

Winter 06 Newsletter

## LEISURE CENTRE UPDATE

It's somewhat old news that the Banstead Sports Centre is to be "saved". The decision of the Council has been well covered, and it's also discussed in the December issue of the *Borough News*. However, there are some important details which haven't been fully reported.

### The Decision

The decision is for a "community wet and dry centre in the north of the Borough". The recommendation continues "following successful discussions with Surrey County Council on an appropriate regeneration scheme for Preston, then a new build wet and dry facility is the preferred option. However if the regeneration scheme does not proceed within a suitable timescale or in a suitable manner then The Beacon School site will be reconsidered as the preferred option."

"To allow the continued operation of the Merland Rise Centre to prepare a scheme for limited investment in this centre. A decision on whether to continue all or part of this investment to be made in twelve months time following an appraisal of the progress made by the partners in the regeneration of Preston."

### The Arguments

The officers received reports on the condition of the existing centre that concluded that the building was still viable and its life could be extended by some short and long term investment. The argument to retain a centre in Preston was strengthened by the advantage of being able to integrate a new leisure centre with other community facilities and therefore providing a focal point. There was already a customer base. Costs could also be shared with partners in the Regeneration Project.

The argument for The Beacon School were that a 'dual use facility' could provide maximum benefit for both school students and the general public, and that running costs could be shared with the school. In addition, changing facilities could be provided for the users of the Recreation Ground, and there would be no cost for the school land. However, there would be limitations on community use, child protection issues, as well as the traffic and planning issues which reflected heavily in residents' concerns.

### What Features are Proposed in the New Facility?

Few details have emerged, but the costings are based on a smaller pool than at present, but do incorporate a learners' pool. The 'dry' facilities include a gym and studio, as at present, but in addition a large sports hall, the profits from which would subsidise the operating loss expected on the pool.

### Costings

The new facilities at a cost of over £14 million use up a sizeable proportion of the Council's capital reserves. There is no allowance for the inflation which will occur before the facilities are built – and Banstead is the last of the three centres proposed (in addition to an upgrade at Donyngs in Redhill and a new site in Horley), and is over eight years away from construction. Will the money still be available at that time?

### What About Progress with the Regeneration Scheme?

The rate of progress has picked up with a new, Interim Regeneration Board having been launched, and the receipt of a £2 million grant from the Government's 'New Growth Points' Initiative. We agree with Mr Darker's (Headteacher of The Beacon) analysis, as reported in this Newsletter, that The Beacon option is very much only a distant possibility.

# **FROM THE CHAIRMAN**



## **A Changing Year**

The end of 2006 has finally seen some limited improvements in fixing the potholes, through a Residents' Association programme of continuous chasing and reminding – rather than a root and branch change in the way the highways service is managed, as discussed in our recent newsletters. We now feel there should be a start on making pavements safe.

## **Minutes Secretary**

In the last newsletter I highlighted the need for a new minutes secretary and we received a response from Mrs Sarah Bragg who has kindly agreed to take on this task. I am grateful to Margaret Murrant who recorded our meetings previously for many years. Margaret continues her valued support as a committee member, area road steward and road steward.

## **Noticeboards**

The Residents' Association now has its own noticeboards – one by the library and the other at the Tattenham Way shops. We hope to develop this as a way of keeping in touch between issues of this newsletter. If you have anything of community interest you would like to display, please contact me.

## **Bus Stops**

After questions at Council meetings on the need for a properly marked bus stop by the filling station at Tattenham Corner, one is now in place, although why it needs to be quite so large is a mystery.

The Council is also embarking on a programme of replacing the bus shelters in the Borough. These are provided on a “no cost” basis by an advertising agency, and the new contractor is not only upgrading the shelters, but is also providing a larger number of them. Let us know if you have any new sites in mind which would benefit from a shelter. We have pointed out that the middle of winter is the wrong time to be taking down and putting up shelters as there is bound to be a period when residents are left out in the weather, but this “does not meet the programme requirements”.

## **Cold Calling**

Reigate and Banstead Borough Council are calling at addresses in the Borough where occupants have not replied to the electoral roll letters sent out earlier this year with a view to collect the information they require. Please call the Town Hall if there is any doubt as to the validity of such callers.

The Borough Crime Reduction Advisor, Steve Ayling-White, asks anyone with a problem with such cold calling to contact him. [Telephone: 01737 – 386442.] He advises that genuine callers will always offer identification. Also, people living alone could ask unknown callers at the door to return at a time when someone else is present, if they are nervous or have any doubt about the caller's intentions (especially if they ask to enter your property).

## **Neighbourhood Watch**

Jean Hatton, one of our Police Community Support Officers, who regularly updates watch co-ordinators with details of any local crime, reminds us to be ever watchful for suspicious activities and to ensure that garden sheds are kept securely locked. At this time of year thieves will also be checking to see if anything has been left on view in vehicles. Always place presents in the boot prior to taking them home. Jean tells us that Satellite Navigation Systems are on the thieves “most wanted list”; please remember to remove portable systems whenever you leave the car unattended.

*Take care and enjoy the festive season. I wish all residents a peaceful new year.*

*John Butcher*

# **TREE PROTECTION**

## **50 – 54 Brighton Road Application**

We reported in our last issue that the previous application for 12 flats, 2 semi's and 4 detached houses, having been withdrawn, a new application for 6 terraced, 2 semi's and 3 detached houses had popped up. This application has in its turn now been refused.

One of the concerns related to the retention of feature trees, and the Council was in the course of preparing a tree protection order (TPO) when two of the six trees concerned were felled. Residents advised your councillors who ensured the TPO was rushed through and served later that day, potentially saving further losses. We're told that one of the felled tree sections showed advanced signs of decay. This is not the point, we can hardly cut down trees to show if they're healthy or not!

## **Provisional Tree Protection Orders**

This is not the first time that the Council has served a TPO a few hours after a tree is felled (for example the Beech Grove site). It is a criminal offence to cut down a tree once the TPO is served.

We have called on the Council to be much more sure-footed in handling tree protection. There are millions of pounds at stake, and the Council can't rely on a good-mannered and gentlemanly approach from developers 'to do the right thing'. It should serve a precautionary, Provisional Area TPO on relevant sites, which will give all trees in an area protection for a period of six months. This will give the time to carry out a detailed survey of the site and work out which trees are worthy of permanent protection, and allow neighbours and others to express their views.

## **Nork**

Developers in neighbouring Nork are now signing option agreements with home owners, and then removing mature trees before or as they are submitting planning applications.

The Planning Department has written to one developer in Nork as follows:

"The retention of trees of significant visual amenity value is an important part of the site appraisal and design process. It greatly assists in blending new developments with the existing area, and thereby avoids loss of character. In contrast, this tree felling exercise appears as a deliberate attempt to pre-judge the proper assessment of site features that should be carried out as part of the planning process. Your web site says that you take 'considerable care to design properties that merge with their current surroundings', but this is at odds with what happened on this site."

## **What Should You Do?**

It's not practical to issue TPO's on all possible sites. However, developments do not suddenly emerge from nowhere. It's not necessarily a secret process. Developers write to residents in a specific area they see as ripe for re-development, and thus knowledge of a possible development often emerges in advance. If you have concerns, please contact the Residents' Association or its councillors to see what action can be taken.

## **Developments in Upland Way**

With winter here, there are few significant planning applications in process. However, we are aware that the Housing Trust are moving towards a new application for housing on the old garage site in the middle of Upland Way. Besides the usual issues of design and density, the major concern is the additional traffic and parking created in this already difficult area. The Residents' Association has served a legal order to preserve the footpath through the site which is providing a certain amount of leverage to address these issues.

## **Back Gardens - Green Fields or Brownfield Land?**

We regret that a backbench bill in the House of Commons, challenging the Government's classification of urban green space – gardens – as brownfield land and thus ripe for re-development, has been talked out. Developers should be encouraged to move towards genuine areas of desolation.

# **EPSOM DOWNS**

## **The first Primary School and Children's Centre in Surrey**

Epsom Downs Primary School and Children's Centre can offer high quality education, childcare and family support from birth to eleven years.

We pride ourselves on meeting the needs of all our children, whatever their age or ability. Dedicated and highly skilled staff combine with specialist teaching in small groups to ensure that children are stimulated, engaged and develop to their full potential.

It is this continuous personal care throughout their formative years that gives our children the best possible start in life, properly equipped to move forward confidently to the next stage in their education.

The school has a wealth of resources including a new ICT suite with the latest computers and interactive whiteboards in every class. We even have our own very popular steel band; the children enjoy performing in the community.

We're enormously proud of our school and we love showing it off – so why not join our growing numbers of new families? Call us on 01737 354313 and see for yourself what makes us special.

## **THE BEACON SCHOOL**

The school has enjoyed considerable success in recent months. Most important, was the award of Specialist Status for Media Arts, which will bring additional funding over the next four years to enable the school to develop the work of Media, Drama and Music, both within the school and in the local community. We are particularly looking forward to developing the arts with local junior schools and inviting members of the community to a variety of events.

The Beacon has now joined the local Surrey junior schools to form the North Downs Federation of Schools, whose aim will be to share good practice, develop joint activities and also to develop the extended schools programme which, by 2010, should offer a range of educational and child care activities from 8.00 am to 6.00 pm.

The Beacon has also received the Artsmark award as confirmation of the quality of provision for the Creative Arts and the National Healthy Schools Award. The Beacon is the first secondary school in Surrey to receive this award, which assessed the quality of health care education, the safety of students during the school day and the quality of our healthy eating programme.

Local residents will have noted that there are fewer students around at lunchtimes. We now stagger the lunch hour and, apart from the Sixth Form, no students are allowed off site during the day. This has cut down on litter (although school site staff still carry out litter sweeps), groups of students hanging around and, most importantly, reduced the presence of outsiders who used to cause a great deal of aggravation to school staff.

Perhaps the only disappointment after a summer of improved exam results, has been the decision of the Borough Council not to place a community sports hall on The Beacon site. Whilst there is still an outside possibility retained for the future, there is no immediate prospect now of filling this gap in Banstead and the school's provision. We have tried a number of avenues in the past twelve years to achieve a sports hall and our two lottery bids failed because the Borough was unable to provide the necessary financial support. Sadly, now the Borough has funds, it does not wish to progress siting this much needed facility at the school.

However, if anyone can help us or knows anyone who may be able to help advance a sports hall to the benefit of the whole community, please contact the Bursar on 01737 - 365222.

# **SHAWLEY COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL**

The school has had a great start to the year.

The children from years five and six took part in a residential visit to the Isle of Wight in September. It was a tremendous success with many children exhibiting resilience and resourcefulness in a range of highly challenging situations. Photographs of the trip are on our website, [www.shawley.surrey.sch.uk](http://www.shawley.surrey.sch.uk). You need to click on classes, and then go to either Maple, Cedar or Elm and follow the links.

By half term the school received confirmation from Surrey LEA that our results from SAT's tests last year placed us in the top 25% of schools nationally for the third year running. We only just missed being in the top 5% nationally by just 0.1. This is a fantastic achievement and is a reflection on how hard the children worked during the year.

The school is growing in popularity as shown by the open afternoons for parents choosing a school for the first time. These were very well attended this year with forty-two different families visiting during the open week in October. You can contact us on 01737 – 350344.

Preparations are underway now for Christmas. A carol concert will be held at St Marks Church and the children from Key Stage One will be performing in the production of "The Little Red Robin."

**An alternative way to contact the County Council:** Instead of the expensive 08456 009 009, use 0208 541 8800. You can find alternatives to other expensive 0845 and 0870 numbers by going to [www.saynoto0870.co.uk](http://www.saynoto0870.co.uk)