



Neighbourhood Watch Members Meeting and AGM



2nd July 2024 at 7pm

The Coddendam Centre, Mary Day Close,
Coddendam, Nr Ipswich, IP6 9SR

Minutes

(1) Welcome and apologies

Tony Spall (TS) welcomed attendees to the meeting, and explained that there had been significant changes since last year within Suffolk Police and SWNA. The SNWA members had been given the opportunity to pose questions to the key speakers via the SNWA website.

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

Tim Passmore (TP) began by thanking the members of Suffolk Neighbourhood Watch for all the effort, help and support they provide to the police and the community. Suffolk now has the 4th lowest recorded crime rate in the country. Suffolk Police now have 1425 officers following an addition of 220 officers over the last year. Feedback on the new policing model has been positive, particularly with respect to improved police visibility. Over the last 12 months multiagency working has been featured, along with a focus on the execution of justice. Domestic abuse victim support has been provided via the Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVA) service, with a new £2m three year contract awarded last year, with an option to extend for two further years. Work has continued to reduce the barriers to reporting serious sexual offences. Unfortunately Suffolk Rape Crisis has closed, not due to funding problems but to some organisational issues. TP is hopeful that a replacement service will be found in future. The PCC has provided £300k to Suffolk Community Foundation, which funds voluntary sector initiatives that support the delivery of the Police and Crime Plan. TP is keen to improve the support for victims of crime, especially sexual crime and domestic abuse. Suffolk Police have implemented the Right Care, Right Person initiative in order to reduce the burden of mental health issues on the police. Roads policing units already do a good job in a challenging county.

Overall Suffolk is the 4th lowest funded force per resident in the country. The Suffolk Police communications and control room uplift has been completed, including 27 additional call officers, and the new Digital comms desk. Whilst

these changes have resulted in an improved service, there remains a need to modernise the physical facilities.

A new Police and Crime plan will be drafted by the end of August 2024, which will be followed by a period of consultation and then budget setting for implementation from April 2025. TP is aware that there is a need to improve crime prevention, and so input from SNWA to the plan would be welcome.

Other key themes are likely to include: schools engagement, prevention of addiction, prevention of fraud, dealing with rural crime, looking at new policing schemes, e.g. hotspot policing, drones, and reduction of retail crime including assault on shop workers.

(3) Insp Naomi Lofthouse, Suffolk Constabulary (Inspector Ben Richards, Sgt Steve Wright and PC Guy Ainsworth were also in attendance)

Insp Lofthouse has very recently taken over from Insp Richards as CPT Locality Inspector. The New Policing Model was implemented in December 2023. Phase 1 is now complete. Suffolk Police are now doing a 12-month review, which will include the redesign of some teams that were not included in phase 1. Feedback has been positive for the new community policing approach. CPTs now have more time to get involved with communities and undertake partnership working, with less time spent on investigations. Response and investigation teams require more work to ensure adequate resourcing. The new approach has meant that diary based appointments are working more effectively. The control room live chat team was launched in March 2024 and has had very positive feedback. There were 12,000 chats during May 2024, with improved waiting times and 95% positive recommendation rating. The Digital team also receive the 101 website inputs and respond as appropriate. This is not managed via an AI chatbot.

Local policing priorities are set as part of a hierarchical approach. The PCC sets the overall strategy, The Chief Constable sets a delivery plan including force priorities, regional priorities, and then local priorities. The local priorities are influenced by analysis of local crime data included data related to repeat offenders, repeat victims, and local officer face to face engagements. Local priorities are updated on the Suffolk Police web site every month.

Insp Richards noted that the new CPT model has meant Anti-social Behaviour reporting has reduced and burglary solution rates have been good, at about 50%. Now every CPO is seen as a "school CPO", giving stronger links with schools, and able to support many more awareness weeks. Police officer engagement has increased from 200 per month to 1500-2000 per month across the county. These numbers are likely to be an underestimate.

Policing gazebos have been used much more at local events, highstreets events etc. Monthly surgeries have been held at pop up shops or other community facilities to enable easier engagement with police by all members of the community. Crime prevention is still very important and the police

endorsed “Secured by Design” products and guidelines for homes and vehicles are recommended (<https://www.securedbydesign.com/>).

(4) Questions & Answers to the above:

- Paul Cawthorne commented that the police were to be commended for their support at pop up shops and their strong community presence in Ipswich Town Centre after the fatal stabbing of a teenager last year.
- Nick King asked if Suffolk Police plan to make use of their access to the SNWA database of NW schemes across the county. Insp Lofthouse stated that they plan to use this material more, and agreed that CPTs could get more actively involved with their local NW scheme coordinators. PC Guy Ainsworth was introduced to the meeting as the new dedicated single point of contact for SNWA in the force.
- Martin Luck, a NW member and resident in Harlow Essex who is soon to relocate to Suffolk, stated that in Harlow he receives a weekly update from the police on local crime issues. This information is very good, will this be replicated in Suffolk? Insp Lofthouse referred to Police Connect and other police information sources already available. TS added that SNWA does produce a monthly newsletter, including valuable crime prevention advice, issued to all its database.
- Peter Corder stated that he had only one or two communications from the police as well as Police Connect. Peter had in the past worked on transport services which included police crime prevention vehicles etc. Suffolk Police handed off crime prevention to SNWA. Why hasn't SNWA been funded? Could we get back to better police communications to NW and crime prevention? TP agreed that more needs to be done on crime prevention and would be happy to look at funding for SNWA subject to clarity over need. Sgt Steve Wright made point that previously all CEOs were trained on crime prevention, and that Suffolk Police has “design out crime” officers and the First Principles information on crime prevention. Suffolk Police have been training every officer to become crime prevention aware to help reduce repeat crimes etc.
- Brian Sivyer commented that there used to be dedicated crime prevention teams and that perhaps we should go back to something more focused? Inspectors Lofthouse and Richards both stated that Suffolk Police do still promote crime prevention via online channels as well as working with councils who have dedicated funding for community safety and ASB reduction.
- Andy Tucker commented that if the new policing model is working really well on community engagement this a good step forward but asked if crime statistics were fit for purpose? Last year (13th Apr.) the Minister for Policing Chris Philp announced changes to the Home Office Counting Rules (i.e. how crimes are recorded) to be immediately implemented (and would "free up 443,000 policing hours") with a follow-up review of the National Standard For Incident Reporting; the changes to the Counting Rules included raising the

threshold for recording minor crimes as well as other pragmatic changes but had the Constabulary yet seen any positive benefits from the changes introduced and are the crime statistics reflecting the new changes introduced? TP agreed that stats could be improved.

- Inspector Richards noted that Neighbourhood Partnership group meetings held by Suffolk Police, which are public events and include representatives from local county councils, would benefit from a formal NW presence.
- Graham Holmes commented that he has updated the SNWA scheme coordinator database in line with the new CPT boundaries. This did however raise some conflict with traditional council ward boundaries. The SNWA also now have an on-line boundary map with each of the NW schemes embedded for easy look-up. Some CPAs are very large, will the boundaries change under the forthcoming review? Insp Richards replied that the police were looking to uplift number of officers in some very large CPAs rather than change the CPA boundaries. The allocation of CPOs is based on demand rather than geography.
- Paul Cawthorne commented that Suffolk Police could engage in more forthright PR and messaging including using ideas from other organisations such as the “Don’t be a tosser” in Bradford as part of their hard-hitting Keep Britain Tidy campaign, better signage with larger police images, police posters in shop windows etc.

(5) Suffolk Neighbourhood Watch Association Annual General Meeting

- i. **Apologies for absence:** 6 received.
- ii. **Review of draft minutes to 2023 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 following roles were 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 – Area Coordinator.

Martin Luck noted that he is moving to Suffolk from Harlow and would like to get involved once settled here.

- vi. **Changes to Constitution:** Proposed new constitution has been on the SNWA website for some time. Changes were highlighted by TS. The new constitution was proposed by Graham Holmes, seconded by Paul Cawthorne.
- vii. **AoB**
 - Rob Woolnough noted that last year the AGM included a presence from Trading Standards why not this year? TS replied we have three area command meetings being planned now, which we hope will include Trading Standards.
 - Eric Sewell commented that NW had seemed to have been pushed away from Suffolk Police over the last few years, but that does seem to be changing now under the new model which is to be welcomed. TS also noted that PC Guy Ainsworth as the new SPOC will hopefully have more time to dedicate to NW both inside the force and publicly. NK also made the point that we need to make more effort to help police to understand what benefits police will get by engaging with NW.
 - Trevor Gibbons asked how SNWA can get some income. His area of Needham Mkt has raised ~£10K over 25 years. TS replied that funding applications have previously been over bureaucratic. TP has now made the offer to make funds available, which will be followed up by SNWA Executive.
 - Claude Brand from the floor, thanked the Committee for their hard work on behalf of Neighbourhood Watch across the county.
 - Off-stage thanks were given by SNWA to Sgt Steve Wright for his seven years of professional and personal support to the committee and Neighbourhood Watch.

The meeting closed at 21.00 hours.