

From the Lookout Post - June 2007

Caversham Court Project

The small room in the stable block at Caversham Court was full to bursting for the first meeting to discuss the setting up of a new 'Friends of Caversham Court'. Having dispelled fears that the group would be called on to lock gates and pick up litter, discussion moved on to how the group should be constituted, what its role should be and how to ensure a balance between those representing particular interests and individuals drawn from the community as a whole.

Many of those present had not been able to attend previous presentations and others were concerned to learn about how plans had progressed more recently. A request was made for a further presentation and many people made suggestions as to how this could reach out to a wide cross section of people in and around Caversham. Do look out for information locally.

If you would like to be involved in discussions and perhaps become a member of the Friends Group, leave your contact details with Anne Keenan, via Anne.Keenan@reading.gov.uk or telephone 0118 947 8930.

Laundry Site on George Street

A rather smaller group was present to hear the appeal from Bewley Homes against the refusal by the Borough Council of an application to build 76 units on the site of Whitenights Laundry on George Street. The Council considered that the height and scale of the buildings were excessive for a site on the edge of a local residential area and these concerns were supported by

local residents, Ward Councillors and CADRA. Bewley Homes endeavoured to show that the blocks would be well screened by the row of poplars and would not unduly dominate the area. By the time you read this column there may already be a decision from the Planning Inspector.

Neighbourhood Policing in Caversham

Much progress has been made recently in establishing Neighbourhood Policing in Caversham. Caversham has been divided into two policing areas. Lower Caversham includes the central business area and the Kings Meadow area. The rest of Caversham, including Emmer Green, Caversham Park, and Caversham Heights is referred to as Upper Caversham. Whilst various factors determined these two policing areas, it is reassuring to learn that in practice Caversham will be policed as one large neighbourhood. We will be able to call on the wider Caversham police team to address issues as necessary.

The policing team dedicated to Caversham is over seven strong, consisting of part of an Inspector's duties, a Sergeant, two Police Constables, now entitled Neighbourhood Specialist Officers, and four Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs). The policing team remains headed by Inspector Graham Dix, who also has responsibilities in West Reading. Sergeant Warren McKeown is in charge of the Caversham wide policing team. PC Stuart Murdock heads the Lower Caversham area. Lower Caversham also has two PCSOs, Layla Cannings and Callum Bushall. PC Chris Manetta heads the Upper Caversham area and the two PCSOs are Jeni Williams and John Hendy.

The prime role of the PCSOs will be to be out and about round their patch, talking to people and providing a very visible presence.

In recent weeks Thames Valley Police have held two initial public meetings to explain the Neighbourhood Policing implementation in Caversham. There were two specific objectives in these meetings. The first was to discuss the role of the Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG), which Inspector Dix noted could more appropriately be called a Neighbourhood Management group. Inspector Dix invited those interested in being a member of this group to provide their details to the Caversham Police team. The second purpose of these meetings was to identify the three most important policing issues, as viewed by the residents. When the meeting attendance was combined with surveying over 600 residents, nearly 700 residents gave the following priorities. In both Lower and Upper Caversham anti-social behaviour was the first priority. Priorities 2 and 3 were the same in both areas, although Lower Caversham had traffic and speeding as priority 2 and burglary as priority 3, but in Upper Caversham the order was reversed. The NAG will meet every 6 to 8 weeks to guide resources in dealing with these issues. Annually there will be a public meeting to review progress and to consider whether the priorities should be changed.

As well as the meetings organised by the police, both Caversham and District Residents' Association (CADRA) and Emmer Green Residents' Association (EGRA) invited speakers from Thames Valley Police to speak at their AGM. Both meetings were well attended, again demonstrating the level of interest in Neighbourhood Policing.

Reporting crime may not always have the high profile action we anticipate. However, it is important to report all non-emergency crime on 0845 8 505 505. Crime and anti-social behaviour reports are provided to the policing team so that they can plan their activity. Crime often fits a locational or timing pattern, which can assist in a more effective police response. In a more general manner, crime statistics are used as a key part of the formula to determine police staffing.

Do introduce yourself to the new PCSOs in Caversham. Also take advantage of the monthly Caversham Police surgeries (Church House, first Monday of the month from 17.00 to 20.00) to discuss any policing issues with the Caversham Police team.

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