

BVRA newsheet

from the Banstead Village Residents' Association

Vol: 14 No. 1 January 1998

Yet another year has passed us by! I hope that you had an enjoyable Christmas and on behalf of the Executive Committee may I extend to all our members best wishes for a Happy New Year along with the hope it will be kind and rewarding for you.

We much appreciate your support and encouragement. We are also pleased to receive your comments, some of them constructively critical, since this demonstrates an interest in, and sense of commitment to, the well-being of our Village. We do not claim to get everything right, nor can we achieve the impossible. We do, however, take our members' suggestions seriously and the Committee's efforts are directed towards securing the best possible outcome, given the financial constraints within which we all have to live.

I should like publicly to thank Committee Members for their individual contributions to our work and for generously giving their own time to the evening meetings which have been necessary to cope with many and varied issues addressed during the course of the past year.

Peter McLaren

Electoral Review

The Local Government Commission for England is carrying out a review of the electoral arrangements in Surrey, including Reigate and Banstead. It is 20 years since the last review was undertaken and since 1976 the electorate of the Borough has increased by more than 8%.

The review seeks to achieve electoral equality as expressed in terms of the *average* Councillor/Electorate ratio which, for the Borough as a whole, is currently 1 to 1,917 voters. In the Banstead Village ward the ratio is 1 to 2,193 voters - or 14% above the average.

The Commission says that it will take into account the identity of local communities in reaching its decision on the future shape of electoral wards - we can only hope that it does so.

What is proposed? Our Borough is suggesting that the composition of the membership of the Council be increased from 49 to 51 councillors. It is also proposing to transfer "portions" of some wards to

others in order to achieve a greater degree of equality.

What does this mean for Banstead Village? The Council is proposing that we retain three Councillors but that some areas within our ward be transferred to other wards as follows:-

1. To Chipstead/Hooley/Woodmansterne

Part of Holly Lane, i.e. 1 - 4 Park Farm Cottages and Bungalow

Part of Park Road, i.e. Banstead Place Rehabilitation Centre; Mint Road; New Place, together with properties to the south-east of Banstead Place.

A total of 133 electors

2. To Kingswood with Burgh Heath

Former Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Holly Lane, which is empty.

Wood Lane (Nos. 1 and 2)

Brighton Road - Newstead Lodge, Wood Lodge and Aberdour School.

A total of 12 electors

Even after these changes and taking into account projected increases in the population by the year 2002, the Banstead Village Ward remains well above the notional average ratio (electors per councillor) for the Borough as a whole by some 14.6%.

The implication for our ward is that we are vulnerable to further adjustments to our boundaries. In our submission to the Commission, B.V.R.A. has strongly argued for the retention of our present boundaries on the grounds that:-

- We have a clear sense of local identity and a social cohesion;
- We are separated from our neighbours by clearly defined geographical boundaries;
- The areas which may be "detached" would not easily be integrated into other wards, resulting in a sense of "not belonging".

We expressed the view that arbitrarily to transfer areas of our ward just to achieve numerical equality would prejudice the well-defined identity of our community and cannot be justified.

This is just the beginning - Phase One! The Commission will issue its draft recommendations, probably in a year's time, when we shall have a further opportunity for comment. It is thought likely the new arrangements will come into being in time for the local elections in the year 2000.

Peter McLaren

Banstead Civic Offices

In September, we reported how the Council had voted in July to refer their proposal for these offices to a so-called "Strategic Planning Group" and meanwhile to go ahead with just the enlarged Help Shop and Citizens' Advice Bureau, without the meeting room accommodation to replace the Council Chamber in the old Council House. We were, of course, very disappointed with that decision, which appeared to be a reversal of the Council's previous intention.

But on October 16th, to our astonishment, the Council returned to that intention. On a recommendation of the Community Services Committee, which meets regularly (no further mention of any strategic planning group), the full Council voted to approve its previous proposal, including the meeting room, and to allocate the necessary capital and current expenditures.

We cannot tell precisely what caused this change of heart, but we are, of course, delighted with it. We have been campaigning for years to try to get something decent to replace the old Council Chamber, and Councillor Brian Cowle in particular has been tireless in pushing the Council in that direction. At the July meeting, we lobbied all the members of the Council with a letter. It had no immediate effect, but we now think it alerted some members to the strength of feeling on this subject in the north of the borough. Then our September article was widely distributed and caused some comment, so we feel those earlier efforts were not in vain - but we are not counting our chickens yet.

The Council House has now been sold, so that money is in the kitty. The next event we are waiting for is the planning application, which we shall examine with great care. Our chief remaining worry is over the Town Hall redevelopment scheme in Reigate. It is expected to generate efficiency savings of between £175,000 and £250,000 a year, but there will be capital charges (interest and depreciation) on the additional capital cost (including our civic offices) of about £3 million over and above the proceeds from selling the Council House and two other Council properties.

Those are the latest figures as far as we know and they seem to make a rather fragile case for the scheme. If the capital estimates for the new Town

Hall go on rising, as we reported in September, we fear they may still cast a shadow over everything else in the Council's financial plans, including the Banstead Civic Offices. So we are keeping our fingers crossed until the building contract is signed and work begins on the site.

David Rudd

High Street - 1

Walking along the length of the High Street on the north side has recently become an altogether more pleasant experience, thanks to the new extensions to the footway areas across the junctions with Wilmot Way, Glenfield Road and Harbourfield Road. These side roads are now much narrower, making crossing considerably easier and safer than previously. Furthermore, new areas of footway and grass have been created, with newly-planted trees, making a major contribution to the project to improve the overall appearance and "ambiance" of the High Street. (In a future stage of the project, it is intended to provide planters, seats and other landscaping features in these areas). At these locations also, the poor footway surfacing (which was a particular problem at Wilmot Way) has been replaced with brand new tarmac, heralding the start of work, hopefully during 1998, to get the footways back into a proper state of repair. The large lengths of buff-coloured tactile paving that have appeared are a Highway Authority requirement (to assist the partially sighted to locate the crossing points).

Not everyone will be happy with the new layout for the High Street. Those drivers who liked to park on the corners and in front of where pedestrians wished to cross should find that this is no longer possible. And those drivers who liked to do U-turns in the High Street by circling round at just the point where pedestrians were crossing the side roads should also find that this can no longer be done. There are bound to be some other difficulties that do occur however, at least initially. We may find that some drivers think it attractive to drive onto the new footway areas to park. (If this problem does occur, the future landscaping scheme could include devices to prevent this). In addition, it is inevitable that delivery lorries will, from time to time, cause some disruption at the junctions as they park close to where they wish to unload. Overall though, these drawbacks should be considerably outweighed by the easier and safer arrangements for pedestrians.

High Street - 2

We are hopeful that shortly the present haphazard arrangement of yellow lines in the High Street will be revamped with a new scheme. This will have two main components:

- A series of bays for "One hour parking (no return within 2 hours)". These will largely follow the existing areas, but will be denoted by a white dashed edging to the bay instead of the present single yellow line by the kerb. (Those yellow lines in parking bays were put down by mistake a couple of years ago - the Association has persevered ever since to get the Council to rectify the situation);
- Double yellow lines around the corners of the side roads and in a few other locations where parking would be dangerous. The overall aim is to have as few lengths of yellow line as possible, and only in locations where parking would be clearly dangerous, so that the traffic wardens stand a better chance of enforcing them.

Some other features of the new scheme will be:

- The loading bay outside the Midland bank and Ibis bookshop will be converted to a proper parking bay for cars;
- The bus-stop outside Oddbins will be moved to outside the new Waitrose store;
- Two disabled parking bays will be provided at the western end of the High Street.

High Street - 3

In the spring months, we should see further work taking place at the western end of the High Street. This will include the installation of brick-built planters outside the former Waitrose store. These will serve a dual purpose - to brighten up what is presently a very dull part of the High Street, and to prevent the practice of car drivers parking on the pavement near to the bus-stop. On the opposite side of the road, plans are being drawn up for enhancing the forecourt area outside Pizza Express. The scheme could include construction of planters, provision of seating or the planting of trees. Funding for this work is being provided by Pizza Express, with the work co-ordinated by the Banstead High Street Steering Group, of which BVRA is a member.

High Street - 4

After years of being hidden away behind an overgrown hedge, the splendour of our Church Institute building is now revealed, with the added benefit of a grand set of steps leading towards the main entrance. (This is on the west side of the building, near the Orchard - the entrance on the east side has become a fire exit only and the previous poor ramp and set of steps at that side have been removed). The work was undertaken by Harrington Brothers of Wallington; the quality of their workmanship deserves special mention. BVRA contributed towards the cost of this scheme; the principal sources of funding were from the Parochial

Church Council and from the proceeds from the 1995 Banstead Village Week.

Tony Ford

Chamber of Commerce

We welcome the news that the Banstead and District Chamber of Commerce, after a rather long rudderless period, now has both a new Chairman and a new Secretary. Residents of the Village will benefit from the resumed activity of the Chamber not only from its efforts to improve the vitality of the shops but also from its participation in the resolution of issues such as the desirability of Closed Circuit TV in the High Street, Christmas Lights, etc.

We recommend that all High Street traders should be members of the Chamber. Applications to join should be made to the Secretary, Mrs. A. Hardy, on 01737 551810.

Chris Penfold

Planning Matters

The Council has refused planning permission for the second application for pulling down Stone Lanterns in Woodmansterne Lane and redeveloping the site. The application, which we reported in September, was for two five-bedroomed detached houses, and the only stated reason for refusing it was that one of the houses would be too close to the rear boundary of 1 Park Road.

In our view, there were several valid additional grounds for refusal, but that was the only one which the planning officer could be persuaded to include in his report. He had given both the applicant and a group of neighbours to understand that he was minded to grant the application, but fortunately the 'objection fatigue' which we feared might allow the application to go through did not materialise, and the neighbours' protest has been effective - so far.

The moral we draw from this and previous cases is: if a planning application comes through your letter box, do not throw it into the bin. Read it and, if you don't like the look of it, put your objections in writing. Talk to your neighbours about it and get them to do the same - the more the merrier. Keep your local councillors informed and try to get them interested.

My telephone number is 01737 356427. We can often show you which policies in the Local Plan ought to be relevant, but they are mostly so 'flexible' that one cannot rely on them. So it is best not to rely only on us or anyone else to protect your interests on your behalf. The strength of objections is in their numbers and vigour.

However, the neighbours of Stone Lanterns are unfortunately not out of the wood yet. The applicants have now returned to their earlier application for four

smaller detached houses, which was refused in April, and have put in an appeal to the Department of the Environment. It will not be heard until March, so for once, the law's delays are acting in our favour - the later the better, since the applicant cannot legally proceed until March at the earliest. Meanwhile, we must all keep our powder dry and be ready to repeat our objections and possibly add to them, before the hearing - perhaps even attend the hearing. Dogged persistence will be the watchword.

Meanwhile, the two applications to continue with non-agricultural uses of part of a farm on the edge of the Green Belt, which were also mentioned in our September issue, have at last been amended to comply more nearly with the Local Plan. The non-agricultural uses will be put inside some existing farm buildings and so will not be such an eyesore - provided the farmer complies with the planning condition, which we, of course, hope he will.

David Rudd

Banstead Wildlife Field

The official opening ceremony was performed by the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Dr. Roy Archibald on September 18th. The weather was fine and the event was well attended by a number of representatives from various official bodies, including Reigate & Banstead Borough Council, Downlands Countryside Management Project (D.C.M.P.), Surrey Wildlife Trust/Butterfly Conservation, British Gas Transco, and

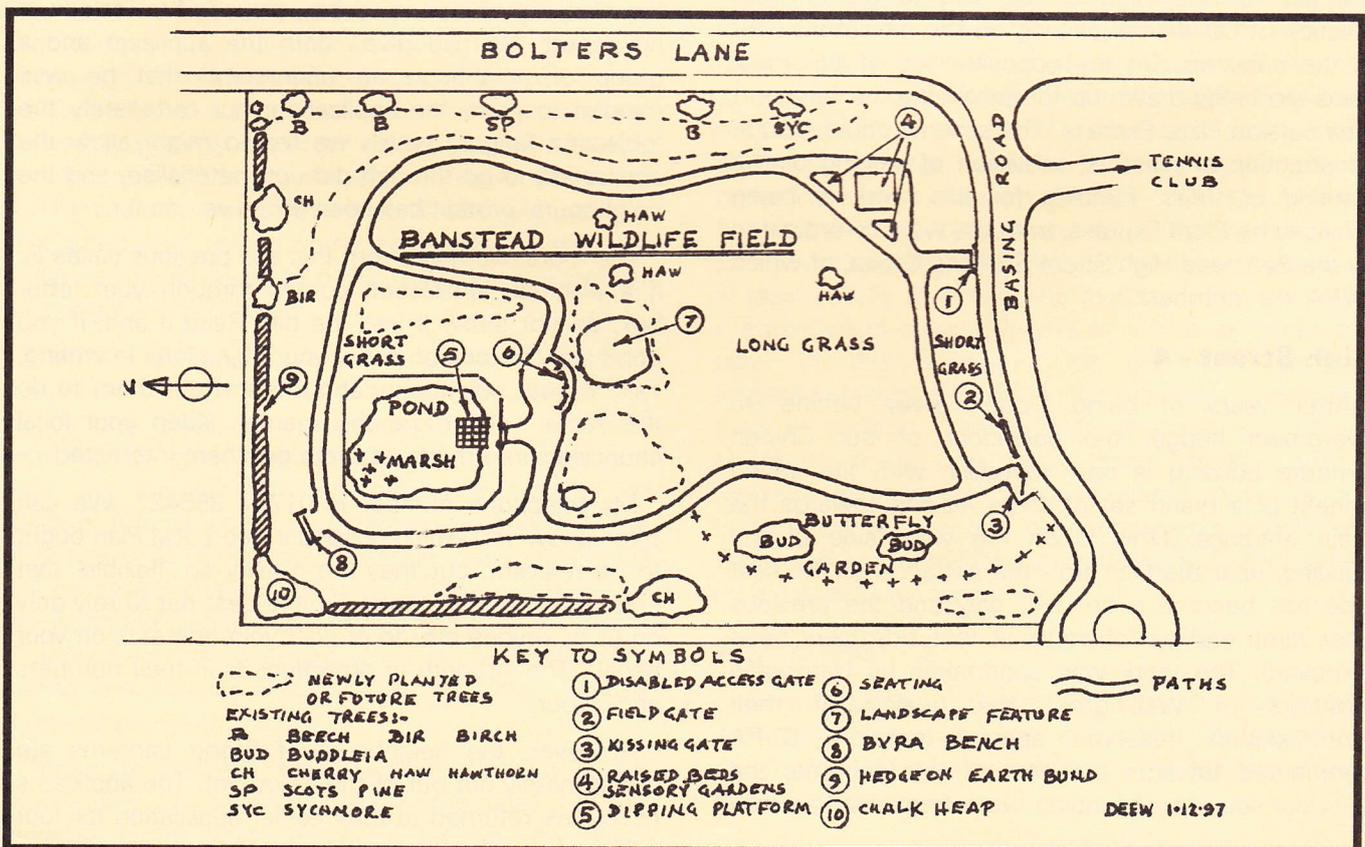
B.V.R.A. Also present were the willing volunteers who have worked so hard to bring this project into being, including the teachers and children from local schools - The Priory, Greenacre and Aberdour.

An informative display stand was set up by the D.C.M.P. and leaflets were available, together with light refreshments. Councillor Bill Bryant thanked the Deputy Mayor for opening the Wildlife Field and told his audience that this amenity was for the benefit of all Banstead residents, to provide a peaceful place to stroll and enjoy nature. It was up to everyone to ensure that the field should be allowed to develop and mature naturally and not be misused or vandalised.

Future tree planting will take place during the winter months and will include oak, yew, spindle and possibly some native fruit such as apple and cherry. The disabled access gate has been widened and a R.A.D.A.R. type padlock provided. For safety, access to the dipping platform is restricted. However, groups requiring to use the pond may contact the pond gate keyholder, Mr. Savage at 60 Bolters Lane. The sign for the Wildlife Field is being produced and will be visible from Bolters Lane. For health and conservation reasons, the public are reminded they are asked NOT to bring dogs into the field.

The layout of the Wildlife Field is shown on the Sketch Map below.

Dennis Woolmer



Street Trees

Reigate & Banstead Borough Council operate a Street Tree Maintenance Programme. There are some 7,000 street trees in the Borough and approximately 400 are replaced each year. In addition, regular maintenance is carried out to prune them, remove dead wood and also to ensure they are in a safe condition, that they are clear of overhead cables and do not obstruct the highway.

Trees are a very valuable asset, as they enhance the environment, provide shelter, shade, and wildlife habitats, absorb pollutants, convert carbon dioxide into oxygen, provide a noise barrier and screen buildings. Tree works are undertaken on a four-yearly cycle, the Borough being split into four zones. Banstead falls into zone 2, and a programme of maintenance is currently underway, with new planting commencing in November 1998. Residents concerned about the condition of street trees in their road or locality are asked to contact the writer on 01737 361769.

Dennis Woolmer

Environmental Services Department

The B.V.R.A. is not always complaining to the Council!

We congratulate the Highways on their speed and efficiency in replacing a damaged grit box in Wilmot Way. Notified by the B.V.R.A. on the 29th October, the new box, filled with grit was in position on 6th November!

Well done and thanks to Brian Jordan and his Highways Team.

Dennis Woolmer

Wheelie Bins

In case you did not see the piece in local newspapers, the Council has announced that the honeymoon is over! It now appears that refuse collectors will not remove additional domestic refuse in black sacks put out with wheelie bins as this does not conform with the terms of the contract.

As we said in the September NewsSheet, if you have a large family (of more than five people) you can ask the Council to provide a larger bin of 240 litre capacity.

The service does not seem to be working as it should. In certain areas the contents of the recycling boxes are not being collected on the same day as the bin is emptied. If you are experiencing difficulties with the service, ring the Council "hot line" on 01737 249600.

Erratum! Contrary to what B.V.R.A. was told originally by the Council about the cost of replacing a recycling box if it is stolen or vandalised, it will now cost you only £4.00, not the £15.00 we were originally quoted.

Last Call for membership subscriptions

In our previous NewsSheet Road Stewards were asked to return their membership subscriptions by November 30th. There are still a number outstanding and as the financial year ends on January 31st 1998, could I please ask that these be returned to the Hon. Treasurer no later than Thursday January 29th to enable monies to be paid into the bank.

May I extend my personal thanks to our Road Stewards for their help without which the Association would not be able to function,

Peter McLaren

STOP PRESS - Stone Lanterns

We have just learned that the applicants have now appealed against the Council's refusal of their second application as well as their first and that the two appeals will probably be heard together in March. They have also made a third application for two five-bedroomed houses, very similar to the second, which we and the neighbours are studying. We understand the Council will consider it in January.

David Rudd