

money into higher interest bearing accounts - making our financial situation more attractive.

While on the matter of Finance it may interest members to know that the Bank Charges imposed on the Association, highlighted in last years audit, were caused by the refusal of the Bank to provide a statement for our Finance Manager, shortly before she went on holiday. Combined with the need to make a large payment - the end result was an overdrawn account that was not drawn to our attention for several weeks. The charges have now been refunded.

### Premises

Bernard continues to manage the Centre and has overseen a number of major and minor alterations during the year. The most expensive of these was the replacement of the gas boilers, carried out in August with minimal disruption to regular users of the Centre. He has also had to deal with untaxed motor vehicles being dumped, users failing to lock the Centre, fires in bins, replacing venetian blinds and the Centre left in a poor state by people who should have known better!

### Conclusion

As usual events seem to overtake the words I've been writing. Vinters Park was in the news this week with reports of residents "taking the law into their own hands." I can well understand this happening, as this has been threatened from time to time over the last 20 years. However I have to say to anyone who is inclined to copy this

example that violence will only encourage more violence. In a culture where carrying weapons occurs more and more frequently then it will only be a short time before knives appear and then we might end up with a serious injury or even murder.

I am aware of the way in which that incident occurred and I know that there was no intent that someone should be "seen to" so I would strongly advocate restraint in responding to provocation. We will be looking to restructure the AGM to bring together Residents with people who may be able to provide some help in this matter.

Over the period that I have been Chairman and have been writing this report I have heard these and similar complaints from different parts of the estate. Unfortunately the only body able to represent all residents and only concerned with this estate is this Association. Regrettably there does seem to be an attitude that residents are not bothered by such problems if it does not happen to them. I would be delighted to see more residents at the AGM but I would be much more pleased to find more residents on the committee sharing the workload and benefiting all the residents of the estate.

I do have to thank all the Committee members and managers for their work during this last year. If anyone would like to be nominated for the committee then please contact the Secretary - Keith Rogers (755858) or Chairman - Neil Sinclair (209526) for a nomination form.



# PARK RANGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE  
VINTERS PARK RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

## RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

All residents of Vinters Park including 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 24th April, starting at 8.15pm. Refreshments will be served from 8pm.

### AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of the last AGM.
3. Matters arising therefrom.
4. Matters arising from the Chairman's Report.
5. Presentation of Accounts
6. Election of Officers and Executive Committee members.
7. A Motion to amend the Constitution. The Charity Commission has relaxed the requirements in respect of the appointment of Auditors. It is therefore proposed to ask the AGM to approve the amendment of Clause 12(c) of the Association's Constitution to read "The accounts shall be audited annually by an Independent Examiner or Auditor to be appointed at the AGM or where this proved impossible by the Executive Committee". Anyone requiring further information should contact the Chairman or Secretary.
8. Appointment of Hon. Auditor.
9. Mick Wright will speak on the "Neighbourhood Watch."
10. It is hoped that both the Mayor, or Cllr. Paulina Stockett, and a senior Police officer will attend the meeting.
11. Question Time - A chance to ask speakers and other guests questions on local concerns.
12. Any other business.

### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Many of you that are reading this Newsletter will be aware that we have been honoured in recent years by having the Mayor attend and speak at our AGM. His theme last year was one of "Getting Involved." So - are you "involved"? Do you feel disgusted at the spread of graffiti around the estate? Do you feel annoyed at the state of the roads on the estate? Do you keep moaning when that street light still hasn't been repaired? Do you keep thinking that we never have any social events on the estate? Do you worry about the increase in crime? Well if the answer to these, and similar questions is "Yes" then perhaps, while you read this report you might see some way that you could "get involved."

The Executive Committee (EC) of the Residents Association (RA) meets about ten times a year. During these meetings we will normally discuss most matters that affect our daily lives here on Vinters Park.

## **Policing**

At each meeting we will normally receive a report from the Crime Prevention Unit, based at Maidstone Police Station, about any criminal activity that has been happening on the estate.

Although, thankfully, still uncommon there does seem to be an increase in the number of thefts on the estate. Vandalism and general antisocial behaviour unfortunately does not decrease although, following last years AGM, the use of "covert surveillance techniques" does appear to have had some success. The committee were also pleased to see the occasional presence of numbers of police on the estate, especially at weekends. Not often enough, but nevertheless still beneficial.

Superintendent Mick Matthews made an especial point last year of encouraging residents to report crime and criminal activity. To give one example - 'I am certain that someone has seen the person who has been spraying walls and trees all around the estate, and yet no one has come forward.'

Neighbourhood Watch provides a structure for concerned citizens to relay their concerns without appearing to be "nosy parkers." We have asked Mick Wright from Maidstone Police to speak at this year's AGM on the matter. If you are concerned about the low but nevertheless increasing crime rate perhaps you should come along and listen to him.

During the year Terry O'Connor has represented the estate at the "Maidstone Police Area North Forum." This is a forum for Parish Councils and Residents Associations to receive information, about the work that the Police carry out, and to

express the concerns of all participants.

## **Condition of the Estate**

As usual one of our Secretary's main preoccupation's seems to have been writing to the Highways Manager, at MBC/KCC, about the condition of much of the "highways" on the estate. Keith's care in defining the problems in his letters to the council ensure that there are few excuses for failing to remedy problems.

We have also been asked to comment about the proposed improvements to the footways on the estate. Part of the proposal was the closure of the subway leading to the top of Marston Drive. For obvious reasons the EC expressed great concern about the possible road safety implications of this move although it would now appear that this proposal has been put "on ice." It is hoped to have a copy of the proposed changes at the AGM..

The committee has also continually nagged about street lights and advised residents to do the same. I am told that the major reason for the slow reaction to these complaints is "inadequate performance by the contractor." Time will tell as to whether the problem has been resolved.

We have also been very interested in the roads in the immediate area, especially between here and Nottcutts. We have been dismayed to see cars parked on the verge, by the roundabout, making foot passage difficult, dangerous and unpleasant.

Unfortunately Geoff Russell has left the Highways Unit and without a replacement we will not have anybody from MBC/KCC at our AGM to field queries on these matters. Nobody that is except our elected representatives on the County and Borough Councils if they are able to attend

## **In the Community**

As well as Terry's visits to the Police Station committee members are involved with the Valley Park Trust and have sat in on discussions upon reorganisation of NHS Management and Consultation procedures. It is also hoped that, later in the year, the

### **YOUR COMMUNITY NEEDS YOU**

As part of the Queens Jubilee, the Residents Association is looking for anybody who may be able to help with a street celebration.

You may be an entertainer, juggler, musician, or just someone who could give a couple of hours to help.

If you fit any of the above, please contact Gerry on :- 678498

Community Centre will be able to host the Valley Park Trust's AGM.

It was a real pleasure to see a Community Event at the Community Centre this Christmas. The "Christmas Cracker" show was held to raise money for charity and was generally held to be a great success.

The EC has now decided that it would be appropriate for the RA to organise a "Jubilee Party" at the Community Centre during the June Bank Holiday. This will be a much larger event than the Christmas show and so volunteers will be welcome.

## **Committee Matters**

The EC and the managers for the RA have also seen a number of changes in the past year. New to the EC have been Pat Moorman and Elsie Harris and Avice Harms has now retired as Finance Manager

to be replaced by Margaret Stubbins and Chris KIRRAGE has given up her place on the Committee to take over Margaret's previous role as Bookings Manager. Both of these ladies have rapidly settled into their new roles and as a consequence of their excellent work and that of Bernard Bellchambers as Premises Manager, the Associations Finances are in good shape. So much so, in fact, that it would appear to be unnecessary to increase fees during this coming year.

## **Community Centre**

I am delighted to report that the Association has had an excellent year financially. Although a large proportion of this has been due to an increase in bookings it is in no small measure due to the excellent management of the Centre. This is a team effort of all the staff employed by the Association.

## **Bookings**

Have substantially increased during this year. Our Bookings Manager - Chris KIRRAGE - has performed magnificently and seems to be able to "shoehorn" in most people. Much of the increase has been through "casual" bookings of children's parties, boot fairs etc. We have enjoyed this overall increase despite the fact that we do not allow consumption of alcohol in the Centre or events to finish too late in the evening. We are also well aware that our rates are amongst the lowest in the area - however as things stand we feel no justification in increasing them.

## **Finance**

Since Margaret Stubbins took this post over earlier this year she has reduced the number of overdue payments and been able to move