

Monday, 29th January, 2018, 7.30 – 9.30 pm

The Maxwell Hall, The Oakwood Centre, Headley Road, Woodley, RG5 4JZ

Present: Mary Bather (chair), Mike Evans (vice-chair), Cllr John Armstrong (Earley Town Council - ETC), Keith Baker (Woodley Town Council - WTC), Richard Dolinski (WTC), Alistair Lloyd (Thames Valley Police – TVP), Mark Smith (TVP), Revd Philip Hobday (Earley St Peters Church), Kim King (Marks and Spencers), Sion Williams (ACER), **Residents:** J Layhe, R Heather, Robert and Inger Grindley, Coling Lawley, Brenda Cutler, Mr and Mrs Ian Haggerty, M Millard, Zofia Frasiniski

Apologies received from: Ian Hill, Jacques Lherbier (WTCM), Jenny Lissaman, David Provins, Michelle Stone (ACER)

1. **Minutes of the previous meeting – 20.11.17** – these were agreed after two typing errors had been amended. Matters arising not on the agenda included:
 - **Update on cycling on the pavement** – Mark Smith quoted Highways Act 1835 which states that it is an offence to cycle on the pavement. There is a fixed penalty used with discretion but a warning is usually given first. The type of bike (brakes) should be considered – BMX bikes sometimes lack brakes. Fear of traffic is not a valid argument for adults offending. Secondary school children cycling on the pavement together with enforcement of helmet policy, should be dealt with through the school. Schools can then take actions through parents. The police do not seize bikes that are unsafe for use on the roads / pavements. Police work with the schools to encourage considerate and safe cycling while promoting cycle marking – this has been successful at Piggott. If there are persistent complaints the police will take action, depending on priorities. Keeping a fine balance between encouraging cycling (to promote greener transport) and safety for pedestrians was highlighted by Cllr Baker. Mark Smith also highlighted the dangers to cyclists and pedestrians from residents reversing blindly out of drives.
ACTIONS: Residents to be advised (in newsletters etc) to contact relevant school (and their local councillor) if they had concerns about safety from persistent cycling on the pavement.
 - **Community Forum Bank Account** – The Chair and Vice-chair had opened a community bank account with £20. ACER (The Whitegates residents’ association) has agreed to donate £25 to the forum. The chair planned to apply for a grant from the Public Protection Fund in April. The forum would be eligible for funding once it had had an AGM and an adopted constitution. Cllrs Baker and Dolinski explained that the forum was eligible to apply for a grant of up to £250 from WTC and Cllr Armstrong said that applications for grants from ETC could be sent in in November.
ACTION: Chair and vice- chair to submit grant applications after the AGM in April.
 - **Computer fraud / telephone scams** – Coling Lawley reported that he had at last had a response from ‘Action Fraud’ to which he had reported an attempt at telephone scamming after, a long delay. Action Fraud (a national organisation to which all fraud has to be reported as local police cannot deal with it) was unable to provide information on what proportion of reported cases are followed up. Coling stated that he believed that it was wrong that the local police were not allowed to act when he was able to give them the telephone number of the person involved in an attempted scam. The meeting agreed that both computer and telephone scams were an increasing threat and after discussion it was decided that putting out succinct information (through newsletters / websites) together with training sessions would help protect people in the local area. It was agreed that older residents should be encouraged to attend information events – the majority of the attendees at the successful Piggott event last year had been from the younger generation.
ACTIONS:
 1. Al Lloyd to send links to information leaflets to chair, chair to circulate
 2. ACER and other organisations (including church) to put key messages in their newsletters / on their websites
 3. Chair and Vice-chair to work with WTC and TVP to investigate the hosting of an information event at the Oakwood Centre.

- **Cycling through Woodley Precinct** – Danger to pedestrians from cyclists cycling through Woodley Precinct had been raised had been raised at the November meeting. One suggestion had been for volunteers to approach cyclists advising them of the dangers of their actions but there was concern that this could lead to confrontations. Other suggestions had included the use of PCSOs or street / community wardens (WBC employees whose primary role is to work with disadvantaged families and bring them into the community). Mark Smith reported that he had discussed the issue with the PCSOs who had advised that the volume of ‘offences’ did not make this a priority as regards their time. After some discussion it was agreed that a possible way forward would be the suggestion by Cllr Baker that volunteers to do some counting at different times over 2 or 3 days to give an indication of the extent of the problem (who, time of day etc). Then, if necessary, there could be some education by PCSOs / wardens. Education regarding where to cycle could also be included with work on bike marking.

ACTIONS:

1. Chair to contact WTC Clerk and Town Centre Manager to discuss how to organise volunteers to count precinct cyclists.
2. Police to include cycling in precinct in education work on cycling in schools.

2. Update from Neighbourhood Policing Team on recent reported criminal activity in the local area

- **Personnel:** Jon Hare is now back at Woodley with Mark Smith. There will be one more PCSO (from Sulhampstead) arriving in the next 4 – 6 weeks making a total of 5.
- **Burglaries:** Main crime concern is burglaries – currently targeting Asian households for gold / jewellery as they did 3 years ago. Residents urged to be vigilant, looking out for suspicious activity. A grey Audi RS3 had been seen but it is likely that a different car is now being used. Residents are reminded to secure windows and doors, leave lights on so that it looks as though someone is at home, install alarms, CCTV etc.

ACTION: ACER to put reminders in newsletters.

- **Drugs:** Cllr Dolinski asked police for update on progress regarding local drug crime. TVP stated that they now had a lot of intelligence and were planning operations – high profile patrols and under cover work. There needed to be sufficient evidence before a warrant could be granted. Local police now had their first closure order actioned. A house with a vulnerable resident was being targeted and they had found evidence of dealing at a sufficient level to take action. Residents coming forward to report activity / concerns does make a difference!

ACTION: Residents to be advised (in newsletters etc) to tell the police (phone 101 or Crime stoppers – the latter is anonymous) of any evidence of drug use even if they think they know. Examples of evidence include small plastic envelopes, small metal canisters and syringes.

3. Local policing priorities – Review of progress / agree actions with respect to:

- **Antisocial behaviour (ASB)** – Woodley precinct has been much quieter recently. Focused police activity has helped but obviously ASB tends to be seasonal so there could be more instances in the spring. There are still some problems at Loddon Vale centre and the Woodley Airfield Community Centre carpark. Residents no longer consider Sandford Park as safe a place as they did after the assaults there last year. This is probably more a problem of perception than reality as despite having a photofit published there has been no arrest. There had been some damage at the Chequers Pub in the precinct but this was likely to have been a licencing issue rather than ASB.
- **Theft from motor vehicles** – this does seem to have died down, partly due to the ‘empty car campaign’. Local police now have a new app on their phones which enables them to report these thefts more quickly. Theft of equipment from trade vans continues to be a problem. Tradesmen should be encouraged to empty their vans at night - they are often reluctant to do so. Police are trying education events (including tool marking) at hire centres, trade fairs, The Wee Waif etc. They have also had some searches at Car Boot Sales. There has been some success in W Berks but it is difficult to track the thieves down.

- **Bicycle theft** – There has also been a downward trend in this area. 20 bikes have been recovered and there have been some arrests. The University have been supportive and the police have been involved in bike marking events. There will be more bike marking events, including in Woodley town centre, this year. It should be noted that this crime is also seasonal and could increase in the spring when more people take to the roads on bikes in the fine weather.
- **Speeding – Community Speed Watch (CSW)** – 14/15 volunteers are now going through their vetting and will then be trained. Residents interested in volunteering can apply through the TVP website. It has taken some time due to the amount of paperwork and this has been frustrating but it is progressing. It is hoped that the community forum will work with the police to help identify the problem areas and thus prioritise the areas to be monitored. If CSW monitoring supports evidence of a problem the next step could be a mobile camera.

Woodley Town Council: Cllr Baker reported that WTC has agreed to allocate £7000 for speed monitoring equipment with a camera to capture the colour and registration of the car – which have to be recorded by the volunteer when using CSW. No vetting will be needed for volunteers to use this system as the insurance will be covered by WTC. WTC will work with the forum and the police to identify priority areas in Woodley and avoid duplication. Could be 6 months before this is up and running. It should be noted that this equipment will be available for use to monitor speed in Woodley only – it will not be for use in Earley.

Coppice Road/ Loddon Bridge Road – Residents of Coppice Road are still concerned about speeding, including an incident with 3 lads on a motor bike who then hid behind the shops and speeding cars travelling on the wrong side of the road round the bend. Al Lloyd reiterated the need for residents to continue to report such incidents so that they move up the priority list. There was a general discussion on speeding and the drawbacks of using equipment to measure average speed. Police cars and ambulances don't register as emergency vehicles when going over speed monitors but their speeds can influence the results. Speeds tend to be lower at busy times when the traffic is heavier. Speeding often takes place at night when no monitoring is in place.

ACTION:

1. TVP and WTC to keep forum updated as to progress with CSW and WTC speed monitoring equipment.
2. Mark Smith to gather details of speeding from Coppice Road residents.

4. Update of local policing priorities – It was agreed that the priorities for the next two months would be:

- Antisocial behaviour
- Speeding
- Computer fraud / telephone scamming – organisation of an event.

5. Draft Constitution – a draft constitution, drawn up by the chair and vice-chair, had been circulated prior to the meeting. The following was discussed and was agreed:

- The name of the forum should remain Woodley and N Earley although it was recognised that the action area in Earley covered by the local police was the Whitegates ward (as outlined in the constitution).
- The equality statement under 1.3 of the constitution should be amended to be in line with Section 4 of the 2010 Equality Act, and thus read *...regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.*
- That it would be useful to have some clarification on who should have voting rights at meetings.
- That the agenda at the current meetings is tight and it may be worth considering 2 open meetings per year and the other meetings be used for police feed-back / review of the priorities. 'Have your say' events would be useful – it may be possible to combine them with the Woodley Town Electors, meeting.
- It was suggested that a member of the forum attended the TCMI meetings.

ACTIONS:

1. Chair to amend constitution to reflect renewed equality statement and to refer to the TCMI website for guidance on voting.
2. Chair / vice chair to attend TCMI meetings

6. **Proposed AGM: Thursday, 12th April, 7.30 – 9.30pm, Maxwell Hall, Oakwood Centre, Woodley.** Agenda to include election of chair and vice-chair, adoption of constitution, financial report and review of policing priorities.

ACTIONS:

1. Chair to confirm booking with WTC.
2. Chair and vice-chair to draw up agenda and circulate with draft constitution at least 14 days in advance of the meeting.
3. Chair, together with ETC and WTC, to advertise AGM in local newsletters and on notice boards.

7. AOB

- **Litter** – Zofia Frasinski mentioned the problems with litter blowing about after the stormy weather on recycling collection day. This matter has now been referred to the TMCI meeting.
- **Marks and Spencers (Shepherds Hill)** – Kim King (M&S) reported parking problems over Christmas due to greater than expected increase in customers. This resulted in customers jumping curbs, bad parking and cars queuing back on the roundabout and along Reading Road. Despite staying open later to spread the demand and drafting in more staff there were not enough parking places to satisfy the customers and not enough staff to deal with the issues. M&S continue to experience problems with shop lifting, as does the BP garage on the roundabout.
- **Butts Hill Road Bridge** – Coling Lawley expressed concern regarding pedestrian safety on the bridge (there is no footway) and wondered if it were safer with the current temporary traffic lights which limited traffic to one way at any one time. Cllr Baker explained that this was indeed a highways issue (not a police issue). Results of a survey of residents in the Coronation ward showed that only 2 residents out of the 8% response would prefer the lights (and thus an alternate one-way system as on Duffield Road) to remain after the work on the railway had finished. Cllr Baker also explained that the construction of a foot way would require a foot bridge which would require a central column. The cost of this would be £7k for the footbridge and £4k for the wayleave for the central column on a main line. A cheaper alternative may be a path to link the two bridges. It should be noted that Network Rail have applied for a 3-month extension for the current work and thus the lights will remain for some time.
ACTION: Cllr Baker to continue to investigate safer ways to cross the railway on Butts Hill Road.
- **Banks** – chair asked about possibility of bank closures in Woodley (in light of recent closures in Caversham). Cllr Baker and Dolinski stated that the Town Centre Manager had not reported any indication of closures. The economy of Woodley was strong and should continue to support a number of local branches.