

## **COUNCIL MEETING – 6<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2005**

### **MAIN DEBATE - COMMENTS FROM RESIDENTS ON ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

#### **1. The Oval Shopping Centre – Anti-Social Behaviour**

Improvements to reduce the activities and intimidating actions by "Yob" youths at the Oval Shopping Centre, Stevenage - is this something which is acceptable in Stevenage in 2005?

It would appear present CCTV and calls to the police are ineffective in containing and preventing this nuisance. There appears to be no serious deterrent or sustained programme to prevent it.

This matter was raised with either Councillor Henry or Latif some while ago, they were helpful and sympathetic and forms were provided to keep a diary.

A concern has arisen for shop workers in the main shops there doing an admirable job giving good service to the public. However, there are serious concerns for the safety of shop workers, especially in the evenings. During the day the shops are frequently confronted by shop lifting under age youths stealing alcohol and other items. When police are called they arrive too little to late to be effective and no further action results. When challenged staff are threaten with violence and intimidated by groups of unsavoury youths, kicking shutters, being a complete nuisance especially near evening closing time. The fear is that shop workers are not safe on their own.

Most residents cannot keep a diary, cannot police the area, do not monitor CCTV, and cannot draw up security policies to give more support to shopkeepers. Is there no way you can encourage good citizenship and discourage bad elements?

#### **2. Area behind the four shops on Burwell Road; the garages behind Chertsey Rise – Anti-Social Behaviour**

As you are probably aware, there are problems with vandals breaking into the garages there. There are also kids, and older boys playing football till all hours. I don't mind the football, but I'm getting fed up with the destruction. I recently had my fence torn down, and have previously had part of my wall torn down. I've had my garage broken into; I've had my son's car driven into by joy-riders who apparently were messing around by the garages; my son's also had paint sprayed onto his car; I've had kids climbing my fence into my garden. I also know that there have been more recent break-ins into the garages. I would like to ask what if anything is going to be done about that area? The lighting which was fixed is fine as far as it goes – it's a great help to the boys playing football - but I thought a camera was being installed? I would also like to ask why there are not more police patrols? At one stage, there appeared to be regular patrols. These appear to have become very infrequent.

#### **3. Chertsey Rise – Loud music from noisy neighbours**

My wife and I are both pensioners and hoped to have a peaceful retirement enjoying our small garden. This peace was non-existent last year at the weekends and Bank Holidays, particularly when the weather was fine, due to loud music from neighbouring properties. Your staff informed us that we should not be able to hear other people's music on our property and sent us a form to fill-in for

the following two weeks. I would suggest that this does not solve the problem and would recommend that a team similar to the graffiti busters be used at the above times to quickly respond to this violation of our rights. I know that a number of people are in our position but are unwilling to risk the wrath of the perpetrators.

#### **4. Fairland Valley Park – Anti-Social Behaviour**

It is with some irony that the government wants school children to have more exercise yet the parents of St Nicholas school feel the need to have a car park right next to the school. Fairland's Valley already has five car parks the main car park for the lake only being five minutes walk from the school with not even any roads to cross, the main lakes car park is also empty and free at those times of day. I would also suggest that the lakes car park has better access than the proposed car park with any argument to there being less accidents being less likely due to the majority of them being caused by the over helpful parents waving each other into the paths of oncoming traffic, having experienced this several times I should know. With the proposed new car park being a painful two minutes from the school I would also suggest that only 20% at most would use the car park with it's main use being a magnet for more mini motor bikes and scramble bikes that Fairland's Valley has become an uncontrolled nuisance for.

Over the past few years I have witnessed Fairlands Valley becoming a haven for anti-social behaviour, from the use of noisy scramble bikes that started today (Sunday 20<sup>th</sup>) at 11.00 and I can still hear them now at 14.40. In the summer you will hear them at two in the morning, to now the three month firework night where the biggest fireworks that can be obtained are placed in the lake overflow under Six Hills Way in the early hours of the morning and detonated, these shake the house.

I would suggest that all CCTV has accomplished is to move the unruly element from the shopping centres to areas without CCTV, the cycle track underpasses included, with my own son being victim of a very savage attack the virtual certainty that police or any authority are guaranteed not to police or take any responsibility for areas of the town has given a green light to the rouge element.

I have personally written to or e-mailed every address I think may have responsibility or answer in relation to this behaviour that this town appears to want to put up with and tolerate. The youths lighting the little fires in the woods and in the fields the other year, what are they burning now?, the youths drinking in the underpasses and in the field the other year, what have they moved up to? The motor bikes that have nearly run me down as they have no lights, across Fairlands when I walk to or from work in the dark (this has also happened in the day) the list goes on.

When I grew up there was always the park ranger, not to only give me a telling off when I was being silly, but to ensure people were safe from the odd stray dog what have you. I was also kept on the straight and narrow by more than one beat copper and when I was driving more than one patrol officer who would show me the error of my ways and convince me that were better things to do with my time then be a bit of a pain. I thank these people for keeping me on the straight and narrow.

Today we do not do this, I walk across Fairlands twice per day, I dodge motor bikes to four wheel scramblers, we cannot even put a sign up NO motorbikes, under age drinking with the abusive language that goes with it is common place as is drug dealing and damage. In Stevenage we would rather pay to repair the fences, trees, bus shelters and sweep up the glass than address the few that spoil it for so many others, if I am wrong I have seen no evidence, wardens or police to support this. So, the question is, why are there so many excuses to not doing what worked but paying fanatically and socially instead?

**QUESTION TO COUNCIL – 6<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2005**

**From Barbara Bunyan, 1 Church Lane, Stevenage**

**Church Lane – Vandalism to vehicles**

We live in the part of Church Lane leading up to Barclay and Alleyne's schools, for a long time now we have been subjected to vandalism especially on our cars ie. broken windows, broken off wing mirrors, dents etc. what if anything can be done to stop this? Would it be possible for a camera to be fitted or more lights?