

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE held on 8 January 2003 at the Vernon Institute, Saughall

In attendance: Councillor A Bailey (in the Chair)
Councillor Mrs P Humphrey
Councillor Mrs JE Storrar
Councillor A Warrington

Invited Members: Councillor RA Storrar
Councillor B Kerr

Saughall Homewatch: Mrs BW Bell
Mr V Cooper
Mr S Kalaher
Mr R Leslie

Cheshire Constabulary: Mr D Owens, Homewatch Manager, Chester and Ellesmere Port Policing Division

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from:

Councillor Mrs M Anderson
Councillor CW Eyton
Councillor Mrs J Johnson
Councillor B Kerr
Councillor Mrs D Whitton
Mr B Jones, Acting Homewatch Co-ordinator
PC P Topliss

2 MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT

No Declarations of Interest were received.

3 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the former Crime and Disorder Committee held on 23 January 2002 be confirmed as a correct record.

4 DRAFT LOCAL POLICING OBJECTIVES FOR 2003/04

Each year the Cheshire Constabulary and Police Authority set objectives, together with targets, for policing which were intended to reflect the priorities of the communities in the Authority's area.

Extensive consultation was undertaken both internally and externally and as part of that the Parish Council had been asked for its comments on the proposed policing objectives for 2003/04.

The meeting gave some consideration to the objectives and formulated its response using the pro-forma supplied for the purpose.

In considering objective 7:

“To provide a visible and approachable service and greater public reassurance through improved access to policing.”

the meeting agreed that the Constabulary needed better communication and co-operation. Response and feedback were essential. This should be through Parish Councils as well as the City Council’s newly established Area Committees. Parish Councils were the first tier of local government after all.

Members also agreed that perceived levels of crime could be exaggerated and this led to fears over the perception of crime. The total number of reported crimes were down and so were nuisance youth incidents. However, the only indicator was reported incidents. People did not always report incidents because it was well known that the Police’s response was poor.

The Committee turned its attention to the Police Forum meeting as it was being asked whether it had seen any improvement in the format of meetings with more time allowed for public questions. The general consensus of opinion was that Police Forums had moved away from their original objectives. They should be held so that the general public could learn about what the police were doing, their operations, etc. and ask questions. It was agreed that the Police Forum meeting was not the place to commend officers.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee’s comments be fed back to the Chief Constable, Mr Peter Fahy, and to the Chairman of the Police Authority, County Councillor P Nurse.

5 CHESHIRE CONSTABULARY’S HOMEWATCH MANAGER

The new Homewatch Manager for the Chester and Ellesmere Port Policing Division, Mr David Owens, had been invited to the meeting by the Chairman to introduce himself and make a presentation on his role.

Mr Owens provided the meeting with a potted history of his career, informing that he had been a policeman in the Merseyside force for a number of years and had been involved in crime reduction/crime prevention. He was now retired and had commenced employment with the Cheshire Constabulary in November 2002 in his current post.

Mr Owens was currently building up a Homewatch database and would send out weekly bulletins to all those on it. Trading Standards and the Fire Brigade would also use this database to put out information. The database was being set up in such a way that he would be able to target recipients so that they would receive information relevant to them and their communities. The system used was called Ringmaster and it had the facility for text messages, important to young people. It was important to get them on board under the Homewatch umbrella.

As funding for Mr Owens' post came from the Single Regeneration Budget it was noted that he had to spend 50% of his time in Blacon and the Lache.

Mr Owens also informed of a Home Office training pack for Homewatch representatives. It was made up of modules and although it started off with the basics it was quite far reaching. Information on this would be included in the weekly briefings sent out electronically. If there was enough interest generated, some training could be provided. Mr Owens undertook to encourage and help interested organisations.

Members told Mr Owens that the Saughall Homewatch had been very active and this had been due in part to the work of Mr Charles McIlwrick and Mr Bryan Jones. Mr Owens agreed to introduce himself to both of them at the earliest opportunity.

Mr Owens also agreed to visit the Youth Club one Monday evening and introduce himself to those in attendance and make a presentation about his work and what he hoped to achieve. It was recognised that it was important to have dialogue with the young people and to encourage them to become actively involved in Homewatch.

6 CCTV AND EXTRA LIGHTING IN THE VILLAGE

The meeting considered whether CCTV or extra lighting in the village was likely to be the most effective in their rural community and asked Mr Owens for his views.

Mr Owens reported that there had been a lot of well established research into these issues and some was available under crime reduction on the Home Office's website.

Poor lighting could result in people being afraid. CCTV was a good tool but was expensive. It would achieve, monitor, detect, identify and control. It could be a deterrent but only worked if there was an effective response to what it showed.

It was considered that lighting, which was more affordable in comparison, might provide a better response. People felt safe in areas of the village that were well lit. Older more vulnerable people in the village did feel more secure. It was important to tackle perceptions.

However, the meeting noted that although the Thomas Wedge CE (Controlled) Junior School and All Saints Church were brilliantly lit, they were subject a lot of disturbance as youths tended to congregate in the vicinity and play football in the school yard late into the night.

Mr Owens told the meeting that he had some CCTV questionnaires which he would send to the Clerk. If the Council was considering buying CCTV the questionnaires would provide findings which would determine what CCTV needed to achieve and an informed decision could be made.

Following deliberation it was **RECOMMENDED** that Council should revisit lighting in the village and decide if it was effective enough or if any improvements could be made in the interest of community safety.

6 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED: That

- (a) the next meeting of the Community Safety Committee be held at 7:30pm on Wednesday, 7 May 2003 in the Parish Room, 2 Fiddlers Lane, Saughall; and
- (b) PC Phil Topliss be invited to attend and make a presentation on crime prevention and community safety.