



Allhallows Parish Council

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Cllr Phil Filmer, Medway Council Peninsula Ward
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16th June 2017

cc. KALC (Medway Branch)
By email

Community Policing Concerns

I am writing to express the concerns of the Allhallows Parish Council and the residents of the parish regarding Policing Policy, Operations and Community Safety in our area. There are continual questions about the value of the payments made by local residents to these services in the Council Tax each year. Residents are becoming even more frustrated with the perceived lack of action in addressing ongoing problems in the area - and especially with local youths who appear to be able to continue anti-social behaviour with delayed, limited or little action taken.

At the recreation ground (owned by Medway Council and leased by the parish council), we have experienced a series of fires, damage to toddlers play equipment, graffiti to equipment, damage to dustbins and more. There have been a number of drug related incidents - NOx and Cannabis primarily - with one seat now named the 'Weed Bench'.

At our Cross Park site, we have had a number of severe vandalism incidents to the changing rooms (still to be fitted out), and security lighting on the Pavilion damaged. There have been a number of instances of motorbikes riding around the site, causing damage, and threatening residents.

At the Brimp (Dedicated Youth Centre), the football arena and public 'picnic tables' have been damaged. Flood lighting was damaged by a youth throwing stones at the lights, fires being set on the plastic playing surface.

In the wider community we have had problems with youths verbally abusing residents and throwing stones through resident's windows. Damage to vehicles (broken car mirrors and scratching). Black bags ripped open and contents spread, bins destroyed or damaged by fire. Motor bikes being ridden around the village - recklessly, little or no helmets and unlikely to be adequately insured - with some near misses reported being reported by residents. Cycles are also ridden doing 'wheelies'.

Youth gathering points are well known and groups are growing as the days are longer. The names of many of these youths are well known, and have been reported. Although a small number come from outside the village. Help in making sure parents of these youth understand their responsibilities and helping them with advice on how to try and manage their youths is also required.

We had a recent incident where a man was physically attacked by youths after his wife had been verbally abused.

Most residents do respect the village and are demanding a response and support from the relevant services. The parish council is limited in powers and financial resources to manage these issues directly and the primary role is to represent local residents and bring these issues to the attention of the relevant services.

Policing Policy

Policy does not appear to cover the requirements of the Allhallows area, or it is not sufficiently resourced for the police to be effective. When issues have been raised with local services we are continually told that there are insufficient resources to cover our area - with resources being allocated to urban areas and the limited local resources having to cover larger areas with no increase to support it. Liaison with local policing is limited as a local PCSO, or other representative are often not able to attend parish council or police liaison meetings due to operational needs elsewhere. It appears to us that there are insufficient resources allocated to the police to perform their duties.

Policing Operations

When we are able to discuss issues with local police, lack of resources is often reported as the primary concern. It also appears that the balance between urban and rural areas is now embedded in the service and our cover appears to deteriorate as the number of local incidents rise.

We understand the policy of intelligence-led policing and stress the importance of residents reporting issues to the police - however it can take 30 minutes or more to get through to the number at peak times and many people will be put off reporting or using the service again.

The limited policing problems appear to be well understood by local youth and the worst culprits operate on the basis that an immediate or delayed police response is normal. Even when there is a response it may be easy to disperse.

Action appears biased towards response and not pro-active patrols and local liaison and information gathering.

We recognise the efforts of the local PCSO resources, but there is now limited time available to liaise, gather information from the area, or perform a community policing role.

Policing Powers

It is often perceived that the police have limited, or no, powers available to them to take effective action to manage the bad behaviour - and the misbehaving youth understand this.

Community Safety

The Local Authority led Community Safety Partnership is often seen as an urban organisation with little presence in the rural areas, or even knowledge of its existence amongst rural residents.

Parish Council Actions

The parish council is prepared to work alongside other services and bodies to address issues, but financial resources are limited. The Allhallows Parish Council operate a dedicated youth centre, but adult volunteers are extremely difficult to come by (and there are many reasons for this). The parish has taken exceptional action to appoint a Lead Youth Worker to try and maintain the limited provision. Significant resources have been allocated to local youth, but this needs the active involvement of both parents and youth to make it effective.

What Next?

The parish council are seeking the views of the bodies involved in these issues and an effective ongoing action plan to improve the safety of residents in the area. From discussions with other parish councils in the area, we know that we are not unique in having these concerns and similar actions are likely to be needed in their areas as well.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Chris Draper', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Chris Draper
Parish Chair