

# Chairman's Report to the Annual General Meeting

of

## Cambridgeshire Neighbourhood Watch Association

Another year gone, and to many probably one that they would rather forget. Lockdowns and severe restrictions on our way of life have led to considerable day-to-day difficulties and, in some cases, sadly the loss of loved ones.

We have all seen the huge impact that coronavirus has had on our communities. Social distancing and isolation changed the way we live our lives and, I suspect, how we reach and interact with local communities will now be very different in the future. What has been hugely positive is the way that communities have come together to provide support to vulnerable people and those in need. Whether it be assistance with food, the collection of prescription medication, or providing a caring call to someone feeling lonely, community groups and newly formed volunteer networks have been invaluable in meeting the needs of local people during this difficult and challenging time. The importance of supporting wellbeing through neighbourliness and keeping an eye on those who are lonely – whether saying hello or setting up a new scheme and all the other actions we take, contribute towards building happier and safer communities.

Neighbourhood Watch has always been about reducing crime and improving community wellbeing and we are best placed to continue to build on this surge in neighbourliness as people look out for the vulnerable and talk to their neighbours more than before. This is the silver lining to the cloud Covid-19 has cast over our daily lives.

Throughout this time Neighbourhood Watch has continued to operate, albeit with some inevitable changes. The executive committee has continued with regular meetings using Zoom, and we have seen a small increase in membership despite the restrictions.

During the last year we have been rebuilding Neighbourhood Watch to address the lack of local support that many of you have experienced. The national website at [www.ourwatch.org.uk](http://www.ourwatch.org.uk) now includes vastly improved resources to help you improve your knowledge and help you support your communities. The process of setting up new schemes and joining Neighbourhood Watch has been streamlined and guidance for coordinators has been reviewed. Several training opportunities have been offered for members as further support. Our own website at [www.cambsnw.org.uk](http://www.cambsnw.org.uk) continues to inform you of our local news, managed by Vic Nickson.

In the next month we expect to see new software introduced which will make the running of a scheme and communicating with members much easier for coordinators. We will also be able to introduce a more localised support structure for administrators based on police neighbourhoods which will complement our existing District and Force administrators. It is

expected that the links between Neighbourhood Policing Teams and Neighbourhood Watch will strengthen as a result.

One area that has always been difficult has been providing effective communication to local areas from the police. The police re-structuring has provided an opportunity for change. We now have a new system which is being introduced across the whole force area, supported by a great deal of hard work by our police single point of contact, which promises to improve the quality and consistency of police Alert messages to members. There has also been enthusiastic support from Neighbourhood Police Inspectors where the changes have been introduced. During the year I have been able to meet with many officers to discuss Neighbourhood Watch matters. I am looking forward to continuing to strengthen our police partnership which has always been an important part of successful Neighbourhood Watch areas.

This is not our only partnership, as we continue to support the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Against Scams Partnership and are also given increasing access to the professional training that many agencies receive. There are many scams out there sent via email and posted. Keep an eye on local and national media and share the safety messages with your own contact networks and amongst your community. A benefit of our partnership is that we can arrange scams training for members and access the Friends Against Scams online training to improve our knowledge of what to look for.

This year we welcomed the election of Darryl Preston as the new Police and Crime Commissioner. Darryl is a supporter of Neighbourhood Watch and has already supported a pilot Dog Watch scheme. He has already attended NW activities such as the Safer Streets initiative in Cambridge and takes a keen interest in what we do.

At the risk of stating the obvious, one person cannot do everything. A special thanks is due to David Godsmark who has decided to stand down from the Executive after many years of supporting us. My thanks also go to the Executive Committee who have met far more often than usual so that we can push forward all the changes and to the many officers in the police who have been an invaluable source of guidance and support through the year. Above all I would like to thank all of you for supporting Neighbourhood Watch in whatever way you chose. I wish I could name everyone individually and mention all the initiatives and projects that have been going on but the list would be incredibly long!

It seems that the year ahead will again be virtual, at least at first. A heartfelt thank you to all of you for your efforts this past year!

Robin Sutton

Chairman Cambridgeshire Neighbourhood Watch Association