

BVRA newsheet

from the Banstead Village Residents' Association

Volume 25 : No. 3 – Autumn 2009

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

You will find the information on our routine activities in the various sections below. Planning matters have been dominated by the Local Development progress, Wellesford Close proposals (again, following an appeal by Whitecote, the developers who bought the Legal and General land), and by Waitrose (still), which plans to reopen at the end of November.

The Banstead & District Federation met in July when we were joined by the Rt Hon. Chris Grayling, MP for Epsom – see Catalina Vassallo-Bonner's article below. The matter of the Town Centre Management group and its associated Christmas Lights remains an issue – you must be fed up with hearing about it by now – which we also describe below. I propose to focus my introduction to this issue on the matter of the Longcroft Clinic, which was trailed in our last NewsSheet.

At the AGM on May 20th we were treated to an interesting presentation from the three senior doctors at the Clinic. The AGM was particularly well attended and it became clear that this is a matter of real concern to our residents. Thank you all for coming and making it a lively AGM.

In a nutshell, the problem over the Longcroft Clinic is the lack of space at its current location, which for many years has limited the number of doctors and the range of clinical services they can offer. They need more room for up-to-date equipment that will allow them to carry out the functions to be expected these days in primary care. Surrey NHS would be able to provide a new site in the Horseshoe for an improved clinic if they are prepared to do so, but the source of funds to build a new facility is uncertain. Your Surrey County Council (SCC) councillor Mrs Angela Fraser is working with Surrey NHS to resolve the issue, but it is not a simple matter to find the funds, as these could amount to some £5 million capital cost. The Primary Care Trust (PCT, now named Surrey NHS) recently held a meeting at the Longcroft Clinic but disappointingly little progress towards a new Clinic seems to have emerged. We have therefore prepared a Petition asking for urgent action on the matter, which we have lodged at the Longcroft Clinic for patients to sign. Please try to find the time to sign this so that we can put additional pressure on the PCT to find a speedy solution. In addition, included with this NewsSheet is a letter setting out the situation in more detail urging you to find the time to write (preferably in your own words) in support of the need for new facilities.

I hope you find the rest of this NewsSheet interesting, and that you all enjoy as good a start to the new academic year as the current economic difficulties allow. By the time you receive this it will only be three months to Christmas which thought should (but may not!) cheer everyone up.

Roger Collins, Chairman

01737 358384

BANSTEAD VILLAGE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

FEDERATION of RAs

The quarterly meeting of the Banstead and District Federation of Residents' Associations took place, as usual, at Toyota on July 24th. Our guest speaker was Chris Grayling MP who, as we know, is a champion of Epsom

Hospital. He was an interesting speaker, talking about the hospitals and other parliamentary interests. Among other matters, we were told that Epsom St Helier have published a profit and loss account which shows that the two hospitals have each made a small profit, but are financially inter-dependent.

Apart from our guest speaker, the Federation has finally ratified its updated constitution and we were delighted to welcome the chairmen of Netherne on the Hill RA and Outwood Lane RA. The addition of these two Residents' Associations brings the member associations up to fourteen, covering the whole of the northern part of the borough. It was interesting to listen to the chairman of Netherne on the Hill and hear about the challenges which his association is tackling. The older associations have pressures of planning and infrastructure to deal with while Netherne RA is working hard to create an homogenised unit out of a brand new community and tackle those issues which come with this.

The next meeting of the Federation will be on Friday October 23rd.

Catalina Vassallo-Bonner 01737 357882

HEALTH SERVICES

In addition to the developing situation in regard to the Longcroft Clinic (see my

Introduction), there is also the matter of Epsom District Hospital (EDH), currently part of Epsom & St Helier NHS Trust. According to a report in the *Epsom Guardian* local newspaper, councillors, residents' associations and other organisations were being invited to a meeting to discuss 'five or six options for the hospital'; it is their intention to publish plans for its future in November. We enquired why no such invitation had been received either by BVRA or by the Federation to be told that there was no space and that Reigate & Banstead were already represented by nominees of the Council. It was insisted that we could not attend, although other RAs such as Bookham would be there. The Federation represents some 30,000 residents, almost all of whom see EDH as their nearest hospital, and we consider that this was thoroughly unreasonable on the part of Surrey NHS.

As reported above, the Federation meeting in July had the benefit of the Rt Hon Chris Grayling's presence and he gave a very interesting confidential explanation of his own vision for EDH - he is very positive about its future. The *Epsom Guardian* article stated that the decision is still to be made whether to continue the linkage with St Helier or to 'forge links with other hospitals' (unnamed); it is apparently not an option for EDH to become a stand-alone trust.

We await a briefing from our councillors on what was said at the August meeting. It is unfortunate that the NHS Trusts are not accountable in any democratic way - only to the Secretary of State for Health - and choose not to consult directly with voters who actually depend on their facilities.

Roger Collins

01737 358384

TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP

The TCM meetings

These have been taking place more or less bi-monthly for many years, but appear to be a casualty of the Council's cash squeeze arising from the collapse of earnings from interest on their capital reserves. While in recent times it has not been dynamic, with very poor attendance by local businesses (the original raison d'être of the TCM was to provide a forum for discussions between the council and the commercial interests in Banstead Village), it is nevertheless a backward step for us to lose this route for making our views known jointly to businesses and the council's representatives. With this loss also go a number of funding lines that we have enjoyed over past years, notably any further subsidy for the **Christmas Lights**. We should be able to ensure that the Lights go up again this Christmas, but after that there will be no funds unless local businesses will subscribe to this initiative – and without an active business forum, or other specific fund-raising group, this appears unlikely.

Given the enormous efforts made by Pam Goldsack and her team to raise the original funds for the **Let There Be Light** initiative it is hard to see anyone taking on the task to raise more funds on an annual basis. While we are grateful to the Council for providing funds over the last nine years, it will be sad if this is the last year of the Lights. Justin Heraghty-Plant has again kindly agreed to organise the lights this year; if anyone is prepared to assist him in future, he might be prevailed upon to tackle the funding needed next year to allow us to continue the

tradition. But if the lights are to continue we will need further sponsorship (and a volunteer or two)!

Waitrose Sponsorship: We are also pleased to report that Waitrose have agreed to the Christmas Lights fund being one of their October sponsored charities (through its "green disc" scheme).

Roger Collins

01737 358384

PLANNING

1. Local Development Framework: core strategy

You will remember from the last NewsSheet our Chairman mentioned that BVRA had been invited to attend a Pre-Hearing Meeting on May 20th. This was to discuss the procedures and administration for an Examination in Public of the Core Strategy element of the Local Development Plan. Unfortunately, the Inspector appointed to examine the Core Strategy had doubts as to the soundness of the document, especially in the proposed number of new houses (9,200) to be built between 2006 and 2026. This figure was based on an earlier government demand and, as at that moment the Government hadn't passed the South East Plan with its demand for 11,400 new houses in Reigate & Banstead, the council felt that the best option was to concentrate on a certainty rather than an uncertainty. As well as the housing figures the Inspector felt there was a lack of information about the necessary infrastructure and education and health needs which would arise with a large development. It so happened that a few days before this meeting the Communities Minister had signed off the South East Plan so that the borough's mandatory

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contribution to the housing stock for the South East was fixed at 10,000, not 11,400. After serious deliberations at the meeting the Inspector decided to suspend the proposed Core Strategy and give the council policy department the opportunity to make the necessary amendments. The result of this is that, once again, between August 21st and October 2nd of this year, we are in the throes of a public consultation based on the amendments to the original Core Strategy, which to be on the safe side, provides evidence in support of its ability to meet not only the 10,000 dwellings now demanded, but if necessary the 11,400 formerly in the SE Plan.

A positive result for Banstead and environments as well as the rest of the Borough is that the promised Green Belt Review has turned itself into a Green Belt Study, still to be completed by 2012, but currently implying that the council policy makers and planners feel that they have enough land already earmarked for development without having to make incursions into the Green Belt, certainly before 2016 and hopefully afterwards. It is now expected that the suspended Core Strategy will be examined sometime in December.

Looking at the original Core Strategy Document in order to update it via the amendments schedule you realise how many acronyms exist in local government. This particular document cited a glossary of 30 to which we were asked to add more, one of which is SEEPB – the South East England Partnership Board. This is a partnership of the region's councils and communities representing the interests of South East England. Precisely, it is an organisation

made up of representatives from the South East England Development Agency and South East England Leaders' Board. It is responsible for commissioning, signing off and delivering the Regional Strategy for the South East England region of the United Kingdom. The Strategy will bring together the South East Plan and the Regional Economic Strategy. The Partnership Board was created following the dissolution of the South East England Regional Assembly on 31 March 2009.

We are not alone in our criticism that the whole process is bureaucratic and fatally divorced from local input or control, so with the conservative party's announcement that it will, if elected next year, scrap the whole structure of regional planning, we do wonder how much reliance can we place on the present proceedings?

Catalina Vassallo-Bonner

01737 357882

2. Local issues:

Wellesford Close - both the council and the appellant have been given the opportunity to comment on the appeal statements of the other party and third parties, including ours. The Inspector's decision is therefore now not expected before early November.

Bolters Corner Rest Home - the owners have appealed against the council's refusal to allow them to use some of the adjoining Urban Open Land (which they had already fenced off!) for commercial purposes (mainly parking), and to move the entrance. We have supported the council's refusal and await the Inspector's conclusion. If this follows the same time-scale as Wellesford, this is unlikely to be before early next year!

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Waitrose - whilst construction is progressing apace, a last minute application to change a number of the external details was recently received. As we felt these (eg changing the car park cladding from brick to timber) would be detrimental to the street scene, and for other amenity reasons, we have objected and await the council's decision. We have no wish to see the re-opening of Waitrose delayed but believe that the substantial increase in size and the ever apparent impact of the building make it important that they maintain the original quality of appearance and design.

Mike Sawyer

01737 355454

POLICE MATTERS

1. The Surrey Police Budget:

Most of you will have received an adjustment to your Council Tax bill. This took effect from Sept 1st and worked out as a cut of 0.22%. Looking at the broad detail, Surrey Police were required by central government to reduce their budget by £1.59m. This they will achieve in part by a further reduction in police officers from 1858 to 1827. I say a further reduction because they had already budgeted for a reduction from 1936 to 1858.

Surrey Police Authority was informed of the government's intention to cap their budget on March 26th and launched an appeal on April 21st. On May 13th, the Local Government Minister confirmed that the decision to cap would go ahead, but that was not the end of the story. The Authority then decided to seek a judicial review and also started a petition. The situation was debated in Parliament on June 10th with all Surrey MPs rounding on the (by then new) Local Government Minister. To cut the story

short Parliament approved the Minister's decision and the judicial review failed. Surrey Police were therefore obliged to start the rebilling procedure. Details can be found on the Surrey Police Authority's web site.

However not all is as it seems. You have to go back a year when Surrey Police set a budget increase of 6% and then posted their intention of setting increases of 4% in the following 2 years. Government duly threatened them with capping in 2008 but did not implement an order, requiring them instead to keep the 2009 increase to 3% rather than 4%.

The Police then set an increase of 3.79% for 2009 and duly ran into trouble. Surrey Police have of course protested for years and with good reason that Government has cut their funding year on year. They quote a fall in real terms over 12 years of 39%. Whereas in 2000 central government supplied 69% of the cash, it is now down to just over 51%. This is on the basis that Surrey is a prosperous low crime area and does not need as much money for policing.

The cost of rebilling is estimated at £1.2m with £0.1m in our council area. In other words, the public purse (our money) has spent more than 2/3rds of the reduction by having to recalculate and send out new bills. There seems to be no ability to keep this year's bill unchanged and adjust this rather small sum next year - that would be common sense and good house-keeping!

David Gradidge

01737 353981

Local matters

The most recent updates on the Surrey Policy website report no major incidents in our area (Banstead) although the recent Banstead Woods murder and unprovoked

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attacks on a cyclist and two pedestrians in the Ewell and Epsom areas might make you question if crime in Surrey is actually falling. With such incidents occurring so close to home it is a concern for us all.

The problem of young people gathering outside Tesco Express in the High Street continues. No dispersal order has been invoked in this area. The police have addressed the problem by speaking to the youths gathering at this location, and moving them on.

Radios have been issued to some stores in the High Street as part of the radio Shopwatch scheme to assist in the prevention of shop lifting. The radios will work with CCTV in the High Street and will be linked to the CCTV control centre. The radio link should be in operation by now.

Petty theft from vehicles has continued throughout the summer. Everything from laptops to loose change has been stolen from cars parked on drives and on the road. The advice from the police is to move all valuables from view and ensure that car doors and boots are locked.

Garden sheds have been the focus of attention for burglary this summer. This is of particular concern when tools are then used to gain access to the main property. Police advise that sheds and garages should be kept locked or padlocked. Valuable equipment particularly bikes should be padlocked in the shed and either security marked or photographed for identification should you have to identify them at any point in the future.

And finally, the Beat Panel will be meeting again on 11th September and 11th December in the Church Institute in the High Street. Both meetings will begin at 7.30 Please

make an effort to come along. It is a chance to ask questions about policing in the Borough and to raise any concerns you may have.

Traffic speeds

As reported in the last newsletter the issue considered to be of most importance to local residents, as selected at the last Beat Panel meeting, was the speed of cars being driven in Bolters Lane - the police speed checks in Bolters Lane had revealed average speeds well over the 30 mph limit. Since this matter was highlighted several motorists have been stopped and ticketed in Bolters Lane.

Complaints continue to be made about traffic speeds on the approach roads to and from the village, as well as on the A 217 - where there have been two serious crashes in the last couple of years.

Another nasty accident has occurred towards the top end of Holly Lane - the car over-turned and a young driver is in hospital with serious head injuries - and some of our local residents have set up a petition at: <http://www.gopetition.co.uk/online/30313.html>.

Park Road Residents' Association have also been monitoring traffic speeds in their area.

We are, of course, aware that the Surrey Police do not have unlimited resources (see the item above). Nor do the councils. Also, we do not believe that traffic "calming" measures are always justified or appropriate. We do, however, think the time has come to get the authorities to address this trend before even more serious "accidents" happen.

In order to have as comprehensive a picture as possible we are appealing for information and suggestions from our members from your experience of actual risk

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areas and potential solutions. Please send your details of any recent incidents, and your ideas, to me in the first instance, so that we can collate them and be able to approach the authorities constructively.

Lindsay Iorworth

01737 353906

HIGH DOWN AND DOWNVIEW PRISONS

The following information has been extracted from the H M Inspectorate of Prisons web site.

Downview Prison is a women's prison with a capacity of 358 as of Jan 1st 2006. The last announced inspection took place over 12th - 16th May 2008 when there were 343 prisoners. All had been sentenced and of these 24% were foreign nationals. A high proportion was convicted on drug offences.

High Down Prison is a category B men's prison. The capacity was noted at 736 in May 2006; however a later posting has it revised to 1103 following the completion of 2 additional blocks.

The last announced inspection was from 15th - 19th May 2006. A split gave 391 as sentenced, 129 convicted awaiting sentence and 200 on remand. Of the overall total 98 were young offenders (under 21). 30% were classed as foreign nationals. No announced inspection has taken place since the prison capacity was increased by a third. Unannounced inspections, by definition, can take place any time.

This increase in capacity seems to have stretched resources especially for car parking. At times parked cars can be seen all way along High Down Lane. Note this is actually a private road.

David Gradidge

01737 353981

LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE

First the good news.

Chipstead Road was resurfaced from end to end in early August. Parts of this road had got into an appalling state over the last few years and it was top of the list of roads needing attention that we submitted to Surrey C C. The last road to be resurfaced in Banstead was Wilmot Way - does anyone have the date please?

We regularly write to Surrey C C with a list of items needing attention but all too often the response is lack of resources. We accept that money is tight (and will get tighter) but believe that the reply should be more constructive. The classic example is of course the semi permanent pond outside Victoria Chemist - Lake Victoria to the cynics among us. The need for repair is obvious for all to see. It has been reported to Surrey C C directly or via our local councillors times without mention. But it never gets onto a list of jobs let alone gets to the top of that list and actually gets done. It is not a big job.

Other long running problems that will now be raised at what we consider to be the appropriate level are -

1 The poor quality of road repairs. Here we will stress that what repairs are carried use sub standard materials aided by poor workmanship. Holes are not squared off, not dug out and the edges are not sealed with tar. Ironically in the Horseshoe another contractor does this but of course the road has no foundation and the road is reduced to rubble within months. The stretch of road along Bolters Lane to Garratts Lane needs immediate attention.

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2 The drainage in Holly Lane with the surface run off causing dangerous margin erosion.

3 The poor state of the road gullies on the main roads including the High St. However those in Winkworth Road up to the end of the houses are now OK for the first time in recent years.

Other less serious items which will again be taken up with Surrey C C are -

1 The growing list of redundant lighting columns (lamp posts to you and me). This seems to be a national problem. One contractor puts up a new column, but another contractor should then take the old one away - eventually. The problem is not confined to lighting columns. All too often redundant or broken posts supporting road signs are left in place for years. This would include the 40 or so now redundant posts marking double yellow lines in the High Street.

2 Missing bollards. There seems to be no clear policy as to whether a flattened or rocky bollard gets replaced or just removed and the hole just covered up. Four have recently gone from in front of the parish church, 2 from outside Marks & Spencer and 3 from outside Milners. Do they serve a valuable purpose in preventing pavement parking and making it safer for pedestrians or are there just too many? At the last count there were about 100 in the High St. Let me have your views.

3 Road markings are repainted on a haphazard basis. In parts of Sutton Lane and Park Road white lines are all but invisible.

4 Unresolved at the moment is the question of who is responsible for gritting the pavements after any snow event.

David Gradidge

01737 353981

MESSAGES FROM SURREY FIRE BRIGADE

Is your home safe from **fire**? How do you know if you are overloading your electrical sockets? Do you know the potential dangers to look out for?

Surrey Fire & Rescue's Borough Manager, Paul Otway is appealing to residents of Reigate and Banstead to consider these very questions and Paul along with his crews from Reigate Fire Station are at hand to help.

There are various fire safety initiatives taking place in the Reigate and Banstead areas. These vital checks can reduce the risk of fires in the home and ultimately save the lives of you and your family. After all, prevention is far better than cure.

Home Fire Risk Checks

An appointment can be made to visit your home to run through a simple fire safety check list. Firefighters from your local fire station will then visit your home to complete a series of fire safety checks. The Home Fire Risk assessment covers three main areas - **prevention, detection and an escape plan.**

The prevention area concentrates on Kitchen Safety, Electrical, Fires, Child Fire Play, Naked Lights and Smoking Materials.

Checking at least one smoke alarm is available, that it is correctly positioned and in good working order will also form part of the detection checks. If a smoke alarm is not present, a detector will be fitted at the time free of charge.

Firefighters will encourage home owners to carry out certain bedtime checks such as shutting all doors and switching off electrical appliances to minimise the risk of a fire occurring in the first place, but, should an emergency situation arise, an escape plan is

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essential. It is also paramount that all members of the household know what to do and are aware of an alternative escape route in the event of fire.

Make sure everyone knows where to find door and window keys.

Firewise Scheme

Is there a member of your family whose interest in fire gives you cause for concern? Surrey Fire and Rescue Service operate a Firewise Scheme that aims to help address fire setting behaviour in children through a tailored educational approach. On request trained advisers will visit your home to talk to your child/children on the dangers of fire-play. This service has a high success rate with one visit being sufficient in most cases.

Group Visits and Events

Would your community group like a visit to or from their local fire station? For example, youth groups are regular visitors to fire stations where structured sessions are provided by the Firefighters on various aspects of fire safety.

Alternatively you could consider inviting us to support an event you may have planned. Every year crews across the county attend a variety of events from open days to fêtes where we will promote fire safety as well as providing an added attraction.

These services come at no cost; call 0800 0850767, log on to www.surrey-fire.gov.uk, or visit your local fire station

Another casualty of our straitened financial times is the Review of Parking in Banstead, which has been postponed. We have written to the Council with suggestions as to changes that could be made to create a dozen or so extra parking places on the High Street. While we have no response on this, we assume it will be taken into account

when the Review is finally undertaken. Overall, however, it is difficult to see how any major change could significantly improve the availability of parking in the Village. What we do need, in our view, is more stringent enforcement of existing parking restrictions, to reduce the endless ignoring of yellow lines in hotspots, such as outside Tesco and in the bus bay by Marks and Spencer. This, however, is another funding requirement that the Council will not wish to take on.

David Gradidge

01737 353981

LADY NEVILLE IMPROVEMENTS

Many of you will have seen the drawings of the council's upgrading works to the Pavilion and play areas. We understand that the contractual details are at last being ironed out and the cafe conversion, multi-use play area and other improvements should be started by the time you read this. As these works should take 3 to 6 months the Avenue Road toilets will be closed for much of this period, and unfortunately it will be some weeks before those in the new Waitrose store can become available.

COMBINED CHARITIES EVENT

This year's event is being held on the 3rd October in the Community Hall in Park Road.

Mike Sawyer

01737 355454

GARRATTS LANE VILLAGE SIGN

Many thanks to Ian and Edna Brookes who have kindly responded to our plea last time and have agreed to help look after the flower bed – the improvement is clear to see thanks to their extra time and care.

Mary Palmer

BANSTEAD VILLAGE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

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2009 to 2010

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Banstead Community Association:

Banstead High Street Steering Group:

Banstead Wildlife Field

CPRE:

CVS:

Police Liaison:

Village Lights:

Planning study group:

Observers of Borough and County Committees:

Reigate & Banstead Standards:

SCC Local Committee:

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 Messrs. Heath, Phillips, Sawyer
 Mr. Gradidge
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 Mr. Collins
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