PRESS RELEASE – 19 February

COMMUNITY PRESSES FOR ACTION AGAINST DRUG DEALERS

Following the residents' demonstration outside Bury Meadow Park on 23 January, as reported in the Express & Echo, community members are delighted with the new strategy established by their neighbourhood policing teams. This has significantly reduced the incidence of drug dealing and drug taking in the Bury Meadow Park which over the past 2 years had reached an unacceptable level, despite the community identifying drug-dealing as the key priority at the St James Ward PACT meeting, chaired by their local Councillor, who has responsibility for parks. The community was very aware that St James and St David’s Wards were flooded with drugs and it was making life very unpleasant for all who live and work there.

The noisy demonstration on 23 January was supported by students from Exeter College who said Bury Meadow Park was increasingly a “no go” area for them. The President of the Students Union recently reported to Exeter Parks Watch that she had been followed and intimidated when walking to work through the Park in broad daylight. Other students feared going into the Park during the day.

Committee Members from St David’s Neighbourhood Partnership have been pressing for a multi-agency approach. In addition to the change in policing patterns, it is now hoped that Exeter City Council will address the problem of dense and tall shrubs round the Park which provide hiding places for concealing drugs, storing drugs and taking drugs. Bury Meadow also needs to become a place for the community and young families. Exeter City Council has £60,000 from St David’s ward residential developments to spend on
upgrading children’s play equipment in the Park. Most of this money has been in the Council’s bank account since 2005 and the upgrading could have been undertaken 3 years ago. St David’s Residents and Bury Meadow Residents continue to press for an imaginative play scheme which includes the community’s proposals, although local proposals have so far been dismissed by the Council without explanation.

The City Council pays for additional police officers in the City Centre: this helps to keep drug takers and vagrants out of the commercial centre. This, of course, means they are pushed into residential area, making life miserable for local residents. Thanks to the excellent work of our neighbourhood police and our PCSOs in particular, local councillors are now being pressed to listen to residents’ concerns

Once the Park becomes “user-friendly” and local people and groups can once again use this valuable green space for recreation and relaxation, the problems of blatant drugs dealing will be forced out permanently.

Local residents are monitoring the situation and are grateful to their excellent neighbourhood police team for helping to progress a strategic approach to the problem. If the situation deteriorates, local residents will again take up their placards and demonstrate in the street.

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