



Neighbourhood Watch Members Meeting and AGM 19th September 2023 at 7pm



The Coddendam Centre, Coddendam, Nr Ipswich

MINUTES

(1) Welcome and apologies.

Tony Spall welcomed everyone. He noted there had been 13 apologies. Tony introduced the first speaker.

(2) Speaker: Tim Passmore, Suffolk Police & Crime Commissioner.

TP began by thanking Neighbourhood Watch for the work we do in our communities. TP has been in the role for 11 years, seeing major changes and developments in crime over that time. The resulting challenges to the Constabulary, in summary he sees as:

- Rural crime is growing in our communities: illegal drugs trade, county lines.
- The rise in fraud is often unseen: online romance, credit cards. We all must raise awareness.
- Cost of living crisis affects deprivation with links to increased crime.
- Growth of domestic violence, modern-day slavery and illegal migration.
- The Police need a multi-agency approach: this must include the voluntary sector and charities.
- Suffolk still remains under-funded by the government. The third lowest in the country: even Norfolk receives £5 more per head of population and the Met something like £50/£60 per head!

Some positive news:

- Recruiting just over 200 new officers: this means a relatively young work force and with training will bring future benefits.
- The *Kestrel* project now rolled out to more districts: 7 staff per area focused on asb, car crime, shop-lifting, etc.
- Domestic burglary visits: it has always been the policy of our Police to visit all cases, unlike other Forces.
- *Fast Justice*: swifter processes in the courts help reduce admin.
- Expanding the rural crime teams. TP has been chairing a review of rural crime with a new report about to be published. [NOTE: Suffolk NHWA think it is: https://www.suffolk.police.uk/sites/suffolk/files/2023-09/SuffolkRuralWildlifePolicingStrategy_2023-2025.pdf].
- New commercial vehicle unit already seeing results (focus on Felixstowe).
- Improved emphasis on disrupting serious crime.

- Continued opportunities for volunteers: *Citizens in Policing*: on horse-back, Cadets now grown into 7 units, Special Constables, staff positions.
- TP noted that almost every crime now has an associated digital footprint. Suffolk Police are now reaping rewards from the investment in the Cybercrime unit based in Halesworth who are able to assist with digital forensics.

There are still problems with a backlog in our courts and also the growing episodes of missing children, many from care: 3,000 episodes last year. The emphasis must be multi-agency and improve early safeguarding to break the cycle. This approach must also focus on mental health difficulties: the *Right Care / Right Person*: 22,000 calls on this issue last year.

Again the multi-agency approach must help address the rise in domestic abuse, through independent domestic violence experts and less the Police.

New govt. *Safer Street Funding* of £1 million includes a focus on engaging young people and reducing re-offending and serious sexual offences.

TP values Neighbourhood Watch to help us all “make it more difficult for crime” in our county.

(3) Speaker: Chief Inspector Andy Pursehouse, Suffolk Constabulary.

AP is head of the Neighbourhood Partnerships Teams. There is more travelling crime now and policing is having to adapt to new technology. He announced a major new model of working which we will see in the next few months. There will be 13 Engagement Officers and 80 Police Officers deployed into Neighbourhood Policing. AP sees the approach more akin to the “old-fashioned Beat Officers” with an emphasis on building local knowledge: engaging, listening and solving issues in their neighbourhoods.

AP commented on the new model helping tackle the “hidden harms” of modern-day slavery and domestic abuse, with an approach based on the “right people, in the right place, at the right time”.

Police Connect: AP keen these email messages are used and received widely for Neighbourhood Watch, as ears & eyes to report intelligence and concerns.

Police website: for reporting and valuable information: *First Principles* is their range of crime prevention advice and guidance. *Constables County* also a valuable news link to communities.

Online is the quickest way to report crime (via <https://www.suffolk.police.uk/contact-us/report-something>) There is also now Live Chat online, and phoning 101 and of course 999.

(4) Questions & Answers to the above:

- (i) **Andy Tucker (Bury St Edmunds Area B).** In summary: outlined new national standards statistics issued by the Home Office which bulks incidents

of violence, sexual abuse and domestic abuse into a single category. His view is how unhelpful it is for members of the community to understand and take action. The stats need separation and better context.

TP accepted this point. He will seek further analysis to try and reach a breakdown of categories and numbers. TP will also consider breaking the stats down into more localised areas to help define hotspots.

- (ii) **Graham Holmes (Hadleigh Area C).** Commented on an incident which gave a very poor experience phoning 101, not only on the length of time taken but also the disregard of the Police 101 call-handler. It later materialised the incident had importance to the Police.
AP commented that from what he heard this was a 999 incident. That should have been clearly understood by the call-handler.
TP said that recent £1.4 funding (part of the county precept that we all pay) is now invested in improved staffing in the Control Room, with improved capacity with 27 extra call-handlers, from the end of October.
There was a request from the floor for a tour of the Control Room if possible?
AP will look into this.

- (iii) **John Sones (Hadleigh Area C).** Asked if there can be an improvement in knowledge on local crimes for Neighbourhood Watch leaders? It was also mentioned that the new model (as above) seems to continue the current structure of 13 district Community Engagement Officers: their role being the main link with Watch leaders on local crimes.
TP was firm that Police engagement must improve and the Police must be answerable to this. Communications need to be better and must be two-way.
AP said the new model is designed to help this.

- (iv) **Tony Allen (Felixstowe Area A).** Asked about recruitment and career development: i.e. if new recruits had to have degrees.
TP said nowadays recruitment is governed by the "Police Educational & Qualifications Framework". Every new officer undergoes a year of front-line duties and then streamed to their particular strengths and interests, with 1 and 2 years further training.

- (v) **Claude Brand (Eye Area A) Police Connect:** some communication was sometimes too late. For example it was Rural Crime Week but there was little/no advance notice! Can this be improved?
TP good notice is important. He supported the emphasis on rural crime and highlighted fly-tipping as a problem. He seeks a change in the law and DEFRA for better enforcement. Why should the landholder suffer.

- (vi) **Bill Davies (Hadleigh Area A).** Can we have phone calls from the Police on local crime?

AP: that approach is not supportable nowadays. He also said that national stats on crime (via www.police.uk) were always a month or two behind. Connect is what is actually happening now.

- (vii) It was commented the online reporting form starts with the request for demographic data (in the “woke” style). This data is mandatory as you cannot proceed to complete the report until done. Why?
AP replied that there are some legal requirements for data collection but he will look into this.

A further contribution was made by **PC Chris Garrod**, Community Engagement Officer in Ipswich. He highlighted the value he sees in the new model: creating a structure of a sergeant and 3 teams of two will help provide improved coverage for an area, with a dedicated email address.

(5) Speaker: Sasha Watson, Suffolk Trading Standards.

SW presented from some slides, now available on our [website](#). Key points:

- Trading Standards is an enforcement agency authority, governed by over 80 Acts of Parliament representing 2,000 regulations and orders across a wide range of subject areas!
- Recent issues are on age restrictions (i.e. vaping) and illegal tobacco via shipping containers through Felixstowe.
- Scams and Frauds are a cross-over with the Police and ActionFraud. SW believes only about 5% are allegedly recorded. They look for “red flags”: victims can be elderly or estranged people. If you are scammed you must report to ActionFraud to get a number, then report to bank and/or Police as appropriate. They work with the national team to disrupt scams.
- Keeping up-to-date is a challenge. SW recommends receiving the regular emails. Register at <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/jointhefight>
- They supply *No-cold-calling* stickers focused on anyone that door-knocks: traders, charities, agencies, etc.
- *Friends Against Scams* offers some good online training. See <https://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk>

(6) Questions & Answers to Trading Standards:

- (i) **Andy Tucker.** Although cold-calling is not illegal, is there still a need for pedlars to have a licence?
SW yes they must. A licence is required if carrying goods door to door. It is not required for selling services such cleaning gutters/drives etc. However, a licence is not difficult to source and can be used across multiple counties.

With respect to **Cold-calling zones**, Trading Standards recently opened their 200th (in Kessingland). There are a number of technical steps for such communities to consider: what nominated area; liaison with the police and council regarding evidence of crime, door-step fraud, rogue trading, etc; a proportionality check; survey

of residents for a majority... The result can include lamp-post street-signs, stickers for every resident and website publicity.

(7) Suffolk Neighbourhood Watch Association Annual General Meeting

- (i) Apologies for absence: 13 received.
- (ii) Review of draft minutes to 2022 AGM and matters arising: as published on our website. Approved. Proposed and seconded from floor.
- (iii) Committee's Annual Report: as on website.
- (iv) Treasurer's Annual Report & Accounts: as on website.
- (v) Election of officers and committee: the current committee stood down and the election resulted in the following roles being proposed and seconded from the floor:
 - Chair: no one elected to this role.
 - Treasurer: Angie Barnetson
 - Secretary: Paul Garner
 - Committee members:
 - Graham Holmes - Database officer
 - Nick King - Funding officer
 - Tony Spall – Communications officer
 - Brian Sivyer - Committee member
 - Angela Rayner - Committee member
- (vi) Changes to Constitution: none proposed.

All present acknowledged and thanked our speakers. Also thanks to Eric Sewell and his daughter who joined us, trading a wide selection of crime deterrent and prevention items.

Claude Brand from the floor, thanked the Committee for their hard work on behalf of Neighbourhood Watch across the county.

The meeting closed at 21.00 hours.