

## **MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF RIVER PARISH COUNCIL**

Held on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> August 2017 at The Clubhouse, River Recreation Ground at 7pm

**PRESENT:** Cllr. Taylor (in the Chair), Cllr. Dixon, Cllr. Buhlman, Cllr. Cooper Cllr. Eyre-Jackson, Cllr. Keningale, Cllr. Nicholas

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Mr. A. Denyer (Parish Clerk), Mr. A. Rooke-James (CSU, Dover District Council)

**93. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** All present

### **94. ISSUES RELATING TO ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR IN RIVER RECREATION GROUND**

Chairman explained that as there is no regular meeting in August, it has been decided to hold this extraordinary meeting specifically to acquaint the community with the extent of anti-social behaviour (ASB) experienced in River Recreation Ground this year. He then reported on the current situation:

#### **a) Principle Incidents**

Chairman explained that until this year, ASB has been limited to occasional incidents. However, this Spring, the parish council became aware of groups of youths congregating in the area of the clubhouse in evenings and weekends. Many of these have subsequently identified as being from outside, neighbouring areas. Following the opening of the new Toddler Play Area, some of these youths would ride bikes around the area (intimidating and threatening parents and children, often with abusive language).

On Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> April, equipment in the Recreation Ground toilets was wrenched from the wall and destroyed. The following day, with a group of youths acting provocatively, the toilets were closed as a precaution. More youths arrived and the police were notified. Two youths then forced open the door to the disabled toilet in front of parish councillors present. The police were called again and attended. Two of the boys involved received home visits from the police.

Since then further incidents and damage have occurred involving the same youths. New locks and other costly repairs are having to be carried out. These incidents have all been reported to the PCSO and DDC Community Safety Unit. Over the weekend of 29<sup>th</sup>/30<sup>th</sup> July, a large group of youths, acting in a threatening and obstructive manner and using offensive language refused to leave the Recreation Ground at lock-up time. The police were called and attended in three vehicles to assist.

#### **b) Steps taken by the Parish Council to date**

Chairman outlined steps taken so far:

- a) The Crabble Lane Play Area and the toilets are now closed earlier each day.
- b) Letters have been delivered to over 70 local properties asking people to report any ASB witnessed and providing the relevant contact details.
- c) Names and addresses of some of the youths have been obtained and passed on to authorities.
- d) A CCTV system has been installed.
- e) Lock-up contractors have been told to call for assistance if there are problems and not confront any of the youths.
- f) Contact has been made with a local youth worker who has offered assistance with identifying youths.
- g) DDC have been asked to remove undergrowth in the car park where evidence of drug taking has been found.
- h) The Recreation Ground is now on the Police ASB watch list with vehicles calling intermittently at the ground.

A good working relationship has been established with the DDC Community Safety Unit and the PCSO.

### **c) Future actions**

The parish council is looking for official support to deal with those youths responsible. Also asking local residents to report any incidents witnessed. Finally, encouraging more local people to use the new facilities at the Recreation Ground as groups of people act as a deterrent to ASB.

### **95. DOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMUNITY SAFETY OFFICER**

Chairman introduced Allan Rooke-James, Community Safety Officer from Dover District Council. Mr. Rooke-James confirmed that the Recreation Ground is now in the ASB tasking area and receives patrols during 3pm to 11pm. On one occasion members of the public had contacted the police and PCSOs attended but the youths had moved on. Other agencies are also involved. Vegetation in the car park being used as a hiding place was in the process of being removed by DDC. It is possible that Community Safety Units own cameras could also be used if the parish council's CCTV is not covering all areas required. Any phone calls received from members of the public will be looked into. It is essential that reports include the time of incident to allow the parish council to check the CCTV and provide any evidence.

### **Questions from the floor**

- a) Question about access to CCTV images: the Parish Council confirmed that two individuals were responsible and that the system is locked away.
- b) Question about local reports of a new PCSO: Mr. Rooke-James confirmed that this will take place in September. Some deployments will also be changing with some PCSOs being given specific roles.
- c) Question regarding the use of social media to spread information: Mr. Rooke-James said this was not recommended as it could prove counterproductive and that information should be given directly to the police and the Community Safety Unit.
- d) Question about what the police response would be: Mr. Rooke-James said the police would try engagement with the youths but would use enforcement as the last resort.
- e) An offer was made to provide 'paintball' style activities for young people if a suitable area of land could be found to permanently setup the activity. Chairman said that the parish council would offer support wherever able to. Cllr. Nicholas offered to be part of a sub-group to look into the idea.
- f) It was queried whether the Clubroom could be used as a youth facility as it previously had many years ago. Cllr. Nicholas suggested that this could be on the agenda for the next meeting. Cllr. Cooper suggested that other forms of youth engagement other than sport also be considered.

Meeting closed at 8.15pm