

BVRA news sheet

from the Banstead Village Residents' Association

Volume 28 : No 1 - January 2012

Chairman's Introduction

I hope you all had a very good Christmas. We are now facing what might be a difficult year for many people and the outcome of several issues could affect our everyday lives. We still wait to see exactly how the government will implement its plans to pass decision making from the PCTs to GP practices. Also, Reigate & Banstead BC is in the consultation phase for its revised core strategy which will set the framework for local development and planning; and the government's localism initiative could also make a profound change to local planning – will any organisation, or indeed person, set out to establish a Neighbourhood Forum to represent the village?

We had one resounding success last year in stopping the Surrey County Council proposals to charge for on street parking. Thank you to all residents and traders in the village who helped with our efforts to resist this misguided initiative. We now have another issue with the R&BBC proposal to end hot meals at the Day Centre in the Horseshoe. Since we believe that this facility is of major importance to many older residents we shall be looking for ways to assist the committee who manage the centre to continue providing hot meals there.

Planning applications remain quiet and are covered in Mike Sawyer's section below. To revert to the matters of the Core Strategy and Neighbourhood Forums, we are hoping that the Council will be able to meet the Federation of Banstead RAs soon to discuss both these issues. We should shortly learn more at the Federation's next quarterly meeting.

The replacement of the High Street lamp posts with new ones should now start this spring – postponed from last September. This means that our perennial concern over the Christmas lights continues. You may have noticed that the lights in the trees outside the Library were missing this year – the Council's contractor Skanska removed the lamp post at the top of Bolters Lane with our lights and equipment which powered these lights. At least we have a little time to arrange new lights - helped by a generous donation of £1,000 from Councillor Angela Fraser, out of her Surrey CC local support fund.

I'm sorry that many issues remain uncertain but we will try to keep you informed, and BVRA wish you all a prosperous and successful 2012.

Roger Collins, Chairman

Tel: 01737 358384

LOCALISM

The government's new initiative comes into effect this year. The detail of how this will operate remains to be defined fully but in principle it will require local councils to devolve to local Neighbourhood Forums some of its powers, for example in regard to planning matters. First, however, some organisation will need to define how it would set up a body, a Neighbourhood Forum, to represent local residents, how this body would function, and then would need to negotiate with the local council its remit and the funding to be provided by the council. Ideally the organisation proposing to set up such a body should be an existing entity with some claims to represent already

the wider community. We thus propose first to discuss with Reigate and Banstead BC how they view this initiative and what they would consider to be a suitably representative body.

While BVRA might in principle become an active party in seeking to set up a Neighbourhood Forum, it is not necessarily desirable to do so. The workload and costs, estimated by government at up to £10,000, are significantly beyond our current resources – unless we can acquire both funds and volunteers to do the work. Bookham, which has looked seriously at this, are thinking in terms of a representative body of around 50 members, so that every part of the community, by age, gender, social and ethnic group, and

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including local businesses, is represented on this 'governing body'. Once constituted the body will be required to hold a referendum on its residents' wishes – whether indeed to create this Neighbourhood Forum and presumably the extent of its powers and functions. It will also be necessary to determine exactly what the neighbourhood is – Banstead Village alone, or Nork as well, plus maybe other neighbours such as Woodmansterne and Burgh Heath?

This is not a trivial task and we would not wish to see our normal activities swamped by an attempt to take this on. However, we would encourage residents to let us have your views, and if anyone wishes to volunteer as the person to drive this initiative, please do step forward.

Meanwhile we will keep you informed of any developments.

Roger Collins

(01737) 358384

VILLAGE CENTRE MATTERS

1. Festive Lights: the replacement of lamp posts is now believed to be imminent. The traders are still working on raising funds to purchase new and better lights for the new posts once these are installed and now have an approaching deadline if they are to be working by the time of the Jubilee. Our Executive Committee has decided that we should also aim to replace the strings of lights in the trees in the Orchard and elsewhere, which have rather suffered this year (see Chairman's introduction to this NewsSheet). BVRA would then take future responsibility for the 'tree lights' only, leaving the lights on lamp posts to the traders.

While the residual 'Millenium Let There Be Light' funds would be available to the traders for their initiative, we also have some other funds. Councillor Angela Fraser has kindly donated £1,000 towards the lights out of her local community allocation. We have also received £446 from Waitrose as a contribution to the lights – from their green token scheme in November – for which we are most grateful. The way forward was discussed at the recent Town Centre Management committee; the aim is to install new lights at the time of the Diamond Jubilee.

2. Longcroft clinic: the saga of replacing PCTs by GP practice groups as commissioners of medical treatment rolls slowly on and we do not yet know what the Health Secretary's final model will be. Meanwhile the Longcroft is setting up a virtual forum for determining patient priorities and needs

through a Patient Reference Group. Two of our committee members have been asked to join this group. In due course the Longcroft will issue a survey to research patient needs and we will be happy to distribute this with our NewsSheet, we hope in May, if they wish us to do so.

3. Day Centre: Reigate & Banstead BC has decided to stop subsidising the provision of daily hot meals at the Day Centre in the Horseshoe. The management committee members at the Centre are volunteers but the cooks are paid by the council. So while the facility may continue, the availability of hot meals will cease unless alternative arrangements can be made.

We wish to support the committee's search to solve this problem; we believe it has been costing the council around £7,500 per year. We do not have the funds to meet this but would like to encourage the continuation of the operation on a semi-voluntary basis. We believe that the interests of elderly residents are unreasonably threatened and would put a high priority on resolving this issue satisfactorily. For more detail see Drina van den Berg's article below.

Roger Collins

(01737) 358384

4. On Street Parking Charges - Postscript

News came through as we went to press with the last newssheet.

A decision was taken at the highest level in Surrey C C to devolve to the Local Committees the decisions on whether to go ahead with these charges. At the same time an officer was charged with reporting to these committee with recommendations on the viability of charging.

Local Committees are made up of a mix of Surrey and Reigate & Banstead councillors.

The officer duly reported that charges should not go ahead in Banstead and the reasons he listed were almost word for word the reasons BVRA and others had put forward in submissions. The local committee endorsed the report and so the subject is hopefully dead for the foreseeable future.

Charges will go ahead in parts of Redhill, Horley and Merstham mostly to restrict all day commuter parking.

(I comment on the new car park charges in a later article!)

David Gradidge

(01737) 353981

FEDERATION MATTERS

The planning sub-group of the Banstead and District Federation of RAs has given detailed

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responses to the borough's consultation on its proposals for Preston Regeneration, in the form of its Preston Draft Planning Framework.

We had a number of serious concerns at the amount of open space being sacrificed to new housing development, the lack of commitment to major environmental improvements, and the lack of commitment to major refurbishment to the public housing stock in that ward.

The council's leader and deputy leader and senior planning officers met us shortly before the consultation ended to discuss our concerns and the reasons for their approach. They explained that substantial amounts of land need to be sold to support the sports centre redevelopment (to which the council is contractually committed) and that the Raven Housing Trust funds are committed to their renewal programme in Merstham for the foreseeable future, so improvements to the existing Preston housing stock will be constrained for some time.

The document is therefore one that provides a planning development framework in advance of approval of the Core Strategy rather than a series of regeneration proposals.

We believe that they will consider all comments from the consultation and will make a number of amendments, many of which are likely to reflect our points - including the need for a range of environmental improvements, accessibility to new playing facilities, and means to ensure the necessary planning controls to secure these intentions.

Mike Sawyer

(01737) 355454

PLANNING MATTERS

1. Local Development Framework: at the end of last year we responded to the council's consultation on urban open land, stressing that it should be as well protected from inappropriate development as is green belt land.

2. Core Strategy: we were grateful to the council for meeting us last October on this matter. The next opportunity to comment will be during the next consultation on amendments, due to take place shortly.

3. Local planning matters: happily, we have been relatively free of many of the "bad neighbour" development projects that continue to afflict others in nearby wards - Nork, Tadworth and Walton, Kingswood and others; probably due to the happy ratio of house value-to-plot size in most of the

village. Many applications are nowadays in the form of "householder applications", the government's expression for a form of application that is relatively trivial and should not clutter up the planning processes. Not all neighbours agree, but there is often little opportunity to find valid planning objections.

Our recent objections have been to proposals for a new house in the garden of 1 Mellow Close and the erection of a 6+ft. front boundary wall in de Burgh Park. A recent application for a large extension behind Ciao Italia in the High Street was refused by the council as being overbearing and out of keeping. An application for a slightly lower extension has just been received.

Long may this lull in significant problems last!

Mike Sawyer

(01737) 355454

POLICE MATTERS

1 We are told that the new national non-emergency telephone number - 101 - is proving a success in Surrey since its official launch on 1st September 2011.

More than 50 percent of the non-emergency calls coming into the Surrey Police contact centre are made by members of the public using 101 rather than the previous 0845 number.

As an alternative to 101 a geographical number 01483 571212 is also available for those unable to use the 101 service (for example, if calling from abroad).

999 remains the number to use in a real emergency - for example when someone's life is in danger, a serious offence is in progress or someone is at risk of violence. For all other situations we are asked to contact Surrey Police on the 101 number. Minor crime can also be reported online, at a police station or at Surrey Police's mobile police office. For more details visit www.surrey.police.uk

2 Surrey Police recently launched an initiative to tackle vehicle crime across the county. Activity will include neighbourhood officers and extra patrol teams focussing on the hot spot areas within Surrey and offenders known to be linked to vehicle crime. The Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) team will also be stopping vehicles which are known to have been stolen or have links to offenders. The overall aim is to reduce the offences of theft from and theft of motor vehicles. Currently most theft from vehicles occurs when they are left unlocked!

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For details on how to protect your vehicle visit www.surrey.police.uk/vehiclecrime

3 Bank courier scam: Surrey Police is warning Surrey residents about a scam in which fraudsters posing as couriers use false pretences to obtain people's bank cards following a number of incidents in the north of the county.

The scam works by the victim initially receiving a phone call, or number of phone calls, from someone claiming to be from their bank. The caller checks the victim's details, including asking for their PIN number, then informs them that they need a new bank card. The victim is advised that someone will be visiting them shortly to collect their old card. A person, dressed to look like a courier, then arrives at the door to take the card. Beware!

Mike Sawyer (01737) 355454

A217 PIPELINE

We understand from Sutton & East Surrey Water that construction of the new main in the A217 has finished. The testing, disinfection and commissioning processes are also nearing completion, but the excavations within the lay-by south of the A240 Reigate Road junction and within the Tadworth Roundabout have to be maintained so this work can take place.

The traffic management between the Tadworth Roundabout and Shelveys Way is to provide the contractor with a safe working area during these final commissioning stages. It is hoped to remove this by January 22nd.

The testing and commissioning phases are much less labour intensive, so there are fewer people on site compared with the earlier construction phases.

On completion of the commissioning, the remaining work sites on the Tadworth Roundabout and in the lay-by near the Reigate Road junction will be fully reinstated, as will the compound on the Mogador Road. Discussions have been held with representatives of Marie Curie Cancer Care, and the other sponsors of the roundabout, to replant the daffodil bulbs at the correct time of year.

S&ESW also thank everyone affected by these essential works for their patience.

Catalina Vassallo-Bonner (01737) 357882

NEW REFUSE COLLECTION SCHEME

Some time ago we reported on the council's proposal to spend several £m. on new refuse freighters, kerbside bins etc. At that time we were critical of the overall cost in relation to unfulfilled

promises (Banstead swimming pool) and the impracticality of the number of bins/boxes then proposed. In 2010 a 54 page report was submitted to the council's executive outlining the continuing need for increasing recycling rates, the harsh financial climate for recycling income, and for reducing reliance on landfill. It appeared that the original proposal was not universally liked, nor snag-free, so other options and implementation timescales were identified. The scheme now adopted will, it was reported last July, cost £4.6m.

Preliminary details of this scheme have now appeared on their web site. In summary the proposal is to be introduced for houses first this summer, and for flats next year, and will entail a change to:

- weekly food waste collection – specially designed lockable food caddy (plus a small caddy for kitchen);

- weekly paper and card collection using your existing black box;

- alternate weekly collection of plastics, glass and cans in a new wheeled bin;

- alternate weekly residual waste collection – your existing wheeled bin;

- garden waste collection - as now for those who subscribe to the fortnightly service.

So it appears we are to have another wheely bin and two new caddies to use - but we are told that if you do not want to have the cans, plastics and glass (new wheely bin) collected from your home you will still be able to use one of the many recycling banks - but few, if any take fruit juice cartons for recycling, despite all this expenditure.

Mike Sawyer (01737) 355454

BOROUGH NEWS

We all get a copy of the Borough News. The Winter issue was 16 pages long. Pages 6 and 7 detailed the achievements of 2011. I read every item. Nowhere was there a mention of Banstead (or for that matter Nork, Tadworth, Walton, Kingswood or Woodmansterne). A refurbished playground in Preston was mentioned, but didn't something happen in the Lady Neville?

Further on, pages 13 and 14 had the Out and About listings. I read every item. Nowhere was there a mention of Banstead (or for that matter Nork, Tadworth, Walton, or Woodmansterne). Kingswood Am Dram got a mention. Does nothing else happen North of the M25?

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Reading on to try and find any word of Banstead I came across the proposed regeneration in Preston including the new Banstead leisure centre. Not exactly in Banstead, but better than nothing I suppose. And didn't that only happen after a huge number of protests.

Sorry to moan, but you really wonder who writes this publication.

This issue could have been used to publicise the new car park charges in the High St. The notice of variation was dated 27th October and was apparently posted in the car park. The new charges are 35p for 20 minutes and 90p for 1 hour (min. 3 coins required – no change given). On the (small) plus side, however, the "no change" machines apparently now give out time for all the money put in. Charges at the Library car park have not increased so far.

David Gradidge

(01737) 353981

ROADS – an update

Every year I tour the public roads in Banstead and note down the state of repair. It is by no means scientific but over time forms a consistent picture. Some roads pothole on a regular basis and then get patched only for the cycle to repeat itself. Others turn to rubble with the top surface falling apart. I email Surrey C C with the results in the hope that they will put some of them higher up their list. Their list this year is a little odd including one or two roads that are nowhere near being the worst.

Here is the "crime sheet" starting with the worst as at the end of June with an update as of Jan 8th.

1. Yewlands Close – truly awful. On Surrey's list and now has had 3 long stretches repaired.

2. Pound Road. Some pot holes have been filled but for a busy road it remains very poor. Needs to be completely resurfaced.

3. The Horseshoe. The far end has been repaired and is - for the time being - no longer an assault course.

Almost as bad –

1. Heath Close – getting worse rapidly. Much of this has now been resurfaced and was on Surrey's list.

2. High St. We all know how bad this is, but it is a major job – don't expect anything soon.

3. Avenue Road. For a busy road, it never gets any serious attention.

The usual culprits –

1. De Burgh Park – potholes everywhere, but some patching.

2. Garden Close – long neglected.

3. Grange Meadow – the patches have been patched – now getting much worse.

4. Oakley Gardens first 50 yds – again long neglected.

5. South Drive – generally falling apart but now has had extensive repairs.

6. Buff Avenue – this has been repaired recently to a good standard.

7. Wellesford Close – the first 50 yards potholed but has had some patching.

8. Bolters Lane – Garratts Lane to the High St – on Surrey's list to be done by the end of March. Gullies

If the roads are showing some improvement, the same cannot be said for the gullies on the main roads. They receive no attention and are in an appalling state.

In Sutton Lane there is a situation where water starting at the Croydon Lane roundabout ends up ponding on Banstead Downs half a mile away. Between this roundabout and the High St, they have written off the gullies outside the Well House. This results in water pouring down Flint Close after heavy rain.

In Bolters Lane North of the High St, all the gullies on the West side are totally blocked so water ends up on the mini-roundabout on Winkworth Rd. The East side is only marginally better.

On Winkworth Rd, the situation is just as bad. Many of those that are recessed are grassed over. Those to the West are mostly blocked to the top with just one outside No 5 serviceable.

I continue to report this state of affairs to Surrey C C but nothing gets done. One wonders what gullies are for. In the meantime they will continue to go round the side roads and clean them out – but that is easy.

Yellow Lines

Finally, you may have noticed that Surrey C C has now started on a much delayed programme of painting double yellow lines. These are mostly on junctions where parked cars can make visibility difficult. BVRA is generally in agreement with the plan. However at the exit to The Maples they painted over existing white oblique line markings making an odd pattern and on the corner of Fiddicraft and Woodmansterne Lane there is now a gap where a car was parked when they did the job. Oh dear!

David Gradidge

(01737) 353981

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NHS: Epsom & St Helier hospitals

We don't expect to hear until late February early March whether or not St George's bid for St Helier and Ashford & St Peter's bid for Epsom have been successful. The tenders are being reviewed to ensure that they meet a range of criteria aimed at ensuring the merged organisations will improve healthcare services for local people. The complexity of the process means that there has been and continues to be a significant amount of work to be done and to ensure that they will meet a range of criteria that will deliver the best for local people and patients. Because of this the process cannot be hurried.

However, we do know that Ashford & St Peter's has been supported in its bid by the Royal Marsden and would like to work with the Royal Marsden to manage cancer services on the Epsom site if its application is successful. At the same time it is understood that the Royal Marsden is also considering how it could support the provision of cancer services at St Helier.

Catalina Vassallo-Bonner (01737) 357882

THE BANSTEAD DAY CENTRE

As you may have read recently in the "Surrey Mirror", and as mentioned earlier in this newsheet, our council intends axing the meals service to the three Day Centres within its control, one of which is situated in the Horseshoe, Banstead. The Banstead Centre has a membership of approximately 1,000, many of whom take advantage of the mid-day meal when they attend - often on a regular basis. The termination of this service would be a significant loss and must impact on the attraction of the Centre.

The Centre comes under the control of the Leisure Services umbrella which is currently spending millions of pounds of our money on the Redhill theatre, football pitches, swimming centres, Priory Park and other parks and gardens. Nevertheless it has to make savings - but why by removing pensioners' mid-day meal?

The council says that demand for these meals is dwindling, but we know that many of the Banstead members are bussed into the Centre regularly and rely on this meal. We are told that the demand at the other two centres is much lower than at Banstead, but that all must be treated the same! Whatever the true position is in the other two Centres, the Banstead attendance is steady at about 20 per day, and 100+ on special occasions.

The savings they are making here would be negligible.

If you feel as strongly as we do that this is wrong, please let your local councillors and the leader of the council know your feelings. Your support is vital and would be greatly appreciated by the Centre and its members.

Drina van den Berg (01737) 356126

LOCAL DEMOCRACY

1 Electoral Boundaries The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) has now made its final recommendations for changes to the boundaries of the county councillors' divisions (wards) in Surrey.

You may recall from the last issue that an additional Councillor has been allocated to our Borough and specifically to the North of the Borough.

The problem has always been how to make 4 divisions where only 3 existed before and not upset too many people. The LGBCE solution was to incorporate Merstham into the 4 areas in order to give the required (only just) electoral equality. In doing this they then had to break their other prerequisite of community identity.

The 4 areas were: Banstead, Woodmansterne & Chipstead; Nork & Tattenhams; Walton, Tadworth & Kingswood; Merstham & Banstead South.

In our view there was never going to be a solution that satisfied everyone.

The problem and the protests arose from lumping Merstham (inc Hooley) in with Lower Kingswood (or as they call it, Banstead South)

Despite over 130 submissions, they have stuck with their original proposals. They admit that "ties are not strong" - they should have said ties are virtually non existent either as a community or by road.

BVRA made a submission based on a revision to the proposed areas. It meant better electoral equality but there being no alternative, to split Lower Kingswood East and West of the A217. In retrospect it would have been helpful if others could have come up with alternatives rather than just make objections. Our proposal was given some credit but not enough to sway them.

So, for reasons of numbers rather than communities, Lower Kingswood is now split off from Kingswood.

David Gradidge (01737) 353981

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2 Localism Act

We have commented previously on some of the planning and other implications contained in this Act. Another important facet yet to be explored is the reversal of the previous government's diktats on the need to organise local councillors under a fixed term mayoral or "strong leader" basis. It appears that greater freedom of organisation is now the order - including the ability to revert to a committee based structure. We look forward to our council's debate on this.

3 May Council elections

One of our 3 local councillors, Brian Cowle, reaches the end of his period of tenure on May 7th, the date of the local election, after many years of dedicated work - more about this in the next NewsSheet.

The lead up to the local election for a new Banstead Village councillor will give voters a chance to explore and debate the prospective councillors', and the council's, views on, among other matters, the imbalance of spending (relative to population) between the southern and northern parts of the Borough, meals for pensioners etc!

Mike Sawyer (01737) 355454

ROYAL BRITISH LEGION POPPY APPEAL

Thanks to your support the Banstead & District Branch of the Royal British Legion (RBL) raised almost £40,000 last year. RBL do not just support WWII veterans, but also our troops currently fighting in Afghanistan. New members are always welcome - we have a lively social side as well! If you are interested in becoming a member please contact John Tween, Chairman, on 01737 355513 or me, Nina Sawyer, Hon Secretary. We should be pleased to hear from you.

Nina Sawyer (01737) 355454

DIARY DATES

U3A Banstead

1. 9th February, 2.15 - 4.30 at Tadworth Church of the Good Shepherd, Station Approach Tadworth. - a talk by Rev. Malcolm Newman,

"Parliament & the strange laws of England." £1 including tea & biscuits.

2. 7th March, 2.15-4.30 at Banstead Community Hall, a talk by Alison Gaitonde, "The History of U3A".

3. 18th April, 2.15-4.30 at Banstead Community Hall, a talk by Faith Powell: "Behind the scenes of a TV quiz show".

Details of these meetings are available from:
Erika Porter (01737) 350708

Banstead History Centre

A talk entitled "Who Do You Think You Are" - a look at behind the scenes of the TV series - will be given at Banstead Community Hall, Park Road, at 7.30 pm on Friday 30th March. Tickets £5 (incl. refreshments) from the Ibis bookshop in the High Street or from me at 5 Garrard Road, Banstead.

More details at:

www.banstead.history@ntlworld.com

Audrey Cartey (01737) 351747

ROAD STEWARDS

I always need to recruit Road Stewards. Vacancies occur all the time and for very good reasons.

At present there is a gap in Flint Close and Barnfield (just off Sutton Lane). Please let me know if you would like to volunteer.

At the time of writing there are quite a few outstanding subscriptions. If Road Stewards could get these to me soon (before Winter sets in) I would be very grateful.

David Gradidge (01737) 353981

ALAN LANSDOWN

After several years of dedication Alan has resigned from the executive committee - although not from all involvement with BVRA - due to other commitments. We thank him for his support and will miss his hard work and support.

Roger Collins (01737) 358384