

BVRA news sheet

from the Banstead Village Residents' Association

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Yet another year has passed. On behalf of the Executive Committee I extend to all our members best wishes for the New Year - may it be peaceful and kind to you.

The passage of 1994 was marked by several events, reported in our NewsSheets, the outcome of which could have made considerable impact on our quality of life. Your Committee Members have had to get to grips with some complex issues which have made considerable demands on their time and energy. I should like to express my thanks to them for their conscientious approach, dedication and imaginative contributions. I think it is important to state again that the Association is a non-political organisation representing all shades of opinion, and your Committee continually strives to uphold its integrity and independence, representing the best interests of our community.

The focus of our attention in 1995 will be the Banstead High Street Initiative which was duly launched last year. In this issue Tony Ford reports on progress to date and the development of future plans.

NEWS UP-DATE

Car Parking Charges

The introduction of a shoppers' rate car parking charge of 20p. for a minimum of one hour for an experimental period of six months resulted in an increase in the use of both the High Street and The Horseshoe car parks - 21% and 18% respectively. Notwithstanding a corresponding decrease in revenue received by the Borough, the Planning Committee has recommended the existing tariffs are retained in 1995/96. This recognition of the contribution which the shoppers rate has made to the alleviation of congestion in the High Street is to be welcomed, and we thank those members who have availed themselves of this hard-won concession.

Post Office Closure

The proposed closure of Banstead Post Office was reported in our August '94 NewsSheet. At a meeting with Post Office Counters Ltd., attended by the Chairman, the decision to transfer its operation to an Agency was confirmed and that P.O.C. had entered into negotiations with a prospective retail operator. The business plan involves the submission of a planning application to extend the proposed premises and no official announcement will be made until all

aspects have been satisfactorily concluded. It is clear the transfer of Post Office activity will not be completed until March or April '95. The future of the existing purpose-built Post Office hangs in the balance.

The Banstead Steering Group will keep a close eye on developments, particularly with its concerns about location of premises; parking; layout of counters and waiting area; and parcel handling.

Sutton Lane Depot

The Borough's General Purposes and Property Committee has agreed, in principle, to the sale of this site to the Orbit Housing Association at current market value.

The proposed development will comprise 20 retirement flats (12 one-bedroom and 8 two-bedroom) for rent to "underoccupying" retired Council tenants of family size accommodation, plus 6 three-bedroom houses which will be offered for sale.

The Executive Committee will, of course, carefully scrutinise the planning application in light of the impact on neighbouring properties and arrangements for access which will be of paramount importance.

High Street Initiative

Progress on the High Street Initiative can be summarised as "slow but steady" since our last report back in August. There have been two main changes since then. Firstly, the extension of the footway around the entrance to Buff Avenue, in an attempt to improve visibility for cars turning out of that road and remove an "accident blackspot." Secondly, some preparatory work has taken place along the kerbline outside Woolworths in readiness for the extension of the footway and planting of trees. This work is due to be done in spring or summer this year.

Following shortly after that will be the alterations to the Park Road roundabout, including construction of a new pedestrian refuge to ease crossing of the eastern end of the High Street. At the same time, the narrowing of the bellmouths at Wilmot Way, Glenfield and Harbourfield Roads will be carried out, together with formation of the additional crossing points for pedestrians along the high Street.

That's enough about the roadworks; what about the extra trees, seats and so on. The detailed plans for

enhancing the appearance of the High Street are currently being prepared and it is intended that these will feature in the Village Week fund raising activities. More of that a little later.

All these efforts have taken a knock recently with the closure of Lo-Cost and the uncertainty surrounding the future of the Post Office building. A glance at the western end of the High Street reveals that much still needs to be done to raise this area to an attractive and thriving part of the Village. We are hopeful that a step forward will be made in the spring with the re-vamping of the Victoria public house, a focal point within the Village.

Tony Ford

VILLAGE FUND RAISING

This year funds raised during the Banstead Village Fair Week, to be held during July 1995, will be devoted to the Banstead High Street Initiative, of which you are all aware. All sections of the Banstead Village community are combining to raise money for the enhancement of the High Street environment with the object of making it a more pleasant place to visit. Members of the business community, led by the Chamber of Trade, have pledged funds, and the Borough Council has allocated money as part of its Town Centre Management strategy. So it really is a joint partnership.

The first community event is a VALENTINE BALL to be held on Saturday, February 18th 1995 at the Community Centre, Park Road, Banstead. Tickets, which include a three-course dinner with silver service, will cost £20 per person. For further information please contact Colin Griffith on 0737 360430.

Footnote:

In 1994, the "good cause" was the two Rose Homes for the Elderly. Altogether, more than £4,500 was raised and is being put towards their new Nursing Wing Fund. The Banstead Village Fair Organising Group extends its thanks to all who supported this cause.

Local Government Re-organisation

The Local Government Commission's report last month to the Secretary of State, recommending that the present two tiers of local government in Surrey should be retained, is a triumph of common sense over wishful thinking. The Secretary of State can accept that recommendation or he can ask the commissioners to think again, but they would be very unlikely to change their minds now. He cannot abolish the two tiers against their recommendation, except by new legislation, so we can fairly assume that Surrey County Council and the eleven district councils will remain in being for the next ten or twenty years.

The cost of changing to unitary authorities would not have been recouped in less than eight years - probably much longer, if ever. More importantly in our view, the halving of the total number of councillors would have severely weakened local democracy. That

common sense came mainly from the residents' associations and other voluntary societies across the county, most of whom opposed the Commission's former preference for a single tier of five unitary authorities.

The Commission's poll of the 500,510 households in Surrey in July produced 63,762 responses, representing 8% of the total electorate - a higher rate than in any other county. 77% of the respondents voted to keep the two tiers (also more than in any other county), which seems to have clinched the matter for the Commission. For comparison, 17% of members responded to our own survey in March and 61% of them preferred to keep the two tiers.

However we do not regard the County Council as perfect. Now is the time for us to join with fellow members of other Residents' Associations in Surrey to press for some much needed reforms of the division of functions - mainly to transfer some functions from the County Council to the district councils, whose members are more numerous and (at least in this borough) in closer touch with residents. We shall keep you posted on progress.

David Rudd

Footnote:

The Local Government Commission in its report to Government acknowledges the role played by Residents' Associations in Surrey in the consultative review process, and notes those in Reigate and Banstead and Epsom and Ewell are particularly active. The report goes on "while it would not be appropriate to recommend an enhanced role for such Associations on a formal basis, the Commission nevertheless hopes that in the respective areas the existing principal authorities will continue to work closely with such groups."

Nynex CableComms

These operations were due to be completed by the end of 1994, except for a few loose ends to be tidied up in January. It should all be finished by the time you read this issue, including the permanent reinstatement of roads, footways and verges.

Only four member's asked Chris Penfold or me to look into complaints which they could not settle directly with Fitzpatrick or Nynex and we were easily able to get Nynex to deal with them satisfactorily within a few hours. We heard of other complaints at second or third hand but we assume they were remedied by direct contacts.

This is a good outcome of cooperation between Fitzpatrick, Nynex, the Council and ourselves, for which we thank the other parties. It shows what can be done by free and frank communication between all the parties concerned.

If there are any works still outstanding in your neighbourhood at, say, the end of January, please let me (356427) or Chris Penfold (356057) know the details and we will take them up with Nynex.

David Rudd

Public Conveniences Behind Woolworths

You may recall that in a previous NewsSheet we drew attention to the deplorable state of these lavatories. We are pleased to report that having brought the matter to the attention of our local councillors work is in hand to replace the china pans with stainless steel and re-fit the conveniences in the financial year 1995-96 in an effort to combat the increasingly common problem of vandalism. Unfortunately in the present economic climate the local authority cannot possibly justify the expense of providing attendants to supervise the conveniences.

Dial-a-Ride

We welcome the investigation being carried out by Reigate & Banstead into the feasibility of providing this service for the elderly in our community. A recent comprehensive study by consultants W.S. Atkins, of transport needs in the Mid-Surrey area highlighted in particular the fact that Reigate & Banstead have the greatest number of elderly residents in the whole of Surrey, except for Waverly, which is marginally higher.

As yet we do not know what level of charges will be made for this service which will obviously require high levels of public funding, but in neighbouring Horley a membership system of £5 per person per year is in operation, together with a charge of 25p. per mile for journeys with a minimum charge of 50p. per trip being levied. We will report on further developments.

Marion Hayns

Did You Know?

What do you get for the money you pay in Council Tax? The following facts and figures, provided by the Borough Council, may be of general interest.

- Of the 450 kilometres of roads in the Borough, only 14 out of 1,400 roads will have their footways fully resurfaced in a year!
- The Borough submitted a bid of £600,000 for local road maintenance - £60,000 was allocated!
- £1,000,000 is needed for urgent footway repairs; the Borough's allocation was £200,000 for this work;
- There are over 800,000 sq. metres of highway grass verges in the Borough. Only 13p. per sq.m. is allocated to cut and maintain them;
- For the upkeep of 250 kilometres of Rights of Way within the Borough, just £39,000 is provided - or about 15p. per metre!

Since these figures were published, we have learned that following the Borough Council's representations, the County Council has provided an extra £276,500 for highways maintenance and footway schemes.

How is Banstead Village likely to benefit? Apart from ongoing traffic management improvements in Banstead High Street, provision has been made for a traffic signals scheme at the A217 Brighton Road/Garratts Lane junction.

Among other schemes recommended for inclusion in future programmes are:

- Traffic calming measures in Court/Avenue Roads;
- Pedestrian refuges in Holly Lane, Garratts Lane (near Garrard Road) and Winkworth Road - adjacent to Wilmot Way.

Although these four schemes have been provisionally included in what is known as the "Minor Works List" there is no guarantee that a particular scheme will be authorised by the County Council.

Council Hot Lines

The Borough Council is endeavouring to improve the quality of service it provides to the community.

If you have problems with such as refuse collection, street cleaning, noise and air pollution, and dog fouling you can contact the Environmental Health Hot Line on 0737 763520.

Another Hot Line, 0737 242477, extension 2345 is provided to enable you to report problems with grass cutting, and recreation concerns e.g. parks or allotments and children's play areas. Keep a note of these numbers in case you need them.

Scrub Clearance

Volunteers are sought to join working parties for scrub clearance on Banstead Downs. If you can help, on either Sunday February 19th or Sunday March 5th you should present yourself, suitably clad and shod at 10.00a.m. - meet at the Sutton Lane Car Park.

If you would like to know more about activity on Banstead Downs, please contact David Gradidge, 16 The Maples, Sutton Lane, Banstead. (Tel: 353981).

Barn Dance - September 1994

Many thanks to all of you who supported our Barn Dance in aid of the High Street Initiative. All those who came enjoyed a wonderful evening and we were able to donate £315 towards the tree planting scheme which commences in 1995. We should particularly like to express our gratitude to the following shopkeepers who generously donated items to the Tombola Stall:-

Edibles - Campbells (Jewellers) - The Ibis Bookshop - Brooks Cleaners - Banstead Hardware - Kingswood Chemists - Paul Anthony - Midas - Flame Grill - Banstead Sports - Thresher Wine Merchants - All Spares - Alice Dress Shop - Lancasters - Golf Shop - Banstead Photographic - Northern Rock - Waitrose - Feminine Addition - Country Jeweller - Mr. Snob - News N' Cards - Giles Lesley - Mark One (Pet Shop) - Victoria Chemist - Panache - Banstead Music Shop - Coughlans - Collingwood Radio - Corridori (cycles) - Body Beautiful - Banstead Cottage - Matteo of Rome - Banstead Photo-Video Centre - Superlook - Le Papillon - Raine Opticians - Dillons - Bournes - Mary Ashley.

THANK YOU
Marion Hayns

Can You Help?

BANSTEAD LEISURE PROJECT - is a new development set up to provide leisure opportunities for residents of the Banstead area with learning disabilities.

We have a fully established social club that meets on the first Sunday of each month at the Banstead Youth Centre. We are now working to develop "SPRINGBOARD" for activities beyond the club - to support people to access leisure activities of their own choice in the community.

We need volunteers to assist groups of two or three people to go ten-pin bowling, to the cinema, or perhaps visit the local pub, etc.

If you have any time available, or wish to know more, please contact:

Steve Whittingham
Coordinator
Banstead Leisure Project
c/o 7 Marshalls Close
Epsom, Surrey
KT19 8HZ
Tel: 01372 725681

Neighbourliness

For the benefit of those blind or partially-sighted people living within our community, we would ask you to look at the trees and shrubs growing in your front garden. If any overhang the pavement now is the time to get out and cut them back, otherwise the Borough Council will do the work and may charge you for it!

Reminder

With effect from April 16th 1995 the telephone code for the Burgh Heath area will have an extra digit; it becomes 01737.

A note for your diary

The Association's Annual General Meeting will be held this year on Wednesday May 10th, same time (8.00p.m.) - same place, Banstead Church Institute.

Committee News

It is with great regret that we bade farewell to two of our members - Pam Jeffries and Geoff Stevens. Both have made outstanding contributions to the work of the Committee and they will be sorely missed. Our best wishes are extended to them. One public-spirited member offered herself for co-option onto the Committee and we say a warm welcome to Mrs. Hilary Powell of Monks Road.

These changes mean that we currently have 14 committee members and five vacancies. I would appeal to our members to consider joining the committee so that we can maintain the momentum we have sustained in our representations on important local issues. If you would like to volunteer or need further information on our committee activities, please DON'T HESITATE to call me on 357463.

Peter McLaren
Chairman