

On Behalf of the We Love Biggleswade Facebook Group the Admin Team requested a meeting with Sgt Kidd to draw attention to the views and concerns that are being expressed by the group members and explore ways that we could all work together to address them.

This meeting took place on Thursday April 30 at 5.30pm. It lasted for one hour.

Present were : -

Alan Dansey, Mark Foster, Andy Buckley – We Love Biggleswade Admin
Sgt Gary Kidd – Sandy & Biggleswade Local policing Team.

The Police do see what is being said in the group but are happy for admin to draw attention to anything that we want to ensure that they are aware of. They will provide us with any information which we can share with the group for them.

We asked about existing communication channels with members of the community public.

These are

- 1) **The Community Safety Forum** meets monthly and has access to information such as crime figures. Various agencies are represented including the Town Council. Personal Attack Alarms have been purchased and issued to priority workers such as lone workers, unsociable hour workers or female lone workers as well as vulnerable victims of crime or potential vulnerable victims. They are dual purpose and can be carried as audible alarms or used as door/window alarms.
- 2) **Speed watch** comprises volunteers who are provided with equipment to measure vehicle speeds and trained to use it. The information that they record is passed on to the Police who contact the registered owner with a warning. The data is kept and action is taken against repeat offenders. However large proportion get the message the first time.
- 3) **Street Watch** volunteers are issued with tabards and simply walk around an area observing and chatting with people. Any concerns are fed back to the Police.

We asked about the Police presence in the town.

Biggleswade Police Station is open Monday to Friday from 9-5 (with an hour for lunch). Currently it is the responsibility of one officer. However in June Biggleswade Police station becomes one of three Parade Centres which means that police will be deployed from there and that will result in a faster response and a more visible Police presence in Biggleswade. The number of people visiting the Police Station is very low and we are asked to ensure that people are aware that it is open and use it if needed. The 101 telephone service is also available and should be used to report all crimes and concerns.

PCSOs – There are two PCSOs that work in Biggleswade and they are familiar with the town and local issues. They patrol the area both on foot and by car. We will be taking up an offer for one of us to spend a day with them to see the sort of things that they get involved in.

In addition other agencies are working to tackle issues in Biggleswade.

The Westminster Drugs and Alcohol Project Have people working in Biggleswade and they are having some success with engaging people in the town including the Market Square and other problem areas.

Other agencies deal with area such as health, housing etc.

The PCSOs are working with the other agencies and since the end of last year they have the power to enforce dispersal orders, if people gathering in areas such as the Bus Shelter are causing problems.

The “Pod” as it has become called is a Portacabin that was in Sandy but no longer in use. It has been brought into Biggleswade simply for use as an office and meeting room for all of these agencies to use for 1:1 sessions. It will not be used for the consumption of alcohol or administering drugs.

Anti-Social Behaviour Involving Drink and Drugs

It is clear from posts in the We Love Biggleswade Group that the problem is far bigger than the figures indicate. In the last 12 months there have only been 18 calls to the Police relating to Alcohol and Drugs in public

places in Biggleswade. It would seem that many incidents go unreported. It is important that they are all reported – call 101 please!

The Town Centre is not actually an “alcohol free zone” as is sometimes stated. However if drinkers cause trouble, as it seems they frequently do, they are committing an offence which needs to be reported. Of particular concern are mentions in the Group of criminal acts such as threats and attempts to get people to part with money. The Police take the situation very seriously and are asking that more people come forward to assist them by reporting incidents and providing information. Pictures from Camera Phones or CCTV can be provided for us in evidence but only if folk are prepared to act as witnesses.

PARKING: This was raised as being another key issue that is frequently discussed in the We Love Biggleswade Group. In particular on street parking by commuters. Whilst the Police are aware in most cases this is a matter for Central Bedfordshire Council. CBC are producing a parking strategy and public consultation is being held.

However in some cases, such as causing an obstruction, the Police are involved in enforcement. For instance there was a situation recently where the Police traced the owners and made them return to their vehicle and move it.

GRAFITTI: There has been a marked increase in the amount of 'tagging' around the town and the police are working with schools to try to identify the culprits. The provision of a “graffiti wall” was discussed as it has been known to succeed in reducing the problem. We agreed that it would be a good thing to do.

Public Consultation

As stated earlier CBC organise consultation on matters such as the parking strategy.

Town council meetings are available for members of the public to attend.

The Police work closely with both of the above, attending meetings and making reports available.

Biggleswade will have a Community Engagement Day on Tuesday June 16 which Town Council, CBC and the Police will be involved in.

The meeting met its objective to establish contact and explore ways of raising issues from the We Love Biggleswade Group. It is hope that this will result in better communication.

END