

## **Community, Coffee & Conversation**

**21<sup>st</sup> April 2026 – Parish Room, Martlesham**

Thank you to everyone who joined us at our *April Community, Coffee & Conversation* Neighbourhood Watch meeting. It was great to see residents come together for open discussion about issues that matter locally. We were also pleased to welcome back PC Sally King and PCSO Tristan Clarke from our Local Community Policing Team

The format of this meeting was a little different. We had no guest speaker as we wanted to dedicate the time to our members and residents. As part of our Better Connected, Future Ready objective, we want to be proactive and take practical steps that genuinely help to stronger and more connected community.

When we initially set these meetings up in January, we aimed to facilitate a space where residents can have a proper conversation with us, to make us more accessible, so residents can share what matters to them, and what we can do as both a Neighbourhood Watch scheme and as Council as a whole.

### **Neighbourhood Watch Context and Values**

We provided a brief overview of Neighbourhood Watch. The charity operates over four tiers and the first tier is their most local, which is where we also sit as a Parish Council. It is the level closest to the community, and if done right, it is often where we can have the biggest impact.

Neighbourhood Watch is guided by five core values:

- Neighbourly
- Community Focused
- Inclusive
- Proactive
- Trusted

These values underpin everything that we do, and because the scope of our scheme is so vast, it allows us to focus on what residents actually care about. Whether that is looking after our green spaces and conducting litter picks, reducing isolation and helping people to feel more connected, or taking steps to keep ourselves and our neighbours safe.

### **Scheme Update**

- Mapping of the original Neighbourhood Watch signage is continuing to take shape and following our Recreation and Amenities Committee meeting in May, we expect to have the laminates ordered and ready to go. While this has been a topic on the agenda for a little while, it is of importance as where Neighbourhood Watch schemes are seen to be active, figures suggest that crime is often reduced by around 20%.

- Neighbourhood Watch week is taking place this year from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> June and we are currently considering the activities we can run locally. If you have any suggestions for the week, please let us know.
- A big thank you to the 21 Young Hearts café for their continued support with promoting our scheme and events. We would also like to thank the Runway Café along with St Marys and St Michaels Churches and the Village Hall in Old Martlesham for giving us space on their noticeboards – it makes a real difference

### **Community Concerns**

Residents highlighted a number of ongoing issues, including:

- Speeding and anti-social driving (particularly in our car parks)
- Broken glass and intimidating behaviour around the Community Hall car park
- An attempted unauthorised entry to the Community Hall
- Fly-tipping and excess litter on Gloster Road

Our Community Policing Officers confirmed that these issues are being actively addressed and encouraged residents to continue reporting concerns.

Questions were also raised about whether the Community Hall car park barrier could be closed earlier, and the council has confirmed that will explore options for this.

### **Key Points from the Open Discussion**

We asked a few questions as prompts to encourage discussion on Martlesham matters.

#### **If you could change one thing to make our area better, what would that be?**

- The level of traffic and highlighted problem areas including Main Road, Felixstowe Road and the retail park.
- Better bus, walking and cycling connections, particularly between Old Martlesham and Martlesham Heath

#### **What do you see as the main issues in Martlesham and Martlesham Heath?**

- A lack of connectivity between Old Martlesham, Martlesham Heath and Brightwell Lakes
- Communities feeling divided rather than part of one village
- Limited collaboration between estates, organisations and local businesses

#### **What should we be focusing on, either as part of a scheme, or as a council?**

- Building stronger links across all parts of Martlesham
- Developing a shared, inclusive village identity
- Ensuring no area feels overlooked
- A suggestion was also made to explore the provision of a knife (amnesty) bin

Following our initial ice breakers, residents also discussed:

- The Visibility of the scheme with regard to numbers at meetings, publicity and greater involvement with the community. While we are publicising on noticeboards, LinkedIn and Facebook, it was suggested that we bridge out onto other platforms such as Nextdoor as another means for those who do not use social media.
- How changing lifestyles can make it harder to know and engage with neighbours.
- The importance of collaboration with local organisations, not just for advertising but with a physical presence. This would have a positive impact on the both the scheme and the council as means for residents to connect directly with us and highlight the work that we are doing.
- Better face to face opportunities to meet with councillors and Neighbourhood Watch organisers.

Suggestions for involvement included: pop up stands at local events such as Birchwood Fete, involvement in 21 Young Hearts activities and local events in Old Martlesham. There were also ideas for a community event in the Square where multiple organisations/groups could be present to showcase their work/activities.

Improving engagement and reach would allow us to expand on previously well received meetings including more practical based digital sessions to gain more knowledge on cyber security and digital safety. We would also be able to move forward with other suggestions including community litter picks.

### **Neighbourhood Plan**

We then welcomed our Planning Officer who provided an informative introduction to Neighbourhood Planning and the importance of updating our plan for the benefit of Martlesham.

She explained that Neighbourhood Plans are community led documents that give residents a recognised voice in shaping local developments, land use, design standards and infrastructure. This ensures that decisions made reflect what matters most to the people living in Martlesham. Our current Neighbourhood plan has been in place since 2018 and since then, priorities and rules have changed at both a national and district level, so now is the time to review and update ours. This will allow us to incorporate other emerging priorities including climate resilience, sustainability and active travel.

A Neighbourhood Plan is an official document that forms part of the planning system. While it cannot be used to stop developments entirely, it can influence how development happens, including its location, quality and design. This ensures that developments support wellbeing, safety, sustainability and local character. The plan covers areas such as housing, environment protection, design quality, heritage and community facilities. The plan must also fit alongside wider planning policies. Safety considerations can be addressed through planning policies relating to lighting, street layout, natural surveillance, accessibility and design of public spaces.

Safety and wellbeing are key themes within planning. Good design can help to reduce anti-social behaviour by improving lighting, visibility and natural surveillance. Safer walking and

cycling routes encourage people to move about confidently while well designed green spaces and community facilities help to reduce isolation and support mental wellbeing. Planning also plays a role in preparing for climate challenges with measures such as improved drainage, tree planting and shading helping to reduce risks during extreme weather.

Residents took part in mapping activities and wider discussions to identify “bright spots” and “hot spots” across Martlesham, highlighting areas such as:

- The Square
- Traffic issues
- Limited pedestrian and cycling routes
- Lack of facilities for children and young people
- Car parks

### **Looking Ahead**

Thank you again to everyone who attended, shared ideas and contributed to the discussion. Your everyday experiences genuinely help shape the future of our community. If you have further thoughts or would like to get involved, please get in touch.

Our next meeting will be held on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> May at the Martlesham Heath Pavilion from 1:30pm to 2:30pm. We will be joined by the East Suffolk Citizens Advice Service who will be providing a talk on their services, how to access support and the cost of living.