



## **NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH IN SUSSEX AND THE SUSSEX NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH FEDERATION**

### **BRIEFING PAPER FOR SUSSEX PCC CANDIDATES**

#### **Purposes of Neighbourhood Watch**

The main purposes of Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) are to promote good citizenship and greater public awareness through Neighbourhood Watch groups, increase public participation in the prevention and detection of crime, reduce the fear of crime, improve police/community liaison and increase community safety.

Neighbourhood Watch is about people coming together to look out for one another and make their communities safer and more pleasant places to live and work. It is probably the largest voluntary movement in England and Wales, being established for about 30 years, and will play an increasingly vital role in community safety with the ever increasing downward pressure on public sector budgets.

In Sussex, Neighbourhood Watch is supported by the Sussex Neighbourhood Watch Federation, local Associations, and various partners, especially Sussex Police. The Federation is a registered charity, led by volunteer Executive Officers (who are also Charity Trustees), assisted by volunteer representatives from all areas across Sussex.

The Objectives of the Federation are:

1. To assist in the creation of Neighbourhood Watch Associations across Sussex, and
2. to support and sustain Neighbourhood Watch Associations across Sussex,

and thereby to promote good citizenship and greater public awareness through Neighbourhood Watch groups, increase public participation in the prevention and detection of crime, reduce the fear of crime, improve police/community liaison and increase community safety, primarily in Sussex, in partnership with recognised Authorities and other relevant organisations.

It is important to recognise that the Federation does not 'run' Neighbourhood Watch in Sussex, which is a grass roots movement supported by the Federation and its partners.

Neighbourhood Watch volunteers provide a huge community safety resource, and we add significant community safety value through things such as organising community safety events, providing property marking kits, and, uniquely in the UK, providing over 350 search trained volunteers. These search trained volunteers are also available to help out in other emergencies, such as flooding and mass casualty incidents.

We believe that it is vital that the Watch movement continues to flourish in Sussex. To do so it needs to be adequately supported, nourished and resourced in order to play its full role in promoting and ensuring safer communities throughout the county.



### **NHW Nationally**

Started in Cheshire in 1982, Neighbourhood Watch is probably the largest voluntary community safety organisation in England and Wales. The latest British Crime Survey showed there are around 170,000 co-ordinators and 3.9 million members in England and Wales. This does not include members of specialist Watch Schemes such as Farm Watch, Business Watch, etc., which probably brings the number of members to around the 10 million mark. Simply put, it is communities - whether defined by geography or special interests - looking out for one another and improving their safety.

The overall aim of the movement is to bring neighbours together to create strong, friendly, active communities where crime and anti-social behaviour are less likely to happen. We believe everyone has the right to feel safe where they live. Our vision is that of a caring society that is focused on trust and respect, in which people are safe from crime and live in communities that enjoy a good quality of life.

The Watch movement is supported nationally by the national Neighbourhood and Home Watch Network, a charity and umbrella company limited by guarantee. The Network has a web site [www.ourwatch.org.uk](http://www.ourwatch.org.uk), which provides a variety of useful resources, and amongst other benefits provides Public Liability Insurance for Watch members throughout England and Wales. NHWN has historically received a small amount of Home Office funding, but the continuation of this is in doubt.

NHW is an independent autonomous grass roots organisation, and is completely neutral in politics. We are non-sectarian in religion, operate an equal opportunities and non-discriminatory policy and embrace diversity.

### **NHW Regionally**

Sussex is represented on the South East Regional Forum, which brings together the other Force/County Associations and their Police colleagues from Thames Valley, Hampshire, Surrey and Kent. Its aim is to share good practice and raise issues of local and regional concern to the national Network, through an Advisory Group representing all regions of England and Wales.

### **NHW in Sussex**

In Sussex there are well over 5,000 street co-ordinators actively involved in the Watch movement, representing members in about 126,000 homes, maybe a quarter of a million people. NHW members are probably the largest single segment of the population by far who are especially interested in the selection, role, performance and activities of the PCC. Most of these members will be voters, which means that NHW members form a significant and highly influential percentage of the electorate. However, the actual reach of Neighbourhood Watch is significantly greater, as many co-ordinators and Watch scheme members forward information to extended family members and others in their communities.

### **We help to promote good citizenship by:**

- Encouraging members and the public to actively and passively support the police in various ways
- Working in partnership with Sussex Police, Sussex Police Cadets, and with other organisations including the Neighbourhood & Home Watch Network, NHW South East Regional Forum, Crimestoppers, West Sussex and East Sussex County Councils, Brighton & Hove, and other Borough/District Councils and Local Authorities, Community Safety Partnerships, Fire & Rescue Service, Trading Standards, the Environment Agency, Water suppliers, Age UK and Stop The Traffik
- Encouraging members to look out for each other and the public, especially for the elderly and the vulnerable, during severe weather, difficult times or when neighbours are ill or away from home
- Teaching primary school children during Junior NHW and Junior Citizen programmes.



**We help to promote greater public awareness by:**

- Attending public events such as 999 days, where we engage with the public and distribute relevant advice, information, leaflets, demonstrate and retail personal security items at competitive prices
- Attending other events such as visiting care homes
- Participating in various local meetings such as Ward panel meetings, street briefings, and giving talks to organised groups
- Running Junior NHW and assisting with Junior Citizen, and taking part in College enrolment freshers/welcome days
- Organising NHW Conferences and AGMs, to which the public and the media may be invited
- Organising educational trips to the Houses of Parliament and Portcullis House
- Communicating messages to NHW members, via the Sussex Police Broadcaster system and also cascading messages internally
- Helping media such as local radio and newspapers, taking part in phone-in programmes and placing articles
- Using the Sussex NHW Federation to help communicate across the county
- Using the Neighbourhood & Home Watch Network to help communicate nationwide and share best cost effective practice.

**We help to increase public participation in the prevention and detection of crime, and reduce the fear of crime by:**

- Encouraging the formation of new NHW schemes, and expanding the membership of existing schemes
- Running Junior NHW and assisting with Junior Citizen
- Distributing information about crime, real scams and potential threats
- Assisting in campaigns such as burglary/theft prevention in selected areas, deterrents to distraction burglaries, persuading drivers not to leave valuables on display in vehicles, and at Olympic related activities
- Distributing up to date lists of useful web sites and phone numbers
- Providing map overlays of crimes to show that NHW areas are safer than non-NHW areas.

**We help to improve police/community liaison by:**

- Encouraging the public to engage with the police in a long term and effective manner, maintain contact through periodical meetings, and reading material such as newsletters and bulletins issued by the police
- Trying to involve ethnic groups, which the police may find difficult to do
- Involving the police in Junior NHW at schools, helping them to break down barriers
- Partnering Police Cadets and giving them practical experience on the streets and at events, giving them greater confidence and something very positive to say on their CVs when they go job hunting
- Having NHW members on police Independent Advisory Groups
- Having NHW members on the Independent Custody Visiting scheme
- Being a significant partner in the Community Resilience plans being developed for Sussex. NHW's Neighbourhood Alert system is currently being considered by the Sussex Resilience Forum.

**We help to increase community safety by:**

- Providing a substantial number of member homes who are observant, look out for each other, are supportive of the police and pass on to the police details of incidents and other intelligence. Residents are the people uniquely positioned to spot unusual activities or unfamiliar people in their local areas, recognise that something may be wrong, and promptly take positive action in response. The rapid and timely provision of intelligence to the police enables the police to do their job in the most effective and



efficient way possible. A rapid, appropriate and effective response by the police will greatly increase public confidence in the police – a virtuous circle.

- Providing the three NHW Sussex Search Teams, an enthusiastic volunteer resource of over 350 trained and forensically aware searchers, who can help the police, when requested:
  - to systematically search for missing vulnerable persons and property which may be crucial to a police enquiry
  - to provide basic First Aid to casualties
  - to assist with hospital documentation in the event of a mass casualty incident
  - in partnership with Sussex 4x4 Response, provide 4x4 vehicles and drivers in emergencies
  - to assist in any other urgent situations
- Taking part, when requested, in police operations, e.g. against prolific burglars, and in police days of action
- Trying to pre-empt distraction burglaries, e.g. under the pretext of water meter upgrades
- Assisting in Community Resilience
- Assisting in high profile community events such as stewarding the Olympic Torch Relay and the Paralympics Lantern parade
- Assisting in Community Speedwatch
- In Crawley, sitting on and contributing to the Emergency Planning Liaison Group and Crawley Tasking and Co-ordination Group
- Assisting in Crawley Snow Force
- Encouraging members to report faulty street lighting needing repair, e.g. lights on during the day or not on at night. This helps cut wasted use of street lighting, saving money and the environment, and by making sure that the lights are working it helps to make people feel safer at night and reduce the fear of crime.
- Taking part in Project Griffin (counter terrorism awareness)
- Conducting online surveys to identify and quantify key issues, and using this information to help develop realistic, workable, cost effective and sustainable responses
- Developing a programme to help address Serious Organised Crime and also with Stop The Traffik

#### **How NHW helps to create value and save money for Sussex Police and the community**

- A new Service Level Agreement between the Sussex NHW Federation and Sussex Police has just been signed, broadening, strengthening and clarifying the breadth and depth of our relationships, and reinforcing that our remit extends to include community safety generally, not just crime
- By providing better and more frequent timely intelligence, enabling police to deal with problems quickly and effectively
- By providing volunteer human resources, e.g. trained Search Teams, and support at events (this is in addition to any Police Volunteers and Special Constables)
- The above also provides an unpaid voluntary emergency reserve for the police, and reduces their overtime costs
- Additionally the police has access to Police Volunteers and Special Constables, who may also be NHW members.

#### **Other benefits which may be brought about through NHW**

Examples of other benefits (which may vary from place to place) include:

- Undertaking some kind of physical actions to help people feel safe where they live (visiting neighbours, installing security devices etc.)
- Acting as a deterrent to criminals
- Liaising with other organisations and companies – security companies, local businesses, faith groups, community groups, other types of Watch scheme etc.



- Information sharing (with neighbours/the community) and reporting (to police/Crimestoppers)
- Taking part in national campaigns relating to safety, security and community issues
- Organising/taking part in social events – increasing a sense of community in their area
- Welcoming new residents
- Undertaking physical actions to make their area a nicer place to live – litter-picking, graffiti cleaning, communal gardening etc.

### **The size of the problem**

- Sussex has a population in excess of 1.5M, about 650,000 homes and an area of about 1,463 square miles.
- Sussex Police has 2,863 police officers and 2,260 staff including PCSOs, total 5,123 in 2012-2013, budget £252.8M
- NHW has about 126,000 member homes in Sussex, say 250,000 people. This is far larger than the constituency of any Member of Parliament.
- The British Crime Survey indicates that nearly 10,000,000 crimes are committed every year, although police statistics show a much lower figure, nearer 4,000,000, and a majority of adults believed crime had risen nationally in the last two years.
- Research indicates that crime against individuals and households cost society in England and Wales a staggering £34 billion in 2009-2010. The overall costs of crime are believed to be a hugely higher figure. In direct response to crime, it emerges that the criminal justice system spent around £6 billion.

### **Logical conclusions**

Money and other resources wisely invested in the prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour are keys to minimising offences occurring. If, in the perfect world, there were no crimes, then the consequences, financial, physical and emotional, would not be felt. There would be no victims. Surely prevention has to be better than cure? We need to strive for the perfect world, even if we may be unable to achieve it. There needs to be far more investment in prevention. Such investment in prevention would reduce the wastage to society and the need for the expensive process of picking up the pieces afterwards.

A Study<sup>1</sup> conducted in 2006 indicated that NHW is reported as reducing crime in 79% of cases in the UK. This review suggests that for all practical purposes, the case for the effectiveness of NHW in reducing crime should now be considered proven.

Sussex Police really does need the support of the thousands of members of NHW, and it costs them very little. Volunteers such as NHW need to be encouraged and nurtured. They give their time freely, and any barriers to their development, enthusiasm, contributions and progress removed. Funding is a major barrier.

A PCC may wish to consider the following question: *Would you consider it reasonable or sensible to send police officers out on the street without proper equipment etc?* If the answer is “no”, then is it reasonable to expect volunteers to help unless they have proper support?

### **Value to the community and savings to the police**

There are many examples of the operational successes of Neighbourhood Watch; missing persons found, vital intelligence provided by local people who know their local areas, criminals caught, stolen property

---

<sup>1</sup> Bennett, T.H., Holloway, K. and Farrington, D.P. (2006) “Does Neighbourhood Watch reduce crime? A systematic review and meta-analysis”. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*. Vol.2, No.4, pp.437-458. and Bennett, T.H. and Holloway, K. (2008) “A review of the effectiveness of Neighbourhood Watch” *Security Journal*. Advanced access publication August 2008.



recovered, scams prevented, cold callers receiving a warm reception, speeding vehicles logged, etc. However, the biggest benefit of the Watch movement is in promoting neighbourliness, actually knowing your neighbours, community cohesion and in helping people feel safe and looked out for by their neighbours. Neighbourhood Watch is run entirely by volunteers, brings a whole range of skills and experience and adds significant value to the community safety movement.

Through the work of volunteer members and co-ordinators it provides a huge community resource. Volunteers come from all walks of life and thus have a wide depth and breadth of knowledge and experience, from a huge range of business, academic and private life, readily on hand and waiting to be tapped without cost. The recent online survey conducted by NHW has produced thousands of informed and sensible comments, independent thinking, feedback and good ideas, which NHW is more than happy to provide to Sussex Police and PCC candidates. It contains a wealth of information and informed opinion directly relevant to Sussex, and in many cases elsewhere.

Many thousands of unpaid hours are contributed by volunteers every year. NHW in Sussex currently receives no automatic funding support. This means that volunteers have to spend many hours fund raising for essential items to enable their projects and good work to proceed – time which could have been spent actually carrying out the projects had adequate and sensible levels of funding been to hand.

To quote an example of specific savings made against Sussex Police expenses in just one day, in 2011 there was a missing person search conducted by trained NHW search volunteers for a vulnerable person near Mallswood. We had 83 people out for about 7 hours, and excluding all travel time and transport costs, that's 581 man hours at say £25 each, about £14,500, which Sussex Police did not have to spend.

In the 12 months to last August the NHW West Downs Search Team has been on 16 searches, used 237 people, and spent 1,855 hours searching, a minimum saving of £35,437. Since their inception nearly 12 years ago they have carried out 90 searches, used 1,407 people and have searched for 10,121 hours. This does not include times when they were called and stood down before reaching the search site. The minimum saving to the Police is £194,145.

With the ever increasing pressure on police budgets and the inevitable devolution of responsibility for community safety to the voluntary sector, it is important that the Neighbourhood Watch movement in Sussex, whose *raison d'être* is community safety, is strengthened and developed. Expenditure on Neighbourhood Watch should be looked upon as a high quality investment, producing enormous cost effective, visible, but sometimes hidden, benefits in return, a real force multiplier.

#### **Peelian principles**

- Every police officer should be issued a identification number, to assure accountability for his actions.
- Whether the police are effective is not measured on the number of arrests, but on the lack of crime.
- Above all else, an effective authority figure knows trust and accountability are paramount. Hence, Peel's most often quoted principle: **The police are the public and the public are the police.**

**Neighbourhood Watch is the public.**