

## **Pebble Coombe Residents Group – Parish Council Meeting 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2024**

### **For Public Issue with Minutes**

Pebble Coombe residents group was set up in 2022 by a number of residents in the Station Rd and Pebblehill Rd area of the parish who were concerned about a number of infrastructure defects in our community as well as on going dangers from traffic north of the Betchworth roundabout to the parish boundary at the base of Pebble Hill. The group now contains nearly all residents in Pebble Coombe area, and is the only established formal residents group in the Parish to our knowledge, the others appearing informal.

At the request of the chair of the parish council at that time we were asked to work closely and fully interactively with the members of the parish council to deliver the improvements the residents were seeking as it was widely agreed with all members of the parish council that the residents requests we're fully justified and more so that Surrey County Council had severely let the community down in their failure to deliver statutory maintenance works or any of the capital works that were required on the B2032 north of the Betchworth roundabout.

Progress to the requests and the priorities set by the residence and the parish council had been going well until recently where there seems to have been a distinct change in appetite by the parish council to continue the struggle of achieving the improvements required and this is why the residents of this sizeable geographical area of the parish have come here tonight to restate our concerns to the parish council whose primary role is to be the voice for the residents to the other statutory authorities of Mole Valley District Council and Surrey County Council, regardless if they themselves do not hold the statutory authority on these issues.

It appears from the lack of transparency in communications to the residence group from anyone on the parish council other than Graham that the issues have not been expedited all progressed since the change in chairmanship and the onboarding of our new parish clerk. Up to this point we had had full transparency and open communication between the residents group and the parish council on all matters including emergency matters that have cropped up from time to time such as the closure of the pathway from the railway to the roundabout, the destruction of the post and rail fencing on the upper pathway, the flooding, the gas leaks closing the road for some considerable period of time a many other emergency situations.

Residents are also brought here tonight as there are serious concerns that although councillor Helyn Clack has tried her utmost to gain traction within Surrey County Council to the issues identified and documented in the priorities list, she has been unsuccessful at obtaining any substantial commitment, dates or times, or any other information as to when the substantial backlog of maintenance work for the Pebble Coombe area will be carried out. Also Councillor Clack has not delivered on the promises given to the residence at the residents forum in July 2022 which was attended by Councillor Clack and the previous Parish Clerk where residents were assured that Surrey County Council would propose a design for Pebble Coombe B2032 road which would be first advised by a speed survey the following spring in 2023 which has never been forthcoming. SCC have today declared that they may have undertaken a very small survey last December 2023, which residents find surprising as no cameras were used and presumably just either radar or pneumatic detectors have been used which are not as accurate as cameras. It now transpires the Surrey County Council are at a loss at how to do a speed survey without the railway affecting the average speed which was a direct request of the residents group as all previous

surveys had been distorted as the survey area started South of the railway and indeed north of the railway thus reducing considerably the average speed in all previous surveys. It should be noted that the speed indicated in the December 2023 survey Northbound – 34.8mph and Southbound – 37.4mph according to SCCs own Speed Policy document is equivalent to the mean speed expected from a 50Mph Urban road, not a 40MPH as it is now which should have a mean average of 32.9mph, and the residents wish 30mph which should achieve 30.5mph

Councillor Clack at her own insistence took over the priority sheets that had up until November of 2023 been extremely well managed and updated by the previous parish clerk. These priority sheets document every outstanding maintenance request, the priorities set by the then parish council and the residents group as well as all of the updates on a weekly and bi weekly basis the both myself and the parish Clerk had obtained from Surrey County Council. Since that date the Councillor Clack took control of the priority schedule the expediting of the maintenance requests have ceased, none of the priorities have moved on, and despite many requests by the residents group, the previous Clerk, and I know Graham himself we have been completely unable to obtain any sensible answers via Councillor Clack as to any dates or progress for any of the maintenance works or the priorities.

I wish to be clear the residents group are very grateful for the support of Councillor Clack and her help with local funding for items such as clearing the pathway, but it is crystal clear the all of these issues now need fully escalated two cabinet members within Surrey County Council, the head of services the infrastructure and highways within Surrey County Council, and our local MP to try and achieve the desired inputs required from Surrey County Council to simply commit to appropriate and reasonable dates and times to undertake both the maintenance works and the redesign for the residents two input to as the draft reply received today from Councillor Clack is not satisfactory in any way.

It should be pointed out to Councillor Clack as an example that despite our efforts and her funding this is now wasted as due to the lack of maintenance since the work that was undertaken using Councillors Clacks local budget the vegetation growth has again not been maintained and he's proving difficult for elderly, disabled, families, and dog walkers once again. Furthermore all of the efforts with the ombudsman to hold Mole Valley to account in street cleaning from Betchworth Station along the wall of the upper path has also been wasted as Surrey County Council has failed to maintain the vegetation which the residents themselves cut back, and now Mole Valley council contractors are again refusing to clean the gully lines as access for their operatives is prohibited by overgrown vegetation once more.

Our community is blighted daily by the volume and speed of vehicles using the B2032 as a cut through to the A217, in particular heavy goods vehicles up to 40 tonnes. The data from the scoop loop at the end of The Coombe clearly shows an increase in the volume of traffic to pre pandemic days and this is made worse by the increased volume pro rata of the heavy goods vehicles. The road is currently a 40 mile an hour speed zone which all residents and even members of this council find dangerous when walking along Station Rd and Pebble Hill and as indicated above SCC themselves indicate the mean average should be only 32.9mph and not that of a 50mph Urban Road. At the annual parish meeting this year we all were lied or you may say misinformed to by Surrey Police's representative as we were told at the public forum that Surrey Police are in contact with residents in the road and told there is not a speed issue on Station Rd or Pebble Hill Rd. Since that time both the previous parish Clerk, myself and Graham have been trying unsuccessfully to obtain a meeting with the local borough commander so that he can explain why his officers completely misinformed the residents and the parish council. This is one example of

a situation that has stopped since the change in the leadership in the parish council and as residents it is the parish councils responsibility to hold these authorities to account.

We have families and grand parents within our community that are too scared to allow their children out of their driveways, to walk along Pebble Hill Rd or Station Rd or for the children to come off the school bus unaccompanied simply due to the volume, speed of vehicles particularly HGV's which suck the small children inward towards the road. This is clearly unacceptable in any community and as a child who used to play along this same area I find it incredible the children of our community cannot enjoy the beautiful countryside, woodland and spaces to play as the traffic is simply too dangerous for their own safety to walk together up to the quarry woods, down to common field, along to the Brockham clump just as I did when I was their age. As you all know our road is part an parcel of the iconic South Downs way and Pilgrims Way. This route is used by Scouts, Duke of Edinburgh scheme members, youth groups and many more who now due to the road being so dangerous to the youngsters walking north or South with their backpacks and tents that they guardians, teachers or group leaders now meet them at the end of The Coombe or at the footpath at the northern end of the area an escort them down the road to ensure their safety. This is a completely unacceptable situation which must be addressed as a matter of urgency and the pathways must be cleared, appropriate crossing points established with signage and all of this is contained within the residents priority schedule now held by Councillor Clack and SCC.

Now residents are fully aware of the proposals by Surrey County Council for the redesign of the A25 from Dorking to Reigate we are deeply concerned with these proposals. It is proposed the average speed cameras are used along the whole stretch of the A25, and the residents believe quite rightly that motorists will simply utilise our stretch of Rd more so than today as it is not protected by average speed cameras and this will simply increase the volume and the dangers to us as residents. I have been in contact with the Reigate podcast team as well as others that have issued the details of this SCC scheme publicly, and I now understand that the parish councils along the route have also had an opportunity to review the proposals and comment accordingly. Why has this parish council not engaged residents group about these proposals in order to get early thoughts and ideas from the residents group on the table and discussed early prior to the official consultation. At a high level this design on the A25 gives a clear opportunity to undertake various works at very little cost to the overall scheme to improve the safety and the community of Pebble Coombe. The first example would be clearly to connect the average speed camera network on the A25 with that on the B2032 that starts at the Pfizer roundabout and extends to the A217. This simple proposal would without a doubt change our community for the better and for the long term. Another example would be simply to improve the crossings at the Betchworth A25 roundabout so that the children of our community can safely cross on their way to school either in the villages or as some do today by bicycle to Ashcombe School Dorking. This scheme would also present the opportunity up building appropriate safe bus stops on or around the Betchworth Roundabout for things like the railway bus relief scheme where currently residents and more so our children have to walk back and forth all the way from the storage yard down at the Arkle Manor in the dark, on a pathway that is vastly overgrown has many trip hazards as the surface is in a very poor condition.

I wish to conclude by reminding the parish council that although you may not be the statutory authority for many the issues the residents group faces you are the voice of the residents and this is expected that as was the previous case with the parish council that you openly and transparently show to residents that you are escalating an expediting all of the issues that this community site faces.

The residents requests are simple and the following is therefore requested;

1. The Parishes full backing in writing for Pebble Coombe Residents , and that they will call out all the failings of SCC to have a dated plan for all the Maintenance and other works required in Pebble Coombe available to residents.

2. That Helyn Escalates immediately the issues and the priorities to Senior Surrey Cabinet Members, to get a proper plan in place that deals with the years of neglect of Pebble Coombe and a plan on how they will action the priorities set out in agreement with Helyn from the Residents, which are

- a. Road & Pathway Infrastructure Improvements and Maintenance, including flooding, Surface, Lining and Signage, much of which is missing. Now includes the collapsing embankment opposite Marshall Surfacing Yard and missing post and railings.
- b. 30MPH Zone from A25 Roundabout to Base of Hill at Parish Boundary with enforcement.
- c. No HGV Zone through Pebblehill and Station Road from A25 to top of Pebblehill

3. That the Clerk takes back control of the priorities spread sheet again. Helyn said that this should be held by her and SCC. However, since the date of issue no one in SCC has updated it with any information at all. They say they have it in hand but have no dates and all the emails we get say, **“No Money, No Resources, No Date”**

4. For Helyn to commit to responding to the top priorities set out by the group as she promised at our residents meeting with her in July 2023. She has not manage to achieve what she committed to do, which was a redesign for the entire stretch of the road following a speed survey, maintenance works undertaken and markings and signage replaced as they are missing.

5. Commitment from Councillors of the Parish and Helyn Clack that have been advised of the design briefs for the A25. You will know that they are using average speed cameras along that route from Dorking to Reigate. We need commitment and confirmation that we will see the average camera zone extended from the A25 Betchworth Roundabout and up to the Cameras starting at Pfizer along the B2032 and improvements to the crossing at the roundabout for pedestrians. These suggestions need to be articulated to SCC now before formal public consultation and the designs need altered accordingly, because you will know from the point of consultation not much will change at all as the budget and risk allocation has already nearly been estimated and allocated, and this is not SCC Funding so it needs dealing with quickly. These are cheap alterations that will have a lasting impact on our community.

Timed – 13m 29Secs