

The important role of the Parish Council's Community Safety Lead Member

Part of the Southern Wiltshire Area Board's Community Safety Theme 2012/13

Background

In each of the last 2 years the Southern Wiltshire Area Board has consulted residents on what it should focus on during the forthcoming year. Among other things, Community safety has always come out as a top priority for our residents despite low crime figures.

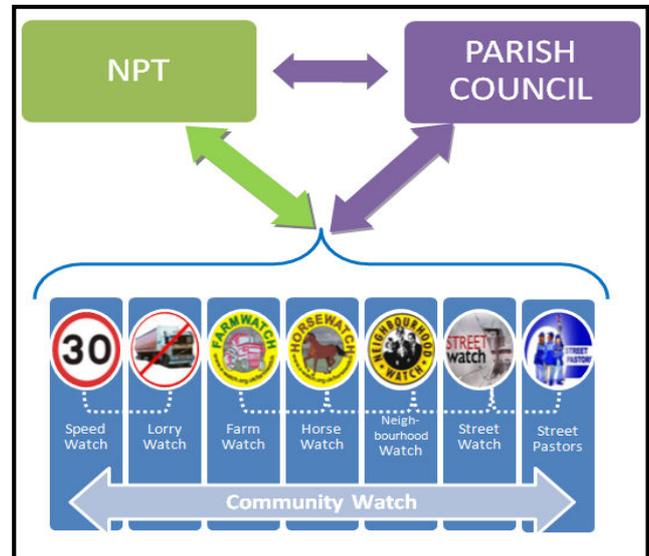
The Area Board's approach to this issue is to improve the networks of communication between Neighbourhood Policing Teams, Parish Councils and voluntary-led "watch" schemes, such as Neighbourhood Watch, Speedwatch, Farmwatch and so on.

Essentially, through developing stronger local networks, active residents will have a greater ability to influence local decisions. Through better networks of communication, residents should develop a greater understanding of the methods and importance of reporting crime and suspicious observations, know more about current local crime issues and also have an opportunity to actively engage in local "watch" initiatives.

Important role for Parish Councils

Whilst not a statutory function, the Parish Council has a vital part to play in promoting community safety in their village. We think the role of the lead councillors could include:

- ✓ Where NPTs are not able to attend a PC meeting there would be prior Email/telephone contact between the lead member and the NPT. The NPT will provide a simple bullet point list of pertinent issues for the parish – the points they would have made if they had



attended the PC themselves. The lead member will then be in a position to update the PC on any Police issues and priorities affecting the Parish. In this way there will be a police liaison report at every PC meeting. The regular dialogue will enhance the Parish Council's ability to influence Police decisions and inform residents about community safety issues. The lead member will be the two-way information conduit between PC (and residents) and the NPT.

- ✓ Gaining an understanding of the coverage of "watch" schemes operating in the parish. Starting a conversation within the Parish about setting up new schemes, promoting and coordinating existing schemes.
- ✓ Finding opportunities to bring people together to share ideas and resources. Eg. Could active Neighbourhood Watch members be interested in becoming Lorry Watch volunteers? Or if there is a Speedwatch team operating could they also look at setting up as a Lorry Watch group.
- ✓ Liaising with other parish leads to share ideas and identify sharing opportunities.
- ✓ Acting as the link with the Area Board on community safety matters.

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