

**The London Borough of Bromley
Neighbourhood Watch Association (BNWA)**

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, 7.30pm 16th May 2013
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. The Secretary requested everyone present should record names/ details on the attendance sheets and advised various Coordinators had sent their apologies.

2. Chairman's Report:

Clifford Longley, BNWA Chairman, gave his report to the meeting, as follows:

This will be the third time I have reported back to the annual general meeting on the activities of the executive of this association. As I indicated to you in a recent email, I felt it was time to move on, so this will be my last annual report and next year you will have the pleasure of listening to someone else. I believe a regular change of chairman in an organisation like ours is no bad thing as everybody has their own priorities just as they have their own blind spots.

When I became chairman of the executive was struggling a bit, as both the previous chairman and secretary had resigned and several members of the committee also took the opportunity to stand down. We have slowly rebuilt, and we now have a very lively and friendly executive, all of whom, I am glad to say, are willing to serve another year. But I would ask one more time, that all of you should think about whether you feel you too can make a contribution in this area by joining the executive. Either let us know at this meeting or afterwards. I assure you it is not onerous. It is certainly mind-broadening.

Three years ago there were a number of goals which we set out to try and achieve, and the executive needed no persuading that they were necessary. Above all our requirement was to improve communications with our members.

Before I myself joined the executive, elected at the annual meeting in 2010, I had been a neighbourhood watch coordinator for some 10 years in an area covering about 300 households and with about a dozen people assisting. During that time I have to admit we had almost no contact with Bromley Neighbourhood Watch Association. I also have to admit it didn't seem to matter very much.

We did what we did, which included compiling a confidential list of all the elderly and vulnerable females in the area, some 19 of them, who fitted the profile of the Operation Minstead type of victims. Each of them was visited by a uniformed officer and given crime prevention advice, backed up by expert technical help if necessary, and those that

wanted them were given personal alarms and devices enabling them to speak to callers through a closed front door. I hope that our response was the sort of good practice that we are going to hear more about when we get to the presentation section of tonight's business. If we were faced with a Minstead type situation again, I'm sure that BNWA would take the lead in helping coordinators understand what was required.

Things have changed; one of the things that changed was the institution of new policing methods under the heading of safer neighbourhood teams. The neighbourhood watch movement seemed to be misaligned to these developments. I noticed this as a member of my own ward safer neighbourhood panel.

So another task that we in BNWA needed to address was to put that right. It is ongoing, but now at least, we have ensured that all safer neighbourhood teams have up to date records of all the coordinators in their area, on an e-mailable database. We have matched all these ward-by-ward records with our own to make sure they are up to date, which I am sure has been a great help to the safer neighbourhood teams. Our aim of having a specific NW representative on every ward panel is not yet achieved but we are working towards it.

So where have we got to? As I indicated we now have an effective and fully functioning electronic database with the email addresses of about 600 of our coordinators. The preliminary work to achieve this was done by Dave Stewart, to whom owe our thanks, and the job was taken to completion in a most professional and efficient manner by James Ellis, grateful thanks to him too.

At the same time our presence on the web was clearly failing to achieve its purpose, and Brian Rowland joined the executive in order to assist us in having an effective web presence. This time last year I was able to tell you that the competition for the design of a new website was nearly complete, though not ready for launch at that meeting.

Quite soon after we did identify our winners, two students from Bromley College, and we held a formal presentation of the prize, a cheque for £250, handed over by Cllr Tim Stevens. But you know all this because it's on the website. The work that Brian did, in collecting the appropriate material for the interim website that he put together for us, made the job much more manageable, and we owe Brian a great debt.

I have recently taken over the management of the website myself, on a temporary basis, and I'm happy to go on doing so until either Brian is ready to step back into his old role, or someone else more competent than me comes forward. As you know the email database and the website are closely linked. When there is something we feel you need to know immediately, James circulates the web address to you in an email, and in one click you have it before you. I hope you appreciate the effort that it took to get such a smooth and efficient system in place. I'm sure you realise BNWA is like a graceful swan in action, all calm and elegant as it moves smoothly across the surface, but paddling like mad under water.

I wouldn't say our communications with our members are perfect but there certainly much improved.

The police, through safer neighbourhood teams, have come to realise the value of neighbourhood watch and how it can be integrated into the whole policing package. In some wards, members of the safer neighbourhood teams, and I'm thinking particularly of PCSOs, have actively helped in the recruitment of new coordinators. To have someone in every street looking out for community safety and crime prevention, and what is more someone the police can go to and knock on the door knowing in advance that they will get a friendly and cooperative response, has been a great benefit.

The system of a safer neighbourhood teams means not only having officers on the spot who know their territory and people, but also makes them accountable to the local community through ward panels. I do not understand why this model needs to be modified, particularly if we accept the assurances that there will be no reduction in police front line numbers. But the new policing model which will soon be rolled out across the borough will, apparently, leave only one PC and one PCSO in each ward, while the rest are withdrawn into clusters. Frankly this seems to me to be going backwards. The executive is very anxious about this and that anxiety is expressed in the resolution on the agenda which you will already have seen, and which I shall ask you to support in a minute.

Having said that, I'm not happy with the idea that an association like ours should get too involved in discussing detailed police policy. Mechanisms exist whereby members of the public can take part in the shaping of policing policy and can hold the police to account through democratic mechanisms. Nevertheless we do have a legitimate interest specifically from a neighbourhood watch point of view. There is a danger for instance that the closer liaison which has been developed in the last few years could be jeopardised. I am ready to be convincingly reassured that these fears are unfounded, but it does no harm for BNWA to put down a marker, which is what this resolution attempts to do.

Neighbourhood watch is one of the first links in the chain of intelligence gathering in which good policing depends. We are told the new system will be refocused on arresting criminals. I am not myself sure that that is the public's number one priority. The public wants to feel safe, and some of the things that disturbs that sense of safety, such as low level public disorder and antisocial behaviour, do not count as major crimes. Just "arresting criminals" isn't quite the answer. That's not just my opinion. Let me quote from a recent speech by Tom Winsor, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary.

"It is necessary, not only desirable," he said, "that citizens should rediscover and discharge their common obligations to co-operate with the police and one another, in the prevention and detection of crime. That requires the police having the trust and confidence of the communities which they serve, so that people will give them information and assistance which can be used to keep the whole community safe."

He goes on - "We should never forget that the primary purpose of the police is the prevention of crime and disorder, and as Sir Robert Peel said, the test of police efficiency is the absence of crime and disorder, not the visible evidence of police action in dealing with it. Virtually all of the costs of the criminal justice system are incurred downstream of the commission of an offence. Prevention is far better than cure in policing and criminal justice. It is therefore extremely important that the first obligation of the police, in preventing crime, is given the attention and resources require. It should also be acknowledged that crime prevention is not the sole obligation of the police; as I have said, it is the obligation of every citizen. And that includes the other agencies and emanations of communities and the state..." Unquote.

It is also significant than at the very top of his list of priorities for the police he puts "preventive policing, examining how police forces prevent crime rather than react to it, and how well officers are trained in preventive techniques." I believe the safer neighbourhood team approach was just such a preventive technique, and a very good one. "Arresting criminals" may be the top priority of the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, but it is clearly not the top priority of the Chief Inspector of Constabulary. Maybe they need to talk to each other. You will have noticed, by the way, that some of Mr. Winsor's remarks are highly relevant to the Neighbourhood Watch movement, and I am sure he will put the promotion of Neighbourhood Watch high on his agenda.

However, whatever model of policing we are given, the role of neighbourhood watch is to work with it, not against it. If we have to adapt to new models, we will, with maximum goodwill.

One further thing worries us at this time. Proposals are in the wind to cut back substantially on the role played by Bromley Council in preventing antisocial behaviour, which is an issue where local government is the lead agency alongside the police. Antisocial behaviour, as I said before, does not usually involve major crime, nor even crime at all - knocking on someone's front door and running away is hardly a criminal offence, nor are 10 young people talking loudly at 11 o'clock at night on a street corner committing any crime, not is it a crime even if this involves making impolite remarks about passing pedestrians - but on a sustained level it can make people's lives very miserable, and tragically as we know, it can even drive desperate people to suicide. Bromley Council's community safety team, under its former leader Colin Newman, made a first class contribution to the quality of life of the people of Bromley, and all that now appears to be under threat. Again, BNWA should be careful not to be political, but where something directly affects our interests, we are surely entitled to say so.

We will come to the resolution in a minute and I think I have said enough about it already, but please tell us what you think and vote accordingly. I will deal with any other questions you may have but stay away from the specific issue the resolution deals with until we get to it. This annual report will be published on the website in the next day or two.

Meanwhile all that remains for me to do is to thank all the members of the executive, and in that of course I include the inestimable Chief Inspector Carron Schusler from Bromley Police and the equally inestimable Sue McVicker of Bromley Council. I have enjoyed my time as your chairman and thank you for the privilege, and I wish my successor an equally enjoyable time of it. So, any questions?

The Meeting applauded in thanks and there were no questions. Councillor Tim Stevens was then invited to address the meeting:

He first thanked the Chairman and the Executive Committee. He then advised that Bromley Council were not making any financial cuts, and explained the way in which the Borough was funded had changed: the Council had to bid for a 'pool' of money from MOPAC, with the results announced in mid April. Bromley Council's priorities in its bid included Domestic Violence. They have made a case for extra money which had been successful.

He added BNWA had been funded by £3000 in each of the past 2 years. It will continue to be supported and there will be a Council Representative on the Executive, and they will attend the Executive Meetings.

He closed by congratulating Clifford Longley in his time as Chairman and also the Executive Committee for their work.

3. Treasurer's Report:

Accounts: Alf Kennedy (Treasurer) gave a brief verbal summary of the accounts as follows. Full details are published on the BNWA website. A summary is:

		<i>2012</i>	<i>2011</i>
Income £		3000	10500
Expenditure £	Web/Hosting	120	156
	Web design prize	250	na
	Street signs/stickers	na	7500
	Expenses/Eqpt/Stnry	15	501
	Comms. Project	445	na
	AGM cost	468	na
	Purchase of eqpt	<u>323</u>	<u>na</u>
		1621	8157
Net Income for year £		1379	2243
Balance B/F		<u>4630</u>	<u>2287</u>
Balance C/F		6009	4630

Balance Sheet at 1 Dec 2012

Current Assets & Liabilities:

Cash at Bank	6009	4630
Net Current Assets:	6009	4630
<u>Represented by:</u>		
General Funds	6009	4630

4. Election of Officers:

There followed an election of Officers and Members of the Executive Committee: all were voted unanimously with no votes against. Those elected were:

Alf Kennedy	Chairman
Aidan McCulloch	Secretary
Graham Pyefinch	Treasurer
Clifford Longley	Member
John Bruce	Member
James Ellis	Member
Brian Rowland	Member
Terry Belcher	Member
Harry Bowman	Member

5. Police Issues: proposed Resolution:

The Chairman read the draft of a Resolution to the meeting for a letter from BNWA to be sent expressing concerns of the BNWA to proposed changes in policing and to inform and assist those involved in making decisions and developing the policing strategy

A Coordinator agreed suggesting copies be sent to the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, the Mayor of London and also to various newspapers. Another advised they had expressed their concern to Ch. Insp. Schusler before the meeting and also their concerns about crime and police numbers.

Councillor Tim Stevens also spoke in support of the motion. He added that local residents also had expressed concerns. The new policing model is due to go live in October, and it will mean there will be a less visible police presence in some areas, but there would be higher concentrations in others.

Metropolitan Police Chief Inspector Carron Schusler the spoke. She advised that in the new policing model, intelligence gathering and information sharing would be even more important. BNWA would therefore have a bigger part to play and a more critical role.

She gave further background on the new policing model and its introduction: 16 Boroughs were due to start in June in Tranche 1 with another 16 due to start in October in Tranche 2.

In the new model, the prevention of crime was a priority. Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) would also remain a priority. There would be an ASB desk at Bromley which would assign tasking to Police Teams.

There would be no reduction in police officers in front-line policing. By September there would be an extra 28 officers assigned to local policing. Each Ward would have its own dedicated PC and PCSO, but there would also be other officers as well.

Overall, there would be an increase in officers on Bromley Borough.

Questions / Comments: Various issues were raised from the floor, which were responded to as required:

One Coordinator commented that not many police officers were seen on Crofton Ward: there was already a lack of visibility, which was very sad.

Another stated they were from a small business background. Their view could be summed up as 'if it wasn't broken, don't fix it'.

Another raised concern that police had stated they cannot interact with children in schools. Ch. Insp. Schusler explained that police did still go into schools, but required special training and clearance to do so.

The proposed Resolution was carried on a show of hands, for a BNWA letter to be sent.

6. Close of AGM:

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and duly closed the meeting.

A. McCulloch
BNWA Secretary