

BVRA newsheet

from the Banstead Village Residents' Association

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CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

Dear Residents

We can no longer suggest that 'events in the Village .. have been relatively quiet', as we did in a NewsSheet last year. With the fire at Waitrose, the economic difficulties of the Council, and certain major planning issues it has been all too eventful. The section that follows this item covers the situation at Waitrose, which has both short and long term implications for the village. The Council's difficulties arising from their investment in an Icelandic bank were reported by Reigate & Banstead Borough Council's leader, Councillor Joan Spiers, to a meeting of the Banstead and District Federation of RAs in October. In a nutshell, the £15.5 million of the Borough's reserves that are invested in the bank will be recovered eventually but in the meantime it will reduce the Borough's annual revenues by nearly £1 million. The Council therefore rightly suspended all capital projects until a thorough review of priorities had been undertaken. The result, in terms of what projects will go ahead, should be published shortly; we are pressing councillors to go ahead with the proposed refurbishment of the Lady Neville recreation area. Some element of the increase in Council Tax will presumably be to recover funds but the indications are that the overall increase will be restricted to no more than 5% next year, hopefully less.

As usual, our routine activities continue and you will find the details, for example on local planning applications, in the various sections below. Suffice it to say here on planning that although run-of-the-mill applications have reduced, presumably because of the economic climate, we have seen some major applications, for example at Wellesford Close by Whitecote, the developers who bought the Legal and General land, now known as the Banstead Estate. We are waiting with bated breath for the follow-up from Whitecote, which may be an application to develop the area behind Copt Hill Lane in Kingswood. The application to rebuild Waitrose will also create lots of work for our Executive Committee members.

In general the Federation has been active, keeping to its new schedule of quarterly meetings. It has also set up a working group to tackle Banstead Estate applications as and when these arise. The last meeting was on police matters and this is reported below.

The Christmas Lights were, we thought, better this year than ever. Our thanks go to Justin Heraty-Plant who kindly took on the task of organising the light-up and to Dave Hill of Powerlite electrical for carrying out the work.

We have talked in previous NewsSheets about the running concern we have about the provision of local health services. There are still no decisions on a new local clinic nor on the future of Epsom General, only rumours, for example that St Helier and Epsom Trust will be split up again. By the time of our AGM on May 20th we hope that some progress towards definite decisions will have been made and we would like to major on this issue at that meeting.

We are delighted that Dr L Nathan of the Longcroft clinic has agreed to be our key speaker at the AGM.

We hope you enjoy the editorials and reports below.

Roger Collins, Chairman

(01737 358384)

TOWN CENTRE MATTERS

These have, of course, been dominated by the twin closures of Woolworths, which would have been

the major talking point, had it not been for the greater issue of the Waitrose fire. The economic climate is causing enough problems for local traders

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without these two factors, and you know times are hard when estate agents and charity shops are closing. It was, however, a hopeful sign that about 30 traders attended the January meeting of the Town Centre management group – perhaps this could develop into the nucleus for a traders or business forum?

Waitrose destruction

Known within John Lewis as 12/12 (but thankfully, and remarkably, with no serious injury or loss of life), the fire has left a gaping hole in the trading position of Banstead. It is a reflection of Waitrose themselves and the success of the building design how seriously we have all been affected by their loss.

It is welcome news that the store will be rebuilt, and that a temporary presence is rapidly being established (albeit on a much smaller scale) in the former Woolworths building.

However, many will remember the arguments and battles that arose over the original scheme in the late 1980's. Apart from the controversy about the loss of the old school building there were many who were convinced that the scheme was too big for the site. In the event a very successful design was hammered out that, most will agree, has sat well within, and added to, the appearance of the High Street.

But that was only achieved after lengthy planning processes, culminating in a public Planning Inquiry. The building approval was made subject to a number of planning conditions to protect the local environment. At the time of writing we await sight of the new proposals at the public display to see how they could be made to fit in as successfully as the "old" building. We are keen to support

their early rebuild, but this is such a key building in the Village that we can only hope that the process will not be rushed, and that Waitrose, and the council's planners, will give everyone a full opportunity to comment on the schemes as they emerge. Much as we desire the early return of the shop, there is only one chance to make sure it is the right scale for the Village.

Woolworths

The short-term use by Waitrose is, of course, only an interim measure which will no doubt have some impact on aspects of the car park. It remains to be seen what will happen, and who will take the building, when this use ends.

Car Parking

The council has been urged to help traders by agreeing to a free parking period – probably one hour – in both car parks, in an effort to attract more shoppers to replace some of the trade lost by the closure of Woolworths and Waitrose stores. Our councillors are pressing for the Horsehoe car park to have, for a few months, free parking for the first hour. It is hoped that this will help to attract more trade to the Village whilst Waitrose is being rebuilt.

We look forward to hearing if this is agreed.

Banstead Village lights

Thanks to the half-dozen who responded to my (slightly dramatic!) plea in the last NewsSheet for help (on behalf of the Town Centre management group), and my apologies to those I did not phone back. In the event Justin Heraty-Plant kindly jumped in and made the arrangements with Surrey CC and our contractor to overhaul and renew them in part. I hope you agree that the

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display is improving gradually year on year. We have some money available for next winter but, due to the council's financial difficulties referred to in the Chairman's introduction, we are likely to lose the money they give us each year for this purpose.

Mike Sawyer (01737 355454)

BANSTEAD & DISTRICT FEDERATION & LOCAL PLANS

In response to the government's invitation to consult on the revised South East Plan, which was issued last year, the Banstead & District Federation of RAs set up a working group chaired by Gary Whitney (Kingswood RA) with Trish Canham (Tadworth RA), Gillian Hein (CPRE & Tadworth RA) and our secretary Catalina Vassallo-Bonner (BVRA). This group produced a detailed response to the Plan which tabled serious objections to some of the proposals on carefully structured grounds and in specific conformity with the government's unrealistic format for residents to make their views known. (This entailed study of a four inch thick set of documents, which few citizens would be able to acquire, never mind find the time to analyse effectively).

The Federation also chaired a public meeting at which our MP the Right Hon. Crispin Blunt, Councillors Joan Spiers and Mike Gosling, and Tim Harrold from the CPRE, all spoke to the 200 residents who attended. Following their appeal for Residents Associations to submit their views on the South East Plan documents, we circulated all our members with a letter of explanation on the matter and a request for each individual to submit their views, together with an outline of the main

grounds for objection that we perceive. We hope this effort, which was made at some cost to our finances, will have an impact on the government's views, but we await their response, not least to tell us what the level of response from our area has been. We believe that they are offering funds for infrastructure and regeneration to underpin the various major projects in Reigate & Banstead, but whether this is in direct response to the protests, and whether they may modify the proposed high level of house-building, which lies at the heart of the Plan, remains unclear at the moment.

The council has now issued its Core Strategy, the heart of the LDF, for consultation. This is a key document in local policy terms, and will determine how the identification and examination of future development sites will be handled (remember, as we have reported before, the council is now charged with the task of identifying sufficient sites for all the development needs identified in the South East Plan – after the government has decided whether it meets their policy dictats!). Residents' Associations were told at a meeting called by the council to explain the process that the documents will by now be available on their web site (if you dig!) or at the helpshop and at council offices elsewhere. The consultation runs from 23 January for 6 weeks, and comments have to stick strictly to the government's format (its said to be easier on-line!). We, and the Federation, will be making our comments, but we urge those of you prepared to look at the document to send your comments in as well.

Roger Collins (01737 358384)

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LOCAL PLANNING MATTERS

The pace of planning applications in this ward has eased, no doubt due in part to seasonal factors, the economic climate, and to the recent changes to permit small scale house extensions without going through the planning process. The notable recent applications and decisions were:

30 Sutton Lane – at the beginning of January we heard that the planning inspector has finally granted the appeal for 4 large detached houses on this site. The appeal was lodged in June;

27 Lyme Regis Road – the appeals for both proposals (one for 5 houses and one for 6 on back-land, with access from Lyme Regis Road) was lodged in May and in November the planning inspector rejected both appeals. A similar application on a slightly larger site was, in the meantime, withdrawn;

Banstead Estate – in addition to the proposal reported in the last NewsSheet, the first planning application was submitted recently (see below). The threat of development is seen to be so potentially damaging to the area that several Residents' Associations are working together to pool resources in responding to any applications as they are submitted. As part of our investigations your RA reminded the council of the planning agreement (under section 52 of the Planning Acts) signed by Legal & General (L & G) when their new(ish) Headquarters building received planning permission in 1988. Under the terms of this they (and the new owners) are legally obliged to ensure that the land is not developed for any use other than agricultural. It remains to be seen how robust this commitment is;

Wellesford Close – an application for 18 houses was submitted for development of the former allotment site off this road. The allotments were closed by L & G many years ago, have been left unused since then, and were included in L & G's sale of the Banstead Estate to a property company called Whitecote Ltd (see last NewsSheet). The application was submitted by a building company owned by Whitecote, and was accompanied by a wealth of supporting information (mostly environmental) over two inches thick! The site is designated in the Borough Plan as Urban Open Land, and adjoins the large area of green belt land. Not surprisingly this was viewed with great consternation by local residents, with scores of letters and a petition with over 100 signatures all against the proposal submitted to the council. We were relieved that the council refused the application in fairly robust terms, and also said that it could see no reason to amend the S. 52 agreement.

Mike Sawyer (01737 355454)

LADY NEVILLE

We understand that the council has agreed to go ahead with seeking tenders for the Lady Neville improvements in February. The need for a financial review of all capital projects has meant that the start on site will be delayed until about June with work expected to take about 3 months.

Mike Sawyer (01737 355454)

POLICE MATTERS

General

On a regional level there are two important items to report which may affect policing in the local area:

Surrey Police have announced that

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they will be following the national Policing Pledge which outlines the service the police will provide. This pledge also highlights how residents can assist the police in making their neighbourhoods safe. As outlined in the last newsletter, the police will gauge their success in some part by feedback from local residents. One forum for residents to provide feedback is the neighbourhood panel meetings which take place at Banstead Junior School every three months. Residents are encouraged to be vigilant when going out and about in the local area and to report anything suspicious to the police. Some details of how Banstead residents may assist the police are listed below.

Police **non-emergency** number is **0845 125 2222**. This number should be called when there is a need to report a matter to the Police, but not when a crime is in progress.

If a **crime is in progress** or someone is **in immediate danger call 999**.

If you have any information about a crime, and do not want to leave your name please contact **Crime Stoppers** on **0800 555 111**.

If you wish to report a crime please do so via either the 0845 number or the 999 system.

The second significant development is that Surrey Police are to introduce hand held computers in an attempt to cut down on administration when recording crime.

Antisocial Behaviour

There have been some complaints regarding youths gathering around Tesco in Banstead. This is a favoured

location for local youth and has been the subject of a dispersal order in the past. The area is being patrolled on a regular basis in an attempt to minimise the problem.

Criminal Damage

Please be on the lookout for anybody lingering in shop doorways. There have been some instances in Nork where superglue has been applied to shop doors and locks. If you see any such activity please report it by dialing 999.

Other instances of crime in the area involve thefts from vehicles, damage to tyres and damage to garden fencing and walls. These events are not targeted in any specific area. Once again, if you see anyone causing damage please dial 999.

Banstead Police Station

Ian Rees – our current Police Sergeant, is leaving Banstead to return to the response team in Reigate. The post in Banstead is to be taken up by Dave Charlesworth who will start on 11th January 2009. Sergeant Charlesworth has 15 years' service and is looking forward to coming to Banstead and the new challenges this will bring.

Finally – a reminder that all residents are encouraged to attend the local panel meetings which take place in Banstead Junior School every three months. To date the meetings have not been well attended and more support is needed. This is an opportunity to find out about local policing initiatives, crime in the area and to raise any concerns you may have regarding crime Banstead and surrounding areas. Details of the meetings can be found on the Surrey Police website. The next meeting is to

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take place at Banstead Junior School in the Horseshoe at 7.30 pm on Thursday 27th March.

Lindsay Iorwerth (01737 353906)

GRADIDGE'S GRUMBLES

Icy pavements

As I write this (Jan 7th) my road, The Maples, is its usual skating rink. This happens with only a small amount of snow and we don't expect Surrey C C to get round to grit this road ever. However what is expected is for the Council to have gritted the pavements in and around the High Street by now. They are lethal on both sides and it is safer to walk in the road. As we all know, Banstead catches any snow that's going so even if we have not had much in recent years the problem is well known to the authorities.

However, on enquiring at Surrey Highways Dept as to why nothing has been done, Mike Sawyer was told "we don't do pavements" and this was followed up with a comment about lack of resources. This matter will be pursued vigorously. Since when have they decided not to do pavements? Subsequent information is that they are supposed to do town centre and other "vulnerable" areas' pavements, so the reason remains to be clarified.

Broken lamp posts

Maybe it's a national problem, but whenever a broken lamp post is replaced, nobody but no one ever gets round to removing the old one. Outside The Well House on Park Road, the new one has been positioned adjacent to the road with the old one 2ft away adjacent to the wall severely restricting the pavement width on this busy corner. I know of quite a few others (A217 traffic lights and by bus stop opposite Sunrise on Croydon

Lane), but can you let me know of any others.

Holly Lane

At the end of September, a small party of us met up with 2 Surrey C C engineers to look at various unresolved problems in and around Banstead. One long running saga is the situation in Holly Lane where, after persistent moderate to heavy rain, water wells up from a manhole cover close to Great Ellshams. The water then floods down Holly Lane and has caused erosion to the road margin adjacent to Holly Lane East. Surrey C C are well aware of these problems and we stressed the potential dangers in this poorly lit stretch of road. Our request was for an extension to the kerb stones along this stretch, but the action taken was to fill in the large holes with loose sandy material with no binding properties. No surprise then that the next rain storms took all this material out and deposited it further down the lane.

Of course the basic problem remains unchanged because Surrey C C are unwilling to spend any money to get to the root of the problem. It is not quite the same, though, as the water now wells up from 2 gullies on either side of Holly Lane some 30yds back towards Garratts Lane!

Bus shelters

The wooden bus shelter in Sutton Lane opposite Sunrise fell over and was removed well over a year ago. So far no replacement - why? Two have been replaced in the High St and there is a redundant wooden one on the A217 just SE of the major traffic lights. Why does it take so long to get relatively simple tasks done?

Leaf clearance

Reigate & Banstead Council do a

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reasonable job clearing leaves, but it is very patchy. The roads needing the most attention never get done properly. In autumn 2007 they were emailed with a list of roads and, no surprise, they were all on the list again this year. Some were better than last year and others much worse. Parked cars are a problem but in most cases it is no bar.

The list was: Basing Road (first 150 yds), Buff Avenue, De Burgh Park, Great Ellshams (entrance and right fork), Chipstead Road (East), Colcokes Road, Monks Road, Courtlands Crescent (East arm), Pound Road & Bolters Lane.

This list is not comprehensive, so please let me know if yours should go on the list.

David Gradidge (01737 353981)

ROAD STEWARDS

There are always vacancies for road stewards so I am always on the lookout for willing volunteers. Most vacancies get filled but there is often a gap that has to be covered.

At present there are vacancies in -

- 1 Palmersfield Rd;
- 2 Parts of Lambert Rd;
- 3 Cheviot Close, Tyrolean Court, Avenue Rd;
- 4 Chilton Close, Cheyne Court;
- 5 Rosehill Farm Meadow, Castlegate.

Items 3,4 & 5 can be split in number of ways.

The job of a road steward is not very onerous and entails

- Delivering Newsletters 3 times a year
- Collecting the annual subscription (not more than 3 tries)
- Looking for new members and feeding back any useful information.

You don't have to live in the road but it does help.

David Gradidge (01737 353981)

INCREASE IN SUBSCRIPTIONS

We have for the last couple of years been dipping into our reserves in support of a number of local initiatives – we made contributions to the Church Institute sound system, the planting at the front of the orchard, the Park Road RA's appeal expenses for our joint appearance at the Courtlands Farm Inquiry, Banstead's elements of Britain in Bloom and our response to the South East Plan consultation documents. Some of these expenses are likely to be recurring costs, and yet more are just beneath the horizon. It is therefore necessary, after several years at the current level, to increase the subs from next year to replenish our reserves, but for the sake of prudence (remember her?) and bearing in mind the country's current financial straits we have limited the increase in subs to 50pence - ie from £1.50 to £2.00. We hope and trust you will see the need for this and appreciate the value you receive from BVRA.

Roger Collins (01737 358384)

BANSTEAD U3A

The next open meeting will be on Thursday 26th February, 2.30 – 4.30, at the Church of the Good Shepherd, Station Approach/Avenue Road, Tadworth, at which Mr. Ian Loftus frcs, consultant vascular surgeon, St. George's hospital, will give a talk on the subject of vascular surgery.

Light refreshments follow the talk and non-members are welcome. Admission £1 incl refreshments.

Alison Gaitonde (01737 812646)