

BVRA newsheet

from the Banstead Village Residents' Association

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CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

A Happy New Year to all our residents - I do hope that the gloomy economic forecasts kicking around do not materialise. We could do with some relief after last year's constraints. Meanwhile the main issues affecting us that fall within BVRA's remit continue to be as before - the infrastructure, health services, planning and education. Since funding is always what prevents improvements, and we cannot provide funds, we can only keep pressing our councils on specific matters.

I focused in our last NewsSheet on the Longcroft Clinic and we mounted a petition to NHS Surrey for a new, improved clinic. The latest position is outlined in the article below. My thanks to all who have supported the petition; we will keep you informed.

In planning matters, the main event was that Whitecote lost their appeal from the Council's refusal of planning permission for their proposals to build on the allotments next to Wellesford Close. The inspector refused the appeal on grounds that would apply equally to any plans to develop other parts of this estate, for example next to Copse Hill Lane. We shall of course monitor future planning applications for this area closely – especially in the light of the rumoured uncertainty as to L & G's continued retention of their headquarters in this country!

The other good news is that Waitrose reopened in November. It seems to be a better store for shoppers, although we are not over-happy about its new look — the council took little or no notice of our comments on design at the planning and construction stage. Those wooden facades round the car park! It is, however, good to have it back, particularly in time for Christmas.

In this respect we are very grateful to Waitrose for providing £3,800 towards improvements in the village's Christmas lights, which helps to replace the £5,000 annual funding that Reigate and Banstead Borough Council has withdrawn. Thank you Waitrose - we should now have just enough funds to be able to provide the lights for Christmas 2010, subject to any complications as a result of the lamp standard replacement programme mentioned later in this NewsSheet.

Roger Collins

01737 358384

THE LONGCROFT CLINIC

In the introduction to this NewsSheet our chairman has summarised the story of the Petition to NHS Surrey for a modern customer-designed primary care facility to serve Banstead, Woodmansterne and Chipstead. The Petition was handed in to the NHS Surrey office in Leatherhead on 10th December. Over 700 residents from Banstead Village, Woodmansterne and Chipstead had signed it and the Chief Executive of NHS Surrey has

recognised the level of concern of local people. As ever, although we know that Surrey County Council and NHS Surrey are working together to find a solution to this problem, there is a matter of finding the necessary funds – in the words of the Chief Executive, 'affordability remains an issue'. This petition was covered in the *Surrey Mirror* of 7th January which fully reported our reasons for raising a petition. The *Surrey Mirror* quoted a Surrey NHS spokeswoman as saying

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"We understand there is a great deal of support for the current site to be redeveloped. However, any decisions must be considered in the wider context. We need to be realistic about the number of schemes we can support". The conclusion? We can perhaps assume that we shall eventually get a new facility, but have no idea what, where or how soon this might be.

Catalina Vassallo-Bonner

01737 357882

PLANNING

1. Core Strategy

One of the longer running issues over the last year or so has been the council's Core Strategy. This will provide the framework within which the Council will carry out its planning functions over the next 17 years until 2026. In the words of the original document entitled *Planning for the Future* : "The Core Strategy has carefully considered the 'big picture' and 'regional strategic landscape' throughout its preparation and development of the supporting evidence base ..(and) has been subject to community consultation, participation and engagement". This has been a long process, beginning in November 2005 with a consideration of issues and options. The document was referred to an Inspector to whom the council submitted *Suggested Amendments* designed to meet his concerns about certain elements of the Core Strategy. We are now (January) in the middle of an Examination in Public (EIP) being held at the Town Hall with the Inspector in the chair and invited participants from the council, the development fraternity, residents and other associations with an interest. This will take three days a week for the first three weeks of January; in fact it will take longer as a result of the snow. The outcome will be a decision by the Inspector whether the Core Strategy is 'sound' or 'unsound', and his requirements of the Council to make changes to achieve soundness if necessary; the Inspector's decisions are final. A great deal will turn on the ability of the Council to implement the

housing and other requirements of the South East Plan without breaching the Green Belt, so we have a keen interest in the outcome and are attending many of the nine sessions, as are a few other Residents' Associations. We will inform you of the outcome in our next NewsSheet. It is a long-winded affair but of some importance to our future as a community.

Roger Collins

01737 358384

2. Local Issues

i) Bolters Corner Nursing Home – the planning inspectorate have now decided the two outstanding appeals (basically the incorporation of some adjoining open land within this facility). The council's refusals have been upheld in both cases, albeit with some adjustments. We supported the council as the land is designated as "Urban Open Land", and is important as part of the green approach to the village centre.

li) Wellesford Close – as mentioned in the chairman's introduction, the council's refusal of this application, again on Urban Open Land, has been upheld by the planning inspectorate. The decision was again quite clear-cut, and is most encouraging as the protection of the character of the area formed a significant element.

Mike Sawyer

01737 355454

COUNCIL STRUCTURE

By the time you read this the consultation period will be almost over (ends 24th February) for comments on changes to Reigate & Banstead council's decision taking structure being directed by the government. The options are either a Leader and executive cabinet (similar to existing system) or a directly appointed Mayor and cabinet. We believe that a directly elected Mayor (who would not be a councillor) would select the cabinet of about 8 from the elected councillors, whereas currently the Leader and cabinet are chosen by the body of councillors. The Mayor would be elected for a 4-year term and could not be removed by the councillors. The leader would be free to appoint a cabinet at will from the other 50 councillors. In our view

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this would be a backward step, removing some more power from councillors. We shall be submitting our views shortly but, if you wish to discuss this, either Mike Sawyer or I will try to help. More details are available from the council's web-site (under "democratic services").

Roger Collins

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POLICE

In December Surrey Police Authority gave its support to the radical plans for change to Surrey Police put forward by Chief Constable Mark Rowley.

Savings will be made by reducing the number of senior officers by around 50, simplifying the structure of the force and replacing a number of outdated, expensive and underused police stations. Surrey Police will then be able to recruit up to 200 more constables, offer more and better ways for the public to visit local police, and reduce the budget gap facing the force. The Chief Constable hopes to complete the majority of these changes within three years.

The decision means that further detailed planning and the first stages of implementation will now begin. The Authority will also begin the process of consulting with the public on the plans for changes to the police estate. The Authority's 17 Members agreed that no police station should close unless better alternatives can be provided. They also agreed that a comprehensive process of briefing and consultation should take place with the public and our partner organisations in Boroughs and Districts before any police station can be replaced.

It is intended to recruit the 200 police constables by April 2012, in order to tackle anti-social behaviour and serious and organised crime, including criminals travelling into Surrey. Locating neighbourhood policing teams within borough and district council offices is intended to provide a better service to the public in jointly tackling local problems. The Force and the Authority will be talking with

communities to see how we can provide a better range of more accessible places for the public to meet with their neighbourhood police officers.

Mike Sawyer

01737 355454

INFRASTRUCTURE

We know that complaints to the council can sometimes achieve results – witness the sanding of the pavements in Banstead after the last fall of snow. We asked the Council last year after the shambles in February, why the pavements were not being treated to keep them usable. As usual, funding was the problem. So, on the occasion before Christmas when snow and ice made the pavements dangerous, there were 7 or 8 people taken to Epsom Hospital after falls in the High Street during one morning. This was reported to the Council citing the serious costs to the NHS of dealing with these accidents. The treatment of the pavements to clear the snow in the week commencing January 4th is thus probably not a coincidence. But how do we get the Council to take our concerns seriously enough to give us a proper briefing on their plans to tackle the infrastructure deficiencies?

BVRA accepts that funding is tight and will get tighter. However this will not stop us pressing Surrey C C to solve the growing list of long term problems, including:

Roads and drainage etc

One of the problems of writing such an item is that it rapidly gets out of date. I started when snow was all around and now in late January it has all gone. Who knows what the weather will be like when you read this.

What is becoming clear is the enormous frost damage to the local roads. It is obvious that this is a nationwide problem, however I cannot escape the fact that, over the years, Surrey C C has skimped on repairs and general resurfacing and, as a result, pot holes have bred and multiplied at an alarming rate in recent days. Those repaired just a few weeks ago are falling apart and even those done in the last few days are showing signs of decay. Travelling just a little further afield, Fir Tree Road is lethal, with Shelveys Road, Merland Rise, Gt Tattenhams

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and Picquets Way all in an appalling state - and then there is The Horseshoe.... Heaven knows how cyclists cope.

Weather & Gritting

We probably have to go back to 1981 or 1979 to find a snowier winter (and its only half over). This is not forgetting the foot of snow that fell on Feb 1st/2nd last year.

Through 2009 BVRA has sought answers as to how we could persuade the council to grit the pavements in the High St next time it snowed, but it remained unresolved. Then wonder upon wonders earlier this month they were treated, and when they ran out they came back to finish the job.

There is a host of other outstanding issues we have been pressing the councils to resolve. This is a summary:

White lines. Banstead High St and especially the area outside Waitrose. This has been a problem area for some time with cars parked on double yellow lines outside Tesco. The lack of visible markings to guide those turning right into Waitrose adds to the confusion.

Redundant lighting columns/posts etc. and also the missing bollards. The Well in Park Rd is protected by 3 concrete bollards. One of these has been flattened and needs urgent attention.

State of the High St.

Problems have multiplied in the snowy weather:

Lake Victoria The situation is best observed after rain but with snow melt it was just as bad, and worse when it freezes over at night. The gully at the entrance to the main car park cannot cope. It ponds right across the road; pedestrians get splashed and those in wheel chairs or motorised buggies have no option but to go through it. Surplus water then flows past the entrance to the church car park to the East. The next gully outside The Orchard also cannot cope and so water ends up at Lake Victoria, which is semi permanent and is also a major hazard for the disabled. Overflow water here has two options. In extreme conditions it goes across to the North side, but

more generally it flows down towards Waitrose. On many occasions the next nearest gully cannot cope and parked cars will have their wheels under water.

Road repairs

The weather is causing all sorts of problems - it accelerates the break up of already poorly maintained roads. In Garratts Lane close to the A217 and in Holly Lane close to the junction with Elizabeth Way there are coned areas marking extensive pot holes. Both these areas are potentially very dangerous with traffic being forced to the other side of the road. These need urgent attention.

On Bolters Lane, near to No 2 High St (Saunders), is a section of pavement that is overdriven by large vehicles exiting the slip road leading behind the shops and then turning left. The kerbstones get displaced and on more than one occasion have been shifted into the roadway. The pavement is now falling apart. This area has been "repaired" on numerous occasions but it never lasts. A more permanent redesign is called for.

Extensive break up has occurred in the following roads/areas:

Garratts Lane roundabout - the whole area needs attention

War Memorial roundabout - previous repairs disintegrating rapidly

Entrance to Buff Avenue - only repaired in November - now falling apart

Avenue Road - major pot holes

High St - too numerous to mention but very bad at the bus stop outside Superdrug where buses have to stop over 2 major depressions in the road.

5 Drainage

There are many long standing problems, in particular:

Bolters Lane from the High St to Winkworth Rd. The gullies in this road are blocked to the top more often than not with the situation made worse by grills being blocked by leaves; ongoing gutter erosion now leaving the lip of the grills proud of the road surface; broad flows of water avoiding the grills altogether. Water therefore

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flows down the West side of Bolters Lane to the bottom where it ponds adjacent to Bolters Corner. Any pedestrians get drenched by passing traffic. The gullies here are always blocked with the recessed one, as has been pointed out on many occasions, being flattened.

Water then floods across Winkworth Rd to the North side aided by traffic and disappears down the gully leading to an outfall on Banstead Downs.

The situation is made worse by the fact that the road surface has been eroded into parallel grooves at the A217 junction. Water therefore flows down these grooves rather than to the nearest gully.

The gully leading to the outfall mentioned above is more often blocked than not resulting in flooding outside Nos 3/5 Winkworth Rd.

Sutton Lane from the War Memorial roundabout to the Croydon Lane roundabout.

There are 2 gullies on the Well House side of Sutton Lane that have been blocked for years. 2 further gullies close to the exit to Flint Close are blocked more often than not with the situation made worse by leaves blocking the grills.

No matter, as the flow of water from the other side of the road bypasses these gullies and goes directly into Flint Close

Flint Close has numerous gullies but –

a) the grills get blocked by leaves

b) the flow of water is so broad that it bypasses the grills

Water therefore flows to the end of the road – a private car park - ponds in the far corner and then overflows into the gardens of Nos 160/162 Winkworth Rd.

Residents of Flint Close do their best to keep the grills from getting blocked.

Leaf Clearance

The clearance of leaves is a recurrent problem. Increasingly it seems to be just part of road sweeping and not a situation requiring extra resources. This year, with a very wet November, in many roads the leaves were

reduced to a soggy mulch before any sweepers arrived. I had a look at many of the culprit roads in early December and got the impression that if leaves had been cleared it was only once at best. By far the worst road was the East end of Chipstead Road where the Sycamore trees lay a complete carpet of leaves. I went round today (Jan 22nd) and it remains a complete mess.

My own road highlighted the lack of attention. Two days after being told The Maples was not a priority road a hired sweeper came round. There were 3 piles of very accessible leaves, but only one was taken. The other two are still there. Let me know what happened in your road.

We have now learned that an executive decision has been taken to cut this budget, so it appears we are back in the era of self-help!

Bus Shelters

I have trying to get a decision out of R & B Council regarding the missing bus shelter in Sutton Lane near the Croydon Rd roundabout. It fell over some 2 years ago and was removed leaving the concrete slab. It then became apparent that nothing was being done and BVRA started asking questions. This is a busy bus stop with school traffic and the nearby Sunrise Homes. There are many other similar wooden structures locally and there seems no justification for it not being replaced. I pointed out there was a redundant bus shelter just to the South of Banstead cross roads and surely it was possible to move it. The last contact with the local council was back in October, but so far no action. I believe Surrey C C are involved in the decision making process. Please let me have your views.

David Gradidge

01737 353981

LOCAL POLICE MATTERS

1. "Give thieves the boot not your valuables"

Opportunistic thieves targeting vehicles in Reigate and Banstead stole thousands of pounds worth of valuables in one week alone, with a number of recent thefts from motor vehicles parked in Reigate, Redhill, Tadworth, Horley and Banstead.

The police say that, although Surrey is one of

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the safest places in the country, theft from vehicles is still one of their biggest challenges. Motorists continue to tempt thieves by leaving items such as satellite navigation systems, mobile phones and tools in their cars and vans.

Officers from the local Safer Neighbourhood Team are cracking down on vehicle crime and will be leaving leaflets offering car crime advice on vehicles' windscreens. On one side of the leaflet is a notice that drivers can display on their dashboard telling would-be thieves that "On the advice of Surrey Police I have left no valuables in my vehicle". These leaflets are also available from the front counters of Banstead, Horley and Reigate Police stations Sergeant Tracey Wilcox, from Reigate and Banstead Safer Neighbourhood Team, said: "We are encouraging drivers to help us reduce car crime, and save themselves the cost and huge inconvenience of replacing expensive items and smashed windows, by simply removing valuables from their vehicles. "Our message has always been a simple one "Don't make it easy for them". You wouldn't leave a £50 note on your dashboard so why give thieves easy access to your Sat Nav, tools or other expensive items?"

On the flip-side of the leaflet are some simple steps motorists can take to help reduce car crime, such as:

Don't leave valuables in your car. Take them with you at all times

Lock the doors, windows, boot and sunroof every time you leave your vehicle

Use the vehicle's security devices

Make a note of serial numbers. Without them, your valuable items are untraceable

Keep driving documents and personal correspondence at home

Lock the car and remove your keys from the ignition at petrol stations. Keep the keys with you

Call the police if you see anyone acting suspiciously.

Sergeant Wilcox added: "We have increased patrols in response to this recent spike in theft

from motor vehicles and I am confident that, together, we can crack down on vehicle crime and make Surrey an even safer county in which to live and work."

Call 999 if you have a genuine emergency requiring the attendance of the police (e.g. a crime is in progress or someone is in immediate danger).

Call 0845 125 2222 for all other policing matters.

Call independent charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 if you have information about crime and don't want to leave your name.

2. Beat Panels:

The Banstead and Nork meetings are held at The Church Institute, All Saints Church, High Street, Banstead at 7.30 pm. The dates for this year are: (Friday) 26th March; 2nd July; 24th September; 3rd December.

3. Shopwatch:

The scheme has recently been improved to link its users to the cctv network monitoring station, and has over the last 6 or so weeks of operation had some notable successes. 3 arrests have been made, and one shoplifting incident deterred. Several more shops are looking to join the network, which should further improve its effectiveness.

Mike Sawyer

01737 355454

REFUSE COLLECTION

You may have seen the recent "roadshow" at the Help Shop. If not, you may wish to get details of the changes to our refuse collection service that are under consideration, either from the Help Shop or from the Council's web-site. What is being proposed is an increase in the number of bins/boxes to encourage more recycling – coupled with a reduction in the frequency of collection of the present green bins which will no longer contain food waste. More details can be found at www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk, but the consultation period is now closed. Only 1,570 responses were received – perhaps a reflection more of the publicity given to the consultation than of the

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feelings of the residents on this basic service? Also, as many will already have found, it is no longer necessary to separate green from white from brown bottles as the council's recycling contractor now uses a machine to do this automatically. The council expects a saving of about £48,000 from this – in addition to the increased convenience.

Mike Sawyer

01737 355454

MAY QUEEN

This year is the 25th anniversary of this popular event, to be held on 1st May in the All Saints Church Orchard. We believe that all past May Queens are being invited to attend. Details from bansteadmayqueen@live.co.uk, or 0774205228

Mike Sawyer

01737 355454

PARKING

1. Review: now is the time to let your local and county councillors know if you have good reason to wish the present waiting restrictions (or lack) to be altered. Surrey CC and our local council have just started their review, but only proposals for change are being considered. So, if you have a problem and don't register it now, it will not be addressed!

2. Horseshoe public car park: we have just heard that Reigate & Banstead's lease will very shortly be terminated by the owners, Surrey CC, who have received a higher rental from a private contractor. At the time of writing we have no details as to whether the current charging practices will continue.

Mike Sawyer

01737 355454

LAMP STANDARD REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME

Surrey County Council has recently let a £75 million public partnership funding contract to replace all the lamp standards in Surrey over 5 years old. Banstead is due to be the first area to benefit, starting in March or April. The purpose is to erect new, energy efficient lighting columns that can be time and intensity controlled. We have supported a request for "heritage" lamps for the High Street, but as

these are about £1,000 more expensive per standard, it remains to be seen if the council will find the extra money.

Mike Sawyer

01737 355454

WAITROSE - GREEN TOKEN SCHEME

Thanks to those of us who put the green tokens in our Christmas Lights appeal in October Waitrose have given us £330 as our share of their monthly charitable donation. This is a very welcome addition to the fund and we are most grateful.

Shirley Conacher

01737 351210

BUS SERVICES

Surrey County Council are reviewing their bus services and there is a public consultation on the current phase. No.420 Sutton to Redhill is the only one through Banstead village and according to the website this will remain an hourly service, but later evening and Sunday service is to be considered.

More information on the county's web-site: www.surreycc.gov.uk/busreview; and comments on the proposals can be e-mailed to busreview@surreycc.gov.uk

Another proposal being separately canvassed is the possibility of re-routing the 166 service back along Woodmansterne Lane and then along Longcroft Avenue.

Shirley Conacher

01737 351210

COMMUNITY HALL

Our lovely and very well used Community Hall in Park Road, built in 1975 by residents' subscription and run entirely by volunteers, is now in very great need of more voluntary help to manage it.

Do you live fairly near the Hall and would you be willing, for example, to hold a key and let maintenance people in occasionally, or maybe liaise with the Hall handyman for minor repairs which have been reported?

If you think you can help in any way please contact the Chairman, Mr. Michael Cartwright, Te1:350660.

Shirley Conacher

01737 351210