

BRAINTREE DISTRICT NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH STEERING GROUP
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING TUESDAY 24TH AUGUST 2021
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Firstly may I thank each and everyone of you for your efforts in the past most difficult year which has affected every person in the World . You have found time to still distribute Neighbourhood Watch information. This is very much appreciated. Not only by myself but by all those who have received it. Please can you ensure that those who help you distribute the information are aware how much their time has helped to keep our communities safer from crime in Braintree District.

So what is Neighbourhood Watch all about?

Let me make it very clear to you all it is about distributing information from reliable sources eg Essex Police, The Office of Police Fire & Crime Commissioners, Essex Fire & Rescue Service, Victim Support and Crimestoppers to REDUCE the opportunity of crime.

We do NOT publish on any Neighbourhood Watch Facebook Groups or distribute information unless it has been confirmed as a crime or crime prevention advice from these sources .

We do not distribute, on behalf of Neighbourhood Watch, any “rumours” of any suspicious activities eg: people or vehicles. It is important to advise everyone that we have a reputation of credibility to protect not only yourself but also the image Neighbourhood Watch. The reason is that it could be a misunderstanding. This was experienced recently when new people in an area saw a “strange “ white van and a person they did not know and thought it best to blast his picture across the village Facebook thinking it best to notify the world of this “fact” ! Well the “suspicious” person was “in fact” outside their own house having a cigarette looking at his own garden! He responded to the Facebook Group and it was taken down. Neighbourhood Watch and all its members are more responsible than that as if we see something “suspicious” we report it first to Essex Police and then – and only then - after Essex Police have verified it as an incident it can be publish with an incident number.

It is very important to remember that Neighbourhood Watch is open to all whatever their gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs and where they live PROVIDED they accept the Neighbourhood Watch Code of Ethics. *These are not my Code of Ethics but they are from National Neighbourhood Watch.*

If you read page six of the Essex County Neighbourhood Watch Members Guide - which I created in 2019 and was funded for a print run of 50,000 by The Office of Police Fire & Crime Commissioner - the summary of the Code of Ethics is clear. Please do bring this to the attention of any one keen to be part of Neighbourhood Watch.

We want everyone to understand whenever we have enquiries or people register with National Neighbourhood Watch directly - and I see their information daily - that they are very welcome to be part of Neighbourhood Watch whether as a member. local or area Co-ordinator and the most important thing to advise them is that we appreciate whatever time THEY can give in their busy lives especially in these most difficult times.

Now why am I telling this to you ,as you probably know that already , well firstly I was asked (as Chairman of Essex County Neighbourhood Watch Association) by an organisation a few months ago to give them statistics of not only how many Co-ordinators and members we have in Essex but their gender, age, ethnicity, religion and other quite personal information as they are asked by the Government to show that their organisation is reaching out to everyone in all communities.

Well I told them that I could not give them that information (even if I had it) as we are bound by our Code of Ethics

So what I did was contact National Neighbourhood Watch and asked them how can I respond to such questions again.....their reply amazed me!

They said that they had all that information on their database...yes the one that many of us have registered. They told me where to find that information which is under “Full User Editor” and then “Groups/demographics” . In fact I was able to create a report as a graph on some of the criteria.

HOWEVER and I am sure you will be pleased to know that the information is only on the database if the person enters it themselves- it is NOT mandatory . It covers age, disability , ethnicity , nationality, gender. working status , religion and even education . So I completed that specific page on my own record on the database and then I created a graph for the whole of Essex (which I will show you at the meeting) . I can do the same for Braintree District if I wanted to do so..... which I will not action by the way.

So just to confirm that we always welcome everyone who is genuine and wants to be part of Neighbourhood Watch in Braintree District.

Oh one thing I feel I should mention, on occasions in the past year I have been contacted by a number of people who , once they have joined Braintree District Neighbourhood Watch and received window stickers etc..etc.. they then ask me to promote their businesses, services or even their own personal work for a charity to all our members on my Neighbourhood Watch database.

I replied that this is not possible as the Code of Ethics states very clearly that we only use the database to distribute crime prevention information . *Sadly some of these people never contact me again- I wished they could have mentioned this before I sent them OUR information!*

Being Chairman of the Steering Group does not mean just being “Chair” of meetings and liaising with the Secretary to plan them. The responsibilities include representing Braintree District Neighbourhood Watch whenever any person or organisation makes an enquiry or wants to discuss any issues on how Braintree District Neighbourhood Watch can work with them to keep our community safer from crime . These enquiries often come from new people as well as organisation so the rest of my report reflects on this fact.

Braintree District Council and Parish Councils

I was pleased to receive an email from Jo Norris , Community Engagement Officer , Braintree District Council who was introducing herself to every organisation in Braintree District and saying that they would like to know how to assist us and maybe with funding too. This was great news so I have added Jo to the newsletter distribution list and also sent various press releases. I was asked to send an article to be distributed to all Parish Councils in Braintree District which I have sent and yes I did mention that we already have support from quite a few Parish Councils and with funding too. I hope that we shall have some responses. So please can I ask you to continue to remind your Parish Councils what you do regarding Neighbourhood Watch and also thank them for their support (if they have given it in the past) as keeping in touch with them is so important.

In addition a week later I had an excellent telephone call from Moira Groborz Braintree District Council , Community Services Officer who is responsible for the Council Community Grant Scheme and Moira was certainly pleased to know what we do and sent me an application form for funding which I completed and sent back. *It is hoped that we may have some news soon.*

In fact Moira mentioned Message in a Bottle I said that I had twenty five available.

In addition to the press releases and other information I also sent her an email version of the Members Guide and the excellent Neighbourhood Watch video created by the Police Officer.

Adult Essex Safeguarding Adults Board :

I have been contacted by Chelsey Jay , Senior Communications Officer, Essex County Council, and was invited to a Microsoft Teams meeting on 24th June . Well I attended the meeting which after an hour Microsoft Teams cut me off from communicating so I decided to have further talks one to one on Monday 28th June. We did , and Chelsey said that they are very keen to have Neighbourhood Watch on the Board. This Board will involve with those who may feel vulnerable caused by many issues eg Modern Slavery & Cuckooing . As soon as I have more information I will update you all.

National Neighbourhood Watch week:

It would be good to know what each of you were able to action between 5th June and 11th June maybe some of you will mention it at the Steering Group meeting?.

I arranged for The Office of Police Fire & Crime Commissioner to publish a Press Release to promote their relationship with Essex County Neighbourhood Watch Association .

I made a statement on Twitter and mentioned that anyone interested in Neighbourhood Watch in Braintree District should contact myself (and I gave the usual email address).

I had various responses one from Acting District Commander Chief Inspector Colin Cox who said "The NHW is a huge network of support to the local Officers in Braintree. Working together to make our communities safer for all". I also had a "like" from James Cleverly MP for Braintree .He is the Minister for Middle East & North Africa , Commonwealth & Development Office.

Celia Shute had an interview with BBC Radio Essex "Sounds App" on Sunday 6th June and Celia had sufficient time to promote Neighbourhood Watch in Braintree and mentioned our usual email address..

New Enquiries

Despite that anyone can type in google "Braintree District Neighbourhood Watch" there are still people who register with National NW and think that they are approved/registered members when in fact they have to be approved by the Chairman of Essex County NW Association, Sadly National NW have decided to delete this information from their welcoming email and as ECNWA Chairman I have made a formal complaint yet again and I will update you. The reason is that people who register directly do not know that they have to be APPROVED by ourselves in each District and this causes a serious issue when the person refuses to acknowledge it.

Essex County Neighbourhood Watch Associations Award 2020/2021

At the Annual General Meeting via Zoom on 14th. July the Event Co-ordinator announced the Winners . It was great to hear that Tina Townsend was awarded the Bronze Award to recognise her achievements in the past year in the most difficult of times too. This Award will be presented by myself (as Chairman of ECNWA) to Tina at our Annual General Meeting on 24th August this is a well deserved award and her actions were recognised by the Executives of ECNWA .

In 2020 as you all know Judy Hill was awarded the Silver Award for 2020 at the Zoom AGM Essex County Neighbourhood Watch Association's meeting last year but unfortunately was unable to collect the award due to AGM and Conference being cancelled. So this award will also be presented to Judy on 24th August.

No Cold Caller stickers.

Since publishing the availability of the No Cold Caller stickers in the weekly and six monthly newsletter each week over the past month I have had many requests for them. This also gives me the opportunity to promote the weekly newsletter to be sent to those who are not receiving it and also post to them other information which I hope is of interest.

Nominated Neighbour Cards

We (that's Braintree District NW) are the ONLY Neighbourhood Watch Group in Essex (probably in the UK) that have such cards and they are useful to anyone who may feel vulnerable to ensure that they do NOT open doors to any unexpected callers. Please can you promote these? They are FREE and I always send clear instructions on how to use them. In a recent newsletter I promoted them again and this generated quite a few requests. There still are people (of any age) opening doors to unexpected callers. Whether you agree with them or not I would appreciate it if you could ensure YOUR members are aware of them.

Community Agents Essex.

I am delighted to see that they are now back to visiting people and discussing any local and personal issues. I had an email from Lydia Howat and I was advised that one of her "clients" had concerns with anti social behaviour in Hatfield Peverel and wanted to know if Neighbourhood Watch could help. I not only gave Tina Townsend the details but also PC James Draper - that's all we can do.

New Groups and members:

During July a Parish Council informed me that they are agreeable to the re-introduction of Neighbourhood Watch in their village and this is great news. It is a long story but best to say we are going forward and that's important. In addition every so often I am notified in National NW database of new registrations and this increases our membership too. So a very positive period in the still most difficult of times. Also I have increased a few more members in a local village (Belchamp Walter) which is great news too. During the year I have discovered that there are a few areas which seem to have "lost" interest or contact with us so I have arranged for the local Parish Magazines to publish a article to hopefully re-activate Neighbourhood Watch.

Request by Braintree Police on list of Co-ordinators

A few years ago I was requested by Braintree Police for a list of all Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators and so I sent an email to over 120 Co-ordinators asking if they were willing for their details to be given. Over the years more than 60% have agreed to have their personal contact details advised to Braintree Police. I send an updated list every six months or whenever contact details have changed. Braintree Police said that they would like the list should as if there was an emergency and they may need to contact local Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators.

Braintree Neighbourhood Watch Weekly Newsletter.

Now in its 12th year my distribution list grows weekly and they are sent to each person bcc. It is a summary of the weekly crime reports from Braintree Police. It needs to be summarised as some weeks there are up to 65 reported crimes. Also some Neighbourhood Watch Facebook Groups do not publish the newsletter on a regular basis and I have asked them to do so -this is the only way that those who are "members" of NW Facebook Groups have information on local crimes. Now this is up to the Administrator of course but this is the only summary of crime reports as the full report is , although sent to all Parish Councils and Essex Police partners. NOT for public viewing and Braintree Police will confirm this.

BRAINTREE DISTRICT TIME BANK

I have mentioned this before as I complete a spreadsheet every month and forward it to Megan Plumb Assistance Engagement Officer with the number so hours I spend each day on Neighbourhood Watch and the hours are used in the Time Bank for volunteers to use to help those in need of any services eg gardening. IF you would like Megan's email address I will advise you and you will be informed how the Time Bank works

IAG (Independent Advisory Group)

This is a Group of various organisations in Braintree District which discusses a number of topics of the day which is not necessarily crime prevention. I very much appreciate Brian Farren volunteering to attend as many meetings as he can by representing Braintree District Neighbourhood Watch.

National Neighbourhood Watch Public Liability Insurance:

The Schedule is available from me if you need to have it to show to anyone. As everyone who is involved with Neighbourhood Watch on any activity is insured eg placing street signs on appropriate posts.

Neighbourhood Watch Facebook Groups

You all know that National Neighbourhood Watch do NOT recognise any members of Facebook Groups unless the individual has registered directly on the National NW Alert database or they are held on a separate database by the local Co-ordinator. Facebook Groups do NOT have any personal contact details so it is not possible to distribute Neighbourhood Watch information to them individually.

I accept that understanding BUT I see NW Facebook groups as a means of ensuring more people are able to read our NW information e.g: the weekly newsletter . Well I did an analysis of all NW Facebook Groups (that I know about) in Braintree District and the members total 8,971. Now some of them are registered with National Neighbourhood Watch NW..I know that as fact but not at least 8,500.

Please can I mention (and I hope for the last time) that NW Facebook groups must abide by the Code of Ethics at all times and should not promote any businesses or services(see Code of Ethics) .

Surely this needs to be understood by those Administrators.

If Groups are set up to cover a village or local community and want to publish Neighbourhood Watch information in addition to local services . businesses or even activities of local clubs they can do so but under the Group name of that village of the community not just as Neighbourhood Watch .

Finally may I thank all our partners for supporting Neighbourhood Watch in Braintree District who are Essex Police, Essex Police & Fire Commissioner, Victim Support, Essex Fire & Rescue Service , Essex Community Agents, Braintree District Council and Crimestoppers too

Thank you all again for YOUR support for 2020/2021.

Clive Stewart Chairman.