

People power can make our borough a better place to live

We all want a stress-free life. We tend to assume that the police are there to fix any problems we encounter that have an adverse effect on our lives. But that is not always true.

Pothole damaged your tyre? That's Surrey County Council. An abandoned car outside your house? That's Woking Borough Council. Fly-tipped rubbish? That's the landowner's problem. Large amounts of rubbish lying around on public roads? Woking BC. Noisy party in the early hours of the morning? Now that's when a call to the police may be best.

But there's a fourth factor that is invaluable in these situations that affect our lives: you. We, the citizens of Woking, are often the best solution there is to beat crime and stop anti-social behaviour. You are the eyes and ears of the authorities, and by keeping a log of events and doing some checking yourself, you can provide them with the information – called “intelligence” – that will enable them to resolve the problem more cheaply and quickly.

So, if a car looks to be abandoned outside your house, check the DVLA website first: www.gov.uk/check-vehicle-tax. If the car is taxed and has a valid MOT certificate, then it is there legally. Sorry, but you'll have to chat with the owner. If it's not, then report it to Woking BC, and they will liaise with the police if required.

If rubbish is fly-tipped on a verge or other public place, then report it to Woking BC. They will establish who is responsible for clearing it up. If they have to clear it up themselves, then it is an unnecessary cost to us, the taxpayers, and we need to be more vigilant about stopping it in future. So be the eyes and ears of the people. Do not ignore rubbish that has been tipped; report it immediately, as others will surely follow and leave more if it's not cleared up quickly.

Woking BC and Surrey CC both have excellent websites where you can report things. So, rather than moaning about a pothole, or a build-up of rubbish, why not tell the authority and give them a chance to deal with it?

- Woking BC: www.woking.gov.uk/report
- Surrey CC: www.surreycc.gov.uk/do-it-online/report-it-online

I recently complained about an increase in rubbish being left on the pavement and verge along my route into town. It turns out that the road is regularly cleared of litter on weekdays and I only spot it because I am sometimes there earlier than the litter picker. An hour later, and the path would be clear. In this case the problem may be improved with more bins, although I continue to pick up the litter as I walk into town and dispose of it in the proper bins. But by contacting them, I spent time discussing it with the right person instead of whinging.