

3 April 2007 – Press release for immediate use

Police chief attends Busbridge Community Forum

West Surrey's Chief Superintendent of Police, Kevin Deanus paid a surprise visit to Busbridge Community Forum on 28 March. He had asked to observe proceedings and was welcomed as a guest by more than 70 residents.

Mr Deanus heard of concerns about continuing speeding offences on the roads of the Forum's area. The introduction of a traffic calming chicane and interactive speed signs on the most dangerous stretch have been only partially successful. Speakers thought that illegal parking on Brighton Road had caused traffic delays and diverted busy drivers onto local residential streets. The chicane was believed by some to present a challenge to irresponsible motorists.

Neighbourhood specialist police officer, Peter Harris was asked to give priority to speeding offences in the area during the coming spring and summer periods, along with possible problems of youth disorder in the Holloway Hill Ground.

Councillor John Robini, who holds the highways portfolio in the Waverley authority, briefed the meeting about new arrangements for local authority enforcement of parking restrictions. He confirmed that Waverley would be taking a soft approach to enforcement in the early days of the changeover, issuing warning notices rather than penalties, but said that stricter enforcement would follow shortly when persistent illegal parkers had had time to get used to the new regime. New enforcement staff will concentrate first on Godalming High Street then work their way out into the surrounding area. Surrey County Council are presently refreshing restriction markings all over the Borough.

Forum Chairman Mike Harrison expressed concern that the issue of parking displacement had not been properly addressed and that parkers, especially commuters from outside the Forum's area, would move to unrestricted roads further obstructing street- and drain-cleaning. Councillor Robini replied that the only long term solution appeared to be some form of residents' parking scheme but he noted that this had been offered by Surrey County Council in the past and rejected by residents. The Forum will revisit this subject for proper discussion in the near future.

Amongst a number of other items, the meeting heard of an experiment conducted in response to complaints that Godalming College's 1,500 students were responsible for the large amount of unsightly litter on Holloway Hill and Tuesley Lane. Volunteers cleared the pavement and banks on the West side between Croft Road and the College – the part of the student's route from the station which falls in the Forum's area. They collected four large bags of litter, some of it clearly over a decade old. Exactly a month later the exercise was repeated and produced less than a third of a bag. Forum Chairman Mike Harrison, who took part in the clearance told the meeting, "It's clear the students are not as bad as they've been painted. But we did discover a need for additional bins on this route and are working with Waverley Borough Council to find sites. Sadly, we had no chance of clearing the East side of the hill because of danger from traffic – it has no pavement – and a high retaining wall makes it impossible for the street cleaning machine to do the work. We're pressing Waverley to find a solution."

After the meeting, Mr Harrison told Surrey Advertiser/Godalming Times, "This was another packed, busy, sometimes strident two hour session. The Forum really covers the waterfront on community issues, from police matters and local authority business, to community events and local news. It is taken very seriously by the authorities. I'm more than ever convinced that, if we continue to pull together, we can make a difference to life in Busbridge."

The next meeting of the Forum will be on Tuesday 26 June.

ENDS

Notes to editors

Other items on the Forum's agenda were:

- Clearance of waste materials around the groundsman's building on the Holloway Hill Ground.
- Reporting pot holes in local roads.
- Street cleaning.
- Royal Mail security.
- Collaboration with the Probation Service.
- Summer social event – the BUZZ – to be held on 7 July 2007.
- Obstruction caused by parking on pavements.
- Plans for an after-school drop-in centre.

Busbridge Community Forum was founded in October 2006. It serves an area in the residential streets to the south of the town of Godalming, covering the districts of Busbridge, Holloway Hill, Crownpits and Bargate Wood. Residents can exchange information and express their views to the authorities through the forum.

Forum meetings are held approximately four times a year and there is also a lively exchange of views by e-mail. Residents can sign up for an e-mail list.

The forum is independent and non-political. It does not serve sectional interests or seek to usurp the function of other organisations within the area. Its function is to provide a focus for inclusive community action and help residents communicate their views to the authorities, including councils, the police, Royal Mail, road authorities and licensees in the area.

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