

Community Centre limits its attractiveness for private functions. This can not be changed without a motion at the Annual General Meeting and the Executive Committee have yet to be convinced of the necessity of such a change. Margaret Stubbins continues to prove ever resourceful in finding new bookings for the centre and is a much valued member of the staff.

Bernard Bellchambers has continued to prove an excellent manager for the centre and has excelled himself in keeping it in good repair. He's supervised the installation of new windows for the common room this year, the replacement of light fittings and the purchase of new crockery for the kitchen. He is still trying to find ways of strengthening our rear doors which may well need replacing in the near future. The other major replacements being considered are the chairs. This may be necessary following the collapse of one of them under a guest at a function in the Hall. Although the remainder have been checked carefully and will be checked regularly, it may well be an indication that they are reaching the end of their useful life.

More annoying are the continual minor acts of vandalism that keep occurring - broken windows, gas flues, signs, etc, the most recent being the large sign that seems, judging by the marks, to have been the target for football or basket ball practice. If anyone does see children or older youths aiming at breakable bits of the centre would you please at least take a description of the perpetrators and pass it on. It is quite amazing how many of these

vandals the police do know and it might well stop them going on to cause more damage somewhere else.

Overall I would urge you to view the Hall as part of your community. The play group meets there, but it's also there to be used for private functions, club meetings, to support your favourite charity etc.

CONCLUSION

I trust you have been able to stay with me throughout this report. As we approach a new millennium this area is settling down to a steady middle age, with little growth expected but it is very important that we keep a close eye on our physical condition. If you feel that you might want to help, a little, in looking after the places we live in then please ask to be nominated for the Executive Committee. The actual commitment is quite limited but can often be surprisingly valuable.

May I finish then by wishing you all, if a little early, my own and the committee's best wishes for the next thousand years.

Woodlands Under Fives

Have Vacancies in all Sessions

Mon-Fri 9.20 - 11.50am

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£2.70 per Session

Toddlers

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£1.50 per family

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PARK RANGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
VINTERS PARK RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION
SPRING 1999

RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

All residents of Vinters Park and Woodlands Estates are invited to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Vinters Park Residents' Association, to be held in the Community Centre on Wednesday 12th May 1999, starting at 8.15pm. Refreshments will be served from 8pm.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the last AGM
3. Matters arising herefrom
4. Matters arising from the Chairman's Report
5. Presentation of Accounts
6. Election of Officers and Executive Committee members
7. Appointment of Hon. Auditor
8. Consideration of a motion to waive the annual subscription
9. Local Policing:- A presentation by Inspector Simon Black.
10. Question Time: An opportunity to discuss matters of local interest with guests at the meeting. These will include - Geoff Russell (Borough Highways Manager) and Head Teachers from local schools.
11. Any other business.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Welcome to this years edition of Parkranger. This Chairman's report is produced here to save you the boredom of it being read out at the Annual General Meeting. Instead we attempt to provide you with a number of guests to question on matters that affect your everyday life. Please read this and if you have any queries then come along to the Annual General Meeting and raise the matter publicly or in private.

ON THE STREETS

Graffiti, overhanging branches, weeds in the gutter, street lights out The Executive Committee has been dealing with all these matters during the last year. We all enjoy the greenery present throughout this estate but sometimes it gets out of control making life hazardous for footpath users. The Executive Committee regularly draws the council's attention to this, when it becomes troublesome, and has always been pleased to see the matter dealt with promptly. It would be nice to say the same about graffiti and street lighting. The two subways under Hampton Road are regularly cleaned and then daubed with graffiti within a few weeks - so much so that the council will now only clean them a few times a year. The only real answer to this is to catch the culprits. The police are

interested in this and the Crime Reduction Unit (which at one time was called the Community Policing Unit) may well be able to recognize the artists from your descriptions. These 'artists' don't always restrict their activities to Vinters Park and the damage they cause across the town could amount to several thousand pounds a year - most of it paid for with our council taxes.

Street lights cannot however be blamed on third parties, the responsibility lying solely with the County Council and as I have driven through 'dark patches' on this estate that have lasted for weeks I have wondered - what is going on? Apparently the new subcontractors have not been able to meet the necessary standards (isn't there some story about paying peanuts ?). Everybody has been complaining and basically that is what needs to be done. Complaints should be dealt with in a number of days not weeks and it is up to us all to ensure that they are dealt with.

You'll have noticed that there seem to be more weeds than ever growing in the gutters. Apparently weed killers have been largely eliminated from the budget, which from an environmental point of view is fine, but when the replacement is two men and a spade, then the roads start suffering as well - a false economy I feel.

Geoff Russell, whose responsibilities cover these and many related matters will be available to answer questions at the Annual General Meeting.

OUR KIDS

The Executive Committee has attended various meetings throughout the year

relating to improved recreational facilities for our children, of all ages.

You may recall that at last year's Annual General Meeting we were told that the Ashurst Road play area would become the councils 'focus park' for the year and that there had been extensive consultation in the immediate area - but only 1 in 4 people responded. So far I must say I have seen very few changes - perhaps they are too subtle to notice, however local residents may be able to speak to the contrary. Regardless of this I understand that local residents enjoyed a relatively quiet year.

Every year there are complaints about children playing football, bouncing the ball off walls, balls flying into gardens etc. I'm afraid I do not have a good answer to this problem. We all know that we live on an estate with children and I would much rather they were playing close to home and off the roads. Equally parents should ensure their children are being considerate, and remember that they could be liable for any damage their children may be causing. Really the older children (and that includes a lot of Dads) could do with a larger open space, allowing the younger children, who are far less likely to cause damage, to play closer to home. I'm open to practical suggestions on this so long as it is remembered that the vast majority of our children are not foul-mouthed terrorists.

The Executive Committee has been represented on a committee looking at the new sports hall that will be built off New Cut Road. Planning is at an early stage but we hope that local youth will be considered in the design.

We have also been trying to contact Kent County Council youth workers to explore any possible developments for this area.

The lessons of the past would indicate that any activities need to be planned for the whole town as youth are drawn from a radius of several miles to any activities.

It is hoped to have County youth workers as well as local Heads of Schools at our Annual General Meeting who may be able to provide further input on these matters.

SCHOOLS and ROADS

A strange combination I will agree, but if your children go to any local schools you will know why I have combined them.

When the Mid-Kent school combined with Vinters Boys school the anticipated increase in traffic forced the County Council to consider access from Vinters Road, Huntsman's Lane

Related to these changes were the proposed cycle routes, some of which bordered on the absurd; again the Executive Committee drew the council's attention to the absurdities being proposed although we had to agree that producing an effective answer within the price proposed was probably almost impossible.

Road problems apart I understand that the integration of the two schools seems to have progressed satisfactorily and that the pupils are taking a real pride in their new school. I hope that Ms Ryder will be at the Annual General Meeting to let us all know about any new developments.

LAW and ORDER

Our Executive Committee meetings have been enlivened by regular updates on Community Policing in the area by Ian

Gedge who is now, along with John Ansell, responsible for Community Policing in Maidstone. This has been useful as Roger Boorman who had been serving as our 'Neighbourhood Policeman' was unable to continue with his duties because of other commitments. This additional liaison has been of value in ensuring that the police are aware of matters that may not be serious crimes but are of 'social importance.'

These are matters that the Crime Reduction Unit need to be aware of, but they are not a 999 unit and may not be able to deal with it immediately. Equally they need to be told who may be responsible for the problems and be given facts about the incidents and not speculation about 'what might happen.' This should never stop you dialling 999 if you have reason to believe that a crime is in the process of being committed.

Fortunately Vinters is not a 'hotbed' of crime, however we do have minor outbreaks of vandalism, there have been a series of arson attacks on cars as well as a few burglaries and attempted burglaries on houses and garages. The overall lesson is that we should always be on our guard but never let fear rule our lives. The police are quite keen to promote 'Neighbourhood Watch' again and anybody interested in helping will have the opportunity to discuss this at the Annual General Meeting.

COMMUNITY CENTRE

The Community Centre continues to pay its own way with few evenings available during the week. It would be good to see it in more regular use at weekends, however the ban on alcohol consumption in the