

Manor Park and Hempstead Fields Residents' Association



QUESTION TIME 23rd January 2014

Notes of the Questions and Responses

The Chair – Paul Sparks

The Panel - Amy Mason, Sergeant Sussex Police

Nicola Johnson, PCSO Sussex Police

Brian Banks, Team Manager Road Safety, East Sussex County Council

Nick Oliver-Taylor, Station Manager, East Sussex Fire and Rescue (ESFR)

Jeremy Leach, Principal Policy Adviser, Wealden District Council

1 ROADS and ROAD SAFETY

School Traffic Parking at the Junction of Birch Close

Resident - Can anything be done about the poor parking that occurs at school pick up times?

Police – bad parking it is a priority for police but difficult because of the two schools and the leisure centre nearby so a lot of cars generated. Enforcement can be looked at and parking tickets have been given recently for parking at the junctions as well as vehicles towed away, not just for double yellow and zigzags. Enforcement is not the answer as can only deal with it when an officer is there. We are looking for the school to assist and taking responsibility by sending messages out to parents.

Resident - lower speed limit? Cars are going too fast for the conditions not actually speeding so changing the speed limit is not down to the police and would be unlikely to get passed as no car accidents where

ESFRS – this is an issue across the county, have tried to educate but it is a short shelf life message.

Resident – there are very few double yellow lines on the whole estate and they would be a visible deterrent.

Need for a pedestrian crossing in Browns Lane

A resident that couldn't attend submitted a question asking which the Chairman read out –

if a crossing of some kind can be installed on Browns Lane, halfway down, e.g. by Streele View, for the people that live on roads & paths off of Nevill Road, that road is scary, I take so much care with my children crossing, but the cars just arrive at speed, we have been caught out so many times, a lot of families cross this road every single day, what also scares me is the children that are just old enough to have the independence to walk to school on their own ... they do this road without their parents, I am shocked there has not been a fatal accident.

It is an important route to get to school; it is safer to jump in our cars!! But that is not a green option anyway! Yes there is the underpass by Tesco, but that is a long trek up, to then cross & come back down again, when dragging non-school siblings - that is totally impractical.

ESCC - zebra crossing costs £15-25,000 to install and a puffin crossing £75-80k. If there is a request it is looked at and assessed and if successful will get progressed. Can look at this suggestion but not hopeful as other locations, even where there are identified crash sites, haven't been successful.

The other way is to find funding from local developers if there are housing developments being built.

Chair - What is the criteria for a school crossing patrol as this would be good location to have one.

ESCC - can have one if they meet the criteria (national guidelines about numbers of cars and numbers of people crossing). ESCC fund around 30 to 40 or if don't meet the criteria then you can have your own but have to pay for them, can be funded locally by school or community. Cost £3-4k per year, less if a volunteer can be found. He offered to put this location on the ESCC assessment list.

Resident - What about speed humps in Browns Lane?

ESCC - again the road has to be assessed and meet criteria before it will be funded by ESCC. Speed humps are a deterrent but are not always appreciated by everybody. Traffic calming schemes cost £100k upwards.

Police - vehicle counts have been done - hardly any speeding during those surveys.

'Operation Crackdown' enables people to report number plates to police who are breaching road traffic laws. And when there are two or more reports Police speak to driver and the team will contact you back to provide feedback.

Resident – will ESCC consider match funding from the community?

ESCC - at the moment have to provide 100% of the funding for it to be paid for.

ESCC is considering introducing a scheme for matched funding for community priorities – this is out for consultation at present with town and parish councils

Resident - walking children to school (Walking Bus) - what happened about that?

ESCC - can advise schools on introducing these schemes etc but no funding available.

Chair – updated the meeting with the Association’s work on this. The Association is working with Manor Primary on this as they want to have a walking bus but the footpaths across Manor Park are in such bad repair that from a safety point of view they couldn't proceed with it as they are so dangerous. The Association is trying to resolve the problems of the footpaths but the big issue is finding the funding.

Police – the community payback team and the ‘quality street’ initiatives could help with footpath clearing etc.

Wealden - has used the community payback team and they were very good. Payback team can be accessed through police team and the Safer Wealden Partnership’s Joint Action Group.

Killed and Seriously Injured (KSI) in Road Traffic Accidents – what’s being done?

Chair - what are you all doing about the numbers of people killed or injured on our roads?

ESCC - Wealden does have a problem when looking at numbers of KSI’s but if you look at the length of roads in Wealden then not such a problem. Crashes are below national average. Think KSI is high because Sussex police using a better recording system than others so a broken finger is recorded as seriously injured whereas other police forces use discretion. We do have issues because of the high number of rural roads and the very poor road network so likely to have more crashes.

Wealden - explained about his report findings. Young people at high risk as are middle aged males on motorbikes and elderly. Safer Wealden Partnership is producing speeding posters aimed at the young who think they are good drivers and no fear of accidents. However they do fear losing their licence. Young drivers are too fast and lack experience.

The Fatal Four: Speeding
 Drink and/or drugs
 No seat belt
 Using mobile phone

ESFR – One KSI is one too many.

Fire Service role is to train and educate young (and mature) drivers, specifically in the colleges and the parishes. They are looking at what causes accidents – ‘don't become a KSI’ - it is all about changing behaviour.

Wealden - working in partnership with others is how public agencies can now achieve so much more.

Untaxed Vehicles

Chair – read a question from the audience: *What can be done about an untaxed vehicle left in a cul de sac?*

Police - report it to neighbourhood policing team or to DVLA website – need to check whether it is a private road - can then arrange for it to be towed away by DVLA.

Pot Holes

Resident – what is being done about the pot holes on the estate e.g. Browns Lane?

ESCC - pot holes generally are the biggest bane of his department's life. Massive undertaking to take forward, they are having to prioritise but residential estates are not as high as a priority as A and B roads. Best to go onto ESCC website and report them as this goes straight through to the highways system and maintenance programme.

Resident - why don't they repair holes that are next to each other?

ESCC - have to meet criteria and observe Govt. guidelines.

Adoption of Roads and Footpaths

Resident - are all the roads adopted?

Chair - all our roads are adopted but the footpaths aren't. ESCC will only adopt them if they are brought up to an adoptable standard and to do this would have to get all households in that section to pay their share which is almost impossible to achieve. It is one of the main aims of the Residents Association and we are very keen to try and find a way forward. Being realistic this will not be easy

2 FIRE SAFETY

Resident – do the Fire Service still undertake home safety checks?

ESFRS - yes we still do this and would love to visit every home - aim to visit 70% of vulnerable households. Look at lifestyle in home not just need for providing a free smoke alarm. Contact the local fire station to request a visit.

3 DOGS

Dog fouling - how is this dealt with?

Wealden - up until 1st Jan there were byelaws which were difficult to enforce so have now introduced a Dog Control Order for the whole of Wealden (but not Ashdown Forest or South Down National Park). With the new order the punishment is now through a fixed penalty notice (£75). We use our Street Scene Officers to enforce and this and the police PCSOs can also issue a notice on the Council's behalf (they weren't able to do this before).

Enforcement is good as a threat but clearly you do need to be there to see it happen. So WDC is also bringing in a responsible dog owner campaign, working with the parishes.

There will be publicity in the local papers and there will be notices on lampposts, we are working with the parishes to identify hotspots. £75 on the spot fine if the owner doesn't bag and bin it.

Only embarrassment will change behaviour – we should all challenge irresponsible dog owners.

4 PUBLIC ORDER

Noisy Youngsters

Resident - youngsters coming down Hempstead lane after chucking out time at the Broadway causing a lot of noise etc., what can be done?

Police - report to police at the time but little that can be done about talking loudly but do call it in. May not be an offence but Police have started filming these people, drunks etc, and then return to them the next day and show them the videos of their behaviour.

Also report issues to 'Operation Blitz' this is a Police van that visits hot spots in north and south Wealden alternate weeks. Information about this can be found via community messaging service. Can sign up to this service on the Sussex Police website.

Wealden – 'Operation Blitz' is excellent – the Safer Wealden Partnership fund it – he had used them himself and they were very good.

Groups of Youths Outside Tesco Express

Chair read a question about disturbance caused by young people outside Tesco express – what can be done?

Police – are not aware of any major problems here. Not necessarily causing a disturbance - more intimidating than causing a problem.

Residents should use Operation Blitz when appropriate - Tesco have a direct number to Operation Blitz if there are issues. If there are problems do report it and don't assume others have done so.

There are two numbers 101 and 999 (latter is only for an emergency - if an offender is there now committing a crime or imminent risk of injury).

101 delays in answering are being addressed and the force has now employed a lot of contact centre staff to answer the phones.

Wealden – advised that the Police and Crime Commissioner has a pot of money designed for use by associations such as ours.

Police – demonstrated two garage and shed alarms. They said that people store high value stuff in sheds and don't often record the serial numbers on them so easy to sell on.

The shed and garage alarms cost £3-4 / £15-20. Suggested maybe the Association could buy in bulk for members.

Noisy Open Air Events

Resident – The Horse Rescue farm allowed a rave in the summer and it went on all night. I rang the horse rescue place and the police who referred me to environmental health - no officer available so told to ring back in the morning. Then told if I want to make a complaint it would come up in search if I sold house!

Wealden – to avoid the search issue might like to make sure your Town Councillor knows and ask him to report it to WDC. There is a new Bill going through Parliament at present to give more powers to the Police and local authorities to control such events.

Closure of Police Station

Resident – is the Uckfield police station being closed?

Police - looking to close the actual building but not remove the 24/7 response service we enjoy at present, we will still have neighbourhood teams which will be relocated somewhere else in Uckfield.

The Chair thanked the panel and all those attending and the meeting closed at 9.35pm