



The London Borough of Bromley Neighbourhood Watch Association (BNWA)

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, 7.30pm Thursday 14th April 2011
Bromley Football Club, Hayes Lane, Bromley, Kent BR2 9EF**

1. Welcome & Introductions etc:

The Chairman of the Association, Clifford Longley, opened the meeting and welcomed everyone, including guest speakers – Chief Superintendent Charles Griggs (Bromley Police Borough Commander) and Kate Daisley (Operations Director, Neighbourhood & Home Watch Network – NHWN). The Secretary requested everyone present should record names/ details on the attendance sheets. A total of 69 names/details were provided with 28 e-mail apologies received from Coordinators. The Chairman also advised Jo Johnson MP and Cllr. Peter Morgan had both sent apologies and Alf Kennedy (Treasurer) advised that Jim Madden (also from NHWN) was belatedly also unable to attend.

2. Chairman's Report:

Clifford Longley, BNWA Chairman, gave his report as follows:

‘May I welcome you to this AGM, which is my first as Chairman. This has been a difficult year for the Association in many ways, but also a promising one. May I start with an appeal for help. The Association’s affairs are run by its Executive Committee and we urgently need new members. There has been more than the usual amount of churn in our Executive membership, so much so that I can’t mention everyone by name. But if are you are thinking this might be something where you could make a contribution, please turn that thought into action and allow yourself to be nominated for election today, or at least get in touch afterwards with a view to co-option as a Committee member.

You will have noticed that Neighbourhood Watch has been in the news recently. It was the vigilance of one of our own Coordinators which first drew the attention of the police to Delroy Grant, the Operation Minstead man who was recently convicted – to the relief of the entire community. I am glad the Coordinator remembered the importance not only of reporting a suspicious vehicle to the police, but of giving its number plate too. That is always vital. “White van acting suspiciously” is useful information to the police, but “white van acting suspiciously, index number so and so,” is in a different class altogether, likely to lead to someone’s collar being felt in a few hours or less. A point to remember, and pass on.

In a different context altogether, you may have noticed that during the recent disturbances in Cairo. When the police retreated to their barracks, local residents formed themselves into groups to protect their property. What did they call themselves? Neighbourhood Watch, or the Arab equivalent thereof! Neighbourhood Watch, the last bastion of civilisation in a world of chaos...

After the meeting I shall post a copy of this report online, where we will also put the Minutes. If you have recently visited our webpage you will probably have noticed it lacks certain sophistication and user friendliness. I am glad to be able to report that the Executive is well aware of these shortcomings and has cunning plan to put them right.

We made an approach to the IT Department of Bromley College, through the Principal, and I am glad to be able to tell you that it has been agreed that the design of a state of the art website for BNWA has been accepted as a course project for second year degree students, starting this September with preliminary work beginning after this AGM.

This is of mutual benefit as it is invaluable to students to be working with a real client, BNWA, rather than an imaginary one, so there is no cost to us apart from a £250 prize to the winning designer. I am glad to say that the course supervisor, Clive Gould, is enthusiastic and hopes to have a trial version ready for testing by the end of this year. We are hoping for an interactive site, which Coordinators can use, but which also contains locally specific information. It will need an Administrator, and we are looking for a volunteer. The sooner such a person joins the Executive the better, as they will be in on the ground floor of the design process. My own hope is that we do not stop at a website, but also engage with the opportunities offered by Facebook and Twitter.

I need hardly say that communication between BNWA and its member Coordinators is vital to our work. After a stupendous amount of effort Dave Stewart, our Executive member responsible for IT, has reorganised our member database and it is now more or less fit for purpose. We are, as you are aware, going to an email-only basis for communicating with members, as we just do not have the resources to go on mailing everything through the post. The plus side is that we are now for the first time able to be in almost instant communication with virtually all of you, and you with us in return. Dave is unable to be here this evening, and so I have expanded this report to cover his area. For the time being the whole Executive is stepping in to fill his role. But we are eagerly looking out for new Executive IT-savvy members.

But more importantly we are shortly hoping to be able to offer this facility to the Police and other enforcement Agencies (e.g. local Trading Standards Dept.) so they can communicate alerts or requests for help through us, to nearly all Neighbourhood Watch Coordinators in the Borough instantaneously, and at no cost to themselves. What is more, we can also do this on a Ward by Ward basis, or Sector by Sector. I am hoping use of this valuable facility will quickly become a routine part of neighbourhood policing, once our Safer Neighbourhood Teams recognise the value of this to their work. We are also developing a new protocol for the way the new electronic database can be kept up to date, which will be a particular help to new Neighbourhood Watches in the Borough which are appearing all the time. We will say more about those developments when they are ready for launch.

You will be aware also that we have tried in the past year to tidy up the relationship between Neighbourhood Watches, Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) and Safer Neighbourhood Panels (SNPs) which now cover the entire Borough. When Neighbourhood Watch first appeared on the scene, SNTs and SNPs didn't exist and there has been some confusion about how they fit together. With the consent of Bromley Council and Bromley Police we have suggested guidance to all the Panels, through their Chair, on what we consider best practice. I also wrote to Coordinators during the year to outline what we had in mind. To reiterate, the idea is that each Panel should have at least one Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator member, who will be willing to take on oversight of the development of Neighbourhood Watch in that Ward on behalf of the Panel.

We suggest that Panels should regard the development of Neighbourhood Watch in the Ward as one of its standing objectives, and keep an eye on this at its regular meetings. We also suggest that one Police Officer in the Team should keep a record of all Coordinators. We have pointed out that many SNTs have found that recruiting new Coordinators door to door is an excellent investment in getting to know their local people face to face, and gives them an invaluable entry into the community that they might otherwise find much more difficult to achieve.

That said, we have to uphold the independence of Neighbourhood Watch, so it continues to be seen as belonging to the community and not as an agency of the Police. We are of course part of the Big Society long before that term was coined, and will still be there when it has long been forgotten. To me the real importance of Neighbourhood Watch is not what it does but what it represents by its very existence – the local community taking responsibility for the safety and welfare of everyone in it. It is not just about 'spotting burglars with a bag marked swag' over their shoulders, it is basically an expression of neighbourliness – of the fact that, in the words of the poet, "no man is an island".

The answer to the question "what exactly do you do?" will become clearer when we put together our new training programme for Coordinators, and here we do genuinely and urgently want your comments. What training do you think Coordinators would most appreciate, both new ones and long established? In what ways could Neighbourhood Watch expand its activities into related areas and activities for the good of the community? Are there other expressions of neighbourliness apart from watching out for that burglar?

One example from my own patch. When the activities of Operation Minstead 'Night Stalker' became well known, my Neighbourhood Watch area, with the help of the local Residents Assn. was able to draw up a list of all the single elderly people, mostly women, that we knew of. The list was passed to the Police, who visited every address and gave advice, checked property security, and offered a high decibel alarm at no cost – paid for I believe by a local charity. I can't see any way the Police could have done that without our help in identifying vulnerable potential victims. It required detailed local knowledge. But I have asked myself since – should we have stopped there? Do we have other responsibilities to elderly people living alone, beyond trying to see that their houses are not burgled? I should like to put that question to you, tonight. It has obvious relevance to the training programmes we are designing.

Organisationally, what we have in mind is dividing the Borough into three sections, and tailoring training to that section's particular needs. This will make it more manageable and also more local, rather than always being in central Bromley. Our aim, perhaps ambitiously, is to have two of these training sessions a year in each sector. We shall shortly start to design the training, and that is where your input is urgently needed.

I said I didn't want to mention individual names on the Executive, but it would not be right to complete this annual report without thanking two non-voting members, Judith Cross, who is also Chair of Bromley Community Engagement Forum (BCEF), and Colin Newman, Head of Bromley Council's excellent Community Safety Team. They have both been an invaluable support to me, a new boy, and I should like to say thank you to them tonight.

But I must also thank all of you for coming tonight and for everything you do for the community through Neighbourhood Watch. With your support I am sure it will continue to go from strength to strength.

Now Alf Kennedy our Treasurer & Vice Chairman wants to speak not just about our finances but also about the Ward Coordinator role and how we are hoping to develop it. I hope many of you will consider taking on that role in your local Ward. There is a simple principle here – if Neighbourhood Watch is worth doing, it's worth doing properly.'

3. Treasurer's Report / Questions:

Accounts: Alf Kennedy (Treasurer) gave a brief verbal summary of the accounts as follows. He advised that full details are published and available on the BNWA website.

		<i>2010</i>	<i>2009</i>
Balance £		2287	2783
Income £		Nil	200
Expenditure £	Web	49	56
	Expenses	356	119
	Training	181	3501

A grant application has been made to Bromley Council for £7500 which, if received may be spent on obtaining supplies of Neighbourhood Watch signs and stickers for Watches.

Questions / Comments: Various issues were raised from the floor. These were answered by the Chairman or Treasurer - general summaries and noted below:

Question 1: NHW stickers can be ordered from a website

Answer 1: Confirmed – 50,000 stickers were available!

Q2: Coordinator had never heard from BNWA for many years, always from the Police.

A2: Police are part of partnership with BNWA and Council, and assist Coordinators and Borough. Acknowledge problems but aim to improve both communications and training.

Q3: Re change from paper to e-mail communications: Speaking for 7 Coordinators who are all not happy about the change. Also a lot of other people who are also dissatisfied.
A3: Agree some people will be dissatisfied but there is just no viable alternative. Paper correspondence is very cost and resource intensive. For this AGM approx. 600 e-mails and 200 paper invitations were sent out. With limited funds we cannot afford the costs: examples are: last year's AGM cost £2200, a letter printed/mailed to 700+ Coordinators costs £2200. Alternative options for those without home e-mail are to use your SNTs, friends, neighbours or relatives, who may be able to print out hard copies if required.

Q4: Strong complaint from Chair of SNP about application and joining processes. There are unacceptable e-mail and IT difficulties and delays – BNWA was uncoordinated and not proactive enough.

A4: Point taken and acknowledged. There is now a draft protocol for BNWA, Police and Council to agree and inform all parties on new applications. As mentioned in Chairman's report, further improvements are in hand or planned by the Executive Committee.

Q5: Poor communication since 'Watchword' newsletter stopped – know not BNWA publication, but issued by Bromley Council Borough Co-ordinator. Any update?

A5: Updated documents are published on BNWA site Yahoo Groups: however you do need to be registered to access them.

Q6: Again, communication must be sorted. SNPs presentations materials are made available. Need up to date information to pass on to Coordinators.

A6: As already mentioned, problems are known and actions planned. If more people volunteered for the Executive, more could be done and quicker.

Q7: General discussion and comments on communication problems and other areas requiring improvements or changes.

A7: Judith Cross (BCEF) agreed working closely with local SNPs/SNTs was essential – SNPs can publish their information on BCEF website. Ch. Supt. Griggs (Met. Police) commented there are communication problems across London and Bromley is not alone. Coordinators should be proactive to keep their members informed: there is detailed information on the Met. Police website, the SNTs all have individual Ward websites and crime details for every Ward are published. The Home Office also publishes information and links. Also SNTs deliver newsletters twice a year – Cray Valley East do six. So all the information Coordinators could possibly need is already there! He added BNWA is not a Police body or organisation; it helps run the biggest number of Watches in London. The Council and Met. Police are re-structuring and 3 Safer Neighbourhood Development Officers (SNDOS) are being put in place to help support the BNWA structure and organisation.

4. Elections to Executive Committee:

a. Treasurer: Chairman advised Alf Kennedy was proposed to re-stand as Treasurer. This was agreed unanimously from the floor with no-one against.

b. Executive Committee: no new nominations had been received. The existing Committee proposed to re-stand for election: Clifford Longley, Aidan McCulloch, Dave Stewart, Peter Toy, James Ellis and Irving Radnor. This was unanimously agreed from the floor

with no-one against. (Secretary's Note: other Committee Members can be co-opted as required but they do not have voting rights).

5. Guest Speakers:

- Chief Supt. Charles Griggs, Bromley Borough Commander, Metropolitan Police:

- a. Communication: The problems discussed earlier are not new. Around 75% of the population now has internet access but most people still say they don't know what's going on! He was confident that there will be improvements with the new BNWA Executive Committee, with support from senior staff in the Police and the Council and the 3 SNDOs now in place.
- b. Crime Statistics: latest Bromley crime figures are embargoed but many areas of crime are down – this is a result of Safer Bromley Partnership working with many community and other bodies. Policing Survey results show for public confidence, 87% think Bromley is a safe place to live; for Police satisfaction, 83% of victims are satisfied with service – 2nd best in London; and an Internal Police Staff Survey shows Bromley is the top Borough in London!
- c. There are many 'good news' events in Bromley, but not all get the publicity deserved.
- d. Police Survey: currently an online survey on Met. Police website on Station 'front counters' and public access – all invited to complete the survey via web link.
- e. Safer Neighbourhood Review: Bromley response was very supportive of the current SNT structure and processes. The outcome of the London-wide review is still awaited.
- f. Assistant Commissioner's visit: a senior officer had visited Bromley this week – their conclusion was that Bromley Borough is a clear policing success!
- g. Partnerships: He was proud of Bromley and the many partners who work alongside the Police. He thanked the BNWA and all the Coordinators for their work.

- Colin Newman, Head of Community Safety, London Borough of Bromley:

- a. SNDOs: Following approval last January, the Borough has now been split into 3 sectors; each now has its own SNDO appointed. These are broadly structured into geographical areas as follows: South - Sue McVicker; North East - Pete Warne; North West - Amanda Davis.
- b. Various information on crime and community safety with related web links is on the Bromley Council website under www.bromley.gov.uk / crime prevention and community safety.
- c. Watch Coordinators Training Programme: Further to the detail already provided earlier by the Chairman, the planned training will be sector based to better reflect the needs of the different areas across the Borough. There will be ongoing liaison and engagement with each of the SNDOs over the specific requirements for the Coordinators in their respective areas.

- Kate Daisley, national ‘Neighbourhood & Home Watch Network’ (NHWN):

a. The Chairman introduced Kate Daisley. Alf Kennedy first gave a brief overview of the different national (NHWN) and London Neighbourhood Watch Association (LNWA) organisations. These are distinct and different to the Bromley Neighbourhood Watch Association, which as already mentioned is one of the largest and most active Associations in London and more widely. A common theme for all is timely and effective communication and tools to deliver the organisation’s needs.

b. Kate Daisley endorsed Alf’s comments. She confirmed we were not alone with the issues and problems that were discussed earlier. The NHWN’s is funded by the Home Office to provide a flexible framework to assist Neighbourhood Watches across the country, many of which did not have the size, scale or organisation that we have in Bromley. She was sure our improving partnership working with the Council and Police SNTs would prove effective.

c. As part of a wider PowerPoint presentation, she explained that the NHWN website (www.ourwatch.org.uk) provides a management system and secure database for areas which lacked any viable alternatives. It was a flexible and adaptable system which was available to all Neighbourhood Watches nationally. Neighbourhood Watch remains the biggest voluntary organization in the UK with the potential to deliver even greater benefits in the future.

6. Close of Meeting:

Ending the AGM, the Chairman especially thanked all three Guest Speakers for their time and interesting presentations. He promised an exiting future for Neighbourhood Watch and encouraged everyone who did not already use the internet to try to find ways to do so – local Libraries also provide the service free of charge. He closed the Meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

*A. McCulloch
BNWA Secretary
31st May 2011*