



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

Torrige District Neighbourhood Watch

Notes of the Neighbourhood Watch Open Meeting held on Wednesday 16th November 2016 at 7.15pm At the West Croft Junior School, Bideford

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

Co-ordinators: Derek Moore (Halspill – Weare Giffard), Moira Hall (Westward Ho!), Barry Jenkins (Winkleigh),
Paul Cooper (Northam), J Bromhead (Westward Ho!)

Police: Sgt. Charlie Morris, PCMO Donna Woolway, PCSO John McGovern

Visitors: Eric Lovering (Bideford), S Wilson (Bideford), David Hurley (TDC for Shebbear & Langtree), Chris Hassall
(Littleham PC), Greg Smith (Bideford)

Apologies: John McDougall (Bridgerule), John Wickett (Pyworthy), Margaret Parfitt (St Giles-on-the-Heath),
Adrian Blight (Alwington), Liz Moore (Weare Giffard), Roger Copp (Milton Damerel), Louis Bach (Westward Ho!),
Caroline Pink (Petrockstowe), Rodney Brent (Westward Ho!)

Welcome: by Tom Carrick who thanked everyone for coming and introduced our guest speaker for the evening,
Karen Mellodew who was from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC). He also introduced Donna
Woolway who is our Police Community Management Officer and Sgt. Charlie Morris who has recently taken over as
the Bideford Neighbourhood Beat Team Manager. Tom went on to mention that at our AGM, which will be held
next February, and as it is not an elections year, he has managed to secure two guest speakers. These will be
Superintendent Toby Davies who is based in Barnstaple, together with Torrige Sector Inspector Shaun Kenneally
who has returned to us after working in Cornwall, followed by a short spell in HQ.

Karen Mellodew from the OPCC. Karen started off by thanking the Forum for the invitation as it gave her the
opportunity of explaining the function of the OPCC, which isn't always fully understood. She also thanked everyone
for helping the Police, which in turn assisted in keeping everybody safe.

By way of background, the OPCC replaced the Police Authority which was a panel made up from mainly Councillors
together with a number of independent members. As the PCC is elected by the public there should be more
empathy for public feelings and their aspirations. Alison Hernandez is our second PCC having been elected when
Tony Hogg's period of office came to an end and he did not seek re-election. Tony was a formal naval officer and
largely achieved the successful setting up of the structure of the OPCC. Alison is more of a political person and is
fully aware of the personal and sensitive issues which the Office deals with. However, both were very focused on
getting the very best out of the Police on our behalf.

The Office functions through four teams and overall running costs are now less than those of the previous Police
Authority. There is a Commissioning and Partnership Team which deals with drug and alcohol issues etc. They deal

with the examination of prosecutions, rehabilitation of offenders and outcomes and are in contact with eighty-eight different agencies which are involved across the systems at different levels. More victims now have access to support throughout their experiences. Child sexual exploitation is the most recent aspect which has come under their remit. One avenue which is being actively pursued is in “early intervention” which is being targeted at new or early offenders before they get established criminal careers, with the intention of creating financial savings by reducing criminal re-activity and all the additional costs that this entails. Modern Day Slavery issues which have come to prominence recently have received a funding allocation from the Government which is being processed through the OPCC.

The OPCC is charged with producing an annual report on how the Police have performed over the previous twelve months. The PCC is also able to challenge the political funding formula which the Chief Constable is not able to do. Karen mentioned that she was responsible for spotting the error in the funding calculation which led to a £15 million saving for Devon and Cornwall. This year their Office is the national lead in lobbying the Government about alcohol pricing and a minimum unit price level. They are also targeting the people who deliberately get drunk before going out for the evening by introducing the “Challenge at the Door” campaign whereby club doormen are provided with breathalysers and anybody failing the test is refused entry to the club. This is proving to be very successful so far.

Karen said that her actual role is “Performance and Customer Service Manager”, which covers the monitoring of Police activity, complaints and how they are dealt with, building an evidence base and best practises. Overseeing out of court settlements and again building an evidence base and reviewing whether they are being used correctly. She monitors all the teams’ performances, sees all correspondence received and sees that it is directed to the most appropriate section to be dealt with. Mediation is also a major aspect of the job – bringing parties together to resolve issues to achieve the best outcomes. Karen also manages the volunteer scheme which covers the independent prisoner visits to check on welfare and rights issues.

The PCC acknowledges that the 101 Service is not perfect but over the last 12 months waiting times have actually been halved. 90% of calls are now dealt with in under 10 minutes but the service continues to be monitored and the Chief Constable is still under pressure to improve it further. The Firearms Licensing section is currently under review of its systems following numerous complaints from the public, many involving long delays. The OPCC also promotes the good work that the Police do by holding events across the area in the summer months enabling the public to meet with them.

The current priorities of the OPCC, which will be published in the near future as part of the Crime Plan are as follows:

1. Support the most vulnerable in our community and those affected by crime: victims, witnesses and businesses
2. Improve Police efficiencies so that we “Get more for less”
3. Put policing at the heart of communities both on our streets and online. Work with the other emergency services to greater effect, e.g. the PFCSO initiative.

Alison is aware that people and communities want to be better connected with the Police. She fully supports this and will be pushing this aspect to achieve a satisfactory outcome. To this end a number of “Links” officers have already been appointed, who will be responsible for specific geographic areas. They will be making contact with various agencies, including NHW, in due course with the aim of setting up channels of communications.

With the main aspects of her presentation covered, Karen then opened up to take questions from the floor.

Q. The last PCC presided over many Police cuts whereas people want to see more Police on the streets. What are the aims of our new PCC?

A. Alison has set aside £2 million to improve front line staff. £2m equates to approx.. 40 officers but it is up to the Chief Constable as to how he deploys his staff. As the types of crime are changing then the Police

need to adapt to deal with the situation and staff duties are changing to meet the new challenges e.g. cyber crime and sexual exploitation of minors and vulnerable people.

John McGovern mentioned that 10-15 years ago burglaries took up a major portion of Police time whereas these are now greatly reduced, which is confirmed by our own weekly crime figures. So it is appropriate to move the thrust of Police staffing to the areas that are causing the most concerns. Also, different ways of doing things are being tried with the aim of reducing re-offending and therefore reducing future crime levels. The concept of a "Village Special" is an exciting idea which is currently being looked at. This is harking back to the days of the Village Constable when a PC lived in a village and was permanently on call. This concept should help to placate older residents who are concerned at the lack of local Police officers and knowing that there is a local person who they can contact. *Shouldn't everybody who lives in a particular area be supporting the older generation from that area so that they are not isolated, and not just be relying on the Police for every little thing!*

Q. Will there be any more resources to help fund CCTV coverage?

A. Negotiations are currently ongoing so Karen was not able to divulge any figures. The outcome will be in the Police and Crime Plan which will be published in the near future.

It was mentioned that Bideford CCTV coverage was excellent but there have had to be cut-backs and so the screens are not monitored on a permanent basis.

Q. There is apparently a Home Office consultation on the subject of CCTVs – will the PCC be involved?

A. Karen was not aware of this initiative but would be very surprised if they were not included.

Q. The concept of a pilot scheme for virtual courts was mentioned recently in the media. What exactly is this and what benefits will it bring?

A. With both Crown and Magistrate Courts having been reduced recently it can mean accused persons and witnesses having to travel long distances to attend a court session which can be made more difficult due to poor public transport options. The virtual court is a locally based room equipped so that testimonies etc. can be fed digitally into the court system without the need for the person to actually attend at court. This is still a trial in its early stages and with a few highlighted problems which need to be resolved.

Q. NHW is funded from grant aid. Will we be able to access any of the funds which are to be made available to the voluntary sector?

A. £400,000 will be made available this year, and also next year, but it will probably not be at local level. NHW will still need to seek funding through grants or fund raising events. Helena, our treasurer, mentioned that all Councils are cutting back on expenditure and grant aid is not exempt from these cuts. We have seen our own funding cut this year and can only envisage matters getting worse.

Q. People still don't know how to report crime and many are still unaware of the 101 service. How is this going to be overcome?

A. The Police have access to many village and parish magazines in our area and contribute to them on a regular basis. This hopefully helps to cascade information, give a police presence and maintain some sort of contact with the people. The earlier question explained the reduced Police presence "on the beat" and the concept of "Village Specials" should go some way to restoring confidence in the Police in rural areas. Petty crime still does take place in outlying areas and the consensus was that it was not being fully reported due to the previously mentioned problems of who and how to report it to.

Q. Devon and Cornwall have a high aging population and this aspect needs to be taken into consideration when technological solutions are being considered. What may seem to be simple to a younger person who has been brought up in the digital era, can be totally confusing to the older generation. How can this problem be addressed?

A. Karen agreed with comment which not only affects Devon & Cornwall, but also Cumbria, North Wales and a number of other rural areas. The current funding formula is not fair to these rural areas and is seeing them disadvantaged. The OPCC is open to any suggestions which might help resolve this problem.

Q. NHW in Winkleigh has a quarterly parish magazine which goes out to approx. 700 homes. In the last issue there was an NHW article seeking more volunteers but there was no response. How do we deal with this apathy?

A. This problem is not unique to Winkleigh and is mirrored in various of our parishes, highlighted by the fact that we have not been able to replace several area co-ordinators who have left. Low crime levels tend to bring complacency, and people in general tend to be more self-centred and unwilling to take on voluntary work of any kind.

With no more questions, Tom thanked Karen for a very interesting talk and the audience showed their appreciation with a round of applause.

Sgt. Charlie Morris introduced himself saying that he had been in the job for only one week although he was familiar with the area, having worked in Bideford 30 years ago. His career has taken him through most departments of the Service, latterly for 7 years in Barnstaple as a detective. He has taken on board the various comments which have been raised this evening and is already looking into re-arranging the shifts with the aim of getting greater coverage across the force area. He requested that all crimes be reported because if they are not reported then the Police don't know what is happening, and therefore can't direct resources to tackle a problem. In response to a question about PFCSOs, Charlie stated that an officer only responded to a Fire Service call-out when he was on Police duty. He was not on 24 hour notice in the same way as a retained fire fighter.

With time moving on, Tom called a halt to the proceedings and thanked everyone for their participation which made for an interesting and informative meeting. He wished everyone a safe journey home and as this was our last meeting of the year, a Happy Christmas & Safe and Prosperous New Year.

Our next Neighbourhood Watch Open Meeting will be our AGM which will be held on:

Tuesday 14 February 2017 at Westward Ho! Baptist Church Hall (*not the Church*), starting at 7.15 pm

There will be no officer elections on this occasion and there will be two guest speakers.

See our official web site at

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

or scan here

