

WATCH OVER WOKING



The news-sheet of the Woking Association of Neighbourhood Watches (WAN)



PC Kirsten Hobbs and PCSO Lesley Foster

Issue 7

Spring 2013

Chairman: Tony Kremer email:
chair@wanw.org.uk

Website: www.wanw.org.uk

Message from your Chairman

Dear Watch Coordinator

This edition of WoW focuses on an account of the Police & Crime Commissioner Kevin Hurley's stimulating meeting with us earlier in March. We are carrying a fairly full account of what was said for the benefit not only of those Coordinators not there but also for residents in your watch who might be interested, so please do pass it on.

The question of "passing it on" brings me to the subject of E-Watch which those of you at the AGM know is one of our 2013 objectives. We want to find ways of communicating more to residents in Watches but feel it best to continue the practice of communicating THROUGH the Coordinator. So we need to find out which Coordinators need some help in collecting email addresses and constructing an email list. Please email me if you want to talk about this but do expect someone to be in touch in the coming period.

Let me mention the Surrey Awards scheme for best Coordinator and for best PCSO. Details were sent out just a few weeks ago and nominations are needed by 19 April. I will be on the judging panel. As you may remember our very own Fui-Ling Bolton was adjudged to be best coordinator in 2012. Let's do it again!

Best wishes
Tony Kremer

Your Police do listen to residents!

On the 8th April representatives of the WAN met with Inspector John Davies to discuss improvements in communications between the Police and the Neighbourhood Watches. A small but useful suggestion from the WAN was to improve the contents of the weekly Crime Bulletins to include details of cars that the police want to trace. The thinking is that lots of people walk their dogs and notice suspicious cars. Having registration numbers to look out for would provide a small, but valuable, extension to the Police "eyes". Just 5 days later, the next bulletins went out with this new information. A big thank you to Woking Police for the speed in which they implemented this suggestion. The first of many, we hope.

The Surrey Police already use Facebook - see "Woking Beat": <https://en-gb.facebook.com/WokingPolice> and are now big Twitter users: <https://twitter.com/WokingBeat>. The WAN are currently investigating the best use of Twitter to improve the 2-way communications between the local Police and the Neighbourhood Watch coordinators.

Your local beat reports for Spring 2013 →



Police Reports -
Spring 2013.pdf

Kevin Hurley, Your new Police and Crime Commissioner



Kevin Hurley was elected as Surrey's first Police and Crime Commissioner in November 2012. He has thirty years' police experience, much of it at senior level. He has dealt with crime and anti-social elements from walking the beat in London and Surrey to writing the National Policing Plan for Iraq. He has done much: from improving care of victims to leadership responsibility for thousands of police officers and multi million pound budgets. As one of a family of three generations of Police officers and with nine immediate relatives still serving or retired, he has unique insights into how the police operate and are funded.

The coordinators who attended the 11th March meeting at The Maybury Centre will have come away with the feeling that here we have a dedicated, knowledgeable and forthright PCC. Below is a report of the meeting.

Neighbourhood Watch is a vital element in Surrey's fight against crime, said Kevin Hurley, the recently-elected Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), and its importance is set to grow in the future as police budgets are reduced even more in coming years. The PCC was addressing Woking's Neighbourhood Watch Coordinators at a workshop held on 11th March in Maybury attended by around 70.

Tony Kremer, Chair of WAN, opened the meeting by sharing his recent experience of reporting a theft abroad, which taught him never to take good policing for granted and brought home how vital it is for citizens to have an effective police force with a generally accepted rule of law.

Surrey's policing priorities

Kevin Hurley outlined his crime plan, its six key issues based upon his manifesto, namely:

- Take a zero-tolerance approach to policing in Surrey
- Deliver more visible street policing
- Put victims at the centre of the criminal justice system
- Give you more opportunities to have your say about policing
- Protect local policing, standing up for officers and maintaining the morale & ethos of service
- Uncompromising on the leadership & service standards expected from the Police

More than just policy

It isn't just about policy though, the PCC said, it was also about the way police interact. He wants Police officers to be properly turned out, polite and welcoming. They should listen and respond in a timely fashion. To some extent this would mean a change in their culture. He wants the Chief Constable to lead and inspire the force at all levels to provide a quality service.

Key to being an elected Commissioner however is his relationship to residents: the new regime is about accountability to the electorate. Kevin Hurley is anxious to ensure his operation is highly visible, in contrast to the previous regime which was perceived to operate behind closed doors. Aiming to make himself open and accountable, the PCC has to take the strategic view of policing in Surrey. He is not responsible for operations, but he will be holding the Chief Constable to account regularly, and this is no longer behind closed doors: you can go on the website (www.surrey-pcc.gov.uk/) to see the recording of this. Kevin Hurley claims to be the only PCC in the country who does this. He answers to the electorate and is monitored by the Police and Crime Panel.

In the current economic constraints, central funding which makes up half of his source of funds has been cut by 23%, so inevitably he has had to put up the precept (effectively our taxes) to keep the overall cut down to 12%. And he forecasts more cuts in future years.

One way of dealing with reduced funding would be to have a reduced Police presence on the streets but there are other avenues. Mr Hurley is pursuing opportunities for Surrey to integrate some functions with neighbouring forces like Sussex & Hampshire. He gave examples such as crime investigators e.g. finger-printing, firearms officers, the major crime unit. Savings can also be made through cross-border mobilisation (Kent or Hampshire cars responding to a Surrey incident just over the county border) and British Bankers Association's joint-funding of a fraud investigations team. Further funds have been freed up by reducing the overheads of the Office of the PCC.

In answer to a question Kevin Hurley admitted that Surrey's crime detection rate was not good enough, though statistics are hard to compare across forces as different areas attract a different kind of crime. Surrey, with its high net worth areas close to London attracts outside criminals.

Workshop: how well are we served?

The first workshop dealt with the level of satisfaction with our neighbourhood police service. Many felt that the answer varied across Woking's 9 areas, with Mayford Coordinators particularly unhappy. The PCC was asked how he and we should evaluate the local neighbourhood police on their performance. He declined to support the idea of making Police complete an annual checklist of local duties that each officer should have fulfilled. WAN Chair Tony Kremer added that Surrey NhW Association intended to run a survey of Watch Coordinators' attitudes towards the Police and their experience. This would provide a snapshot, but in order to monitor improvement, he would propose that this should be repeated after two years to see progress against the 6 targets.

Kevin Hurley had a question for the Coordinators present: when did you last hear a Chief Constable, Chief Superintendent or a Superintendent address Coordinators? The response was not for at least ten years. Another said that Peter Williams (latterly deputy chair of the old Police Authority) was a regular attender at the quarterly meetings in Woking, but his focus was mainly on financial matters. It was agreed that in future regular Community Safety Meetings should be held.

One questioner asked what were the qualities needed in a good NhW Coordinator. The PCC responded that both he and the Chief Constable strongly support the concept of NhW. He felt that Coordinators were a very important element of future policing as the unformed presence reduces. The key role is to spread the message on crime reduction and energise people to be more vigilant. They should be active in neighbourhood police teams. NhW should push boundaries of what is done by Police and what by residents. It's important for there to be a relationship between the co-ordinators and police. Unlocking the passion in every good police man and woman is his aim.

He hoped that WAN could recruit younger Coordinators and people from ethnic minorities.

Workshop: communications to and from the PCC

Tony Kremer said that he wanted to get more Coordinators active in forwarding communications to their residents, preferably by email. An action being taken by WAN: we will contact all co-ordinators who had not responded to recent invitations to meetings.

One of the workshop sessions asked Coordinators to consider how best to communicate with the PCC? Many agreed with WAN's suggestion of a quarterly email from the PCC, also to be carried by local press. This email should record success to date against the six priorities.

As to how residents can feedback to the PCC, the overview could be obtained by WAN through the intended survey mentioned above. Local issues should be raised in the first instance at local level, but in the absence of a response, they could be raised with the PCC. His office will bring it to the attention of Senior Officers for it to be passed back down the chain. Another option is for WAN to act as a channel of communications to the PCC.

Mr Hurley did ask co-ordinators not to mass-email him as this was unhelpful.

An important channel of communications was the Police Panels. Area Coordinator Paul Salt pointed out that the Sheerwater panel had disappeared. The PCC said the neighbourhood team should be holding meetings in some form. Tony Kremer said that publicity was key to a good turn-out and he had secured agreement that all panels would continue unless attendance at well-advertised meetings remained poor. WAN believes that it is up to areas to support the panels and make them worthwhile. Their real strength is the ability for local priorities to be set, with the Police reporting back on performance achieved against previous priorities.

The PCC questioned as to why a problem raised separately with the Police was not included in the concerns raised at a Panel meeting. The questioner suggested that poor communications within the Police had resulted in the local team not being kept in the loop.

One Coordinator wanted to know why no action had been taken on cars he believed were involved in serious crime. The PCC agreed that it was clearly incumbent on the police to respond. Sgt Mark Bridge promised to discuss this with the resident.

A question was asked as to how we know whether the PCC is meeting the targets. The response included the point that the crime statistics as currently displayed on the website do not include much detail & are often out of date. The proposed quarterly email newsletter should include crime statistics.

Speed watch

Fed up with motorists speeding down your road? Want do something about it on behalf of your community? There is a solution: set up a local Speed Watch scheme. The Community Speed Watch is a sister Watch scheme to the Neighbourhood Watch and is also affiliated to Surrey Police.

Local residents are trained to operate mobile speed guns by the local Police Casualty Reduction Office and each Watch receives its own speed gun for use on the nominated local roads. Working in pairs, the residents need to commit to carrying out the checks on a regular basis – this is not a one-off activity. It could be once a fortnight, once a month, or on an ad-hoc basis. This is up to the volunteers. One person operates the gun whilst the other notes the vehicle registration, make, colour and the time. The speed recorded by the gun is added to those details. These are emailed to Surrey's Speed Watch centre where the police take action.

If the vehicle can be positively identified the owner is sent a warning letter by the Police. If we are honest, if we were caught speeding by a local team and received a letter we would be very likely to watch our speed in the future. After all, we have received just a warning that could easily have been a fine and points on our licence if recorded by the police. If the motorist is caught speeding a second time a more firmly worded warning letter is sent. Caught a third time and the driver is in trouble.

The scheme has been used successfully in the streets of Woking. Sarah Woolmer of West Byfleet was impressed by the training and the commitment of Mark Talbot, our local Casualty Reduction Officer. Her road is used as a rat-run and the use of the speed gun has resulted in the lowering of the average speeds by motorists, as it has in another local road where the camera is used. Just having the warning signs put up at each end of the road (a mandatory requirement) is a passive method of reducing speeding. But Sarah warns that those who go on the training need to understand that this is a commitment to carrying out the checks on a regular basis. Claire Castle in Westfield has similar views. As with Sarah there are two roads registered for the Watch in her patch and one is a busy main road with a school close to one end. She is grateful that her contribution means she can do something positive about speeding motorists. She feels she is influencing her environment. Both ladies agree that the visible Speed Watch creates a sense of neighbourhood community.

To start a scheme up make sure you have a big enough core of volunteers who can commit to carrying out the checks. These may only be 1 hour a month, but the commitment must be there. Choose one or two roads in your patch where you believe speeding is a problem. The equipment and training is not cheap and we want to ensure that the cost is money well spent for Surrey Police. Interested? Then contact the WAN chairman, Tony Kremer chair@wanw.org.uk. The WAN will coordinate all the enquiries and make sure that the Police have a large number of committed residents to train in one session. Go on, do something about speeding rather than just moaning about it.

Property safety advice

Your Safer Neighbourhood Teams have outlined some simple tips that could help to make your property secure (thanks to PCSO Mital Patel):

- Please remember to secure all doors and windows to your property. Always use the key to set deadlocks on your doors – do not rely on just the latch mechanism to secure the door. Don't forget all upstairs windows and small windows.
- Secure any outdoor gates, sheds, and outhouses. That means with locks or bolts.
- Please make sure that all valuables are not visible from a window or in vehicles.
- Use timer switches to allow lights to come on automatically when you are out. These are devices with a 24 hour timer switch that can be plugged into your lamps: you can then select the appropriate time for the lamp to come on to give the impression that someone is in.
- Property-mark your valuables. For smaller items like jewellery you should take pictures of each individual item to ensure that they can be identified, as this will make it difficult for burglars to sell on and can easily be traced by Police. WAN can supply SelectaDNA kit to forensic-mark them at a reasonable price (see below).
- If you see anyone acting suspiciously please report these using the 101 number or speak directly to your Safer Neighbourhood Team

For details on getting a SelectaDNA kit, contact Tony Kremer: chair@wanw.org.uk

Details of the product: <http://www.selectadna.co.uk/forensic-coding-domestic-kits.html>