

Bedford and District Neighbourhood Watch



Charity No 1062009

February 2018 Newsletter

NEIGHBOURHOOD
WATCH

Bedfordnhw.ourwatch.org.uk

Welcome to the first Newsletter of 2018. We hope you find it helpful.

This is following our Members Meeting held on Wednesday 21st February 2018 at Kings House, Ampthill Road. Bedford.

Our very good speaker for the evening was Paul Coombes, Chair of Bedfordshire Crimestoppers and we also spent some time discussing the future direction of Neighbourhood Watch, both locally and countywide.

At our last meeting in November 2017, we presented awards to over half of our 51 Area Coordinators and we were pleased to be able to present a further seven awards at this meeting who were unable to attend the November meeting. We will be contacting those who have been unable to attend both these meetings in order to offer their awards in due course.

Our guest speaker for the evening was Paul Coombes, who is Chair of Bedfordshire Crimestoppers.

He gave a talk on CrimeStoppers, its history, how it operates and a summary of the campaigns that are being conducted locally. CrimeStoppers, like Neighbourhood Watch has its origins in America. For Crimestoppers it all started in Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA. In 1976, as a result of a vicious armed robbery at a petrol station, the employee, a young student working part-time, was shot dead. The detective investigating the murder believed this crime had been committed by someone living in the local community. The officer also thought that someone in the same community knew the killer but, for whatever reason, were unwilling to come forward and talk with police face to face.

The officer set up a telephone 'hot line' where anyone with information could ring and speak anonymously with the detective. If their information led to an arrest, the caller could receive a reward - with the caller remaining anonymous at all times.

Local businesses were approached for funding to support publicity and payment of a reward. Along with the media giving the scheme the publicity it needed, within a short time, a caller had phoned the 'hot-line' giving information which led directly to the arrest and subsequent charging



of the suspects. Coincidentally, the police were also receiving anonymous information about other criminal activity occurring within their local community. The concept developed and CrimeStoppers was born. CrimeStoppers was introduced to the UK as an independent charity by Lord Ashcroft in 1988 after the Broadwater Farm riots, in Tottenham North London.

During these riots PC Keith Blakelock was murdered. He was decapitated with a machete. For a month after his murder, over 400 people were questioned about his death. It was Lord Ashcroft's view that someone within the Broadwater Farm estate knew who murdered Keith Blakelock but was too afraid to come forward. It is from this event that Lord Ashcroft believed an anonymous reporting line was required, to break through the fear and as a result Crimestoppers was brought in to the UK.

Unlike the US where they have different numbers for town, county, state-wide schemes, here in the UK we have a single number 0800 555 111. It is the only anonymous way of providing information about crimes and perpetrators and is 100% successful in protecting the identity of those that call. Calls are not traced or recorded, the phone lines are encrypted and any online activity removes the IP address to ensure no trace is possible.

Specially trained call agents go to great lengths to ensure that the person calling in doesn't identify themselves. The information is audited by supervisors before being sent through to Forces to guarantee anonymity. Those cases where the information can only come from a single source are depicted on sending through. CrimeStoppers is not connected to the police but the Police or relevant Law Enforcement Agency will be sent information from us. All information is sent through in a 24 hour time frame except for information relating to time sensitive incidents.

This is a service that is available to everyone. CrimeStoppers is able to translate documents or phone calls in up to 149 languages and this continues to expand. Contact to CrimeStoppers is also available to those in prison.

A vital part of our charity is the number of volunteers and committees we have. They support their Communities and tackle their concerns by delivering local campaigns. The volunteers represent their communities and the partner police force areas. The committees also fundraise, to not only enable the campaigns to take place, but to also facilitate awareness events.

The campaigns in Bedfordshire are currently under review for 2018 – 2019 but the campaigns for the previous year have included domestic violence and abuse, modern day slavery, child sexual exploitation, burglary and knife and weapon crime. It is likely that some of these will be repeated during the next year.

CrimeStoppers is aimed at anyone and everyone but can include people who are prepared to get involved but not to the extent of giving a witness statement, perhaps they are frightened because they fear retribution from the subject or associates, they are giving information about a relative or close friend or they may even be a criminal themselves.

CrimeStoppers will also do appeals for people wanted in connection with crimes and will offer enhanced rewards for information that leads to the arrest and conviction of a perpetrator of crime. We also have a Most Wanted facility which has proved very successful and persons that are of interest for your area can be viewed on the CrimeStoppers website along with current campaigns.

Rewards are available for information given, although, they are rarely requested. The process of giving a reward to someone has been carefully developed in order to ensure that anonymity remains.

It is difficult to give specific results to show the success of CrimeStoppers because this would impact on the anonymity of the person giving information. I can however tell you that in 2016 / 2017 we heard from over 4000,000 people and this resulted in 17,573 crimes either solved or prevented. This information included 1,892 violent crimes including murder, 1,499 burglaries, robberies and thefts and 410 sexual abuse cases and rapes.

Further information on CrimeStoppers can be obtained at www.crimestoppers-uk.org a National website with a link to a secure form to give information online, www.crimestoppers-uk.org/bedfordshire for local pages, www.crimestoppers-uk.org/most-wanted for the Most Wanted page and there is also a twitter and facebook page. As members of the Neighbourhood Watch the more people that are aware of this service and the number 0800 555 111 the better. Information will always be passed to the relevant Police Force or Law Enforcement Agency however they will clearly act on information which is a priority to them. That is why the campaigns are important as they always align themselves with local policing priorities.

NEWS

At one of the partnership meetings we attended, the problems of under reporting was discussed. The feeling was that incidences of crime or intelligence were not being fully reported, perhaps because of being unaware of how to report.

So we have been asked to pass on, through our members, the following pieces of information.

The first two options are familiar to us: i.e.: 101 for non-urgent calls and 999 for emergency calls.

You should call 101 to report crime and other concerns that do not require an emergency response.

For example, if:

Your car has been stolen,

Your property has been damaged,

You suspect drug use or dealing in your neighbourhood

Or to:

Give the police information about crime in your area

Speak to the police about a general enquiry

You should always call 999 when it is an emergency, such as

when a crime is in progress,.

Someone suspected of a crime is nearby.

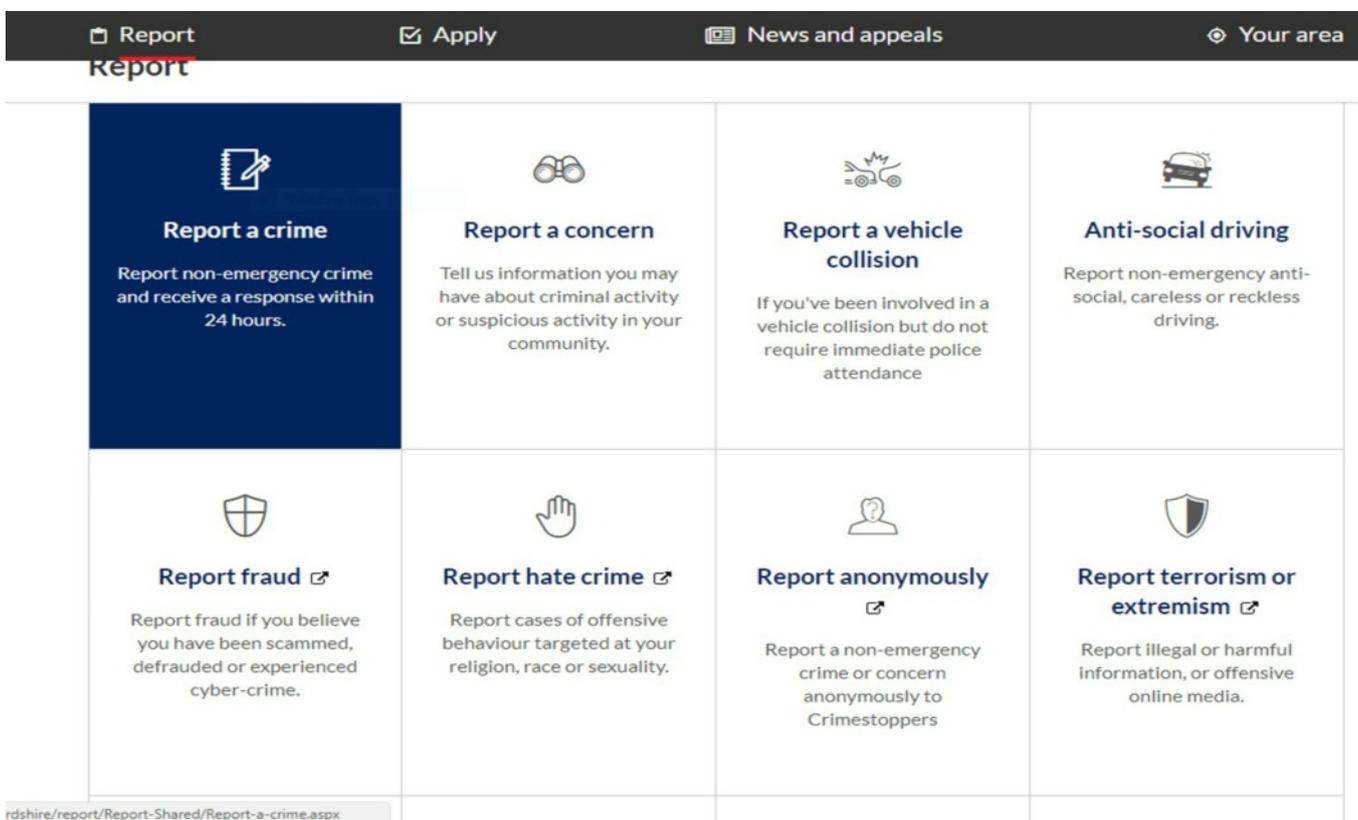
When there is danger to life or when violence is being used or threatened.

At our last meeting in November 2017, we introduced a third option and we have been asked by Community Safety to promote this option, perhaps where the preference would be to write down rather than speak what you want to say or pass on.

This third option is using the reporting page on the Police website.



From the front page of the website, clicking on 'on line reporting' takes you to this page, giving a number of options.



Rough Sleepers:

If you visit Bedford Town regularly, you may have seen an increase in rough sleepers.

In response to this, Bedford Borough Council has received funding to introduce a programme that is designed to help people who find themselves in this situation.

You will soon see posters like this asking for the general public to be aware.

The emphasis is to 'give a hand up rather than a hand out.'

Anyone wishing to give to local charities that are supporting the homeless, or refer a homeless person for assistance, can do so via these websites.



Analysis of Neighbourhood Watch in North Bedford

At the meeting, Hazel gave an in depth analysis of where the Association stands for the coming months, but first she explained how we got to this point in our history. Below is a resume of what was shared.

Bedford & District is the longest serving Neighbourhood Watch in the country starting in 1983. By the year 2012, we had 28,000 homes involved with Neighbourhood Watch. In 2009 we became a Registered Charity and managed by a board of Trustees who are elected annually. Our constitution states we need to have a minimum of five Trustees.

Over the years we have been recognised, by our Partners and Nationally, as an active and engaging Neighbourhood Watch, as you have seen by our end of year reports.

There are two other Neighbourhood Watch Associations in Bedfordshire:- Central Bedfordshire and Luton.

In 2016, National Neighbourhood Watch rebranded and adopted a new constitution and registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Part of this change was to streamline local Neighbourhood Watch Groups into Force Level Associations and for us to comply, we needed to develop a County Wide Association, geographically in line with Bedfordshire Police.

So Bedford & District, Central Bedfordshire and Luton joined to become "Bedfordshire Neighbourhood Watch Association". Even though we have become an Association we still retain our three individual identities and areas we cover.

This was recognised by National and we have a partnership agreement with them as a consequence. Coming back to Bedford & District, we are all volunteers.

In the past, we had an employed Administrator for a number of years and this terminated in 2014 due to a lack of funding.

Since then the only way to maintain the day to day administration was for the Trustees to accept this responsibility on behalf of the charity and we believe this has been done to a high standard.

At present there are eight Trustees and although we have tried, we have been unsuccessful in recruiting more. As we approach our next AGM in September, there are a number of current Trustees who will not be standing again and the reasons for standing down are genuine. This means we will have insufficient to meet our constitutional obligations.

Unless more Trustees are found, who can support the running of the charity, Bedford & District cannot continue to function in its present form. This will also have a bearing on the Bedfordshire Association.

We want to look at all alternative and acceptable ways of running Neighbourhood Watch in Bedford that is effective and accountable for us all. So there are important decisions to be made over the coming months.

In order to make any changes to the Charity, our constitution states we have to bring any proposed changes to the Area Coordinators or representative, who are our members, for a vote.

I hope this has helped to give you an understanding of where we are and I hope we can bring options for your consideration at our next meeting in June.

We would welcome any comments you raise/bring, either by email (bedfordnhwatch@gmail.com) or respond via the Alert message you received this newsletter on.

The next quarterly meeting will be on Thursday 7th June 2018. at 7:30 pm.

Venue to be confirmed