

## Willesborough Community Forum

Open Meeting – 12<sup>th</sup> November 2014 7.30pm

Willesborough Baptist Church – Hythe Road



About 50 people attended the Open Meeting, which was preceded by a static display of the Forum's latest news and an opportunity to talk to members of the WCF Steering Group and local ABC Councillors Bob Davidson and Andrew Mortimer.

### **1. PCSO Report – Presented by PCSO Graham Maxlow**

Graham advised that statistics collated over the last 12 months in the Aylesford Green area show a 50% drop in local crimes including household burglaries, criminal damage and shoplifting.

In the North Willesborough area during the last three months there have been 6 burglaries which again sees a decrease in figures from the previous quarter.

The Police are concerned that there has been a recent increase in the amount of bicycle thefts in the Willesborough area, these have mainly taken place from communal areas such as schools, retail areas and communal areas. Graham advised that the Police offer a marking facility which is free service, registering and marking bicycles which reduces the chance of your bicycle being stolen. If you are interested in this service, please contact PC Aimee Thatcher at the following email address

[aimee.thatcher@kent.pnn.police.uk](mailto:aimee.thatcher@kent.pnn.police.uk)

### **2. Universal Credit – Presented by Jayne Faulkner**

Jayne presented information regarding the reforms currently being made by the Department of Work and Pensions with regard to the benefit system. The current system including Job Seekers allowance, Income Support, Working Tax Credit, Housing Benefit and Child Tax credit is being amalgamated and will become one benefit, Universal credit. This system has been rolled out in the North of the country and plans are to introduce it in parts of Kent from February 2015.

Full details of the changes are available on the Department for Work and Pensions website [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions). Jayne Faulkner can also be contacted directly at [jayne.faulkner1@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:jayne.faulkner1@dwp.gsi.gov.uk) to answer any questions you may have regarding the new scheme.

### **3. Community Council Campaign Update – Presented by Ian Stevenson**

Ian advised that the petition in support of the Community Council, had been presented to Valma Paige, Head of Electoral Services at Ashford Borough Council on the 6<sup>th</sup> of October. In total 832 signatures were collected in support of the programme and Ashford BC now have a year to consider and respond to the petition. This will hopefully result in a referendum for North Willesborough.

### **4. Speedwatch**

The Community Council Team are continuing their speedwatch campaign around Willesborough. The areas that have previously been targeted will alter slightly in the forthcoming months, the Hunter Road site will hopefully move to outside the UpMarket Centre and a new site will be situated in The Street.

Trials undertaken in Hunter Avenue resulted in two out of 62 cars registering higher than the speed limit.

Another additional site will be manned opposite the Ashford Nursing Home to check speed limits of vehicles exiting junction 10 entering Church Road.

The site in Bentley Road will be revisited.

The purpose of speedwatch is to raise Social Awareness of the risks of speeding in the Willesborough area. Initially number plates are recorded and repeated offenders will receive a letter from the team with a follow up visit from the local Police, it is hoped that this will act as a sufficient deterrent and will result in safer driving speeds in the area.

Since Speedwatch began collecting data in August 2014, figures show that 95% of drivers in the local area, keep to safe speeds. In total of the 3526 checked, 66 were recorded as driving above the speed limit for the area.

Accident statistics for the last 3 years will be presented at the next Open Meeting.

## **5. Planning Developments**

A Junction 10a community working group has been established and are working in partnership with Ashford Borough Council and the Highways Agency to improve the appearance and upkeep of the junction.

The application for Sevington is being processed and is now closed for comments. To date over 90 objections have been received. Details are available on the Ashford Borough Council Planning website.

Planning for Highmead House has been reapplied for but the plans are very unclear. Willesborough Community Forum have put their comments forward and this is now in the hands of the planning committee. A planning meeting will be held on November 19<sup>th</sup> at 7pm.

Plans for new housing in the Blackwall Road area are currently being processed. Initially the proposal was for 42 houses, this has subsequently been reduced to 35 and will consist of 2,3 and 4 bedroomed houses.

## **6. Councillor Reports – Andrew Mortimer & Bob Davidson**

The junction 10a committee has been formed and is designed to minimise the problems that may arise while the new junction is being built. It is hoped that they can work together with all departments “to support and protect residents” while the work is underway.

It is planned that construction of the Country Park at Conningbrook Lake will begin within the next month and it is hoped that the park will be ready by Spring 2015.

Plans are in hand to improve the safety and flow of traffic at the S-bend on Kennington Road as this is a notoriously problematic area both for local residents and motorists. The bicycle lane will be removed and reformed to run alongside Givaudan straightening the road. Kent County Council are yet to confirm a start date for this work.

Plans to construct further housing in the area will be included in the next stage of the Council’s development plans and will include Abbey Way and Willesborough Lees Park.

Initial results from recent market research has shown that requirements include: Affordable housing, clean streets, activities for young people, parks and open spaces.

Recycling: Since the introduction of the recycling scheme, Ashford has gone from being considered one of the worst areas in the country for recycling to being in the top 10%. This is saving the Council over ½ million

pounds every year which will result in Council tax remaining at the current level. Well done to all of the residents for embracing the new system.

In January 2016 the EU Commission will change the recycling scheme to include separate containers for paper, tins and glass. Ashford Borough Council are working alongside Biffa to ensure that recyclable waste can continue to be sorted at their depots rather than by residents.

Residents at the meeting raised concerns about the cleanliness of footpaths especially at this time of year as wet leaves create a risk of accidents. Residents also requested that the street cleaners visit after the refuse collection service rather than before as is currently happening.

Resources are being put in place to tidy up the area that was Ash Forest.

The Councillors asked residents to make them aware if there are any particular areas i.e.: footpaths that are in urgent need of attention.

Councillors advised that if residents are aware of any street lights not working, they can make a note of the number on the street light and report it as faulty to the Highways commission.

The following from George Koowaree, who could not attend in person due to illness:

George Koowaree will be at Dunelm Mill on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> November collecting signatures for a petition to get a roundabout in place at the Barry Road junction, Sevington.

George Koowaree is also looking to see if KCC money can be made available to introduce yellow line parking restrictions on Lees Road under the motorway bridge.

## **7. AOB**

WCF is setting up a service to residents for reporting overgrown footpaths to the relevant authority. There will be a central email address for residents to report area of concern to. Full details will be published in The Pilgrim when this service becomes available.