

18 January 2007 – Press release for immediate use by Surrey Advertiser

Busbridge Community Forum endorsed by residents

Busbridge Community Forum held its first public meeting on Wednesday 17 January when a packed room, estimated at around 60 residents of the GU7 1 postcode area, unanimously endorsed the no-nonsense, non-political, independent stance advocated by Forum chairman Mike Harrison.

Meeting at the Holloway Hill Ground clubhouse, residents of Busbridge, Crownpits, Holloway Hill and Bargate Wood discussed a wide range of issues from priorities for police work to road problems, littering and a summer social event.

During a discussion of the growing problem of litter on local streets, especially Holloway Hill, Neighbourhood Specialist Police Officer Peter Harris suggested that the Probation Service could arrange for people serving community service orders to help clear it up. In spite of the success of this scheme in other work this seemingly simple solution had previously been overlooked in the Forum's area and the idea met with strong approval.

In setting priorities for police work the meeting asked that efforts be concentrated during the coming few months on the problem of speeding and vehicle noise in the area. In particular there were demands for a mobile interactive speeding sign – which advises motorists of the limit if they exceed it – to be moved around the most vulnerable streets. PC Harris also agreed to look into the possibility of groups of local residents being trained to use laser speed guns.

Two local councillors, Peter Martin and Chris Slyfield, who live in the area were questioned about new arrangements for enforcing parking restrictions. Councillor Martin explained that the present slackness in enforcement is partly a consequence of the shift of responsibility from the police to the local authority. The changeover should be completed by May and he agreed to report to a later meeting about progress.

Many residents pointed out the problems caused by inadequate street cleaning, including blocked drains and the consequent flooding, slippery road surfaces and obscured parking restriction markings. Others had concerns about damaged road surfaces. Residents were urged to take up every instance of inadequate road work with Surrey County Council's contact centre by phoning 08456-009009. PC Harris said that it is important to be very precise about the location of the problem, giving both the address and the numbers on nearby lampposts. Chairman Harrison urged the meeting to 'saturate the authorities with reports' and both the councillors agreed that this approach is most likely to get results.

Councillor Slyfield pointed out that the so-called public time at both Waverley and Surrey council meetings is rarely used. "There is a huge opportunity to get heard at these meetings which is being wasted", he said.

After the meeting chairman Mike Harrison told The Surrey Advertiser, "Considering this was a damp winter evening, the turnout was extraordinary. I think we have demonstrated beyond question that there is a real need for a community body in Busbridge. And there was very little moaning – most speakers truly wanted to find solutions to difficulties and were prepared to pitch in and help if necessary. It really seems that the time has come for some constructive, community led discussion and action".

A second meeting of Busbridge Community Forum was set for Wednesday 28 March 2007 at 7 for 7.30 PM in the Holloway Hill Ground clubhouse.

Other features of the meeting included the launch of the Forum's in-development web site, www.busbridge.net, and a presentation by Paul Napthine of Surrey Community Action (SCA) in which he suggested that the Forum considers the possibility of working up a Community Plan for the area. He said that SCA could provide help if the Forum requests it and possibly some funding.

Clare Haddad, who was principal organiser of last year's successful BUZZ event last summer, requested help with an extended event this year, currently pencilled for Saturday 30 June at the Holloway Hill Ground.

She also agreed, after discussion of problems encountered with rogue traders operating in the area, to distribute 2,000 copies of Home Office advice leaflets with the next edition of the Busbridge Parish Church magazine, The Bridge.

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Notes to editors

Busbridge Community Forum was founded in October 2006.

It serves an area in the residential streets to the south of the town of Godalming, Surrey, UK. It consists of almost all of the postcode area GU7 1..

Residents of the districts of Busbridge, Holloway Hill, Crownpits and Bargate Wood can exchange information and express their views to the authorities through the forum.

Forum meetings are held approximately four times a year but 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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