



PETERBOROUGH ROAD & AREA RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

PRARA NEWSLETTER

Volume No. Two Issue No.6 April 2003

PRARA meeting at the British Legion Club, New Kings Road, 19 March 2003 at 7pm.

SOUTH PARK

Twenty-three members braved the anxiety engendered by the international situation to hear three council officers and a Met. policeman explain how they are working to try to improve conditions in and around South Park. They answered a number of members' concerns, although there were some suggestions to which they were unable to agree. The meeting was chaired by PRARA'S Coordinator, Patricia Hicks. Guests included Alison Love, Coordinator of the Peterborough Estate Neighbourhood Watch.

Three of the spokesmen came from the council's Direct Services – a very large department responsible for many council services apart from those concerned with the borough's parks. Hammersmith and Fulham has not had a separate Parks Department for a number of years.

Steve Leahy is Operations Manager. So far as parks are concerned, his part of Direct Services (DSO2) is responsible for the Parks Constabulary and for parks development in hard landscaping.

Alan Taylor in DSO3, looks after the maintenance of soft landscaping, whose work PRARA has recently commended because of improvements in pruning, manuring, replanting, re-turfing and tidying up generally in South Park.

Inspector Stan Davies, who was previously Detective Chief Inspector at Fulham Police Station until retirement, heads the Parks Constabulary. This is mainly concerned with matters inside the borough's 24 parks and includes liaison with the Met, truancy patrols and the graffiti team.

The fourth spokesman was PC Richard Sparks, nominally the Sands End Ward community policeman, but who is now embedded, to use a current term, in Hurlingham and Chelsea School, which he represented at the meeting since its head teacher, Ms Veronique Gerber, was unable to attend.

OUR MAIN CONCERNS

One of PRARA'S main concerns about South Park has been the steady destruction by vandals of the historic terracotta balustrade. Recently a letter to PRARA from Mr Andrew Davenall, the Director of Direct Services, quoted a possible £25,000 for its repair and restoration. Mr Leahy said that more recent quotes were coming in at double that figure.

He explained that the repair and restoration of damaged areas of architectural interest demanded financial resources beyond his park budget and were being transferred to the council's Environment Department,

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which was also responsible for the £84,000 new garden recently designed by Groundwork West London. The council was currently looking for alternative funding for the terracotta restoration but there was no time table yet.

Mr Leahy added that a 'best value' procedure for various council works could be expected in a year or two's time and would include consultation with residents. It would examine issues and recommend the most cost-effective and best way of tackling them.

PRARA's other main concern – linked with what was happening to the terracotta – was vandalism generally in the park. Use of CCTV to identify individual culprits had been suggested. So was briefly shutting the Peterborough Road gate into the park at school going-home time to deter children who might have more than just admiring the flowers on their minds. The other four gates would remain open. However, the meeting heard that shutting one gate was not a good idea. PC Sparks, who has been working with Hurlingham & Chelsea School for the past year, explained the problems faced by children in an over-crowded school (1000 pupils on a site for 600), whose pent-up energies exploded outside the school gates. Both he and Inspector Davies thought closure would irritate the children, leading to rumbles outside, and transferring any trouble to the surrounding streets. Moreover the park walls were not high and could easily be climbed.

Inspector Davies added that most vandalism took place later in the evening, after the school children had gone home – a point made by PC Sparks – and often in low light, which reduced the effectiveness of CCTV cameras, although he did not rule out the use of the council's mobile CCTV cameras in the future – another of PRARA's suggestions. Here a point had been made earlier by Patricia Hicks that youths from outside the borough could be vandals. For example a youth recently arrested in Daisy Lane in possession of a stolen parks' quad bike, which he had driven into a resident's car, had a criminal record and came from Battersea.

OTHER CONCERNS

PRARA members asked for information on the following topics:

- Cheaper alternatives to restoration of terracotta, to release funds for other park projects
- Concerns about car parking in the park, and damage to grass verges by park vehicles
- Bad condition of tennis courts
- Repair of infant play area
- Employment of a park keeper
- Pigeons
- Deterioration of park buildings. Left empty they attract vandals
- Park crime statistics
- Putting barbed wire on park walls to deter vandals
- Lack of visible policing in South Park

Alan Taylor explained that the terracotta was a listed material and so there was no alternative to using cheaper materials for restoration. Park keepers had been replaced by the Parks Constabulary, who were more cost effective. He would investigate the pigeon problem, caused by a resident feeding the birds, but there was little he could do.

Steve Leahy would look into parking by footballers on certain days inside the Woolneigh Street entrance, and also the damage to verges caused by maintenance vehicles. Perhaps some widening of tarmac paths would help. He accepted that the tennis courts were in bad repair and would discuss this at the next review, as well as repair and maintenance to the infants' play area. The Environment

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Department was responsible for the buildings in the park and this would also come under review. Putting barbed wire on top of walls was not possible. The visual impact would be prison-like and the park was in a conservation area. PC Sparks added that a youth worker was looking at buildings directly inside the Peterborough Road Gate as a possible youth club.

Inspector Davies said that there was very little actual crime inside the park. What there was, was mostly mobile phone theft and that was tiny. There was no reported pedophile activity in the park. He agreed that Parks police were not always a visible presence, because they were short staffed. Personally, he favoured foot patrols and getting to know residents, but he urged everyone to contact his police team if they had concerns.

Daisy Lane residents were concerned by noise and unruly behavior of the young people at the Castle Club. It was suggested they contact the police when the problem arose, and then a solution would be discussed.

In response to a question regarding the employment of Community Support Police who are highly visible in Central London, PC Sparks said Fulham had one, and will consider getting more, but it was very costly.

AGM NEWS

PRARA hopes to hold its first AGM in late May but is keeping an eye on the international situation, which is tending to distract us all from our peacetime affairs.

Will members please think who they would like to see as Standing Committee officers, and, if they wish to nominate persons for the various responsibilities – which must be done in advance of the AGM - would they remember that nominees must be existing members of PRARA, willing to stand, and that proposers and seconders must also be existing members of the Association. However Patricia Hicks would like to give early notice that she is standing down as Coordinator this year.

We hope to firm up AGM details in our next Newsletter.

1 April 2003

Distribution list for PRARA Newsletter No 6 April 2003

Cllr. Nick Botterill (Con. Parsons Green & Walham)
Cllr Brendan Bird (Lab. Sands End)
PC Chris Amey (Community Policeman Parsons Green & Walham)
PC Richard Sparks (Community Policeman Sands End)
Mrs Lesley Schwartz (Chair, ARISE)
Alison Love (Peterborough Estate NWatch)
Lee Hayhurst (News Editor Fulham Gazette)
Niel Redpath (Chairman Fulham Society)
Steve Leahy (DSO2)
Alan Taylor (DSO3)
Insp. Stan Davies (Head of Parks Constabulary)
Andrew Davenall (Director Direct Services)
Tony Louki (Councillors Services, advisor to Cllr Michael Cartwright, Deputy Director Environment)

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