

BVRA **newsheet**

from the Banstead Village Residents' Association

Vol: 21 No. 2 May 2005

Notice of Annual General Meeting

**The Executive Committee extends to all members of the Association
a warm invitation to the 58th Annual General Meeting to be held at:**

**THE CHURCH INSTITUTE HALL, HIGH STREET, BANSTEAD,
on WEDNESDAY 25th MAY 2005, at 8.00pm**

AGENDA

1. Welcome by Chairman.
2. Presentation to Mr Peter McLaren, MBE.
3. Minutes of 57th Annual General Meeting held on 20 May 2004 will not be read, but a summary will be distributed to members in the hall.
4. Chairman's report - 2004/2005.
5. Presentation of audited accounts for the year ended 31 January 2005 (included on the back page of this NewsSheet).
6. Adoption of new constitution.
7. Election of Officers, Executive Committee and Auditor for the year 2005/2006.
8. Presentation by Mr Guy Davies, Reigate & Banstead Council's Development Control Manager, who will talk about the effect of the changing planning regime on development in our area.
9. Open Forum debate of local issues with our Councillors.
10. Any other business.

Please bring this invitation with you to the meeting.

May 2005

John Nicolson,
Hon. Secretary

45 Wilmot Way, Banstead
Tel. BH (01737) 353038

COMMITTEE NEWS

First and foremost, **Peter McLaren** has retired as chairman. He has served and developed the Association for a quarter of a century - as Treasurer since 1980, and as chairman since 1986. In this time, and due in no small part to his energy and exceptional standards, the Association has grown in size from under 900 to around 2,000, as well as in standing, recognition and influence. Although he has not severed his ties completely, he will be sorely missed by the committee.

It is intended to make a presentation at this meeting in recognition of his exceptional contributions to Banstead.

Secondly, Dennis Woolmer is on the point of de-camping to sunny south Devon, and (since we will not pay his travel costs) he has resigned from the committee after nearly ten years, the last few as vice chairman. He was, in particular, the main force behind the millennium signs, and will also be much missed.

We wish both Peter and Dennis bright skies and happy times, and thank them for their many efforts.

The committee therefore has a new chairman - **Sam Walsh** - and four new members - **Mrs. J. Williams and J. S. V. van den Beig; Messrs. R. Collins and A. Lansdown**. Whilst we are nearly at full strength, we would be pleased to welcome more members - whether on a full or occasional basis. The AGM is an opportunity to find out how you can take part.

Mike Sawyer 355454

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Dear Members

The past year has been a busy one for the Borough and the Association, with some successes and some sadness. I have to report the sad passing of Dr David Rudd, and the retirement of Mr. Peter McLaren MBE, after 25 years service.

I am pleased, following the election by your Committee in February, to be able to follow Peter's tenure as Chairman of the Association and would confirm my intention to direct and guide the Association forward positively for the benefit of the Members.

Within the NewsSheet, which I trust you will find informative, there are updates on the work and contribution that your Committee members have made in such matters as Planning, Town Centre Management, SEERA etc.

If there any matters, which you wish to discuss, I would be only to pleased to receive a call to discuss it with you. You may call me on **(01737) 350130**.

Sam Walsh

BANSTEAD VILLAGE PLAN

The previous NewsSheet reported on the bid for funding for "Streetscene Improvements" for the Reigate and Banstead area that had been submitted by Surrey County Council's Local Transportation Service. The bid was for enhancements for Banstead High Street, taking as its basis the "Plan for the Centre of Banstead 2004 - 09" prepared by the Town Centre Management Group of which BVRA is a member.

The results of the bidding have now been announced. As predicted, all eleven of Surrey's Districts submitted bids. The competition included bids for enhancement projects for Leatherhead, Caterham, Dorking and Epsom as well as Banstead.

The evaluation was in three parts:

1. The level of "partnership working"
2. The degree to which the scheme addresses the County Council's corporate policies
3. Value for money

"Partnership working" comprises:

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- The extent to which there has been a high level of engagement with the community
- The level of local support and commitment
- Non-council contributions (in terms of voluntary manpower and community funding, for example)
- How realistic it is for the scheme to be achieved
- The track record of the local community in achieving successful ventures

Measured against these first five criteria the bid for Banstead scored 88%, not a bad performance for our village. What's more, our score was the highest of the eleven entries!

In the second part of the evaluation, the bids were compared against such esoteric items as the degree to which the bid addresses the Self-Reliance Agenda, the Local Strategic Partnership Agenda and the Community Survey findings. No, we don't really know what all that means either!

Still, we managed to scrape 54% on that. The highest however was 98%! The net result was that Banstead dropped a couple of places to third overall.

Then the sting in the tail. As the County officers developed the bid, the Town Centre Management Group submitted a plethora of information to assist. This included schedules of areas in the High Street where the footways require resurfacing or repair (based on detailed surveys by BVRA Committee members), together with schedules of the parts of the public footpath network which need attention to the surfacing or the lighting. This effort was directed at meeting the local aspirations for making the best of what we have got and attempted to meet the objectives of the bid process which was to improve the general appearance of the streetscene.

Unfortunately, the County officers putting

the bid together chose to ignore most of that and defined a scheme for elaborate changes to the parking bays, crossing points and landscaping of the High Street. We do not want all that - we did that a few years ago and the basic shape of the High Street is now about right. What we needed was attention to poor footway surfacing, erratic lighting, poor public footpaths. We offered to review the draft bid document so we could assist in tailoring it to local circumstances, but the time to submit the bid was not generous and this offer was declined.

Disappointingly, the cost of the officers' proposals was the highest of all the bids submitted. As a result, Banstead ended up at the bottom of the table when value for money was calculated.

This is deeply frustrating. We had a golden opportunity to improve our environment, which was, literally, second-to-none in terms of community support and commitment. Banstead, in effect, handed on a plate to the local office of the County Council the opportunity to secure success. But it was not to be. We will now have to start all over again in our efforts to persuade the County as the Highway Authority that it really is about time that the footways, public footpaths and street lighting in Banstead received attention to bring them up to a reasonable condition. We are not seeking grand paving schemes - just a footway surface which is even and which drains rainwater into the gutters. Surely not too much to ask.

Tony Ford - 354757

PLANNING MATTERS

1. South East Plan:

You will perhaps have seen reference to this Plan within the press and previous NewsSheets. You may also have received a copy of the consultation leaflet from the Plan's authors, the South East England Regional Assembly - but again, you may not have been so fortunate as delivery seems to

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have been (to put it kindly) "patchy". You may have noticed that one of the headlines for this Plan is the substantial amount of new development, principally housing, that is proposed. Although the main areas of focus for the Plan tend to be the locations most in need of regeneration (such as the Thames Gateway and some of the south coast towns), the Plan raises serious issues for everyone in the south east of England.

The purpose of the South East Plan is to provide a set of policies and proposals for directing the use of land and the way in which both urban and rural areas are developed and managed. The Plan covers all of the South East of England, from Kent to Hampshire to Essex, but it excludes London.

Presently, land use in the region is planned primarily through the Structure Plans prepared by the County Councils. Below that are the Local Plans which apply the County-wide policies to the individual Boroughs. The Local Plan for Reigate & Banstead, for instance, has recently been updated and adopted. The role of the Structure Plans is, by and large, to set the constraints and the planning framework within which the development industry then undertakes development in a manner, timescale and location of their choosing. However, the whole rationale of the South East Plan is different. It is much more focused on stipulating the overall level of development in the region, where it should be, what it should look like and when it should happen. It purports to herald some step-changes in the way that the local authorities and other agencies undertake their work. This is to achieve, in the words of the Plan, "a sustainable balance between economic prosperity, environmental quality, social well-being and a high quality of life".

The current Structure Plan for Surrey has only recently been adopted, but following the anticipated adoption of the South East Plan in 2006, the Structure Plan will be superceded and, after a period of transition,

the Structure Plan will be abolished. The Local Plan for Reigate & Banstead (as well as for all the other boroughs and districts in the South East) will remain but will over a period of time be recast as "Local Development Frameworks", which of course will have to reflect the requirements of South East Plan. At first sight, the issue which appears most relevant for our area is accommodating the planned level of development, and in particular the proposed number of additional houses, in a manner which does not lead to a deterioration in the quality of life for residents. This would appear similar to defying the laws of physics! The Plan acknowledges the challenges and scale of providing adequate infrastructure and resources for the future population of the region (roads, schools, hospitals, water and energy). The current problems with water supply within our area are indicative of this.

But the South East Plan purports to do more than just provide a framework for growth of the region. It is also supposed to define how the proposals for development and management of the region are to be implemented, in a way which appears to be much more proactive than hitherto. The legislation which established the process for producing the South East Plan was entitled the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The latter part of the title relates to new legislative powers for local authorities to compulsorily purchase land where "they think that acquisition will facilitate the carrying out of development, re-development or improvement which is likely to contribute to the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of their area."

Does this matter for Banstead? Even if the Government (of whichever persuasion) persists with this direction for planning policy in England, it is hard to envisage our present hard-pressed local authority seeking to buy parts of Banstead or its surroundings to enable large-scale development. But other quasi-governmental organisations, the

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South East England Development Agency for example, might do just that! And it doesn't need to be for housing. Implementing the South East Plan will require new facilities for dealing with the problems of waste management and for the provision of renewable energy, with no locations ruled out.

The Association has submitted a comprehensive response to the South East Plan. We find the present document unconvincing in that many of the objectives appear contradictory. For example, the Plan identifies that land in the Green Belt or within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty should not be excluded from consideration as possible waste management sites. This is in clear contradiction to the reassuring and assertive tones elsewhere in the Plan about protecting and indeed actively managing such areas for their benefits of open space and recreation.

The Plan states (correctly in our view) the fundamental need for infrastructure provision and environmental protection to precede development, (rather than be planned to follow along afterwards - because it never actually does so). But little evidence is provided to show that this is achievable. And the whole document lacks credibility through paying scant attention to how the substantial levels of funding to implement many of its policy objectives will be achieved.

We also expressed concern that one of the proposed measures for how well the Plan is performing is the number of dwellings completed within certain specified bands of density (that is the number of dwellings per acre or hectare). The target for each band is not defined, nor is there mention of how the bands may be applied across the region. It is not out of the question that Banstead may find itself within the high band (ie. similar density of development to Linden Homes in the High Street or Pegasus in Bolters Lane). This is despite recent clarifications by our Local Authority that the character of the

area is one of the factors that will be taken into account when assessing the density of housing development that is appropriate to each area.

The Plan also contains policies related to sub-regions (ie. areas within the South East Region which warrant specific policies). Banstead is within the sub-region called "London Fringe". (Whilst we might get a little nervous about the implications of that label, think what the residents of Guildford might feel as they are also London Fringe!). The policies for London Fringe relate mainly to the number of new dwellings to be accommodated within the area in the period 2006 - 2026. Three growth rates are postulated - continuation of the existing rate, a 20% increase on the existing rate with development spread throughout the sub-region and a 20% increase on the existing rate but with development concentrated into specific areas (identified as Redhill, Woking and Guildford). Leaving aside the question of why is all this development needed, we cannot see that it is realistic to expect that the higher rates of house building will be able to be accommodated in the area without risking serious erosion of environmental quality and prejudicing the overall quality of life for residents. There are existing problems of resource shortage, congestion and pollution and it is hard to see these not being made worse by further development. More locally, the higher rates of development will almost inevitably require releases of Green Belt land. The Green Belt around Banstead is not flawless (for example, the gradual urbanisation of Croydon Lane over the last decade has changed that part of the Green Belt out of all recognition). But it does contain some important areas of countryside, woodland and downland. We will all be the poorer if that is eroded.

The South East Plan will now be revised and updated with another consultation later this year when "further work has been done" and the results of this present round of consultation have been reviewed and

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incorporated. We will be watching carefully to see how this fundamentally different approach to planning evolves.

Tony Ford - 354757

2. Other Planning Matters:

No major applications have been received since the last NewsSheet, but we have been struggling to get Sunrise to ensure that there will be no longer term parking problems when their development is complete.

Pegasus's appeal against the council's refusal to let them keep their garish advertisements was recently rejected and the offending "murals" removed. However, the appeal time process had the effect the developers hoped for as they were able to keep them up until they were ready to remove a large section of hoardings to reveal the new building to view.

The development at 4-5 Avenue Road is proceeding, but despite the requirement for a working method statement the developer has been accessing the site with heavy equipment without first constructing an access road that could take the weight without damaging the footway. The damage is plain to see (as is the mud), to the inconvenience and possible danger to pedestrians. It is strange that all parking along this section of road was curtailed - in our view unnecessarily - but that this obvious problem has been allowed to exist.

Mike Sawyer - 355454

HIGHWAY MATTERS

We have been trying to persuade the Local Authority to do something to alleviate the flooding that frequently occurs in the High Street outside Victoria Chemist. Various suggestions have been made to them - an additional drainage gulley is the obvious one, but building up the level of the road surface so that water runs around the kerbline rather than being blocked behind it is another option.

Their response is that "there is insufficient

funding to tackle all the problems with drainage in the County". What they have offered to do is to add clearance of the existing drainage pipe to the schedule of work for the maintenance gang that visits the Banstead area once every nine weeks. Better than nothing, you could say. But this "problem" has been with us for over a decade. What really irks us is that large sums of money are spent by the local authorities on "customer surveys", strategy preparation, consultations and Corporate Plans, leaving, it seems, nothing in the pot for the most basic tasks of stewardship of the public areas. A small example maybe but indicative, we feel, of the poorly judged sense of priorities that pervades current local authority thinking.

Tony Ford - 354757

THE HORSESHOE

Although many local roads continue to suffer from potholes or worn surfaces, none is in the same league as The Horseshoe.

On the entrance and exit there is a small white sign saying, amongst other things, that "this way is not dedicated to the public!". This obscure message gives a clue to the reason why the road surface is in a continual state of collapse. The sign means that the road is not managed by Surrey County Council Highways Dept., but by Surrey C C Property Services Dept.

This latter body is relatively small and only has a budget enabling it to patch the road, or in many places, to patch the patches. They did fill all the potholes at the beginning of March but a quick trip round tells you that the next batch of potholes are making themselves felt. The reason the road is falling apart is that it was never constructed to modern standards and certainly not to take heavy construction traffic. The foundations are not there. The road needs to be dug up and totally rebuilt to to-days standards - including better pavement widths.

Surrey Highways will not adopt the road as they would indeed have to rebuild the road

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at a cost of many £000,000.

So, nothing is going to happen as things stand; the road will continue to be a test track for the local 4 x 4s. Users of the road are not bothered by which department of Surrey C C owns the road - they just want something done. Could I suggest that they find the money to rebuild the first very busy 2 way section first - make a start, and then have a plan to do the rest albeit in sections.

David Gradidge - 353981

GARDEN CHEMICALS

Are you aware that many of the old garden chemicals are being banned? Some popular weedkillers and other chemicals are banned from September 10th this year, others from April 30th next year. Popular brands affected include Pathclear and Weedol (and others containing atrazine, simazine or paraquat). Although new formulations are becoming available that comply with the new regulations, we would all do well to check all our old "stock"! More information from www.pesticides.gov.uk which also has advice on chemical disposal. (Yes, I know, its those darned www's again; but if you are not already "connected" you can get to them from the Library services free internet facility - just ask in the Banstead library. The government and local government are putting out more and more information this way, so if you don't have an internet connection its worth trying your hand at the library.)

Mike Sawyer - 355454

RECYCLING

As you may be aware if you use the recycling facility in the Horseshoe car park, Reigate & Banstead Council is trialing a scheme to recycle plastic bottles. Although not all plastic is accepted, this is to be welcomed.

Also, the cost of green (now red!) garden rubbish collection bags has been reduced to 25p - another welcome move. Available from the Helpshop, also in the Horseshoe.

Mike Sawyer - 355454

OUR CONSTITUTION

Since the formation of the Association and the creation of the "Rules" in 1977 there have been only four amendments to effect the changing subscriptions and number of committee members. Your Committee has reviewed the constitution and felt it was time to bring the "Rules" up to date, to reflect current practice. There are no changes of principle to the constitution. We propose to adopt the updated constitution at the Annual General Meeting.

Copies of both the current and proposed "Rules" are available from the BVRA Secretary and we are also hoping to make copies available to view at the Help shop. Further copies will, of course, be available at the Annual General Meeting.

If there any comments or matters that you wish to discuss, please call Sam Walsh, David Gradidge or Mike Sawyer.

Sam Walsh - 350130

ROAD STEWARDS

As with the executive committee, road stewards come and go! They are the only means we have for distributing our NewsSheet, and while we seem to maintain reasonable numbers, we really would appreciate a few more volunteers. We try to keep the "patch" as close to your home as possible, and within the range of one to two dozen letterboxes. It's not that onerous a job, especially compared to the benefits to our membership, so please can we have a few more volunteers?

David Gradidge - 353981

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INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST JANUARY 2005

	2004/2005 £	2003/2004 £
INCOME		
Subscriptions & Donations	3054	3070
Interest received	32	40
Golden Jubilee Project		3240
	<u>3086</u>	<u>6350</u>
EXPENDITURE		
Production of News Sheets	1237	1456
Subscriptions	30	30
Printing, postage, stationery & telephone	303	345
Hire of rooms	459	419
Sundry expenses	222	71
High Street Initiative	515	
Golden Jubilee Project		3716
Excess of Income over Expenditure	<u>320</u>	<u>313</u>
	<u>3086</u>	<u>6350</u>

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST JANUARY 2005

	31/01/05 £	31/01/04 £
NET ASSETS		
Treasurer's account - Lloyds TSB	1767	3410
Deposit account - Lloyds TSB	3000	1000
- Halifax	1111	1094
Debtors net of Creditors	<u>-54</u>	
	<u>5824</u>	<u>5504</u>
REPRESENTED BY		
General Fund as at 1st February 2004	5102	4789
Add surplus for the year	<u>320</u>	<u>313</u>
	5422	5102
Fund for the Preservation of Banstead Amenities	<u>402</u>	<u>402</u>
	<u>5824</u>	<u>5504</u>

I have audited the above Balance Sheet dated 31st January 2005 and attached Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended on that date and they are in accordance with the books and vouchers submitted to me and in my opinion reflect a true and fair statement of the affairs of the Association.

R N Bowes
8 Mellow Close
Banstead
Hon Auditor

Richard N Bowes

J D G Gradidge
16 The Maples
Banstead
Acting Treasurer

J D G Gradidge