

HARROGATE & DISTRICT NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH ASSOCIATION
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 20 OCTOBER 2009
AT HARROGATE COLLEGE, HORNBEAM PARK

The Chairman opened the Meeting by welcoming all our guests whose numbers were impressive despite poor weather conditions.

Mrs. Ruth Andrews, Section leader, Fraud & Investigation Unit, NYCC Trading Standards, was introduced as our Guest Speaker.

Mrs. Andrews described the remit of the Fraud and Investigation Unit as tackling doorstep crimes, i.e. Cold Calling/Bogus Callers, particularly targeted at elderly and vulnerable people who in many cases had been duped out of many thousands of pounds.

North Yorkshire and Humberside, being part of a prosperous county with convenient arterial routes, and having a population of 19% over 65 years, has been seriously attacked by unscrupulous traders.

The aim of Trading Standards is to reduce harm and protect vulnerable people and the ultimate aim is to convict all rogue traders. We are encouraged to inform Trading Standards every time suspicious trades people have called and been turned away from your door and also to inform the Police, via the local Safer Neighbourhood Team, of each incident.

The formation of No Cold Calling Zones is important, particularly so in areas where vulnerable people have already been targeted.

Mrs Andrews was thanked by the Chairman and Mike Sims and was warmly applauded for her comprehensive and informed presentation.

At this point The Chairman introduced members of the Committee.

1. **Apologies for Absence.** Apologies had been received from John Parker, Maureen Asher, Peter Thornes, Jim Dobbs, Mike Bevington, Alan Rawson, Barbera Rickards, Shirley Parker-Wright, Mike Josh and Janet Hall.
2. **Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on 14 October 2008.** The Minutes of last year's AGM were accepted as a true record.
Proposed: Dorothy McCartney. Seconded: Tina Oates.
3. **Matters Arising.** There were no matters arising.
4. **Chairman's Report.** Our Chairman, Keith Roberts, presented the following Report:

'Those of you who were at the last AGM will recollect that Ron Sneddon retired. I would make two points: Firstly that I took over the Chairman's role with the Association in good shape, although there was plenty of scope for expansion and secondly, Ron has suffered further medical problems but when I met him last month he too was in good shape and looking extremely well.

a. We now have 900 NHW coordinators/schemes in our district covering 18,000 households. Including other watches, Farm, Pub, Shop, School Watch etc. there are now over 1200 in total.

b. There is still scope for new schemes and I refer to Rural Areas and Ripon where we have not been so diligent in the development and integration of NHW

c. Our quarterly newsletter LOOK OUT is well received by most coordinators and now features feedback from schemes on innovative actions, which we encourage. However, we also hear that sometimes coordinators do not always pass on the newsletter and important messages. Peter Dallas has re-jigged the heading of our documents to reflect the large area that we cover.

d. Our website - we regret that recently there has been a serious problem of a 'Trojan', Davtroff, which infiltrated the server used by our designer. As soon as we were aware, we shut down the access in order to protect the users. We are now back on stream with a clean early edition and are in the process of updating the data. We also look to simplify the website to make updating more user friendly and provide a more reliable server with frequent updating.

e. Our second recent problem has been associated with the updating of the NYP Ringmaster database to version2. Some of the recently appointed coordinators have not received posted newsletters because we were unable to print the labels. We are now aware of the problem and solution but it is a slow laborious process to make corrections. Another RM problem is that a high percentage of e-mail messages have been returned as 'undeliverable'. Many of these are because of a change of ISP, inbox full etc. Could we please request that we are notified of any changes of address?

f. Notwithstanding the system hiccoughs we, here in H&D, have a Safer Neighbourhood police service second to none. We have seen the effective introduction of PCSOs, the formation of SNTs and a new generation of SNGs. NHW has been actively involved in all stages and the result has been the reduction in crime to become the leading level in the country. Month by month and year on year crime is reducing. Recently, it has been published in answer to the question '...does NHW contribute to crime reduction in the community?' A report by ACPO noted that in 79% of cases, NHW was effective in reducing crime, compared with similar areas where no scheme exists. Surely there is some correlation between the low level of crime and the coverage of NHW schemes - it cannot be pure coincidence. Another separate survey showed that 75% of the public not in a NHW scheme would join if there was one. A conclusion can be drawn that there is every incentive to promote the formation of new schemes and refresh others.

g. One area that I think we, as NHW, can do better is in rural areas, where the number of incidents is reducing but because of the geographical spread the detection rates are lower than in urban areas. We can be more proactive in reporting suspicious incidents.

h. this leads me on to the next point. The police, through intelligence or at random,

recover stolen goods but are unable to return them to the rightful owner. There is an easy solution to identifying your possessions - and that is by coding them. There are two very effective systems - Smart Water which can be applied to any item and links it to your household. Over one million households now use Smart Water and at £22 per unit (50-80 items) one off cost is exceptionally good value when purchased through ourselves. From Smart Water directly it now costs £4.99 per month. Secondly, and for free, we draw your attention to use of the IMMOBILISE registration system. The beauty of this system is that any household item that has a serial number can be registered anonymously and if found the police can immediately check the database for ownership. Each of our police stations has a stock of 2x window stickers and 5x smaller product stickers. The uptake by coordinators has been very slow so far but we would encourage them to collect a sufficient number to allocate to their neighbours. The police previously sent out a message stating that the stickers are a very effective deterrent and you do not necessarily need to register all your products - but it helps! However, it is worth noting that less than 10% of goods recovered by the police find a way back to the rightful owner and believe it or not, those items found but not returned must, by law, be offered to the thief or illegal possessor. Coding can tie a criminal to a specific incident improving the chance of prosecution - CODING IS FOR KEEPS.

i. One area of concern has been that we have tended to become 'Harrogate centric' and we need to become more active in other locations. On 19th November we shall be holding our next Coordinators' Support Forum at Ripon Fire Station and we shall try again to hold surgeries in rural locations, where we shall try not to be bound by ward or parish boundaries but by common problems and risks.

j. So, what about the future? Besides the tidying up actions highlighted there are other activities on the horizon which come about because the Home Office realised the benefit of a country wide NHW volunteering structure and there is already talk about community resilience/emergency planning which does not impinge on the professionals but recognises that nobody knows the locality better than the locals and harnessing those resources to marshal resources on the ground will address some of the problems that have been identified subsequent to major incidents. Involving youths and minority groups in NHW and developing websites for youth such as our Blaze.nhw site are on the agenda nationally and regionally. Whilst on about Regional we should mention that NYP have supported us in forming a NY NHWA embracing all eight districts, where we look forward to a large expansion programme and incorporating best practice. The first most significant change, which will be announced shortly, is that there will be a new category of NHW/NYP Volunteer, which will need only a limited vetting procedure before allowing NHW coordinators into police stations to use computers for access to Ringmaster databases.

k. Finally I would wish to thank our H&D NHW Committee for their dedicated contribution to our tasks and to you, our coordinators- our communicators, between NYP, NHW and your neighbours. Your efforts are very much appreciated.

Remember: TO PREVENT CRIME IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY.'

5. Treasurer's Report 2008/2009 and Election of Inspector of Accounts, 2009/2010.

Katy Piazza, our Treasurer, made copies of the Receipts and Payments Account also the Statement of Assets and Liabilities at 31 August 2009 available and presented her report. The report was accepted. Proposed: Peter Dallas Seconded: Chris Oates All were in favour of the re-election of Terry Harrison, our independent auditor since year 2000, who will continue in this appointment.

6. Election of Committee 2009/2010.

Keith Roberts will remain as our Chairman and Katy Piazza remains as our Treasurer, the appointments were accepted unopposed. No Vice-Chairman was elected. The new Secretary will be Len Hutton. Mike Josh and Joyce Pearson expressed interest in joining the Committee.

The Chairman thanked those members leaving the Committee for their input over the years.

7. Q&A. Mr Martin Milburn, NYP Community Safety Manager.

Martin Milburn who represents NYP Western Area, comprising of Harrogate District, Richmond and Craven, reassured us that Western Area is one of the safest places in Britain. Mr Milburn, who described his role as day to day service to coordinators, offered a general 'thank you' to NHW whose assistance makes the job easier for the police. Martin was pleased to answer a variety of Ring Master related questions from the floor. He confirmed that as many PCs and PCSOs as possible are being trained in the use of Ringmaster and that the quality of the system is being improved. In order to avoid the duplication of messages a process is in hand to evaluate the number of e-mails produced. Inaccurate Ringmaster addresses remain a problem and we were encouraged to check our e-mail addresses and have them updated on the system. Martin urged anyone with a Ringmaster query or problem to contact him directly at the Harrogate Police Station.

8. Any Other Business.

There being no further business the Annual General Meeting concluded at 21.30 hrs.