

# COFTON WATCH

## NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH NEWSLETTER

# Residents take a stand

Welcome to CoftonWatch the first of our intended regular newsletters from the sub-committee of Cofton Hackett Neighbourhood Watch.

Firstly our thanks to the original organiser and committee who set up the Cofton Hackett Neighbourhood Watch scheme 20 or so years ago. It was not an easy task to set this up and has been difficult to maintain.

Secondly we must explain why we believe we have had to re-launch the scheme and how it will work.

Over the last 20 years life has changed and many people have become aware of the increase in levels of crime and anti-social behaviour. A group of local residents who live near Cofton Park have become particularly concerned, asking if there was in existence an organisation who could monitor/report incidents and also inform the whole of the area in case there was a pattern to these incidents. Neighbourhood Watch.

A number of meetings have now taken place to re-launch Cofton Hackett Neighbourhood Watch. The original organiser, the local police and the well established

Rubery Neighbourhood Watch group have assisted us greatly. The main difference this time is that rather than one person taking the responsibility it was agreed that we would have a chairperson and a sub-committee to share this task. Currently we have a full coordinator meeting each month at the Rednal Social Club, courtesy of the Social Club Committee, with a sub-committee meeting in between. It is intended in the future to reduce the frequency of these meetings once we believe we have everything in place and running smoothly.

However, the whole scheme relies completely on the help and cooperation of local residents and those who have volunteered to be coordinators. The intention is to have one coordinator to 'look after' approximately 10 houses. That means we need about 70 for our area. Currently we have about 50. This has resulted in several coordinators with too many houses and some areas with no cover at all. We would appeal to those areas who are not covered for volunteers to come forward. i.e. Cofton Lake Road, Kendal End Road, parts of Ashmead Rise. The

task is not very onerous but will hopefully help to cut down the level of crime and anti-social behaviour in our area.

The purpose of this newsletter is to keep you informed. On the inside pages you will find articles from the sub-committee on progress with the scheme, the means of communicating the incidents which is currently under development.

*Continued overleaf*



## THIS ISSUE

- The story so far
- Safety checklist
- Firework Alert
- Communication
- Useful Tel: No's
- Attributes of a co-ordinator

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There will be a regular section from the local police who are incidentally very happy with the re-launch. We will also include useful security hints, safety codes, phone numbers of important contacts and possibly a list of local tradespeople and suppliers recommended by people living in the area.

We would also be interested in your feedback with suggestions for improvements, changes etc.

Enjoy reading but mostly let your friends and neighbours know that Cofton Hackett Neighbourhood Watch is back!

**Chairperson: Katie Mann**

Sub-Committee: Carol Barrett (secretary), Emily Mayne (treasurer), Sharron Imrie, Paul Stephens, Garry Turland, Keith Duncan.

## STOP PRESS

### Cold Callers

There has been a recent increase in canvassing within Cofton Hackett. We all have to be aware when opening our front doors to strangers.

It is advisable to;

- use a chain at the door,
- always request to see identification even if they are in a uniform,
- do not leave your personal belongings and valuables near the front door,
- stay with gas and meter readers at all times

Legitimate callers will not be offended by your request and will carry the appropriate identification.

## Firework Alert

Bonfire night and New Year's Eve are approaching so be considerate to others if you are having fireworks;

- If possible let neighbours know of your celebrations
- Be aware of local pets who may be scared and inform their owners in advance
- A recent change in the law means that it is now illegal to light fireworks after 11pm, except for 4 days of the year including Bonfire Night and New Year's Eve
- It is unlawful to sell fireworks to under 18s
- Follow the Firework Code

**Be safe and have fun!**

# Police Comments on Local Incidents – PC Jayne Willetts

We know the majority of thieves are opportunists and so the police advise to limit their chances by closing any doors and windows in unoccupied rooms and lock external doors.

Ensure that purses, wallets, handbags and mobile phones are out of view and not left downstairs overnight.

Bear in mind that many newer cars can now only be stolen with the keys and thieves will go to great lengths to get hold of them, even using a fishing rod to hook the keys through the letterbox or an open window. Get into the habit of storing your keys safely away from the front door to avoid

the upset and expense that victims of crime experience.

Can members of the community please ensure that valuables are not left in vehicles overnight including purses, wallets, handbags, laptops etc...

Also be aware that documentation that is left on show can be used to steal your identity to open credit card accounts, purchase mobile phones and obtain credit in your name. Anything which has your name and address on can be used to try and obtain

credit. Destruction is the best way of disposing your old bills and a shredder is the most effective method. If credit is obtained in your name it can cause problems with your ability to get credit in the future.



# Communication method of Cofton's Neighbourhood Watch

## History

In order for Neighbourhood Watch to work there has to be a real sense of community and strong communication network. We need to be able to deliver a message to as many households in as short a time as possible if we are to make people aware of incidents and to reduce the potential for reoccurrence.

Our aim in Cofton Hackett was to enlist people from every road to support the scheme. We assessed that 10 houses was a manageable number to cover and so required a considerable number of volunteers across the parish. To date we have been delighted with the response and support from the local community with only a few areas remaining without cover. We continue to promote these areas and our dream is to have the whole neighbourhood involved.

Looking at a map of the area, we have identified 10 geographical groups to provide zones to help us with our communication. Each group links its co-ordinators to ensure that local incidents can be shared immediately within the vicinity. These can then be cascaded throughout the rest of the neighbourhood. Meetings have proved very sociable and a great way for co-ordinators to get to know one another. By grouping co-ordinators we hope to strengthen these links and provide a better sense of community.

## Alert procedure

As a member of Neighbourhood Watch we are all responsible for being aware as individuals and looking out for each other and our properties. If you spot an incident or are a victim, then the first point of call is the local police, who you should obtain an incident number from. This not only ensures that the crime is recorded but also helps us to track the crime trends affecting our area and the required resources provided by the Police. We continue to work closely with the local Community Liaison Officer in addressing common themes which we are starting to identify.

Once a crime has been reported, a member informs their assigned co-ordinator. (Each co-ordinator should have informed you of a second name in the event of unavailability). The communication chain then commences.

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**Please keep the section by your phone to help you to support your local co-ordinator and help the scheme overall.**

Co-ordinator name \_\_\_\_\_

Group Number \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number \_\_\_\_\_

Second co-ordinator \_\_\_\_\_

Police emergency 999

West Mercia Police 08457 444 888 (Incidents in Cofton Hackett)

West Midlands Police 0845 113 5000 (Incidents in Birmingham, i.e. Cofton Park)

**Remember to request your incident number and inform your co-ordinator**

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- The co-ordinator then informs any one of the 10 lead co-ordinators.
- They use the communication circle, contacting a further lead co-ordinator.
- Each lead co-ordinator then informs the other co-ordinators within their group.

This will ensure that we have as many people involved as possible to;

- minimise the burden on the person who initially reported the incident,
- get as many lines of communication going as possible to create a domino effect,
- hopefully result in everyone knowing in the shortest possible time.

You may have already received an alert through your door. This process hopefully formalises the already informal communication which has been developing within the area.

## Alerts to date

We have already begun to identify themes arising within the alerts to date. In summary, we advise that all members remain aware for;

- house burglaries
- car thefts
- antisocial behaviour, especially from youngsters in groups
- fires in Cofton Woods
- suspicious cars loitering, especially around local shops and the Stocken
- nuisance mini motorbikes
- graffiti, litter and nuisance dog fouling

## Communication Prioritisation

We have classified the alerts as being Red / Amber / Green. The speed at which the communication takes place will depend upon the nature and severity of the incident.

**Red** – this is urgent information and should be communicated around the circle within 48 hours

**Amber** – this is information which is important but not urgent and should be communicated around the circle within one week

**Green** – this is information which is not urgent and is not incident related such as minutes of the monthly co-ordinator meetings and other general communication, i.e. leaflet distribution etc.

## How you can help your Neighbourhood Watch to be a success

To date we have already received praise from the local police, District Councillors and Rubery Neighbourhood Watch. We can only continue this level of success if all members support the scheme and help to make the communication links maintained.

## Useful telephone numbers

<b>Police</b>	<b>999</b>
<b>West Mercia Police</b> Cofton Hackett area	<b>08457 444 888</b>
<b>West Midlands Police</b> B'ham area, i.e. Cofton Park	<b>0844 113 5000</b>
<b>Park Rangers</b> Cofton Park	<b>0121 454 7810</b>
<b>Graffiti Cleaners</b> – Graffiti Wizard (private company – to remove any graffiti damage to property, or inform Parish Council Clerk of any damage to public property)	<b>0800 977 4918</b>
<b>Bromsgrove District Council</b> Refuse Collection Environmental Health Noise Nuisance	<b>01527 873 232</b>  <b>01527 881 441</b>
<b>Community Safety Officer</b> (Mr Graham Rock – crime and disorder issues and antisocial behaviour)	<b>01527 881 486</b>
<b>Cofton Hackett Parish Council Clerk</b> Mrs Pauline Foxall	<b>01564 823 315</b>
<b>District Councillors</b> Ann Doyle Brian Fuller	<b>0121 445 4184</b> <b>0121 445 4950</b>
<b>Victim Support</b>	<b>0121 444 0327</b>

If you have any comments or suggestions about this and future editions of Cofton Watch, please contact Carol Barrett, CHNW secretary, via your local co-ordinator.

## Qualities and attributes of a Cofton Hackett Neighbourhood Co-ordinator

A co-ordinator will ideally;

- Be approachable and accessible (e.g. retired / home worker / full time parent)
- Decisive and effective
- Work closely with other members to facilitate alerts
- Have answerphone / computer / printer – be able to receive and send e-mails or able to quickly hand deliver alerts to their group
- Be committed to the success of Cofton Hackett Neighbourhood Watch!

**Areas remaining without co-ordinators and not covered by the scheme are;**

- Cofton Lake Road
- Eachway Lane
- Kendal End Road
- Lickey Road