



Distribution: NHW Forum members, Area Co-ordinators, Sup. Toby Davies, C/I Ryan Doyle, Insp. Shaun Kenneally, Insp. Phil Gray, APS Sally Ferris, PCs, PCSOs & PCMO Donna Woolway.

Torrige District Neighbourhood Watch
Notes of the Neighbourhood Watch Meeting held on
Thursday 15th September 2016 at 7.15pm
At the Appledore Football Club

Forum present: Tom Carrick (Chair), David Braziel (Vice Chair), Mike Jackson (Secretary), Roger Copp (Milton Damerel), Robin Edmunds and Jane Wilson (Woolsery), Bob Line (Westward Ho! & Abbotsham), Angela Lovering (Bideford), Luke Brennan (Bideford), Helena Schiller (Treasurer) and John Bowers (Winkleigh).

Co-ordinators: Liz Moore (Weare Giffard), Derek Moore (Halspill – Weare Giffard), Moira Hall (Westward Ho!), Louis Bach (Westward Ho!), Barry Jenkins (Winkleigh), Gail Hichna (Northam).

Police: PCMO Donna Woolway.

Visitors: Wendy Roden (Bideford), Marilyn Northcott, A N Other.

Welcome by David Braziel our Vice-Chair who would be leading the Meeting for the evening. He thanked everybody for coming and introduced Donna Woolway, who is our Police Community Management Officer (PCMO), who was to be our guest speaker for the evening.

Apologies John McDougall (Bridgerule), Margaret Parfitt (St Giles-on-the-Heath), Philip Smith (Bideford), Adrian Blight (Alwington), David Butler (Monkleigh), Meg Galley-Taylor (Thornury), Lorraine Greg (Woolsery), Paul Cooper (Bideford), Susan Uttley (Westward Ho!), John McGovern (Bideford PCSO), Sandra Brown (Torrington PFCSO) and Melissa Baker (Torrington PCSO).

Donna Woolway – Police Community Management Officer (PCMO). Donna thanked the Meeting for inviting her and explained that she was known across the area through her previous role as the Crime Prevention Officer, which had entailed giving various talks, including one about “Operation Jessica”, which had importance due to the high level of older residents across Devon. Her new role is a civilian position and is for a trial period of twelve months and which is running over eight force areas. The scheme is being closely monitored and at the end of the period it will be reviewed, to decide on its suitability to roll out to the whole force. She is embedded in the Neighbourhood Beat Team and will be working closely with the Beat Sergeants and Inspector Phil Gray. The job itself can best be described as problem solving in the work field of the Neighbourhood Teams. Looking at problems to see if they are being dealt with in the best way and involving other agencies and partnerships. Part of the job will be to build links with local communities to make the areas safer and better places for everyone and to get communities to take ownership of some problems, rather than always wanting the Police to be the lead agency. Donna will also be looking at the ways that increased levels of volunteering can be utilised, which is where NHW involvement comes into play. We are all aware that we very seldom see PCs or PCSOs just patrolling the streets any more, due to staff cut-backs and this is an area ideally suited to NHW. Our members are usually fully aware of what is happening in their communities and if they become concerned about things that come to their notice, then these should be passed on to the police who will be in a position to take appropriate action or bring in other agencies if need be.

Donna mentioned the 101 service which the public are unhappy about due to the poor response times. She explained that the Police are aware of the current problems and that various computer systems are being updated which should help, and that she was actually involved in a 24 hour survey last Friday, at one of the call centres. During this period all the calls were sorted, logged and a report will be released in due course. The aim of the exercise being to check whether 101 is being used for its correct purpose, which is to direct the calls to the relevant Police department. 101 is actually a switchboard service and not a department for dealing with problems. The public needs to be educated to this fact and once this is generally understood then the way which we interact with 101 will be improved. All calls to the police, except for 999, go to 101 and part of the review exercise will be to ascertain whether this is the best way of dealing with calls or if there is another better way.

Donna mentioned that there were eight positions like hers, which were part of the trial and that part of her remit is to find better ways of working with NHW and other agencies. She feels particularly fortunate in that Torridge NHW has an established good working relationship with the police which is enhanced by having our Support Office within the police station at Bideford, which gives each side easy access to one another. In this respect she mentioned that she had already spoken to Mike about enlisting the assistance of the Holsworthy Co-ordinators with a project she was involved with and would be monitoring the outcome. Donna then opened the meeting to request questions and comments.

Q. What are the intentions about expanding the network?

A. Where gaps are identified, then recruiting more co-ordinators would be pushed and the use of CRIMESTOPPERS would also be encouraged.

Q. How many calls did 101 receive during the four hour session that Donna was involved with the exercise?

A. An individual session tally was not kept, but an overall figure will probably be released when the report comes out.

Q. What are the number of call handlers employed by 101?

A. On each work shift there are 6 call handlers at both Exeter and Plymouth.

Q. When a crime is reported to 101, is it passed on to the local Beat Team?

A. It depends on what type of crime is involved. Some will be passed directly to the local Beat Team but others will go to CID.

Q. Some areas have Special Constables. Are they part of the Community Team, because they have not been mentioned during the presentation?

A. Specials are considered to be part of the NBT and are not allowed to patrol with the PCSOs. The PCSO role is non-confrontational whereas a Special Constable has full police powers available to use.

Q. The medical 111 call line is staffed by medically trained people who are immediately able to respond to queries. Why is a similar system not used for 101 with police staff manning the phones?

A. The police are geared up to handle many problems through specialist departments and it is the job of the call handler to decide which department is the most appropriate and pass on the call as quickly as possible.

Q. Did the survey monitor "abandoned call" which many call centres seem to do?

A. No, but Donna felt that this was an area that needed to be given consideration and with long waiting times being a complaint, then the number of abandoned calls would be a helpful indicator.

Q. Even if 101 passes on the call quickly, there can still be a long wait. Why is this?

A. Many callers are wanting to speak to a specific officer who may or may not be on duty at the time. The officer might also be dealing with something else which takes preference, and these things take time to check. But, officers will always respond to messages requesting returned contact.

- Q.** Who are watching the CCTV cameras which are scattered across the Town because some criminal acts must be recorded but no action appears to be taken?
- A.** CCTV operators costs and their working hours are covered by the Council and have been drastically cut to make savings. In many instances, recordings are still available to look back to check on specific crimes.

Comments:

- Dog walkers can be a good source for intelligence gathering as they tend to walk regular routes and notices changes.
- Recruitment is a problem. From 1000 parish newsletters which went out recently in Winkleigh with a NHW article asking for volunteers, there were only 2 enquiries.
- Winkleigh has been trying to set up a Speed Watch scheme for some time now. Whilst the volunteers have been recruited and vetted there is nobody available to train them which in time will mean losing the goodwill of these volunteers. Donna mentioned that this is one area which she is intending to look into.
- Several comments were made that the 101 service was reluctant to take calls from NHW co-ordinators who were calling on behalf of somebody else. As some older people don't like to make phone calls or are possibly "hard of hearing", shouldn't 101 be prepared to work with NHW? We have after all been vetted and surely there should be a two-way flow of information. Perhaps even an alternative way for COs to be able to pass on information. Donna said that she will take this matter up with admin.
- There was a recent questionnaire from the PCC and everybody was urged to complete and return it, so that the PCC was made aware of our feelings in connection with our dealings with the police.
- A recent press article (*in the Daily Mail*) reported on remarks from HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary which acknowledged that police foot patrols had been abolished. This information was hidden within the report in an effort to play it down.
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With no further questions from the floor David thanked Donna for a very interesting and informative presentation and the audience showed their appreciation with a round of applause.

Open Forum

- Q.** What is happening about the Co-ordinator Questionnaire which was suggested at a recent Forum Meeting?
- A.** This has now been finalised and will go out together with our Autumn Newsletter, to save on postage costs. We will be asking for them to be returned by the year end so that we are able to analyse them prior to setting next year's programme of events.
- Q.** Some of our NHW street signage is old and faded, which gives a poor impression to the public. There are also some signs still in place even though there is no longer a Watch scheme in operation. What can be done about these situations?
- A.** David said that any Watch co-ordinator is able to change their own signage and they should contact him to obtain an application form to order new signs. In respect of obsolete signs, David will contact DaCCWA to obtain a ruling as to how we should be dealing with these. Angela requested that this subject be brought to the next Forum Meeting so that it can be progressed.
- Liz Moore from Wear Giffard mentioned that they had 7 co-ordinators to cover their village but they were very fortunate in that there was very little crime.
 - David is happy to register co-ordinators on the National web-site but the CO themselves will be sent a verification email which needs to be responded to in order to complete the registration.
 - One person mentioned that they were a co-ordinator of nothing as she had not been able to interest any of her neighbours into becoming NHW members. This triggered various comments and it would seem to be quite a common theme that when general crime levels fall, people tend to be more complacent and not prepared to get involved. Only when crimes flare up in an area do people take notice and show interest.
 - Tom mentioned that our decision to split our meetings into Open Meetings and Forum Meetings, which are only for admin. purposes, has had the desired effect of making the Open Meetings of more interest to the members and

general public, although attendances were still disappointing. We try to get a guest speaker who is relevant to the area which the meeting is held in and we have often been fortunate in getting a member of the local Neighbourhood

- Beat Team. The CO questionnaire mentioned earlier is to get feedback from all our COs as to how we can improve these meetings.
- Many members of the public feel that NHW has no authority and that if the Police would openly acknowledge the scheme and its benefits, then more people would be interested. This aspect was raised during Donna's session and is a subject that she is to investigate further.

With no further questions or comments, David thanked Luke for obtaining the use of the venue for us and also for providing the refreshments. The audience showed their confirmation with round of applause.

Close of Meeting. David closed the Meeting by thanking everyone for coming and for participating, which helped to make for an interesting and lively Meeting. Everyone was wished a safe journey home and the Meeting closed at 8.45 pm.

Our next Neighbourhood Watch Open Meeting will be held on:

Wednesday 16 November 2016 at West Croft School, Bideford, starting at 7.15 pm

See our official web site at

<http://torridgenhw.ourwatch.org.uk>