



**OFFICER REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE  
(MOLE VALLEY)**

**RESPONSE TO THE PETITION  
ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ON ANSELL ROAD**

**24 SEPTEMBER 2008**

**KEY ISSUE**

To consider the petition submitted by Mr. Demosthenous on behalf of the residents of Ansell Road, Dorking asking partners to focus on reducing anti social behaviour by exploring the possibility of closing or diverting the public access to Meadowbank and Mill Lane via Ansell Road.

**SUMMARY**

The petition was presented to the Local Committee on the 11 June 2008 to rise the profile of the issues with regards to Ansell Road.

**OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Local Committee (Mole Valley) is asked to:**

- (i) note the petition.

## 1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In February 2008 Mole Valley Inspector John Tadman raised the issue of Ansell Road and the increasing numbers of anti social behaviour incidents at the Joint Area Group.
- 1.2 The Joint Area Group or JAG is a subgroup of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and is a partnership group with the mandate to explore hotspot locations across Mole Valley and seek a resolution to the mixture of crime and disorder problems that arise.
- 1.3 On accepting the nomination (original nomination form is attached) the case was assigned to Clive Smitheram, Community Safety Officer for Mole Valley District Council and Surrey County Council's Sarah Haywood, Local Committee and Partnership Officer for Mole Valley to start exploring the possible solutions with Mike Bessent, Surrey Police's Crime Reduction & Crime Prevention Design Advisor for Mole Valley.
- 1.4 Inspector John Tadman established that over the last three years there has been an average of 10 crimes a year reported. The residents state that they may not report all incidents. Residents report that problems can start around 3pm when schoolchildren walking past bang on the front windows and doors. The problems then escalate during the night until 2am-3 am when the Malthouse and then the Surrey Yeoman pubs turn out. They report people urinating and vomiting in front doorways and glasses and bottles being smashed. Three houses have had front windows broken this year.
- 1.5 The District Inspector met with six residents experiencing higher levels of concern from anti social behaviour compared to the remainder of the road. At the bottom end of Ansell Road, the road bends round to the right and the footpath continues on directly in front of a line of terraced houses down to the stream and Meadowbank. The houses are separated from their front gardens by a footpath.
- 1.6 Research into the land records showed that the ownership of the footpath and surrounding land is complicated. Surrey County Council's Countryside Legal Team defined the footpath as the following:

'The public footpath that you refer to is Dorking Foot Path 77, and is also a Townpath, and as such the surface is looked after by Highways, but enforcement falls to Countryside Access. It would appear the path itself is not registered as being owned by anyone and Surrey County Council rarely owns public rights of way, and I can see no reason why Surrey would own this footpath.

What we do have as the Highway Authority is a vested interest in the surface that is anything that happens within the width of the footpath. The public have a right to use the footpath at all times over its full

width, which starts directly outside the front doors of the houses, and extends over the tarmac.

From the information I have available to me the path running from Mill Lane up to the path itself is private.'

- 1.7 Mole Valley District Council legal team searched their records and the attached map shows the land the District Council own and what land was transferred to the new Mole Valley Housing Association.
- 1.8 It would appear that while the footpath running in front of the properties is the responsibility of Surrey County Council the residents own the land and therefore the legal costs of closing or moving that path would lie with the residents. Understandably, the residents are not comfortable with this course of action without the partnerships backing.
- 1.9 Residents have been advised that the land used as an alley to reach the rear of properties appears to belong to the owners of No.23. and therefore a resolution to the problem of people using the alley as a cut through from the Malthouse Public House lies with them. However, there may well be some legal implications and residents have been directed to Surrey County Council's Rights of Way Team for more information.
- 1.10 Surrey Police analysts have provided regular updates on the number of crimes and for the period 23/07/08 to 21/08/08 there was one report of an anti social behaviour incident.
- 1.11 The local police team have increased the number of patrols over the last six months and the situation appears to have eased. Together with this it should be noted that the Malthouse Public House has been closed and therefore the number of people using the route after dark should diminish significantly.
- 1.12 Following a review of the area it was considered by the JAG that the anti social behaviour Ansell Road suffers is part of a wider problem and the partnership agreed to look more widely at the situation, including in Meadowbank and St Martin's Car Park.
- 1.13 An improvement to the CCTV in Meadowbank and the re-establishment of the electric supply means the area is well covered by CCTV. Discussions have taken place with the Head of General Services and the Car Parks Manager at Mole Valley District Council to explore restricting access to the lower floors of the car park to stop young people using the second floor as a meeting point. This project is moving forward.

## 2 OPTIONS

2.1 Currently the options are:

### Option 1

Move the footpath 15 feet to the east (with the gardens then separating the houses and the footpath) effectively forming a buffer to protect the properties.

### Option 2

Alley gate the bridge into Meadowbank, rendering the footpath a cul de sac and closing the public right of way.

### Option 3

Alley gate the entire length of the footpath from the road to the river.

- 2.2 The JAG has explored these options and unfortunately the legal situation over public rights of way makes moving or closing up the ally way very difficult and expensive.
- 2.3 The Surrey County Council's Highways Group Manager (East) has met with the Chief Executive of Mole Valley Housing Association to explore developing the land at the end of Ansell Road to create a natural blockage. Discussions continue between the two parties but at the time of going to print Mole Valley Housing Association were discussing options with their architects.
- 2.4 There is the possibility of using remote CCTV and this is being explored with regards to the legal implications. Mole Valley District Council are responsible for CCTV and options are being developed by them.
- 2.5 Surrey Police will continue patrols of Ansell Road and Meadowbank while the situation is being investigated.
- 2.6 Surrey Police's Community Safety Sergeant has agreed to visit the Ashcombe Secondary School in the new term to speak to pupils about anti social behaviour issues.

## 3 CONSULTATIONS

- 3.1 Throughout the JAG process the residents have been kept in regular contact.
- 3.2 The JAG is comprised of all statutory partners who are invited to attend the monthly meetings. In the case of Ansell Road both the Countryside Legal Team and Rights of Way officers have been invited to comment.

#### **4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND VALUE FOR MONEY**

- 4.1 The cost of moving the town path will have significant cost implications. For the residents restricting access to the alley way belonging to number 23 will be relatively inexpensive if progressed, however they will need to seek legal advice as the pathway has been open for a number of years.

#### **5 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 All equalities and diversity implications will be considered when a solution has been found.

#### **6 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 It is hoped a remedy to the problems suffered by the residents will be reduced and therefore the number of reported anti social behaviour incidents will drop.

#### **7 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 Ansell Road, Dorking has suffered a number of anti social incidents due to its proximity to two pubs, the local secondary school and Dorking Town Centre. The solution is complex due to the legal requirements around town and footpath issues.
- 7.2 The JAG is exploring all possible solutions and asks that the Local Committee support the group in seeking a resolution.

### **OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Local Committee (Mole Valley) is asked to:**

- (i) note the petition.

#### **8 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 At this time it is necessary for the JAG to continue to seek a resolution and bring back to the committee should a decision need to be made with regards to Footpath 77.

#### **9 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT**

- 9.1 The next meeting of the JAG is the 7<sup>th</sup> October 2008 where the group will continue to seek a resolution.
- 9.2 The Local Member will be informed of any progress or updates.
- 9.3 The residents will be formally written to detailing this report and offering further assistance if required.

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**BACKGROUND PAPERS:** JAG Minutes and action plans