

BVRA newsheet

from the Banstead Village Residents' Association

Vol: 14 No. 3 September 1998

What a summer we have had! One benefit of the mixed weather in June and July is that our water supplies are assured for the foreseeable future - according to the Operations Director of Sutton and East Surrey Water Company. I hope you have all enjoyed your summer break.

Our Annual General Meeting in May was well attended and we enjoyed an evening of lively debate. Two motions presented at the meeting were discussed at some length. The first related to the Electoral Review in which it is proposed to transfer some 397 electors out of the Village Ward created a good deal of emotion and resentment. A motion deprecating the Local Government Commission's draft recommendations and calling for our community's wish to preserve its local identity and social integrity was passed unanimously. The sentiments expressed have been passed to the Commission asking it to think again.

The second motion concerned the way in which the Borough Council delivers its services to the community. An article on this important issue appears later on in this NewsSheet.

Committee News

My appeal in the April NewsSheet for Association members to offer themselves for election to the Executive Committee fell on deaf ears. Disappointingly, only one member came forward in response and a warm welcome was given to Gerry Levy of Winkworth Road who is already actively involved.

Having said farewell to six committee members at the AGM we still have vacancies. With many important local issues to be examined and considered, it is essential to attract new committee members to provide continuity and fresh ideas and to share in the work load. BVRA is an independent, non-political organisation with a membership of over 1,900 households. Issues are considered on their individual merits and our stance is determined in the best interests of our members and the community as a whole. Please do carefully consider whether you can contribute in the preservation of our local amenities. If you are interested in supporting the Association's work you might care to give me a ring on 01737 357463. You will find a warm welcome awaits you and your views will be valued.

A full list of committee members with their addresses and telephone numbers appears in this NewsSheet for your retention.

Peter McLaren

Refuse Collection - Results of our Survey

We have to thank the members of 332 households who responded to our refuse collection questionnaire in our April NewsSheet. They represented 17% of our membership - roughly 750+ residents.

The majority (80%) were not seriously dissatisfied with the new service with wheelie bins and separate boxes for paper and cans. 20% thought it was better. We think it is fair to assume that most members who did not respond were much of the same mind, since they did not take the opportunity to complain.

About 40% of the responders said they would be pleased if a form of back-door collection could be restored, although they were not all displeased with what they are now getting. However, about half that number had complaints about the service under our various headings. We reported those details to Mr. Storer, the Council's Streetcare Manager, but he did not acknowledge our letter.

The Council put out a press release in June, which referred to "an independent survey by a residents association in the north of the borough" but did not mention that we had conducted it. The press release said the survey showed that the residents in Banstead thought the new wheelie bin service was as good as previous back door collections, but it withheld the fact that one in five were dissatisfied.

Shortly after that press release, the Council's Environmental Services Committee were told that our survey "indicated that residents appeared to be happy with the current service", but the committee were not informed of the complaints enumerated in our summary. We have written to the chairman to give him that information and suggest that, since our survey has been brought to the committee's notice, they deserve a more balanced account of its findings.

David Rudd

Council Services

The Government has recently announced that in future a 'Best Value' approach will be adopted by Councils, replacing existing compulsory competitive tendering in the delivery of council services. It has been apparent to the Association that some work undertaken by contractors, be they the council's direct labour or private firms, has not delivered a

standard of service which is acceptable and meets the contract specification. These shortcomings apply across the range of activity including maintenance of roads and footpaths, grass cutting, clearing soakaways, gullies and culverts, autumn leaf clearance and the like.

A motion debated at the AGM urged the Borough Council to devote more resources to supervising and monitoring contracts, both internal and external, and to withhold payment where work has not been completed to the standards required by the contract specification. This motion was passed by an overwhelming majority.

The Council in its response to our representations has admitted that in the past payments have been made on completion of a contract without the work being inspected. We have been assured that steps are being taken to ensure that this practice ceases. Perhaps we can look forward to getting a better standard of service and value for our money?

Streetcare

The Borough Council has recently re-organised its arrangements for dealing with the care and maintenance of our streets, and has appointed a Streetcare Officer responsible for the overview of all aspects of services for Banstead Village. He is Mr. John Bevan who can be reached on his direct line 01737 276222.

Our Executive Committee has designated one of its members to act as a link with our Streetcare Officer and who will monitor and follow up progress with repairs or other problems reported to her. She is Mrs. Shirley Conacher 32 Court Road, Banstead. Tel: 351210

Mrs. Conacher would like to hear from you about any problems you may experience such as pot holes in roads/footways; blocked drains and flooding; street lights; obstructions (abandoned vehicles); overhanging trees; mowing of verges; autumn collection of leaves; and the general cleanliness of streets.

We hope that these arrangements will lead to a better response to the reporting of problems and an improvement in standards.

Peter McLaren

Planning Matters

Last year Greenacres School was granted 'outline' planning permission for a new science block. That meant that the size and shape of the building, to which neighbouring residents had objected, had to be resubmitted in more detail. When the drawings came in, they showed an even larger building and Councillor Geoff Sinnerton, who was then on the planning committee, objected on those neighbours' behalf. He suggested how advantage could be taken of the slope

of the land to provide the required accommodation with a lower roof height. He retired from the committee in April.

In May some revised drawings for a slightly smaller building, which was however still larger than the one for which outline permission had been given, came in and were recommended for approval before they were published. They went to the new committee, which had four new members, without the details of the previous objections and Councillor Sinnerton's suggestions. We heard what was happening by chance and tried to write to the committee members but we did not know the names of three of the new members and our letter did not reach the members we did know until just before the meeting. The committee granted the application, as recommended.

Greenacres is well known and well respected in Banstead. Many of our members have girls there and some are on the staff or board of governors. In our view the site is over-developed, but the school needs a new science block. On the other hand, some other members live in houses which were built under the restrictive condition that their windows must not overlook the school grounds. Now their gardens and houses will be over shadowed by a building which could have had a lower roof if the constructive suggestions for lowering it had been studied.

We reported in April that the planning committee had been persuaded to refuse permission for two five-bedroom houses on the site of **Stone Lanterns**, which is next to a 500 year old listed farm house. That was the developer's third application. They appealed against the committee's refusal of the first two applications, but those appeals were dismissed.

In May the developer put in a fourth application for two slightly smaller five-bedroom houses, to which we and the neighbouring residents objected on broadly the same grounds as the third. That application went to the committee in June with a recommendation to grant it, again without giving the new members the details of the previous objections. However Councillor Brian Cowle persuaded the committee to put it back for a month to enable councillors to accept an invitation to visit the site. The applicant had boarded up the windows of the old house and put a large heap of rubble in the drive, so the site looked run down. Nevertheless, when the committee met again, they refused planning permission by sixteen votes to nil - a bigger majority than for their refusal of the third application. We are now waiting to see whether the applicant will appeal again.

In our view the planning officers are given too little guidance in the interpretation of the Local Plan. The Environmental Services Department told us last

October that they had enough guidance on how Local Plan policies should be interpreted from the objectives set out in the plan, but in fact (as we were informed when the plan was in the melting pot) some of its policies were made 'flexible' so as to leave room for interpretation by the Council. We understand that other councils have given guidance on how their local plans are to be interpreted, to the great relief of their residents.

David Rudd

Future Changes To Policing In Banstead

In June the Home Secretary announced that the boundaries of the Metropolitan Police would change in the year 2000 so that Banstead, Epsom and other local areas currently policed by the "Met" would come under the control of Surrey Police.

This changeover, now being planned jointly by the officers from both police forces, is likely to have a number of effects. At present, however, any possible changes to our Council Tax, Banstead Police Station, etc. can only be speculation. As your representative on the Banstead and District Police Consultative Committee, I will endeavour to keep you up to date through the NewsSheet on the planned changes as they are advised to the Committee.

Chris Penfold

**U3A University of the Third Age-
Banstead area**

The U3A is an International Organisation providing opportunities to continue learning for older people. For further Information concerning the local Banstead U3A, please contact:-

**The Membership Secretary
Evelyn Shamash Telephone number
0181 643 3916**

or

**The Group Coordinator
Pat Hargreaves Telephone number
01372 748 756**

The Annual Subscription is:- £5.00

Banstead Wildlife Field

On 16th June a group of disabled children from Shelley's School, Kennington, visited the site and took part in pond dipping. It was a pleasant day out which the children enjoyed. Many wild flowers have been blooming, and in June the hillock by the pond was a riot of poppies and ox-eye daisies, whilst dragonflies with iridescent blue bodies patrolled the water. In the April issue of the NewsSheet, it was incorrectly stated that the keyholder to the pond gate was

Mr. Savidge. Local Schools or other groups requiring access for pond dipping must contact:-

Mr. Ian Wright,
Countryside Officer,
Reigate and Banstead Borough Council
Telephone number 01737 276 134

Dennis Woolmer

Church Institute Frontage

The work on the Institute frontage is now complete, and I hope you will agree that it has substantially improved its appearance. May I express the Association's thanks to Lewis White, the consultant landscape architect, for his help with this project, and also with the other environmental improvements in the High Street. Incidentally, members of the BVRA committee carried out the planting of the shrubs you now see along the frontage, and my thanks are due to them.

Membership Subscription

Subscriptions (still a £1. per household) for the year ending January 31st 1999 are now due. Could Road Stewards please let the Treasurer have them (and the receipt books) as soon as possible and certainly not later than November 30th. You will recall that the Association has set a target of 2,000 members by the Millennium and what a great achievement that would be!

Chairman

Late News

As we go to press two items of news for you. First, a planning application for the conversion of the Council House in Brighton Road (now sold) has been submitted. The developer wants to provide 43 'Very Sheltered Apartments' for the elderly with varying degrees of infirmity. We understand the facilities will include a communal restaurant, lounge and launderette, and domestic help and social care will be available.

The development involves the demolition of 'The Cottage' in Lyme Regis Road and replacing it with a three-storey building along its frontage. Also proposed is the erection of three-storey rear extensions, together with two- single storey buildings on the eastern side. BVRA will scrutinise this application with very great care.

The second item concerns the old Waitrose Store in the High Street. There are rumblings of a feasibility study to consider how this most important site might be developed in the future. More about this in the January NewsSheet.