

W A T C H W O R D ©

NEWSLETTER OF THE THANET NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH ASSOCIATION

Secretary/Treasurer and Editor : Dennis Cooper : tel 01843 845933

Email : denniscooper@btinternet.com



Issue No. 94 JANUARY 2012

NEWS & VIEWS from the Editor's Desk

The Thanet Neighbourhood Watch Annual general Meeting was held on Monday 21 November at the Broadstairs campus of Canterbury Christchurch College. The 40 attending coordinators were pleased to welcome as guests Sgt Amanda Cullen from the Community Safety Unit and our Watch Liaison Officer, Sue Boorman.

Inevitably perhaps, Amanda Cullen's report concentrated on the police re-structuring necessitated by the budget cuts imposed by central government, particularly insofar as this impacted on levels of neighbourhood policing. The new East Kent Police Division now embraced Dover, Shepway and Ashford as well the Canterbury District. In addition, Kent police were cooperating more and more with Essex police in mutually relevant areas of policing. Chief Inspector John Frayne was the new Thanet District Commander in succession to Mitchell Fox. Some £50 million in cuts had had to be found during a period of 4 years. We were fortunate that the new Chief Constable has had considerable experience and well developed ideas as to how these cuts were to be found with minimum damage to frontline services. So far good progress had been in the reduction of uniformed officers by 500, while there was still a little way to go to meet the target cuts of 1000 in civilian staff across the county as a whole. Cuts in uniformed officers had been achieved without reductions in frontline staff due to judicious replacement of desk-bound officers by civilians. As a result resources devoted to neighbourhood policing have been increased, but in common with new county-wide policy, these would from now on be allocated on a priority basis to those wards most in need. This meant that some areas of Kent would have neighbourhood resources reduced while others would see increases. Thanet came firmly into the latter category and priority wards will notice higher local police and PCSO numbers. The changes clearly entail the adoption of new working practices and changes in the remit of some departments. A special team devoted to Margate Central and Cliftonville West would be charged with improving

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Dial 01843 222236 - Sue Boorman Watch Liaison Officer; email susan.boorman@kent.pnn.police.uk

Dial 01843 222214 - Watch Liaison Office; email: thanet.nhw@kent.pnn.police.uk

Dial 999 when a crime is in progress and Police presence is needed, or in an emergency (but only if there is a real emergency)

Dial 101 to report non-urgent crime, incidents of anti-social behaviour, or for general enquiries

Dial 0800 555111 (Crimestoppers) to report crime or suspicious activity in complete anonymity

Dial 01843 577000 (Thanet District Council) to report fly-tipping, noise nuisance, graffiti, dog fouling, abandoned vehicles and parking problems

Dial 08454 040506 for Kent Trading Standards to report doorstep callers, rogue tradesmen etc.

Dial 08458 247247 - 24 hour helpline for Kent County Council

Dial 0300 123 2040 to report fraud or a scam

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.kcnwa.org (Kent NW Association)

www.ourwatch.org.uk (National NW)

www.kent.police.uk

www.police.uk (national police website)

www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/kent

www.crimestoppers-uk.org

www.hoax-slayer.com (latest info on scams)

www.getsafeonline.org (safety on the internet)

www.actionfraud.org.uk for info/report fraud

www.thanet.gov.uk (Thanet district council)

www.consumerdirect.gov.uk - consumer advice

TELEPHONE NUMBER 101 LAUNCHED FOR NON-URGENT CALLS TO THE POLICE



**D I A L
1 0 1**

Since mid-November we now have a new number to dial to report non-urgent crimes to Kent Police or to access services, make enquiries or contact our neighbourhood police officer. The 101 number was introduced nationally after a crime survey revealed that only 54% of people knew how to contact their local police force. The 101 number has been introduced to make it as easy and simple to access non-urgent police services and to tell the police what is going on in the area. It has also had a significant benefit in reducing the misuse of the emergency 999 number.

This number should be used to report all non-urgent incidents and crimes, such as stolen cars or damage to property, suspected drug dealing, minor traffic collisions or any crime-related information or suspicious activity in your area. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week and directs callers through to the Kent Police control room. All calls will cost 15p regardless of duration, time of day or whether it is from a landline or a mobile phone. There is also a parallel text messaging service for those who are deaf or speech-impaired. To use this service, text "police" and your message to 60066.

It should be noted that matters of general public nuisance like graffiti, abandoned vehicles, vandalism and fly tipping remain the responsibility of Thanet district council. And in an emergency, when a crime is in progress or life is in danger, you should continue to call 999.

To facilitate use of the new system, it will be important to be able to provide your postcode to ensure that you are given relevant information or assistance.

(Continued from page 1) good working arrangements with the Liaison Office in handling this. Turning to intelligence, e.g. information regarding ASB and drug dealing, it would be particularly useful if coordinators or other members of the public were to keep a sort of log of events to be passed on to the police.

In her own report, Sue Boorman provided hot off the press details from a county WLO meeting that morning in Gravesend. There would be a review of WLO functions around the county in January or February, and the results would be as eagerly awaited by individual WLOs as well as NW members. At some stage in December there would be a presentation by an Inspector Willis about the operation and administration of the new CCD communications programme; and a review of the Service Level Agreement with Neighbourhood Watch would be undertaken in the near future with Kent NW. Finally, she provided several copies of an explanatory booklet about the switchover to digital TV in Thanet, which included very important advice about avoiding scammers or fraudsters, as well as doorstep callers. She emphasised that she would continue to do all that she could for NW within the confines of the time she had available and the many other tasks which formed part of her overall duties. Dennis Cooper said digital TV switchover information would also be covered in the next issue of

SEE SOMETHING SUSPICIOUS? – DON'T IGNORE IT, REPORT IT!

SWITCH-OVER TO DIGITAL TELEVISION FROM 13 MARCH 2012

Most if not all of you will have already heard or read about the impending switch to digital TV which will result in the traditional analogue signal being switched off in the Thanet area. If you do not have a digital or digitally-enabled TV by that time, your TV screen will go blank when switch-over takes place. Current information is that switch-over is a two-stage process - on 13 June 2012 the analogue BBC2 signal will be changed to digital and then on 27 June 2012 the remaining analogue TV channels will be switched.

We make no apology for devoting space to this topic since it is very important indeed for more elderly people or those who are disabled or simply remain confused about the issue to be aware of the implications and to know where they may, if necessary, receive official and authoritative advice and practical assistance. If you know of anyone who finds all of this mightily confusing, please take the time to pass on this information, since it may reduce any chance of their being mis-advised or tricked into spending more than is necessary to prepare themselves for the switch-over.

The easy way to establish whether you already have digital TV is to see whether you can already receive more than 5 channels e.g. because you are already connected to Freeview, Freesat or Sky. If not, you will need to take action to ensure that you may continue to receive TV. You will need to check every TV set you have to confirm whether or not you need to take necessary action by the switch-over date. If you already have digital TV you will need to retune your sets after the switch-over.

Fortunately the BBC have a comprehensive switchover help scheme through which you can not only obtain advice but also order and have installed by an accredited technician whatever equipment you need. To take advantage of this scheme as we heartily recommend, please telephone 0800 40 85 900 or 0800 40 85 913.

Alternatively log onto the Internet website: www.helpscheme.co.uk. For further information visit the website: www.digitaluk.co.uk.

EXTRA POWERS FOR POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICERS

PCSOs in Kent have been armed with 12 new powers to clamp down on anti-social behaviour on our streets.

The 400-strong county team, which provides support to regular police officers, now has the authority to issue on-the-spot fines to under-18s caught drinking or trying to buy alcohol

PCSOs can now also issue fines for drinking in designated public zones, truancy, graffiti, fly-posting and improper use of fireworks. They will also have the authority to search young people for hidden alcohol and tobacco.

In addition they have the authority to disperse groups of under 16s and ensure that they return home. They can also issue fines for begging.

PERSONAL EMERGENCY ALARMS

There are many of these on the market and are frequently advertised in local media. The main feature is the provision of a pendant alarm trigger, worn around the neck or on the wrist, which is connected to your landline telephone and when activated, connects you automatically with a call centre which will take quick action to deal with your problem, e.g. following a fall or accident in the house or garden away from your landline or mobile telephone. They are particularly useful for the elderly or disabled but in practice they can also benefit others, e.g. home or lone workers, sufferers from long or short term health problems, those recuperating from surgery and victims of domestic violence or crime.



The various suppliers of these alarms and associated equipment have differing charges, according to the actual equipment ordered. There is usually an initial installation charge followed by a monthly charge. Some offer a trial period and many offer free long-term maintenance of the equipment.

We advise anyone interested to review carefully what is on offer from various suppliers, at what price and for what specific purposes, how comprehensive is the service offered by the call centre concerned. It would be wise to consult family members or friends before making any commitment.

WARNING – THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTS OF PRESSURE SELLING BY SOME SALES PEOPLE FOR THESE PRODUCTS, AND OF PEOPLE FINDING THEMSELVES BUYING EXPENSIVE UNNECESSARY EQUIPMENT. PLEASE TAKE EXTRA CARE, PARTICULARLY IF YOU RECEIVE UNSOLICITED TELEPHONE CALLS, MAIL OR DOORSTEP SALES PEOPLE FROM SUPPLIERS OF THESE SYSTEMS. YOU WOULD ALSO BE WELL ADVISED TO CONSULT A MEMBER OF YOUR FAMILY OR A CLOSE FRIEND OR NEIGHBOUR BEFORE SIGNING UP TO ANY CONTRACT.

LOCAL POLICING INFORMATION, INCLUDING CRIME MAPS

A good deal of local information can be obtained by logging onto the national police website www.police.uk, or on the Kent Police website www.kent.police.uk by entering your postcode. Included are crime statistics broken down by category and shown on a map by approximate location.