

## **TILGATE COMMUNITY FORUM**

Wednesday 22nd May 2019.

1. The Chair, Richard Handy, welcomed Melanie Pyle and Becki Buckley from Crawley Police, Karen Rham from Crawley Borough Council, Councillors Duncan Crow, Francis Guidera, Charles Petts and 24 other members to the meeting with apologies from: Nick Hagon, Robert Edwards, John Dale, Mr and Mrs Hull, Roland Etherington and Dick Bird.

RH congratulated Councillors Guidera and Petts on their election to CBC for Tilgate.

2. The Minutes from the meeting held on 24th January were read and accepted as correct. Matters arising:

Christmas lights on the parade - no progress to report

Funding application to the council - no progress to report

### **3. Modern Slavery**

RH then introduced Becki and Mel from Crawley Police to talk about Modern Slavery.

The talk began with a brief description of what is meant by the title. It is servitude, forced labour. The Modern Slavery Act made it a serious offence.

Human trafficking, movement from one place to another but not necessarily very far - it could be from one end of a street to another, or from one town to another. It could involve illegal entry into the country.

Exploitation of labour – often picking on vulnerable people – can be seen in nail bars, car washes, household duties, sex workers, criminal activities. It is everywhere.

Victims are often kept in cramped housing, with restricted access to washing facilities. They would be told that their work would cover the cost of their keep. Debts may be run up in the victim's name, so that they are in "debt bondage".

Using children to smuggle drugs between towns is known as "County lines" and there was a recent conviction where children were being used to carry drugs from London to Portsmouth. The prison sentences for the organisers were up to 5 years. There are 7 live investigations in Crawley too.

Signs to look out for in exploited workers: clothing not appropriate to the weather, eg in the case of car wash victims, unkempt appearance, inadequate safety equipment. They are often fearful of speaking to people, they don't speak the language or someone else is speaking for them. They are being controlled. They will not know their address or where they live as they are moved about so much. They work long hours, and have little food. They are told they can work off the money owed for their lodging, food and travel.

See videos at Gangmasters website:

<https://www.gla.gov.uk/publications/resources/>

There are 2 apps you can use if you suspect exploitation: "Unseen UK" and "Safe car wash".

To report suspicious behaviour, go online to Sussex Police, or call 101. Quote 'Operation Eagle'.

Report anonymously via Crimestoppers 0800 555 111

Modern Slavery Helpline 0800 121 7000

Salvation Army confidential helpline 0300 303 8151

Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority 0800 432 0804.

Stop the Traffik 0207 921 4258

Becki explained the training they are given includes being able to talk to the possible victims and get them away from their situation and into a safe area. They do need some proof that the people are actually being abused.

FG said he had watched a documentary programme with regard to 'nail bars' where the victims were afraid of the police as they were corrupt in their own country. Some were disabled, homeless and kept away from public view. Homeless people are not necessarily victims, but are vulnerable, and may become victims of slavery.

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is the process through which potential victims of trafficking in the UK are identified, so that they can be supported and protected. It is a particular process to be followed when it is suspected that an adult or a child might be a victim of trafficking. It is operated by associations such as the Salvation Army, the Police, and reports to the Home Office. In the case of a child, the child's best interests will be a primary consideration in the decision to make, or not to make, a referral into the NRM.

RH thanked Becki and Mel for their talk and wished them well in their work.

#### **4. Update on Tilgate Park: Karen Rham, Neighbourhood Services Manager**

In the absence of Nick Hagon Karen Rham once again gave an update on the park. She did not bring plants but Nick had given her notes on what to look out for when walking there, listing the rhododendrons, candelabra primulas, handkerchief trees and the Tulip tree. There is now a new manager in the park while Nick works on a 15 year plan. Nick is also in charge of the Golf course now.

Bearing in mind the trees and shrubs were planted 1850's we should be protecting the area for the next 150 years. Nick will be talking to residents for help.

Tree maintenance - one or two trees in the Pinetum have had to be taken out due to being set on fire last year. Where trees have had to be taken out new ones will be planted in the autumn.

There is a meeting in The Barn on 25th June at 6.30pm with an update on the trouble in Tilgate Park car park.

A question was asked about why dangerous noisy machines had to work in the park at weekends when people are out and about enjoying themselves. KR explained work has to be carried out whenever it is necessary.

RH thanked KR for the update.

#### **5. Updates from Councillors and questions**

DC WSCC councillor for Tilgate and Furnace Green reported that Livingstone Road had at last been resurfaced much to the delight of Ron Spraget who had been petitioning for the work to be done for some time. He had written to WSCC to pass his thanks to the workmen who carried out the work.

Question: why do WSCC not advise car owners that their road is to be weeded and gutters and drains cleared? DC this is only done when the road is to be resurfaced.

It was pointed out that there was a large broken Virgin manhole in the verge of Winchester Road that needed attention. DC said he would be out and about on Thursday and would check it out.

FG spoke about the boxing at K2 where he felt uncomfortable with the unusual atmosphere it brought to the sports centre. The Car Park situation in the Park is much quieter now, and residents are much happier with this. Tilgate Parade is feeling unsafe for people after dark.

More people sleeping in shop doorways in the town centre is causing concern. Bedding is left during the day reserving places but if it is removed this is theft. There are new faces, not all are homeless, they have property to live in. Begging is illegal. DC pointed out at this point that money should not be given to beggars, but to the proper charities concerned.

In answer to a question, in Three Bridges trees are being pollarded and some Chestnut trees have had to be taken out due to disease. In Tilgate it was pointed out that a tree in Oxford Road is blocking the light from the street lamp. DC advised contacting Crawley Borough Council about that. RH thanked the councillors for their input.

**6.** Sylvia Handy reported on the **Crawley Road Space Audit**, which the Tilgate Forum Parking Committee sent a report to last year. An email was received from the West Sussex Highways Cabinet member stating that a draft document has been prepared and comments were being returned. It was promised that stakeholders, including Tilgate Forum, will be involved in discussing it. [These workshops are envisaged for the summer.]

### **7. Any Other Business**

:Don Garner has obtained five packets of wild flower seeds to plant, and he would like to know members' ideas as to where to sow them. KR said that the planting should be marked so the grass cutters avoid them. The Walled Garden and Durham Close were suggested.

:Ron Spraget asked members to think of donating spare food items for Open House next November. He has been doing so for five years in Livingstone Road and always gets a good response from the people living there.

:The raffle was drawn, and four prizes were won.

: A survey of opinions about the Forum was filled in by members attending.

### **Dates for the diary:**

- Next Forum meeting is Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> July at 7.30 pm
- Visit to Biffa waste treatment plant in Horsham Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> June. There will probably be other dates. Ask if you are interested.
- Volunteers for Tilgate Park Peace Garden: Saturdays 8<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> June 10.30 am
- Volunteers for Tilgate Park Heather Garden: Wednesdays 12<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> June 10 am
- Friends of Tilgate Park, The Barn, 25<sup>th</sup> June at 6.30pm

### **Helplines for Modern Slavery**

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### **Forum contacts**

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