

# Police 'not up to speed'

■ Volunteer teams frustrated that Speed Watch guns are lying idle

■ Equipment costing thousands gathers dust due to 'communications error'

**FRUSTRATED** anti-speed campaigners say they have been let down by the police.

They are unable to use traffic speed-check equipment despite paying thousands of pounds for it because an officer who retired has not been replaced.

Both Thanington and Chartham parish

councils signed up to Kent Police's Speed Watch scheme aimed at advising drivers to slow down.

But since February their equipment has been gathering dust.

Now the councils say they feel let down by the police and their appeals for help have been ignored.

Police admit there has been "a breakdown in communication".

■ Full story, page 5; Comment, page 10.

## Police say sorry for Speed Watch scheme fiasco



■ Gazette reports on Speed Watch debacle

A POLICE chief apologised for not giving Speed Watch volunteers the backup they had been promised.

Ch Insp Lee Russell has said an officer will now be given responsibility for the scheme, which uses speed-check equipment to target speeding motorists.

We revealed last week how expensive equipment bought by two parish councils had been gathering dust since the police officer responsible for the scheme retired in February.

Thanington and Chartham

councils said both had been let down by the police after attempts to find out who had taken on his job failed.

Now the chairman of Hackington parish council, Ray Evison, has also voiced his concern.

Hackington was one of the first councils to invest in Speed Watch yet volunteers had been waiting almost a year for training.

Mr Evison said: "Having recently undertaken a parish appraisal in which by far the largest cause for concern was speeding

and inconsiderate traffic through Tyler Hill, we feel doubly let down by the loss of support.

"We believe the police did not just take their eye off the ball, they closed their eyes to the issue."

Ch Insp Russell said: "An officer is being nominated to be the link for Speed Watch and we regret this was not addressed sooner."

In the meantime, PCSO Trevor Ingram will work with Thanington parish council to get Speed Watch up and running.

Neighbourhood officer PC Nick Bell had spoken to Chartham parish council and training was being arranged for the Speed Watch volunteers.

The police would also be contacting Hackington parish council.

Roger Cheeseworth, Thanington council clerk, said: "It is positive news.

"Having spent a long time talking to the police switchboard and not getting anywhere, I am glad the Gazette brought it to the police's attention."