Acting quickly to defeat crime

The days of *Dixon of Dock Green* are long gone. Criminals no longer go around in a striped jumper and mask, and are not known by their first name to the local sergeant. Criminals are now far more sophisticated and anonymous and we, the public, need to up our game accordingly.

Speed is key to preventing crime or catching criminals red-handed – that is, getting the right information to the police in the quickest time. The facility to do this has been in place for over a hundred years: the telephone. The 999 call was started in 1936. When calling, we quite rightly expect the police to react accordingly and without delay. The evidence shows that this does happen, irrespective of what we believe.

But if we see something suspicious, and a crime is not imminent or in progress, we now have the option to ring 101. This service did not have a good start due to long wait times. In Surrey, we have been assured that this has been addressed, but we still might find it more convenient to place a 101 "Call" via the Surrey Police website.

But what do we tell the police? Has all the evidence been collected? Have you enough to tell the police that enables them to collate your call into a wider gathering of intelligence? This is where social media becomes invaluable. Love it or hate it, social media is here to stay and, used properly, is an invaluable tool for all.

If you encounter something suspicious or unwanted, tell others immediately in your community and get them to look out for the problem. They can report back their sightings via social media, such as Facebook. Reports of sightings will soon come in as word gets out. Someone in the group can then take responsibility and call 101 (or 999 if urgent) and give the police all the intelligence they need to react. All those following the social media posts will know that it has been reported to the police. It is much better to prevent a crime than to have to deal with the aftermath.

Social media is not for everyone, but it has proved invaluable across the country in reducing crime and catching criminals. There will inevitably be someone in your street or community who is a good social media user and they will be up for this. In fact, there's probably already a social media group in place – just go online and take a look.

Report it to Surrey Police: call 999 or 101 or *https://www.surrey.police.uk/ro/report/*