturday.

To make it easy, we're offering testing in a wide range of venues throughout the week including GP surgeries, pharmacies, community venues and clinics.

If you think you might have been at risk please get more information or a test. Visit [www.hertsaid.co.uk](http://www.hertsaid.co.uk) to find an event near you.

**Suzanne Bannister,**  
director, Herts Aid

## Thanks for backing our Christmas event

I'd like to say a huge thank you to everyone who came along to Nobel's Christmas Fayre on Saturday – we raised £524 for our sixth form and Macmillan Cancer Support.

Many sixth form students dedicated hours to make this day the success it was – thank you to you all and well done! Another big thank you also to the talented students who entertained us throughout the event as well as all those who ran stalls – you were brilliant! Nobel staff have supported us throughout preparation for this event and on the day itself and so shouldn't be missed out. Early Christmas good wishes to you all!

**Holly Ingram,**  
head girl, Nobel School

## SPEAKER'S CORNER

**D**id you see the reports in the Sunday papers, highlighting how many chief executives of well-known charities pull down six figure salaries, and how many of their management teams are earning £60,000 a year or more?

I certainly did, and it's easy to understand why, when the word 'charity' is mentioned, some people feel disillusioned.

With such high administrative costs, they feel that any pound they donate might not serve the need they intended it to.

But what goes for national charities certainly doesn't apply closer to home – and that's one of the many reasons that I'm so proud to chair the Stevenage Community Trust.

We have an incredibly lean model, with just one part time employee, supported by 16 trustees who volunteer their time, working alongside many others in the town who have a passion for helping individuals within our community and local organisations who need our help.

We have just one part timer on the payroll, and we also have no office costs thanks to a recent move to The Follett Office in

## Fatcat charity bosses? Trust us, we're not like that at all...



by Rob Stewart

Chairman, Stevenage Community Trust

Stevenage Old Town, which is generously helping us maintain our efficient and effective model.

If you haven't heard about the Trust before, let me tell you that we were one of the first community trusts in the UK.

We were founded by a Labour Mayor of Stevenage, Hilda Lawrence, chaired by a Liberal Democrat – Lord Cobbold – and supported by a Conservative MP, Tim Wood. Local businesses became founder members of the Trust nearly 25 years ago with the sole purpose of doing more than

just paying corporation tax and national insurance.

They recognised they were benefitting from the efforts of local people on their payroll and it made moral and ethical sense to support the local community. It made good business sense, too.

Our next fundraising event, on Friday, December 12, is our annual Celebrity Lunch.

This year's speaker is BBC Radio 5 Live presenter Garry Richardson, who has interviewed world leaders such as Nelson Mandela and President Bill Clinton, and he will no doubt be entertaining and insightful.

We are asking for your help to create a record-breaking audience – tickets are £49, or perhaps your company might like to book a table?

You can get full details about our big event from [Caroline@stevenagecommunitytrust.org](mailto:Caroline@stevenagecommunitytrust.org) – our one part-time member of staff would be delighted to hear from you!

Contributions to Speaker's Corner are welcome – if you've got something to say, if you can say it in 400 words, get in touch to find out how you can reach our readers. Email editor John Francis ([john.francis@thecomet.net](mailto:john.francis@thecomet.net)) for full details

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