

Monks Orchard Residents' Association

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Croydon

(Non Party)

(Independent)

NEWSLETTER - Summer 2004

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENT

By now, residents will have received their Council Tax demand for 2004/5 and noted that it has increased by 7.3%, which is more than four times the rate of inflation. This is on top of last year's massive increase of 27.3%. It is interesting to note that for every £100 paid ten years ago residents now have to pay £275. If the increases had been kept in line with inflation residents would only be paying £135. The question to be asked is; what are we getting for all this extra money?

The Council finds itself in a very difficult situation, usable reserves have been reduced to a dangerous level and the District Auditor has taken the unusual step and made two recommendations that must, by law, be considered and acted upon. As a consequence, spending will have to be curtailed further and more services will have to be cut if the Council is not to be made bankrupt.

There is growing public support for Council Tax to be reformed, even the Leader of the Council agrees that the time has arrived for a change because the present system places too much reliance on the grant from central Government. A number of alternatives have been suggested ranging from a local income tax to a local sales tax. Whatever new system is introduced it is vital that the money collected is spent wisely and not seen to be wasted.

The Monks Orchard Residents' Association was founded in 1923, and represents 2,500 residents.

MONKS ORCHARD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Minutes of the 80th Annual General Meeting of Monks Orchard Residents' Association held at St. George's Church on Friday 26th March 2004.



Bob Akers opened the meeting by welcoming 150 members to the 80th Annual General Meeting of Monks Orchard Residents' Association. He said that this was a notable landmark in the history of the association that said much for the residents who have given their support over these many years. He also welcomed Councillor Avril Slipper, Councillor Eddie Arrum, Councillor Janet Marshall and for the first time a Member of the Greater London Authority Andrew Pelling who is also Leader of the Opposition at Croydon Council, Geraint Davies. M. P. W. P. C. Allen and Angela Fenner, Trading Standards Officer.

Apologies for Absence

Councillor Derek Loughborough, Councillor Richard Chatterjee, Charles and Lillian Hutchings, Marcia and Michael Nash were unable to attend.

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

These were published in the May edition of the newsletter and copies were available in the hall. The minutes as provided were proposed and seconded and approved as a correct record of the AGM held on Friday 28th March 2003.

Matters Arising

At the previous meeting, members endorsed a proposal that MORA campaign on their behalf against the year on year inflation busting increases in Council Tax. It was agreed that 'enough is enough' because taxes are, for many, becoming unsustainable. Subsequent to the meeting, attempts were made to place the issue on the agenda at meetings of the Neighbourhood Partnerships, but requests were refused. Letters were also sent to local and national government with no affect. The Executive Committee decided that adding our support to a national campaign for the reform of Council Tax would be the best way of pursuing this issue. It was proposed that MORA become an affiliated group to the 'Is It Fair' campaign which is supported by the British Legion, is nationwide, non-party political and is for everyone, not only pensioners, who want the existing system of Council Tax abolished and replaced by a system that takes account of an ability to pay. The proposal was approved.



Chairman's Report

It was reported that much has happened during the past twelve months and that the members of the Executive Committee have been active in representing the opinions of members and forwarding such opinions to the appropriate authority. It was stressed that it is not surprising that the association is constantly pressed into action when the residents of Monks Orchard are being attacked from all sides. Changes in local government and the new authorities such as the Greater London Authority have increased taxes

but have drastically reduced the influence taxpayers once had on the decision making process. The cabinet system of local government appears to give the Council unchallenged authority and, as a consequence, money is being wasted, schools are short of money and services are being reduced. Taxes are being increased to employ additional police but Monks Orchard has no Community Ward Officer.

The Department of Planning and Development Control is willing to give permission for developments that are completely out of character with the surrounding area. Mobile phone companies have been given the statutory right to erect telecommunication masts almost anywhere. The Mayor of London under the guise of Transport of London has unbridled power. A Housing Association, using funds provided by The Housing Corporation, a non departmental public body sponsored by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, is able to purchase luxury housing to meet social housing needs, using tax payer's money, and move a group from another area and deposit them in an established community without consultation. These are only some of the reasons why local residents are frustrated and angry and why MORA has an important role to play in trying to preserve the character of the area.

Bob Akers said that he is pleased to be able to report that the membership remains strong. In September we lost the services of John Walkington, Vice-Chairman and Treasurer who made a valuable contribution to the work of the association and is sadly missed. Our condolences go out to his wife and family. Terry Greenwood has taken over the role of Treasurer, Elaine Eckhardt has filled the vacant post of Transport and Highways and two new members Andrew Seagram and Brain Spiking have been co-opted to the Executive Committee. Members appreciate the expansion of the newsletter and the web site is proving a useful tool in spreading community information. On your behalf I thank Derek Ritson for his sterling work as editor and manager of the web site. To continue to operate successfully with an increasing workload the duties need to be spread more widely. Anyone willing and able to offer help is asked to let him know. It was also mentioned that there is an urgent need for a person who can offer legal guidance on an occasional basis.



Treasurers Report

Mr. Greenwood began by saying that he is a new member of the Executive Committee and, as a consequence, had not known John Walkington for long but he did know that he was an excellent Treasurer and he hoped to do as well. He reported that there has been a remarkable turn around in the balance of the accounts. The account balance for 2002 -2003 returned a deficit in excess of £1,000 which was unsustainable. As a result of action taken by the Executive Committee the predicted deficit for the year 2003 – 2004 had been changed to a surplus of over £1,000. The improvement in the balance had been achieved by following an agreed strategy. For the first time advertising has been accepted to help cover the increasing production costs of the newsletter, meetings of the Executive Committee are being held in the houses of members and our insurance premiums have been reduced. He concluded by saying that if all continues as planned the financial forecast for the coming year looks healthy.

The Chair thanked Mr. Greenwood for producing such satisfactory results after taking on the important duties of Honorary Treasurer at short notice and half way through the financial year.



Police Liaison / Security Report

The Chair invited Jean Cook to give the report on Police Liaison and Security.

Mrs. Cook began by saying that the crime reports printed in the monthly editions of Croydon Eye are providing very concise details of bogus callers, i.e. Gas Board, Water Board, Electricity Inspectors, most with false identification tags giving plausible excuses for gaining entry to houses. They also contain detailed descriptions of women asking for money to get home, or to use the telephone to call a relative for help. These rogue callers usually have an accomplice lurking unseen and waiting for the opportunity to enter and search while the front or rear entrance door is open. The Police have liaised with Age Concern to supply free front door chains and spyglass viewers to some of the more vulnerable residents, especially those living in bungalows or ground floor flats. In addition, the Fire Service is supplying smoke alarms and it is important that all residents install these safety devices, not only the elderly.

Mrs. Cook said that from her attendances at the quarterly Police meetings held at the Forestdale Community Hall, she has gained information on the new communication system linking Scotland Yard with local Police Stations Patrol Cars and Beat Officers. The system will take time to install and put into practice but should be fully operational in 2006. This will mean that all 999 emergency calls will receive attention within a few minutes because calls will be forwarded straight from Scotland Yard to Patrol Cars and Beat Officers, thus enabling the nearest Patrol Car or Beat Officer to answer the call

immediately. The crime figures for this area, which includes part of Shirley and Ashburton sectors, are comparatively low when compared with some areas and this points to the fact that Monks Orchard residents are more careful with the security of their premises.



Mrs. Cook concluded by saying that as broadcast on television, everyone is asked to be more vigilant when travelling by train, tube, bus, shopping or walking the dog in order to report any criminal intent or illegal actions plus possible terrorist attacks. Do not hesitate to report suspicious behaviour, or bags left unattended and vehicles parked unusually. Be much more on your guard from now on and don't hesitate to dial 999, It does not matter if your call is found to be harmless, at least you are seen to be on watch. Mrs. Cook concluded by wishing members a safe and happy 2004.

Election of Officers and Committee for 2004/2005

The Chair said that as mentioned in his annual report, two members have during the past year agreed to be co-opted to the Executive Committee. He said that he was pleased to be able to report that all the present members have agreed to stand for a further term. In order to save time he suggested that the Executive Committee be elected en bloc.

The Executive Committee is to be Chairman Bob Akers, Vice-Chairman and Secretary Anne Johnson, Terry Greenwood (Treasurer) Alyce Menhinnitt (Membership Secretary), Derek Ritson (Editor and Website) Jean Cook (Police Liaison/ Security), Elaine Eckhardt (Transport and Highways), Marcia Nash (Primary Care Liaison), Christine Ross-Smith (Social Secretary), Michael Nash, Patricia Turner (Area Managers), Brian Spiking and Andrew Seagram (Committee Members). The motion was proposed, seconded and approved.

Award of Life Membership

The Chair said that this is the time when we recognise and honour those that have made a valuable contribution to the work of the Association. This year the Executive Committee have elected to award Life Membership to Charles Hutchings who for over thirty years has acted as Area Manager combined in the latter years with the post of Historian/Archivist. Charles has recently moved out of the area and will be missed by all those who knew him. He was unable to attend this meeting and Christine Ross-Smith accepted the Honorary Certificate on his behalf. The gift Charles has selected is a copy of the forthcoming book on the History of Monks Orchard and Eden Park which is to be published in October.

The Chair said that before proceeding further on behalf of the membership he wished to pay tribute to the excellent work undertaken by the Area Managers and also pay tribute to the Road Stewards who are the backbone of the Association delivering 2,500 newsletters and collecting the annual subscriptions from members.

PLANNING REPORT



Bob Akers began the report by saying that the past year had been one of mixed fortunes on the planning front.

Bethlem Royal Hospital

In April the appeal made by the South London and Maudsley NHS Trust was upheld despite the enormous efforts made by elected representatives and CABBE, and supported by all the local associations and residents. There is still a need to be vigilant; recently another application to build on the metropolitan open land on the site of the Royal Bethlem Hospital was opposed by residents and refused by Bromley Council.

Woodmere Avenue

Work is expected to start in May on the construction of seven properties at the rear of 100 Woodmere Avenue. The developer has consulted with residents living nearby and they seem reasonably satisfied with the amendments designed to retain their privacy.

Orchard Way

Land Investment and Development made an application to demolish the buildings at 79 – 85 Orchard Avenue and to erect 9 detached houses plus a chalet bungalow. This was followed by another application to demolish 81 Orchard Avenue and 2 High Trees in order to extend the site. An appeal was made to the Secretary of State following the failure to determine the planning permission within the time allowed. Both appeals were dismissed.

The Glade and Watlings Close

The Council refused the application made by Hillcrest Homes to demolish the existing bungalows at 102 & 104 the Glade and to erect six houses with access onto Watlings Close and an appeal has now been made to the Secretary of State. The decision is expected soon.

Wickham Road / Cheston Avenue

Children Child Care has applied for planning permission for the Tudor Lodge at 377 Wickham Road. The proposal is to use the building as a day nursery. Residents living in the area have concerns about the number of additional vehicles likely to be attracted to the area. MORA has joined with the Spring Park Residents Association in objecting to this proposal. The application is to be considered by the Planning Control Committee on April 1st and the recommendation is to refuse permission. *This recommendation was upheld and permission for this application was refused.*

PLANNING WATCH

No formal planning applications have been made but information provided by local residents suggest that the garage in Wickham Road near the junction with Wickham Avenue is to close and should be replaced by housing. This is

associated with a rumour that The Co-operative Store is also to close and the site be used for housing. The loss of this large local store will be a shock for local residents who will have much further to walk for shopping.

The South East Region of the Co-operative Group has subsequently confirmed that there is absolutely no substance to these rumours and that the store will continue to provide a service to the residents of Shirley

Developers are seeking properties in Oak Way, Ash Tree Way and Greenview Avenue and some offers have been accepted. It appears that the plan is to gain access to the allotments situated at the rear of Greenview Avenue and to build a large high-density estate. MORA has circulated a flyer to residents in the area because of the distress caused by uninvited callers making cash offers on the doorstep. This is most unprofessional behaviour and residents have been warned not to be intimidated and to check the identity of the caller and the company.

The Glade Development

The rumours circulated about this development have greatly troubled and disturbed local residents. The complete lack of prior warning and consultation created suspicions and fears. On receiving confirmation of the sale of the 'luxury' houses in the development for use as 'social' housing MORA sought expert professional advice on how this change could be resisted but were informed that nothing legally could be done. One concern was that the estate would no longer be a mix of homes for sale and rent on affordable market terms, which would attract high and low income earners that are the very basis of social inclusive communities. Instead the estate is to be occupied by one social group that could add to the burden of local taxes. The second concern was the improper use of public money. It has been acknowledged that many more non-luxury houses could have been purchased for the same amount of money.

Acting on behalf of members, MORA attempted to obtain information about the future occupants, how they would be selected, how they would be absorbed into the community and how the estate would be managed. Answers were also required about the affect the number of large families would have on local services such as health and education. Encouraged by the new owners, Presentation Housing Association, a public meeting was called and over 350 residents attended. Invitations to the meeting were sent to the Director of Housing at Croydon, Presentation Housing Association, the Housing Agency, the local Councillors and Geraint Davies M. P. Curiously, only Councillor Derek Loughborough and our local M. P. Geraint Davies attended. It is a great pity that representatives from the Council and Presentation Housing did not attend because they could have shone objective light and given answers that would have helped allay the fears of residents. The meeting was cut short by a failure in the public address

system but there was, for those attending, an opportunity to voice their opinions and demonstrate their disgust at the way they have been kept in the dark about the intended use of the development and its implications on the community. In an attempt to obtain answers to residents questions MORA used the only route possible and made 12 formal complaints to the council. A response has now been received and these will be shown on the screen and to give you the opportunity to draw your own conclusions. *[Ed: These are edited responses containing the factual details – the full text of the responses can be obtained from the editor on request].*

Complaint 1: The Council's failure to consult and inform residents living nearby that the estate was not to be sold as advertised for "luxury housing" but to be converted to "affordable social housing" and be offered to applicants drawn from the borough's waiting list without a re-application for planning permission.

Answer: *The deal between Presentation Housing & the developer was a private transaction with no involvement from the Council, therefore there was no requirement for consultation with residents on its merits and there was no input from the Council. The change from private housing to affordable housing would not constitute a change of use that would require a re-application for planning permission.*

Complaint 2: The Council's failure to observe the significance of the number of dwellings (14) in relation to the plot size for which planning approval was sought initially and the threshold for provision of a percentage of the development for "affordable housing" to be included as a requirement of planning approval.

Answer: If the proposed number of dwellings falls below a stipulated threshold, as is the case with The Glade development, the Planning Department cannot require affordable housing and is therefore unable to influence to whom a developer sells. The only exception would be if the Council believed that the developer was deliberately proposing a development below the threshold number of homes to avoid the affordable housing requirement. That was not the case at The Glade.

Complaint 3: The Council's failure to provide evidence of the criteria for defining "affordable housing" or to provide evidence for meeting the value for money criteria to allow The Glade development to be allocated for social housing.

Answer: *The Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance defines affordable housing as: "Housing for rent set within the reach of low income households, and / or housing for sale on a shared ownership basis, to meet the priority need for social rented housing and the need for 'key workers' to gain access to subsidised market housing." The subsidised rents of the properties in The Glade are to be around £100 per week.*

Complaint 4: The Council's failure to advise local residents of a change to the planning approval for the conversion of the en-suite bathrooms to a 5th bedroom in all of the 14 houses thereby increasing the accommodation for larger families and the increased burdens on local services, schools, health provision and transport.

Answer: *The development approved consists of 12 four-bedroom houses and 2 three-bedroom houses. The en-suite bathrooms have not been converted into additional bedrooms. They have instead been converted into shower rooms. This is not considered to be a material change to the approved scheme and therefore does not constitute an amendment requiring a further planning application/permission.*

Complaint 5: The Council's failure to ensure that the estate was a mix of homes for sale and rent on affordable market terms that are the basis of social inclusive communities that do not add to the burden of local taxes. The use of the entire estate for social housing will establish a ghetto-type isolated group within an established community.

Answer: *The Glade development is in the midst of an established local community with a range of housing tenure types, including housing association homes. It is a relatively small estate in what is already a diverse area. These homes will indirectly reduce the Council's reliance on the use of expensive forms of temporary accommodation (like bed and breakfast accommodation) and the cost of this to local Council taxpayers will fall as a result.*

Complaint 6: The Council's failure to ensure value for money for provision of social housing, using public money, whether from local or central government funding for allowing an inappropriate use.

Answer: *The Council does not have a role to play in ensuring the value for money of funding made available through central Government.*

The funding for The Glade was allocated by the Housing Corporation. However, the Council does not regard the use of this development for affordable housing to be an inappropriate use given the shortage of affordable housing in Croydon.

Complaint 7: The Council's failure to undertake a feasibility study on the impact of the education provision in the Monks Orchard catchment area. Schools are refusing to accept applications from children of residents living in the area.

Answer: The Planning Department do not undertake feasibility studies into the impact on education provision for developments of this scale. These would only be undertaken where a much larger scale of development is proposed.

It is unlikely that this development would have significant impact as many of the residents nominated by the Council are likely to keep their children in existing Croydon schools. The change of tenure does not impact significantly on the assumptions about the requirements for wider public service provision that would have been made when the planning application was approved.

Complaint 8: The Council's failure to undertake a feasibility study on the impact on medical provision in Monks Orchard. General Practitioners refuse to accept further additions to their patient lists and the hours devoted to consultations have been reduced.

Answer: The Planning Department do not undertake feasibility studies into the impact on medical facilities for a development of this scale, but only on much larger proposals. The change of tenure does not impact on the reasonable assumptions made about the impact of the development on local public services when the planning application was approved.

Complaint 9: The Council's failure to undertake a feasibility study on the impact of transport and road safety on The Glade and surrounding roads.

Answer: When considering planning applications, a number of factors are taken into account. These include: the impact on highway and pedestrian safety. During the consideration of planning application 02/3688/P, Planning Officers consulted the Transportation Division. The impact on pedestrians and on the highway were taken into account in the officers' recommendation to approve and the subsequent Development Control Committee approval of the planning application.

Complaint 10: The Council's failure to undertake a study of the impact of an estimated 50 children and adolescents in an area devoid of facilities for their enjoyment and entertainment. The lack of facilities will serve to encourage anti-social behaviour.

Answer: Shirley is better-served with accessible public open space than many other parts of Croydon. The site sits close to a large area of Metropolitan Open Land that includes South Norwood Country Park amongst other recreational facilities. Each of the houses has a private rear garden.

Presentation should deal with any reported anti-social behaviour by their tenants. Anti-social behaviour could not be justified by a lack of recreational facilities in the area.

Complaint 11: The Council's failure to provide evidence of the process by

which private purchasers were requested or cajoled into withdrawing their purchase funding after laying out deposits and survey fees, such that the whole site could be sold to the Presentation Housing Association en-block.

Answer: *The Council can find no evidence to support the suggestion that private purchasers were requested or cajoled into withdrawing their purchase funding by the Council.*

Complaint 12: The failure of the Council to send a representative to the public meeting, originally requested by Presentation Housing, to allay residents' concerns relating to The Glade development.

Answer: *The Council would only attend the public meeting if Presentation intended to be there. Presentation disputed that they ever agreed to attend a public meeting. They stated that their involvement in the site was not a matter for consultation, and therefore it would not be appropriate for them to be at the meeting on 16th January. Instead, they wrote to local residents to tell them about the way in which the properties at The Glade would be used.*

On a separate front, MORA have raised questions relating to the legality of the funding of the purchase of luxury properties for social housing with the National Audit Commission and we await their response.

Shirley Oaks Nature Reserve

Shipmeade Properties appealed against Croydon Council's decision to refuse planning permission for the Shirley Oaks Garden of Remembrance. The Planning Inspectorate confirmed that the decision would be based on the written representations. Shirley Oaks and Monks Orchard Residents' Associations, the Councillors and local conservation groups asked for a Public Hearing to be held locally. This request was granted due to the amount of interest in the site. The latest news is that Shipmeade Properties have withdrawn the appeal.



Report Back by Councillors

The Chair introduced Councillor Pelling who was to speak on behalf of the local Councillors. He began by saying it was a privilege to address the members of MORA for the first time, having not been invited to the Annual General Meeting before. He knew that the association is non-political, a stance that he always embraced when he visited other residents' associations around Croydon and Sutton, areas that he represents as a Member of the Greater London Assembly. However, political neutrality did not stop the Association from tackling many controversial issues and he can understand why, as the Chairman had mentioned, residents feel under pressure and under attack in their local environment. Along with those from MORA he had attended and spoken at the Bethlem enquiry and it was very disappointing that the decision taken by the Bromley Planning Committee had not been upheld.

MONKS ORCHARD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION HANDY ADS SECTION

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Councillor Pelling continued by saying that there is a great deal that is changing in London and one of the issues that is important at the present moment is the power Ken Livingstone has as Mayor to set out, what is called, the London Plan, which has come into effect quite recently but will have a significant impact on our



local environment. This is because the Mayor has the power to direct local councils on the number of properties that are going to be built in each borough. There is a need for affordable housing but Ken Livingstone's instructions that over 17,000 new properties be built in Croydon over the next twelve years will put a real strain on the local environment. For Monks Orchard that is the equivalent of 800 new properties. There are places that properties could be built, one really real example of that is the Croydon Gateway the empty site next to East Croydon station but unfortunately the Council wants to reserve that principally for what I regard as a 'white elephant' stadium. It would be just the right place for key workers, for police officers, nurses and teachers, close to a very good public transport system to get around London for the many vacancies for their particular professions.

There will be many more examples, as mentioned by the chair, of developers knocking on doors trying to change the nature of the local area. This is something that needs to be addressed by the process of political debate. It is a good question to ask Ken Livingstone if he comes to Croydon during the forthcoming election.

Councillor Pelling said he had a report to pass on from Councillor Loughborough who has contacted the Housing Association about the important question about the value for money of the luxury homes being bought for social housing. An impolite letter of response was received saying that the price paid to purchase the properties from the developer did fall within their guidelines for value for money, so there are issues as to what happened regarding the actual sale price. He then referred to the statement about the remoteness of the Greater London Authority and an example of this is Transport for London and what is happening regarding the proposal to erect bus stops in two of the major roads in the locality. It is fair to say that the local council was consulted and Councillor Avril Slipper attended the relevant committee to express reservations about the proposals being put into effect and the council did agree to make changes. One really big challenge that MORA will have to face in the coming year is the proposal to close post offices. This will impact particularly severely on senior citizens who depend on the post office for cash and many other facilities. There are to be 3,000 urban post offices closed and the process is being accelerated and although there was expectation that an announcement about Croydon post offices would be made on March 10th the post office has said the announcement will

be made sometime next month. We need to be ready to answer the case if some of our local post offices are selected for closure, as we already know, one was closed in the Wickham Road in December.

Councillor Pelling mentioned the reference made to Council Tax and said that he could prompt a debate but one issue that he would be very careful about if there is a change in how the tax was formulated is that it should not be administered locally because the council has a very long and unfortunate record of mucking up their records and information, for example Housing and Council tax benefits. A number of residents come to his surgery as a GLA or ward member saying that they kept arguing with the Council and I do not owe them this money and they are taking me to court, I feel intimidated and I am going to pay up. Unfortunately, this is often a senior citizen who may only have a few thousand pounds life savings. One elderly lady paid up £600 because she could not face the trauma of going to court even though the council's case was unjust. So there is a danger if the council is given the responsibility to set or collect a local income tax. A simple way to manage the tax is to manage the tax well in the first place. As we know the Audit Commission is having to give the council specific instructions, such is the state of local affairs are in, schools are having to send their students home early. This is not what good public services should be about.

Referring to MORA's reservations about the Neighbourhood Partnerships, Councillor Pelling said that one of the frustrations was that the Council Cabinet Executive members did not attend. If they attended that would be a better system and residents could hold people to account. The partnerships should be kept but residents should be given some real powers to decide how to spend money locally.

Concluding, Councillor Pelling mentioned the locally important topic, which has made residents interested, and excited, this was the issue of wheeled bins. He was pleased that the Council had taken note of the petition that he had organised on the Lawdon Estate, which is now exempt from being forced to use wheeled bins. However, he still feels that the Council are not making the right decision on compulsory wheeled bins. If people want the bins that the Council want to supply, that is fine. This will be an advanced provision but he did not think the consultation through 'Croydon Reports' that took place between the choice of a pristine and happy looking wheeled bins and, on the other, a torn plastic bag with a decaying fish hanging out was not a real choice because some residents do have their own dustbins. We proposed to the Council that there should be a choice whether or not to take this new provision and this was amended to choice, where appropriate. The one size policy is not going to work, some people have large families and will not be able to fit their refuse into one bin and many senior citizens who may be living on their own will find it very hard to take the responsibility of taking the bin to the edge of their property. He agreed that a lot of development



pressure is taking place at the present moment and it is important that we continue to fight for our local environment.

Report Back by Geraint Davies M. P

The Chair invited Geraint Davies M.P. to report back. He began by saying that it was pleasing to return and speak on a more civilised evening after the highly charged public meeting held earlier this year. He said that the Chair had given an excellent report on the legitimate concerns about value for money, community integration and the other issues surrounding the impact of the development in The Glade. Those who did attend the public meeting will know that it was disrupted by a small number of unruly people. The British National Party have written to him to confirm that they had attended and this was correctly reported in the local papers as an attempt to stir up racial tension. Like the officers of MORA, he was disappointed that the invited representatives from the Council and the Housing Association failed to attend and pledged that he would continue to do all that was possible to improve the dialogue between the residents, the Council and the Housing Association. The Council refused to attend a future open meeting and, therefore, he agreed to act as a bridge and had obtained answers to the many questions supplied by MORA and residents. He had produced copies of the answers obtained and these were distributed at the end of the meeting. The British National Party stated that they would not attend this meeting but will continue to pursue a race-related agenda in the area. Since their letter the police have uncovered a plot to fire bomb the new estate and publicised this fact in the local press. Whilst it is important to have a debate about value for money and other associated topics, we cannot allow extremists to hijack the legitimate concerns of the community so that a law-abiding area is threatened with arson and criminality.

Planning permission had been given to the developer for the construction of 14 houses in February 2003. The properties were purchased by Presentation Housing Association for use as social housing of which 11 households will be nominated by the Council and 3 by Presentation Housing Association. There is a fear of unruly tenants but the Council has advised that tenants with arrears or a history of misbehaviour will not be considered. The tenants will be Croydon families with an immediate need for larger accommodation. Some residents argue that the money invested in buying these houses should have been used to purchase more properties in a cheaper area. The Council argues that due to the right to buy there is a particular shortage of larger family houses in Croydon and an immediate need for them from local families. The Council says these houses will not be sold through right to buy, were bought below market price and are available for immediate occupancy. He stressed that he is not a Councillor and is not involved with planning decisions but there are many questions people wanted answered and he had

ensured that answers were provided. Mr Davies said that he had produced a written report on the Glade to allow time to report back on issues important to local residents that he was influencing on their behalf.

Turning to anti-social behaviour, new powers introduced by the Government to combat anti-social behaviour came into force in February. These powers include fixed penalty notices for sixteen and seventeen years-olds, rounding up children late at night, imposing parenting orders on parents who fail to keep their children under control, dispersing intimidating gangs of youths and stopping the supply of air guns and paint sprays to youths. With more police than ever in Croydon including six additional officers in New Addington from June 2004 and the South Norwood and Waddon wards set to get additional police this year, tackling anti-social behaviour will be a top priority.

On the theme of crime, Mr. Davies expressed his disgust and regret at the killing of Steven Pillings, a Croydon resident outside a nightclub on Park Street. Ex-bouncer George Lumsden, who has eight previous convictions, was found guilty of manslaughter and given a sentence of three years and could leave prison after serving only eighteen months. He has told the Attorney General that this sentence is far too lenient and if sustained could undermine the community's confidence in the judicial process and therefore called upon him to refer the matter to High Court. In response the Attorney General has called in the case papers for review.

Mr. Davies said that people will know that he is one of five parliamentary ambassadors for the NSPCC, MPs from the range of parties, who promote child protection legislation. He presented a private members bill in the aftermath of the tragic death of Joshua Osborne, a baby from Addiscombe, who was shaken to death by his childminder Linda Bayfield who had an undisclosed history of ten previous complaints. Mr Davies' Bill called for parents to have the right to see all previous complaints against prospective child providers. After much deliberation the Government has accepted this proposal .It will be implemented by OFSTED and provides potentially life saving protection for children.

Mr. Davies said that residents may or may not be aware that one in twenty cars in Croydon and elsewhere are not insured. As a consequence, owners have to pay more to cover the costs of the accidents non-payers cause. Subsequent to consulting the industry, who hold a database of all those who have car insurance, he is pressing the Government to cross-reference this list with the DVLA list of registered car owners to identify addresses where a car is registered but no insurance exists. Those who are registered owners of cars but are not insured can then be systematically targeted to pay up or face a fine or imprisonment.'

Mr. Davies reported that he receives many letters from constituents concerned about animal welfare issues and has been active in this area. He

has met with representatives of the World Wildlife Fund to raise the profile of the organisation in Parliament and to explore ways to achieve Government action in this area. In particular, he has agreed to take the lead in pressing for changes to European legislation that would bring about the banning of endocrine and hormone disruptive chemicals in manufactured products where alternatives exist. Such chemicals cause fertility problems in both humans and animals and he is preparing a Parliamentary Bill to be put to the House in April.

Concluding, he thanked residents for their continued support and advised he may be contacted for help and advice or to raise local and national issues by writing to Geraint Davies MP, House of Commons SW1A 0AA or email GeraintDaviesMP@parliament.uk or phone [REDACTED] (10-12.30 Mon-Thur) for an appointment at the weekly surgery.



Presentation on Trading Standards

Introducing Angela Fenner, Trading Standards Officer at Croydon Council, the Chair said that some vulnerable consumers in the community have fallen victim of unscrupulous tradesmen. He was therefore pleased that Ms. Fenner had agreed to attend this evening to tell us about the

rights we have as consumers.

Ms. Fenner began by saying that Trading Standards is essentially a law enforcement agency whose aim is to ensure a fair and safe trading environment. There are two basic types of law in the United Kingdom, criminal law and civil law.

Criminal law

These types of offences are considered to be against the common good, they are crimes against the state. Speeding down the High Street is dangerous even though no individual may be hurt; it is banned to prevent injuries.

Examples of criminal law enforced by trading standards are:

The Trade Descriptions Act, which outlaws incorrect descriptions about goods and services. For example, a large quantity of counterfeit Kirov Vodka was seized recently. Not only was this not produced by Kirov, but also it had a lower alcoholic strength than claimed and some samples contained dangerously high levels of methanol, which could be lethal if consumed. A number of shops are being prosecuted.

The Consumer Protection Act covers areas such as safety of consumer goods and misleading price indications. If you bought a toy, which had dangerously sharp points on it, or if you are overcharged in the supermarket then we would prosecute under this legislation. The fines levied go into the public funds rather than to individuals.

Civil Law

This is different to criminal law as it lays down the rights that individuals have against other individuals and allows each party to claim against the other.



The Sale of Goods Act lays down the rules for buying and selling goods i.e. your rights against a trader and their rights against you.

The Distance Selling Regulations give you rights when you buy over the Internet, over the telephone and by mail order. The important thing to realise is that only the parties to the contract can make any claim. Whilst we can advise you on your rights any court action has to be taken by you.

As mentioned earlier, the Sale of Goods Act lays down the rules for buying and selling goods. Every time you buy anything, be it a tin of beans or a new car, you are making a contract with the seller. The contract does not have to be in writing. You have the right to expect goods to:

(a) Be of a satisfactory quality, this is the standard a reasonable person would think satisfactory: Appearance and finish - A Range Rover, a prestigious car, was supplied with a dirty interior. The dealer refused to give a refund because there was nothing wrong with the car. When the buyer went to court the judge held that he was partly buying the pride and prestige of owning the vehicle and could expect it to be clean. Free from minor defects, for example a television with scratch but works properly could be returned for a refund. Safety, the supply of dangerous goods may also be criminal offence. Durability, for example, a pair of shoes would not be expected to last whereas a kitchen would. Expensive goods could reasonably be expected to last longer than cheaper ones.

(b) Fit for purpose for which they were sold. The purchaser has the right to examine goods although not necessarily to use them, e.g. where hygiene may be involved. If you take the goods back shortly after purchase then you would be entitled to a refund, after you have had them for longer you may only be entitled to a partial refund, a repair or an exchange. A credit note may be offered by a retailer where you have no right to a refund but remember you do not have to accept this if you are entitled to a refund, repair or exchange.

(c) As described (on the label, in advertising material, by the trader etc.)

Second- hand Goods

If you buy a second hand car you cannot expect it to be perfect and it would be unreasonable to expect it to be as good as a new one.

The Sale and Supply of Goods to Consumers Regulations 2002 have recently come in and lay down consumers' rights over the longer term - up to six years from purchase. In the first six months the trader must prove the fault was not there at the time of purchase. First remedy is repair or replacement with a refund only given when the first two are not possible.

Guarantees offered by manufacturers are now legally binding and you are entitled to see what it will cover before you make a purchase. No rights apply if buying from private seller.

Supply of Goods & Services Act

If you pay for someone to provide a service then it has to be done with reasonable care and skill. If you put your car into a garage to have a new fan belt fitted and this is done incorrectly then you would have a claim for this as well as any other damage it may cause to your car. Furthermore, a service has to be provided within a reasonable time. If you have double-glazing installed and all the parts are ready should it take two weeks? This is probably unreasonable. If you are concerned about how long something might take then make time part of the contract. If the trader will not agree to this then go to someone else. A service must be available for a reasonable price, unless a price has been agreed. If a plumber comes to your house to fix a leaking tap and charges £500 for changing a washer then it would be unreasonable unless you agreed to pay that amount before the work was done.

The Trading Standards Officer offers advice to consumers and businesses on how to deal with these problems. You can call our advisors on 020 8407 1310. You can also find tips on how to deal with problems in the Consumer Awareness Toolkit, which is available from MORA and contains lots of useful information.

Contrary to what many people believe, most contracts have no cooling off period therefore, if you sign it you are bound by it even if you have not read the terms. There are, however, some occasions when you can cancel. You have probably heard stories about double glazing sellers, visiting people's homes and virtually refusing to leave and after five hours the owner will sign anything!

This led to legislation being introduced so that if a company phones you up and makes an appointment or just calls with no appointment then if you sign a contract you have seven days to cancel.

The trader must give a copy of the cancellation rights. It is an offence not to and the contract will also be unenforceable. Additionally, even if you have asked the salesperson to call, if you sign a credit agreement for work, say a conservatory, then you have five days to cancel. Again, the trader must give you details of your cancellation rights.

As it is becoming more popular and common to buy goods over the Internet, the phone or by mail order, regulations have been brought in to give consumers confidence in shopping this way. These govern what information must be given to consumers including the price, details of delivery and cancellation rights. However, these regulations do not currently apply to holidays or financial services so the cancellation rights do not apply to these.

If you have any problems with Internet or other distance-selling traders please let us know. If you are concerned about the amount of junk mail you receive or if you would prefer not to receive marketing phone calls or faxes then you can register with the following:

Mailing Preference Service (MPS) DMA House, 70 Margaret Street, London W1W 8SS Tel: 020 7291 3310, Fax: 020 7323 4226,

Email: mps@dma.org.uk Web: www.mpsonline.org.uk

Telephone Preference Service (TPS), DMA House, 70 Margaret Street London W1W 8SS, Tel: 020 7291 3320, Fax: 020 7323 4226,

Email: tps@dma.org.uk, Web: www.tpsonline.org.uk

Facsimile Preference Service (FPS), DMA House 70 Margaret Street London W1W 8SS, Tel: 020 7291 3330, Fax: 020 7323 4226,

Email: fps@dma.org.uk Web: www.fpsonline.org.uk

Equal liability; some services, such as flights and holidays are covered if they were purchased by credit card, this even applies where goods are bought overseas although some issuers may argue against this. The total cost must be over £100 but the liability applies even if a lesser deposit is paid this way. There have been problems reported to us where builders have knocked on a consumers door to say that there is a roof tile loose and offer to replace it only to find the chimney needs re-pointing and then finding further work to do all of which is actually unnecessary, this work, if done, is often done badly and outrageous fees are charged. Another scenario is where someone knocks and says that they have been round the corner doing a job and have tarmac left over and could do a cheap job replacing the drive. This is a fabrication and customers end up being charged more than quoted for a very bad job. There have been instances where consumers have been driven to the bank to withdraw £1,000s in cash.

Croydon Trading Standards have a pro-active team who will respond to complaints, or even suspicions, about rogue traders. We actively encourage receiving information about any trader currently operating in an area that you feel, for some reason, may be suspect. To take appropriate action the Trading Standards team need as much information as possible such as, copies of flyers, leaflets, number plates of vehicles, descriptions of those doing or supervising the work. If you wish to employ a builder ask friends and neighbours for recommendations. The Council has a Builders' Charter, which lists builders, plumbers, electricians who are able to supply references and are members of a trade association. Always get a written quotation for any work you are getting done not an estimate; a quotation is legally binding an estimate is not. Do not pay for the work until it is completed to your satisfaction especially large building work. You may be asked to pay in stages but do not pay the full amount until the work is completed to your satisfaction. Insure you get a written invoice with details of the amount paid and what work has been done.

Concluding, Ms Fenner circulated leaflets and booklets containing advice to consumers. Croydon Trading Standards can be contacted on 020 8407 1310, or you can call at the 'One Stop' at Taberner House.

Community Ward Officer

P. C. 528 Denise Allen was introduced as the new Community Ward Officer for Shirley. It was confirmed that she was active in the area dealing mainly with youths causing problems for shopkeepers in the area. She explained that residents can contact her on the office number 020 8649 1442 and urgent calls could be made to her mobile telephone [REDACTED].

Any Other Business

There was no AOB raised.

Concluding, the chair thanked all those who had attended and contributed to the meeting. He then closed the meeting.

Abandoned Vehicles



Last year more than 135,000 cars were dumped in London, costing the capitals ratepayers £10 million to remove. Abandoned vehicles are dangerous, blight the environment and encourage crime. The Association of London Boroughs and Home Office have introduced an operation called Scrap-it. The operation is a London-wide campaign to remove vehicles dumped in our streets and every local Council in London will get rid of unwanted cars for free and dispose of it safely. It is illegal to dump or abandon a vehicle and it could result in prosecution.

Car owners can also be prosecuted for keeping an unsafe vehicle on the road; so make the most of this new service. An unwanted car or van should be taken to the Croydon Car Pound in Selsdon Road or a request made for it to be collected stating the registration number and the address and position of the vehicle. Prior to being accepted for disposal or removal it is necessary to produce the vehicle registration document (log book) plus a letter signed by the registered keeper stating they want the car taken away and scrapped.

To find out more, contact Croydon Abandoned Vehicles Unit, telephone 020 8686 6413, visit the website www.alg.gov.uk/scrap-it or call the information line 020 7747 4822.

Letter to the Editor



It is not normal practice to publish letters in this newsletter; however, this one from a local resident has been included for the information it imparts. Sadly, it does little to increase the community's confidence in the

criminal justice system. Name and address supplied has been withheld from publication.



Dear Editor,

It is with regret that I am writing to you but I now feel that it is time for the silent majority to be heard. Over a month ago I was the victim of a burglary to my private residence. I actually returned to find the Offenders still in my house. Obviously shocked I managed to keep my wits about me and caught one of them.



It has been over a month since this incident and the local authority have not been in contact. I then receive a call from a constable who asked whether I would like to be involved in a new scheme. I politely said I would spare some of my time to see what this was all about. The scheme called 'Restorative Justice Programme' in my book basically benefits the criminal. Where is the justice to us law-abiding citizens? The scheme allows the criminal to come face to face with the victims, me, so they can tell me (the victim) why they did it and under what circumstances. I can then give my side of the story and then maybe agree a suitable sentence.

Has this country gone crazy?! Who exactly is the law working for? Not only was I told that because the criminal (a 23 year old female crack addict) would get a lower sentence for admitting to breaking into my house, but it would also 'look good' for her sentencing. There is nowhere in the scheme any incentive for me to get involved.

I had got over the fact that my privacy has been ruined and then get this joke scheme thrown upon me. Nowhere does it say that the £10,000 worth of damage they caused, incorporating loss of earning and endless telephone calls to insurance companies, would be given back to me. Furthermore, the criminals will get treatment, for which I as a taxpayer will have to pay.

Speaking to friends and family they all feel the same as me, if you are prepared to do crime, you should also be prepared to deal with the justice and sentence given. Where is the incentive for these criminals to stop if all they are going to get is a nice 'touchy feely', hand holding stint in a warm drug clinic, only to come out and re-offend?

Those of you out there please let me know where the justice in our society has gone. I no longer feel that the law is there protecting innocent, law abiding individuals, as myself, but for the crooks and criminals who choose to cause pain and anguish to us! No wonder we are losing control of our streets in this country. Maybe it is time for the silent majority to speak up to clean up our streets and criminals ourselves as faith in the law and judicial system is slowly but surely being lost!

Signed: an 'angry' resident.

The History of Monks Orchard



Requests for historical information and photographs of the area have been included in previous issues of this newsletter. Residents have helped in countless ways and supplied stories, memories and photographs dating back as far as the early part of the last century. These recollections have been selected and carefully assembled to compile the Book of Monks Orchard & Eden Park, which is to be published in October. The work traces the history of the area from the beginning of the eighteenth century, when its proximity to London began to draw in rich landowners. The early 1900,s saw the demise of the larger houses and the development of today's housing estates. Attractive new homes among woods, parks and playing fields offered the kind of environment where people chose to live and to create a friendly, thriving community. The book covers every aspect of local life down through the years from schooling and shopping through entertainment and sport, to work and worship. The work contains historic photographs, numbering almost 300, many of which are published for the first time.

The book of Monks Orchard & Eden Park by Ian Muir and Pat Manning is part of the award-winning Community History series published by Halsgrove. Community histories provide a richly illustrated lifeline to the past and a link for future generations to treasure. Residents can get directly involved and be able to include their own name, or that of a friend and relative in the limited subscriber edition. The edition is large format (A4), 160 page hardback book containing historic photographs, maps, drawings and other illustrations priced at £19.95. An order form can be obtained from Halsgrove Direct, Halsgrove House, Lower Moor Way, Tiverton, Devon EX16 6SS. Tel: [REDACTED] Their website is: www.halsgrove.co.uk and e-mail : sales@halsgrove.com.

PLANNING REPORT

High Trees/Orchard Avenue

Subsequent to having their appeal dismissed by the Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State, Land Investment & Development have submitted a revised planning application for the site of 2 High Trees and 79-85 Orchard Avenue. The proposal is to demolish 79-85 Orchard Way and partial demolition of 2 High Trees and erect 2 detached two storey houses, 6 two storey semi-detached houses with accommodation in roof space and 2 detached chalet bungalows all with attached or integral or detached garages: formation of vehicular accesses onto Orchard Avenue and High Trees and provision of associated parking; erection of attached garage to existing bungalow at 2 High Trees. Acting on behalf of local residents MORA will be objecting to this application.



Rubbish Collection



As you may have read in the local press, Croydon Council have cancelled the Rolling Rubbish collections for this year, as a cost saving measure. Croydon Council is really pushing recycling over the whole borough and they felt that the rolling rubbish was contrary to this.

We have been in contact with the Environmental department at Croydon Council, who has provide us with information on alternatives to the Rolling Rubbish Collection. A household can have one collection, once a year, of up to seven items. This can be arranged by contacting Croydon Council on 020 8686 4433, and asking for Residential Bulk Collection. Croydon Council will also collect other items at other times, but for a minimum charge of £20.00. Croydon also has a SWAP SHOP which is web based, where you put details of items you want to give away or swap for another items. NO MONEY MUST CHANGE HANDS. The address for the site is: <http://www.croydononline.org/Giveaway/>

Anniversary Reunion!



St John's C of E School 50th Anniversary Reunion
Saturday 19th June

St John's School, Spring Park Road



St John's School is celebrating 50 years in the current building this year. There will be a reunion for former pupils and staff in the school hall on the evening of Saturday June 19th. Exact time TBA. BBQ and drinks will be available for purchase. We hope to have a display of old school photographs. If you would like to come along and / or loan photographs for the display, please register at www1.st-johns.croydon.sch.uk/anniversary or call Helen Tucker ([REDACTED])

Bowls Open Morning



The Spring Park Men and Shirley Ladies Bowls Club will be holding a combined Open Morning at their Bowling Green Saturday 15th May from 10am to 1pm.

Those interested in participating please come along,
all will be welcome.

Our experienced coaches will be on hand to give you an insight into the game of Bowls.

You will find our green at Shirley Recreation Ground, Shirley.
The Car Park is situated in Spring Park Avenue.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS 2004/5

Chairman:	BOB AKERS Tel: [REDACTED]
Vice Chairman & Secretary:	ANNE JOHNSON Tel: [REDACTED]
Membership Secretary:	ALYCE MENHINNITT Tel: [REDACTED]
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Hon. Historian:	CHARLES HUTCHINGS Tel: [REDACTED]
Primary Care:	MARCIA NASH Tel: [REDACTED]
Area Manager:	MICHAEL NASH Tel: [REDACTED]
Area Manager:	PATRICIA TURNER Tel: [REDACTED]
Committee Member:	MARGARET DOMONEY Tel: [REDACTED]
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