

BVRA news sheet

from the Banstead Village Residents' Association

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I hope you have enjoyed your summer holidays and the long spell of hot weather, although for keen gardeners the drought has brought problems of survival. Are we not indeed fortunate to be served by Sutton District Water who, as usual, have been able to maintain our supplies.

Now down to business and, firstly, our Annual General Meeting held on May 10th 1995. Attendance was down slightly on previous years, but we still enjoyed a lively discussion. The meeting was addressed by Inspector Diaper, Metropolitan Police, on the subject of "Crime in Banstead Village." Whilst we gained a better understanding of the problems of vandalism, burglary and unruly behaviour by a small section of the community, regrettably he was unable to offer us much in the way of reassurance. We must all remain vigilant and support the communal efforts of Neighbourhood Watch groups. We may even see the future introduction of closed circuit television as a possible means of combating crime in the Village. Surely a sign of the times we live in!

Committee News

It was most heartening to receive an excellent response following my appeal for new committee members in our April NewsSheet. We are delighted to welcome our new Hon. Secretary, Mrs. Joanna El-Batal, together with Mrs. Gaynor Talbot and Dr. Surindar Mathur who were duly elected at the A.G.M. May I take this opportunity of paying tribute to Mary Sudell who has served the association so well over many years. She has generously agreed to stay on as Asst. Secretary to ensure a smooth transition and, of course, she remains a committee member. My grateful thanks to Mary.

At its first meeting on May 30th the new Committee (of 18 members) re-elected Peter McLaren as Chairman and David Rudd as Vice-Chairman. A full list of executive committee members, with their addresses and telephone numbers, appears in this NewsSheet. Please keep this for future reference.

High Street Initiative

There is good news and there is bad news to report in this NewsSheet on the progress of the High Street Initiative!

First, the good news. With the completion of work on widening the footway outside Woolworths, attention is turning to the next stage of the High

Street scheme. This will comprise a range of measures aimed at making the High Street easier for pedestrians to negotiate and providing more opportunities for tree planting and other environmental improvements. A total of eight locations are affected:

- Park Road roundabout - enlargement of the roundabout junction, construction of pedestrian refuges in the High Street and in Park Road, and moving of the War Memorial further back on the verge.
- Near Buff Avenue - building out the footways to create a narrower point on the road so that pedestrians can cross more easily. The same will also be done at two other locations in the High Street - adjacent to the Church Institute and adjacent to the entrance to the church car park.
- Harbourfield Road, Glenfield Road and Wilmot Way - narrowing of the bellmouths at these junctions, to make it easier for pedestrians to cross and to reduce the occurrence of U-turning by vehicles.
- Partially filling in the old bus bay on the opposite side of the road from the Post Office to create a wider footway and a properly defined parking bay.

All these alterations are shown on the plan that was included in the April NewsSheet. More detailed drawings of the scheme are on display in the Help Shop in The Horseshoe. Design of the work is currently underway and it is hoped that construction will take place in autumn this year. When this is finished, the major changes to the basic shape of the High Street will be complete and the efforts of the High Street Steering Group, of which the BVRA is a member, can then focus more sharply on the improvements to the appearance of the High Street and how it is used. This will include, for example, a review of the parking arrangements and the location of yellow lines, and proposals for tidying up the frontage of the Church Institute building.

The BVRA first became involved in the High Street Initiative in 1993. The Association had for some time prior to then been pressing the local authority to invest in our village centre, with, for example, proposals for enhancement of the High Street, and more appropriate parking charges being put forward. With the advent of a new initiative by Reigate and Banstead Borough Council called Town Centre Management, with specific funding allocated to it, there was an opportunity for some of the changes that the Association had been advocating to come to

fruition. The High Street Initiative was then born, comprising a partnership between the local authority, BVRA, the Banstead Society and the Chamber of Commerce. The "vision for the future shape of the High Street" that has been reported in the NewsSheets over the past months and years started to materialise.

The major role in this partnership has been the local authority's, since only they can actually undertake the work on the roads, footways and public places that is required. We believe that the BVRA has played its full part in the partnership, as have the other Banstead organisations. We have all been active in defining what work should be done and ensuring so far as we are able that the interests and requirements of the local community are incorporated into the scheme. We have organised and staged exhibitions and other publicity in an effort to keep the people of Banstead informed of what is going on. Last but by no means least has been the local community's input to fund raising for the project via the efforts of the Backing a Brighter Banstead campaign. Nevertheless, the proof of the pudding is in the eating and it is the implementation of the changes to the High Street that will dictate the success or otherwise of the whole project.

Much has been achieved, and we have maintained right from the start that it will take several years before the project is complete. Now for the bad news however. Over the past few months there have been an alarming number of instances where the implementation of the scheme by the local authority has been less than perfect. The most obvious examples of this are:

- The ludicrous circumstances of the bus stop outside the former Waitrose store, which for some weeks had the shelter displaced from the bus stop and for which there is still no permanent sign
- The replacement bus shelters which were supposed to be of similar style to the old ones, but in practice are completely different
- Money being spent on renewing the existing white and yellow lining, large parts of which will become redundant under the new scheme (One of the primary objectives of the High Street Initiative has been to provide properly defined parking bays so that many of the yellow lines in the High Street can be dispensed with altogether)
- The landscaping of the roundabout by The Victoria has still not been attended to, although it is over a year since the roundabout was altered
- The tree pits recently constructed outside the Woolworths block are substantially larger than they should be and the new trees are substantially smaller than they should be.

The overall result of this is that the village is not getting the scheme that had been expected, or in the way that had been expected. Although many of the above points could be considered details, we are going to have to live with these details for a long time to come. It would be fair criticism to say that the appearance of the High Street has taken three steps

forward, but then two frustrating steps backward. The Association has endeavoured through its membership of the High Street Steering Group to ensure that instances like this do not occur, but we are not the local authority and we cannot control every bit of the work. We are sad that the High Street scheme is not working out as planned and apologise to our members if expectations fairly raised are not being fulfilled.

The Association intends to continue its involvement with the partnership since we believe it will bring benefits to the village in the longer term. However, it is clear that at present the internal coordination of the Council's activities on the project leaves much to be desired. The Association will continue trying to push those charged with implementing the work to ensure that the details of the scheme are fully thought out, that the local community has an opportunity to determine how the design should look and that when the work is carried out it is properly planned, executed and supervised. We feel that if we are to be part of this partnership we are entitled to expect the Borough to fulfil its part of the bargain too.

Tony Ford

Banstead Village Fair

A fine sunny day helped create a carnival atmosphere in the Village for the Fair, held on July 8th. On behalf of the Organising Group I should like to thank our members for their generous support which will benefit the "Backing a Brighter Banstead" campaign. Over £2,000 was raised during this event. Our committee members all actively participated and their efforts were much appreciated.

Local Government Review

Since our April NewsSheet, we have been giving a great deal of thought to how our local services should be run in future. You will recall the Secretary of State for the Environment has stated he intends to keep the County and Borough Councils up to their undertakings to implement changes by way of increased co-operation and partnership arrangements. We are looking to our Councils to improve the quality of services provided and better value for money by the elimination of unnecessary bureaucracy, duplication and waste.

We have already had a meeting with the Asst. Chief Executive of Surrey County Council and we have also written to the Borough Council urging them to engage in a dialogue with County officials and members on the way forward. Unfortunately, this initiative has been stalled as far as County is concerned, by the intervention of the Borough of Spelthorne, which has won an appeal to the Secretary of State for a review of his original decision not to grant unitary status. This has resulted in yet more public consultations - I shudder to think what all this is costing! We do not intend to allow this initiative to be quietly forgotten.

Waste Disposal in Surrey

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Surrey's planners recently completed a statutory public consultation on their draft plans for waste management and disposal in the county. They issued a leaflet, called "New Ways for Waste", which some members may have seen, although it seems to have been poorly distributed. They also held eleven public meetings, one in each district. The one for our borough was the last, but two committee members also went to the first one and we have accounts of two others.

There are broadly two kinds of waste. Household / commercial / industrial waste decomposes when it is dumped (as most of it is at present) and turns into flammable gases, which pollute the air, and poisonous liquids, which tend to leach into water supplies. The leaflet warned that *landfill space for that waste will run out only eight years from now* if present trends continue.

The other kind is inert demolition waste and there is said to be enough landfill space for it, but the leaflet said: "this is not using our resources to the best effect." No quantities were given for either kind.

With only that slender information, readers were asked eight "Do you agree . . . ?" questions about re-use, recycling, avoiding environmental problems and building large incinerators - if necessary in the Green Belt countryside. A freepost form was attached for their responses. We think those responses will have little or no value because the questions were too vague and the planners withheld important information.

What the leaflet did not say was that the waste is not just Surrey's waste. It is Surrey's waste plus imports from neighbouring authorities - mainly London. Regular readers may remember from previous NewsSheets that these imports have been rising over the years. In 1992/3 1.1 million tons of waste originated in Surrey and a further 1.5 million tons were imported - much more than in the previous two years (average 0.9m tons). The tonnages in 1993/4 were virtually the same as in 1992/3, with still a far larger proportion of imports than in earlier years. *There is no guarantee that the imports will not increase again in the future.*

Many people did not realise the situation until we dragged it into the consultation. When we explained it to some of them, they were at first incredulous, then indignant that the County Council allows the imports and then sceptical that they cannot charge the importers for the privilege, which would at least slightly reduce our Council Tax. The only beneficiaries from the imports are the landowners where the waste is - quite legally - dumped, but of course it is we, the residents of Surrey, who will suffer from the pollution of our environment.

We asked the planners why they were reluctant to include imports in the public consultations, as we have urged them to do for the last two years? They replied: "The key issue is how should Surrey provide for its own waste arisings (meaning waste originating in the county) - that is the area on which the plan is focused. Imports where we can't influence them directly would be a red herring and divert attention from that key issue." In other words, if they can't

stop something rather nasty happening, they try not to discuss it in public.

For disposing of those imports as well as Surrey's waste, the planners favour large-scale waste reduction - including incineration, which many experts oppose on environmental grounds - in probably three plants across the county. Each would occupy 4-8 hectares (10-20 acres), with a 70 metre (230 foot) stack, and would be fed by up to 150 heavy lorries a day (one every three minutes throughout an eight-hour working day). The planners picked eleven possible sites (eight in the Green Belt), but a county councillor told us they had all been opposed in council by (guess whom?) the councillors representing those very places. Something had to give, so all eleven went into the plan. Two are in Redhill and that public meeting attracted about 500 people in vigorous opposition.

When our Borough Planning Committee considered the plan, their verdict was: general support for the waste-reduction sites - but again not in our back yard, please. However some Borough councillors, prompted by us, did question "the County Council's position over imports and consequent need for major incinerators." They saw that imports have consequences which need to be taken into account.

Meanwhile Croydon decided recently not to improve its waste disposal facilities; its contractors will continue to export its waste into Surrey. *Surrey continues to be a convenient dumping ground for other people's waste.*

County Hall has had 400 letters from Surrey residents about the plans. Some are said to "refer to the desirability of restricting imports" and a majority are thought to be opposed to "unreasonable provision made for the treatment and disposal of wastes arising from elsewhere." No-one can say how many respondents who did not mention imports were aware that there are any.

Although the County Council cannot restrict imports directly, it belongs to a planning club (called SERPLAN) of the authorities in the South East Region, which is supposed to be developing a regional strategy for waste disposal. Surrey's planners hope the strategy will "ensure that waste is not transported into Surrey unnecessarily" but there are still large disagreements about it after years of negotiation. Until the members can agree on and publish an effective strategy for the region, the natural conclusion is that *any better facilities provided by Surrey will make it easier for other authorities to export their waste into our county.*

We are now urging the Council to publish the regional strategy and to be candid about the difficulties in SERPLAN. Some councillors have told us they support us and we have some grounds for hoping that, when the revised plans are published in the Autumn, they will "pick up our comments concerning the fuller public discussion and explanation of imports in their local and regional context." If that happens it will be a step in the right direction.

Waste disposal is reckoned to be the leading environmental problem in the region. This article has not gone into the technicalities and we do not claim to have the solutions. But the Local Government Commission recently commended our contributions to county affairs in general. In this case we fear the planners have not seen the wood for the trees, so - with our members' support - we shall continue to try and get all the issues out into the open. Who knows, that might generate enough public interest to break the deadlock in SERPLAN.

David Rudd

Reigate & Banstead Environmental Forum

This Forum has been set up during 1995. Its objectives include defining, developing and promoting the concept of "*Sustainable Development*" within the Borough, involving all sections of the local community, and creating partnerships between business, the public sector, educational establishments, youth, voluntary groups and individuals.

So what does *Sustainable Development* mean? It can be defined as development, of our environment, which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. The main issues of today in this context include Protection of the Natural Environment, Resource Conservation, Pollution and Waste Management, Transport, and Community Health and Safety.

So far, the Forum is in "start up" mode. A Steering Group of some twenty people, from a wide variety of Societies, Associations, etc., in the Borough, is meeting once a month formulating plans and activities. David Rudd and I are members of this Group on behalf of BVRA.

With some other members of the Steering Group, I attended "Seeking a Sustainable Surrey" a one day Conference at the University of Surrey organised by the Surrey Society and Surrey County Council. Two hundred people from all over the County took part in this conference.

With Waste Disposal (see elsewhere in this NewsSheet), Air Pollution, Transport, etc. featuring with increasing frequency in the Press and on TV, we can all expect to hear a lot more about what we can do to sustain our environment in future.

For now, why not think again about what you can do:

For example, can you reduce the length of car journeys by using local shops and facilities? When you do have to use a car, can you combine a number of trips together? Can you use your car less and increase your travel by bus, train, bicycle or on foot? Can you avoid driving in congested areas during peak hours by starting your journey earlier or later? Do you have to take the children to school by car?

The above questions are posed in a booklet "A New

Transport Plan for Surrey", published by the County Council who are seeking views from all of us. Get your copy from the Help Shop or the Library.

Chris Penfold

Potholes and Pavements

Over the years the condition of our roads and pavements has been deteriorating, due to neglect. Our thanks to Richard Bowes who has been rounding up problem potholes in our residential streets and reporting them to the Borough Highways Dept. The latest feed-back is that those in Salisbury Road will be temporarily filled, prior to full re-surfacing work taking place within the next few months. Orders have also been placed for potholed joints in Croydon Lane to be repaired, together with repairs to the concrete carriageway in Holly Lane East.

Three committee members recently carried out a survey of the state of the High Street with a view to identifying pavement problems which could give rise to injury of pedestrians, as well as other shortcomings such as the state of the Victoria roundabout. A schedule of repairs and refurbishment required has been sent to the Chief Highways Engineer for attention.

We are also grateful to Cllr. Brian Cowle for his intervention concerning the state of the High Street carriageway as well as problems in other residential streets, which have been brought to his attention.

Chris Penfold continues to monitor the condition of the reinstatement of pavements and roads in the aftermath of Nynex' operations in Banstead Village. Please let him know of any difficulties in your area (Tel: 212051).

Banstead Council House

In our April '94 issue of the NewsSheet we reported that the Borough Council had submitted a planning application for the conversion of the Council House, Brighton Road, into flats. This proposal was shelved pending the outcome of the review of local government in Surrey.

We have for some time known about the Council's expressed intention to centralise its services and administration into the Town Hall in Reigate, leaving a skeleton representation in the north of the Borough, based on the Help Shop in The Horseshoe which is presently housed in a temporary building.

It is understood that at a meeting of the Borough's Policy Committee in mid-July it was decided to recommend the disposal of the Council House building, together with land at the rear. It was also recommended that plans for an extension to the Day Centre to provide a permanent home for the Help Shop should not be pursued, but that the possibility of providing an alternative presence in Banstead High Street be examined.

This matter was again considered in early August, at which Councillors representing the north of the Borough pressed for a guarantee that the Council

would provide suitable premises with better accessibility in which to locate the Help Shop which would enable a comprehensive range of services to be offered, including facilities to hold public meetings. This bid was defeated by a margin of one vote (presumably by members from the south)!

The only conclusion one can reach is that the Council is keen to sell the "family silver" so that it can expand its facilities in the south of the Borough, leaving us very much the poor relation! This Association, along with other residents' groups, will continue to resist the loss of this building which is the last remaining link with our past in the days when we were well served by the Banstead Urban District Council. If the Council goes ahead and sells the Council House, despite public opinion, we then need to ask why we in the north should not share in the proceeds?

Banstead Post Office

I am sure you will have read in the local press that Post Office Counters Ltd. has negotiated an agency agreement with Dillons for the provision of post office services in the Village as from mid-September. Judging by their behaviour, Post Office Counters do not care about public opinion since they have steadfastly refused to consult with community groups about the provision of services. It remains to be seen what sort of facilities Dillons will provide, but concerns remain about parking (in such close proximity to the roundabout and bus stop) and, of course, the number of positions and waiting space allocated within the shop.

Provision of Gypsy Sites

The County Council has recently put out for public consultation proposed changes to policy regarding the future provision of gypsy sites. This has been brought about by the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, 1994, which removes the County Council's previous duty to provide caravan sites suitable for gypsies in Surrey. What remains is a discretionary power to provide further sites.

Banstead Village is bounded on north, south and east sides by open Green Belt land and is, therefore, particularly vulnerable to intrusion of unauthorised gypsy encampments. You will know that in recent years we have experienced several such intrusions which have caused considerable concern and inconvenience to nearby residents, not to mention the cost of removing the rubbish left behind, for which we pay.

Your committee has carefully examined the new proposed draft policy which in our view contains

examples of imprecise thinking and ambiguity which might prejudice the exercise of new powers for eviction from unauthorised encampments. Our representations to the County Council seek to both strengthen the new policy provisions and to clarify these ambiguities.

Dial-a-Ride

We are very pleased to report that this scheme is now up and running - there are two minibuses operating daily from Monday to Friday in the Reigate and Banstead area.

Those residents able to avail themselves of this facility are the elderly or those who have difficulty in using public transport. There is an annual fee of £5.00p. for those not eligible to claim income support or housing benefit.

Application forms can be obtained from the Help Shop or Banstead Day Centre, both located in The Horseshoe, or by phoning 01737-242477.

Each minibus can take up to 15 passengers and is designed to transport some wheelchair users. It is primarily for social and shopping trips and cannot be guaranteed to take patients to special medical appointments at hospitals.

To book a journey notice of 48 hours is required and it is possible to book up to seven days in advance - also more than one booking can be made at a time, but rationing may be applied if demand is excessive.

Fares are based on a zone system, for example a door-to-door return trip to Sutton would cost £4.00p.

We have it on good authority the drivers are very friendly and helpful; they will carry shopping and escort you to your door if you live on your own, so please get an application form and give it a try. This is a service we need to support and encourage!

Marion Hayns

I hope you will find the articles appearing in this NewsSheet both helpful and informative. Any comments about the format or content you may have will be very welcome. Apart from representing the best interests of the Banstead Village community, we attach great importance to the dissemination of information about local affairs and the manner in which services are provided. The new committee will strive to achieve both those goals.

Peter McLaren
Chairman