

BVRA newsheet

from the Banstead Village Residents' Association

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Well, the much talked of Millennium has arrived at last, but it does feel any different to the previous century! I hope you all enjoyed a good Christmas and extend to all our members best wishes for a peaceful and fulfilling New Year.

Looking back over the past decade, the Association has flourished to the extent of doubling our membership - we are on the verge of breaking the threshold of 2,000 households in the Village. This surely demonstrates an interest in and commitment to our community and its well-being, and the desire to preserve what is best in our environment.

It is with a sense of disappointment and frustration that we see the departure to Woodmansterne, Chipstead and Hooley of large portions of our "patch". So much for the concept of community identity and cohesion sacrificed to achieve an electoral correctness for which we have to thank the Local Government Commission. May I thank all our members in the areas affected by the boundary changes for their support and encouragement in the past and our conscientious road stewards who have worked so hard to achieve almost 100% membership. Please see the article on continued membership which appears later on.

Looking to the future, I know the Executive Committee will continue to resist development which adversely impacts on the quality of our lives, and attempt to introduce common sense into the way local government operates (or occasionally doesn't, as the case may be!).

Committee News

Since our October '99 NewsSheet, we have bade farewell to Surindar Mathur - we thank him for his contribution and enthusiasm and wish him well in his new home. We still have vacancies for committee members and anyone interested in joining us will be made very welcome. Please give me a call on 357463 if you would like more information.

Peter McLaren

Sainsbury's Planning Approval

At the local authority's Development Control Committee meeting on 8 December, Peel Developments were granted planning permission for the proposed new Sainsbury's store at the western end of the High Street, albeit with a number of conditions attached.

Since the update given in the previous NewsSheet, the scheme has been changed considerably in response to the various concerns that had been raised by BVRA and our partners on the High Street Steering Group:

- The design of the building is now much more in keeping with the architectural styles of the High Street in general and of The Victoria public house in particular. The developer is required to make specific provision for a good quality route for pedestrians from the new store to the two public car parks. This includes construction of "raised tables" across the High Street, Bolters Lane and The Horseshoe so that shoppers pushing trolleys don't have to go up and down dropped kerbs.
- The developer is required to have a positive plan for accommodating staff car parking to reduce the pressure for these cars to park in the adjacent residential roads.
- The layout of the proposed car park has been revised to give a long length for cars to queue within the boundaries of the site (so that queuing back onto the High Street will be minimised).
- The times during which lorries can enter or leave the service yard are restricted

Whilst many people may feel that a second supermarket in the village is unnecessary, the fact remains that the site already has permission for such a use. Through combined pressure from BVRA, the Banstead Society, the Chamber of Commerce, our councillors and the local authority planners, Banstead has gained significant improvements to the scheme as it was originally proposed.

Peel Developments will now spend another 3 to 4 months finalising planning issues and preparing the detailed design for the store. Demolition of the old building is expected to commence in the spring with the construction of the new store taking about 9 months.

The focus now moves to the future location for Dillons and the Post Office, which must of course be in their new premises before demolition of the Sainsbury's site can be completed. The Post Office have given a firm declaration that they will continue to have a presence in the High Street. We understand that a number of possible premises have been investigated, but there is no definitive news yet on the final decision.

Tony Ford

The Borough News

Do you remember the *Borough Times*, the Council's civic newspaper, published four times a year? It ran into serious distribution problems and one councillor was embarrassed to find at a public meeting that many of the audience had not seen it. We had the impression that the distribution was improving up to March last year, but publication then ceased.

The paper was relaunched in September-October last year under the new title, *Borough News*, with a budget of £23,000 for the first three editions. The Strategic Services Department says that 52,000 copies went out (which works out at 14.7 pence a copy) and that the distribution company had only 50 complaints of non-delivery, that is to say from specified individual addresses. We understand the company claims that in some cases its telephone checks showed that neighbouring houses had had copies, from which it concludes that the complaints were not valid. The Department has dismissed a complaint from our neighbouring Woodmansterne Green Belt & Residents' Association that whole roads and whole areas did not get copies, together with the results of a straw poll at a meeting of RAs with councillors, which seemed to show that only about five people among thirty had copies.

On the other hand, we had informed the Department that seven out of nine of our committee members at a meeting in late October had not had copies, which seemed to imply that there had been only 43 complaints from the whole of the rest of the borough. But if the deliverers were careless they might not police their own activities reliably, and in any case people do not complain about the non-receipt of a paper they have not heard of or only vaguely heard of.

We learn now that for the December issue the distribution company has turned to the second class post for many of the houses in more than a dozen roads in the Village, where there are said to be special difficulties. That will add 19 pence to the cost of every copy. It also gives greater credence to our instinctive suspicion that the above 50 complaints were really only the tip of the iceberg and that the distribution company is aware that the problem is or was really much larger.

We must hope that this rather expensive postal distribution will bring the second edition to the households that missed the first. But if you are sure that you did *not* get a copy of the *December* edition and you are *not* displaying a "No free newspapers" notice (which would exclude you), now is your opportunity (if you can be bothered) to write in, giving your address and post code, to The Communications Officer, Town Hall, Reigate. You can "post" your letter or card without a stamp at the Help Shop in the Horseshoe.

David Rudd

Collective Action

You may have heard about the flooding of raw sewage onto the Downs behind Commonfield Road which has been occurring over the past several years. To overcome this, Thames Water proposed to install a large concrete holding tank in the roadway which would have involved closing the road over a period of some five months, (including Christmas and the New Year). After much effort the Company provided technical details of the scheme which were circulated to residents.

Following a concerted effort by residents, who picked up their pens to protest, Thames Water, to its credit, has agreed to put the proposal on hold while it examines an alternative solution to the problem.

I have included this local item to demonstrate the persuasive power of collective and determined action undertaken by a group of residents. It doesn't pay to sit and do nothing!

Peter McLaren

DETR AND ITS TRANSPORT POLICY

Our main concerns as an RA are with planning applications and other local matters in the Village. But our amenities and quality of life also depend of course on the policies of the Surrey County Council, the South East Region Planning Association and up to the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) at Westminster. So we have participated in the policy consultations of all those bodies.

Our biggest worry about DETR is its horrifying demand that Surrey must allow 90,000 houses to be built in the county by 2016 - nearly twice as many as the planners estimate can be accommodated in the urban areas. We are relieved that at last the County Council has come out in open opposition to this threat to the Green Belt and we hope the timing has been judicious.

Just now we are offering our comments on two parts of the DETR's transport policy, on which it is conducting consultations: cycling and car parking. Like everyone else, we are in favour of more people using pedal bikes instead of cars, but not at the severe risk of life and limb. Some years ago DETR required local authorities "to produce a local cycling strategy as part of their local plan", and that has led to a rash of narrow cycle ways across South East Region, with only painted white lines separating the cyclists from motor traffic and frequently interrupted by legally parked cars and other obstacles which force the cyclists to turn into the traffic at an awkward angle. Our streets are too narrow and our traffic too heavy to do any better.

Now some independent research has shown that the accident rate in such schemes, intended to reduce the risk of an accident on two wheels, have been found to be twice as high as the injury rate on roads with no special protection for cyclists. Our point is that both the scope for and cost of safe cycle ways probably vary widely across the country, hence the local governments, in consultation with their local residents and voters, not the DETR, are best able to assess whether, where and how to provide them.

4 Turning to car parking, our residential streets are often choked with parked cars, even to the point sometimes of impeding access by ambulances and the fire and police services. We therefore welcomed the *minimum* off-street parking requirements for new residential developments in the 1994 Local Plan. But now DETR is veering to the view that off-street parking spaces generally tend to discourage people from using public transport. And a developer in the Village is already arguing that reducing the number of parking spaces in a new housing scheme will reduce traffic generation whereas in reality of course it will lead to the new residents parking their cars in neighbouring streets, thus choking them up even more - to the great inconvenience of the other residents.

We have therefore urged the DETR to make it clear that, whatever may be the merits of reducing car parking at shops and offices, the new policy is not intended for residential developments.

We cannot assume that the DETR will pay as much attention to the views of a single RA as it must to larger organisations, but our views are not eccentric and we hope that other small organisations will reinforce what we say. Also we have pointed out that consultative inputs from residents' organisations have the advantage of coming directly and undiluted from the people whose lives are most affected by the DETR policies.

David Rudd

Future BVRA Membership

In October 1998 I wrote to Road Stewards covering the areas involved in the changes to our electoral boundaries, informing them of the position regarding future membership of the Association. Paragraph 2(c) of the BVRA Constitution provides that membership shall be open to:

Residents in other Wards and districts (i.e. other than Banstead Village Ward) interested in the work of the Association, subject to the discretion of the Executive Committee."

At its meeting on September 29th 1998, the Committee resolved that the members concerned should be able to maintain their eligibility for membership if they wish to do so, thereby enabling them to maintain their links with the Village community.

If your Road Steward is willing to continue to deliver your News Sheets and collect annual subscriptions, your continued membership and support would be warmly welcomed and valued. As you are aware, these boundary changes take effect from the May 2000 local elections.

Peter McLaren

Let There Be Light

Well Done BVRA! Donations of over £1000 in total were received from some 150 members for Millennium Lights in the High Street. You will have read in the press of some of the difficulties which occurred but there has been unanimous praise for the effect of the lights. Some have thought there should have been more lights! However, the total funds collected did not permit more in time for the well attended Lighting Up Ceremony (note that our application for Millennium Lottery funding was turned down and that the cost of modifying each lamppost to provide power for lights has been £380 - we are looking at ways to reduce this and so instal more lights). There is still time to add more for the Millennium, providing more funds come in - donations should be handed in at Maxine's Woolshop.

Chris Penfold

CCTV for Banstead High street

The Council are awaiting a response from the Home Office on whether a Grant will be made to contribute to the proposed installation of TV cameras. In the meantime, our Local Beat Officer, PC Mike Ward, has been seeking pledges from High Street Businesses for contributions.

If residents would like to contribute, the procedure is as follows: Make your cheque payable to "Banstead Cameras" and enclose together with a self addressed envelope (so that a receipt can be sent to you later), in a sealed envelope marked "Banstead Cameras" and hand it in at Banstead Police Station (opening hours Monday-Friday 11am - 6.30pm, other days 10am - 5.30pm).

Chris Penfold

Did You Know?

The Borough Council let a new contract (in March '99) for highways maintenance services, including grass cutting, hedge maintenance and such as shrub bed and floral bedding/hanging basket displays. The contract specifies precisely the standard of service expected, together with a scale of financial sanctions (called liquidated damages) to be applied for failure to deliver.

We feel it would be helpful if residents were to act as our "ears and eyes" for our Streetcare Officer, Marc Hillsley (tel:276222) drawing attention to obvious failures or omissions to provide a reasonable service.

The following abbreviated extract from the specifications may be of interest and is for guidance:

- Footpaths, roadways, drains and drainage channels shall be cleared of all grass clippings;
- On highway grass verges/roundabouts permitted grass height should be maintained of 1" and a maximum of 4". Grass clippings will not be removed, but spread evenly over the site;
- Trees damaged in the process of strimming verges will be replaced by the contractor;
- Grass edges are to be maintained on a five year rolling programme;
- No grass seeding or turfing works should be carried out in dry/frosty weather; if it fails to establish after reinstatement it may have to be done again (Wilmot Way?) at contractor's expense;
- Hedge maintenance along highway verges to be cut on two occasions per year - NOT during bird nesting season - and clippings removed;
- Shrub beds are to be visited regularly when litter, weeds, leaves etc. are to be removed and soil cultivated;
- Hanging Baskets - spring and summer displays to be provided. Floral bedding is gradually being replaced by shrub planting.

Chairman

Car Parking Charges

With effect from early in 2000, revised rates of charges are being introduced by the Borough Council which will apply to the car parks in the High Street (short stay) and The Horseshoe (long stay).

For the first time there will be a shopper's rate of "10 pence for up to 20 minutes" (so bring your roller blades/skate boards with you). Those of you who normally take a little longer to do your shopping will, in future, pay "30 pence for up to one hour". The full tariff is as follows:-

Up to 20 minutes	- 10 pence
1 hour	- 30 pence
2 hours	- 60 pence
3 hours	- £1.00
4 hours	- £1.30
5 hours	- £2.00
16 hours	- £3.00

Season ticket rates have also increased to £48, £121. and £450. (all plus VAT) for monthly, quarterly and annual tickets, respectively.

The penalty for non-payment or exceeding the time period purchased is reduced from £60. to £30.

Membership Subscriptions

At our November committee meeting, we reviewed our financial situation in light of our income and expenditure commitments. The current subscription rate of £1 per household was set at the Annual General Meeting in May 1990, since when the determination of future rates has been delegated to the Executive Committee. The consistent increase in our membership over the years has compensated for inflation in printing and other costs. I am pleased to report your committee has decided there is no justification at the present time for increasing the membership fee and it will remain at £1 for the financial year 2000/2001, starting on February 1st. I hope you will feel this represents good value.

Treasurer

Final Call

At the time of going to press, a number of membership subscriptions are still outstanding for the year ending on January 31st 2000. It would be much appreciated if road stewards could let the Treasurer have their subscriptions and receipt books NO LATER than Thursday January 27th so that the money may be paid into the bank before the end of our financial year.

Chairman

Wanted Urgently

One or two of our road stewards have retired this year which means that there will be no delivery of our News Sheets. We urgently need public spirited people to volunteer for this task to cover Garratts Lane (west end) and Chipstead/Brighton Roads. If you are able to help please ring Peter McLaren on 357463.

THE PRINTERS OF THIS NEWS SHEET, MARSHALL REPRO. WOULD LIKE TO WISH ALL MEMBERS A VERY HEALTHY, HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR.

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