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179 WINTER
2007

THE NEWSLETTER

CIRCULATION
3,800

DORRIDGE & DISTRICT RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

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MASSIVE..

.....response to our petition. Nearly 800 residents returned the 'Petition for Protection' that went out in the last newsletter. We cannot recall a greater number for any previous initiative and your interest has sent a very strong message to the Council that residents are determined not to give up on the struggle to protect our lovely area from those who would happily despoil it. DDRA's own message to the Council was that here was a petition which required people to deliver their own individual response, not simply sign something in the street, and that it was restricted to householders in the area defined by our newsletter delivery. A small group of committee members and other residents witnessed the presentation of the petition to the Council on October 9 and we are pleased to report that we have already been invited to meet SMBC's Acting Chief Executive on December 3, together with the Strategic Director for Community and Economic Development and our own Councillor Ian Courts, who is the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Regeneration. To be offered access to such high level officers is clear evidence of the impact of the petition and our thanks go to all of you who gave your support. We will report on the meeting in the February newsletter.

And the unexpected spin-off was...

.....a massive rise in our membership. The petition seems to have stirred a lot of people

who had not paid before, or whose membership had lapsed. The end result was that with 980+ we very nearly reached the magic 1,000 we have been chasing for a couple of years. Well that's what we thought, but in fact we may have actually exceeded the 1,000 without knowing as not all of the Membership Subscription slips returned are filled in to show how much is for subscriptions and how much for a donation. Thus a cheque for £5 without explanation might be for one person with a £4 donation, two with a £3 gift and so on... Nevertheless we have still reached our highest RECORDED membership figure ever and this is important, because we are now spending more money than ever before. More members = more cash = more goodies. Various items later in this newsletter report on recent improvements, and all of these have bent our finances. And of course you know what's coming next don't you? Our subscription year runs from January to December and we already have the 2008 membership cards printed and waiting to go, so any payments received from now on will be counted as membership for 2008. Only £1 per head, and the slip is, as ever, at the bottom of the back page of this newsletter. And we really would be grateful if you could let us know how many members are included.

Christmas is a-coming.....

.....and you may remember dire warnings that darkness would fall upon the land as the Council removed its financial support for Christmas lights



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across the borough. However we at DDRA were quick to point out that most of the lights in Dorridge were provided by local donations from residents, businesses, and DDRA funds. The answer was that we could have the lights if we paid for the installation and the electricity costs and so, for a little over £500, Dorridge will light up on Monday December 3. That will be the light baskets on Station Approach, the looms around the shops in the square and by the railway bridge, and the tree.

And speaking of trees.....

.....there was an excellent response to the request in the last newsletter for volunteer tree wardens and a group of six has met twice to establish a way forward. The group will work closely with the Solihull Tree Wardens Group, which also has representatives in Knowle and Shirley, and will concentrate on

- Gathering information on trees in the area and providing warnings of threats, disease, decay and vandalism.
- Reviewing Planning Applications and working closely with the Council where local housing developments are likely to have a particular impact on trees.
- Working in the community and with schools to raise awareness of the importance of trees to the environment.

The group is also liaising closely with DDRA's Planning Secretary, and the current focus is on developments in Bentley Heath and the Dorridge Triangle where developers are planning infill housing that could impact on a number of valuable trees. Other activities are the production of a register of valuable and protected trees and the future of the copse of trees (formerly known as The Triangle) at the junction of Avenue Road and Dorridge Road. The copse is an important local feature but for some time now its appearance has deteriorated due to lack of maintenance, so it will be a very useful exercise if the group undertakes a proper assessment of it with

a view to improving its health while at the same time enhancing its appearance.

Anyone who has any concerns about threats to trees in the area, would like further information, or wants to take an active role in the group should contact : Bryan Chapman on 01564 77 0995, Helen Fairlie on 01564 23 0068, or Dave Tomkins on 01564 73 2258.

This is an important addition to the list of environmental protection strategies we possess and we are grateful to the six volunteers for their enthusiastic beginning to this important task. While the group will work independently of the DDRA committee we will nevertheless help them with advice as required and financial support as appropriate.

Think before you park.

That is the message being sent out by the Council now that it has taken over the responsibility for enforcing parking restrictions across the borough. Twenty one specially trained Parking Attendants took up their duties on October 1st and will work across the borough to enforce existing regulations; there will be no new restrictions introduced. Although their visits to different areas will be random (to avoid motorists picking up predictable patterns of attendance) it is also possible that they will respond to reports of identified 'hotspots'. And we are sure we can come up with one or two of those around here!

FACTS –

- The Attendants will have the power to issue Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) to drivers who contravene parking restrictions.
- They will NOT have targets for the number of PCNs they issue
- A PCN will cost the driver £60 – reduced to £30 if paid within 14 days
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- Income from PCNs will pay for the service, with any surplus going towards projects to improve transport and road safety

It is hoped that the new arrangements will help to reduce indiscriminate and inconsiderate parking, cut down on the abuse of disabled parking spaces, improve safety around schools and improve access for the emergency services. And finally, although parking infringements are no longer an issue for the police, obstruction will be, so PC Simon Harrison will still be on the lookout for vehicles causing an obstruction and he retains the power to issue a ticket.

Some you win, some you don't.

We have been quite busy during the summer trying to implement various improvement plans we mentioned in earlier newsletters. It took a degree of pestering of the powers to get the DDRA tubs onto the station and we were disappointed that they languished so long in their little compound while members struggled to get permission to install them. But they are there now and we hope station users agree that they are a distinct improvement on the rotting wooden tubs they have replaced. Many thanks to our band of volunteer helpers and to gardener Mick Watson. Thanks go also to two residents – too modest to be named - for their efforts on the ugly little patch between HSBC Bank and the railway bridge. This has long been another eyesore but with the offer to continue monitoring and maintaining the patch it is another problem solved.

And the benches on Avenue Road and Dorridge Road. Again it took longer than we had hoped to get them there and now it is probably too cold to sit on them. However we have had some kind comments from residents who tried them out before the weather changed, so next summer....!! The other benches on Station Approach have become very dirty and the Council has agreed to paint them shortly and then carry out a full refurbish next year.

But we continue to fail in Forest Court. We did have an encouraging reply when we wrote to the managing

agents back in July and had hoped that it would be followed up with an offer to meet us to discuss the future. Nothing. So now we will contact them again and ask for a meeting. We would also like to hear from the freeholders, who are aware of our concerns but have not responded. We did get a bit excited when the old Spar unit was cleaned up, but the excitement waned with the news that the expiring lease required that the premises be restored to the original state on expiry. So far we have no word of anyone moving in. But we won't give up. The Working Party is due to meet again shortly and we will try a concerted approach to Dorridge Estates (freeholders) Portfolio Investments (leaseholders) and Collingwood Rigby (managing agents). What we would really like is to get all three to sit down together with us to hear our concerns at first hand.

New times for Police Surgeries

Following comments that many residents are not able to get to the Police Surgery on a Tuesday morning PC Sharon Williams has agreed to a three month trial in the New Year for evening slots. Sharon will be outside The Dorridge Deli in Forest Court at the following times :

- Thursday January 10 5.00-7.00pm
- Thursday February 14 5.00-7.00pm
- Thursday March 13 5.00-7.00pm

And wouldn't you just know it? On the day of our discussion, and Sharon's agreement to the trial, she had such a flood of callers that she had to stay on for an extra hour!

Anyone for Probus?

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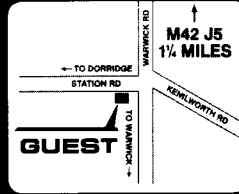
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Locally, it is a group of retired and semi-retired professional and businessmen who meet on the first Tuesday of the month to enjoy a good lunch with pleasant company, followed by a talk from acknowledged speakers.

The group meets at The Forest Hotel in Dorridge around noon and also arranges concert and theatres trips, with an optional meal beforehand, which have proved popular with members and their partners. The club is limited to 55 members but there are a few vacancies at the moment. You can be assured of a warm welcome, and if you would like more information contact the Secretary on 01564 77 8612 or visit the club at www.probus-dorridge.co.uk

It's the all singing, all dancing.....

.....Children's Theatre School, now open in Dorridge. Solihull Theatretrain is a performing arts school for 6-18 year olds and meets every Saturday morning, 10.00am-1.00pm at Dorridge Methodist Church (school term times only). There are three age groups, 6-9, 10-12 and 13-18, and each child takes part in an hour of singing, dance and drama. It is open to all regardless of ability, as enthusiasm, commitment and having fun are the priorities. All pupils take part in a show, either locally or in a West End theatre.

You can find out more from Sara Shepherd on 01675 44 3540, or at solihull@theatretrain.co.uk.

Well done Tablers.

The bold experiment to change Dorridge Day to Sunday certainly paid off. We don't have figures but we had more visitors to the DDRA gazebo than we have ever had, and our general feeling was that the event attracted a much larger crowd than previous years. All in all a great success, and a credit to all the hard workers at Knowle and Dorridge Round Table who made it happen.

Advance Notice

The 47th DDRA AGM will be on Thursday 6th March 2008 at 7.30pm at Bentley Heath Community Hall.

And finally....

.....as we draw closer to Christmas and the end of another year we would like to thank all those who give us so much help and support – the residents who look after the station and garden areas, the volunteers who deliver the newsletter, our advertisers, our councillors, Ken Meeson, Andy Mackiewicz and Ian Courts, our Neighbourhood Coordinator at the Council, Kerry Mountjoy, and our Neighbourhood Police Team, led by Sergeant Ann Strachan. So to all of them, and to all of you :

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