

Neighbourhood Watch

As the sitting Police and Crime Commissioner for five years, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to say how much I and Surrey Police value Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) and want to continue supporting it. I have no doubt in my mind at all that it contributes substantially to making our county safer, and needs supporting, as I have done consistently. Surrey Police think that too! NHW doesn't only help to fight crime: by encouraging residents to be more community-minded, it also supports a greater community spirit in other areas, and brings our residents together: particularly important in these troubled times.

NHW has been through some difficult times recently. The move to a more digital, online focus has made some people uneasy I know. I think it's inevitable that this is the future, but recognise that it has been challenging for some people. I hope however that these teething problems have been just that: temporary difficulties which have mostly been overcome, or at least on the way to being solved.

What do I think are the three priority areas that NHW can help in achieving my objectives if re-elected? Perhaps I should start by saying what my over-riding objectives are:

- **Recruit more officers and frontline staff.** After a decade of savage cuts, the tide has turned, but we're still only back in financial terms where the force was in 2010. More police are still needed.
- **Concentrate more on crime prevention.** A key part of that is more officers on our streets and in our communities to give reassurance, deter criminality and gain intelligence. And an even more positive partnership with Surrey residents.
- **Up the crime-solving rate.** It's too low and needs improving.

With an excellent base already existing, my top three priority areas for NHW would be:

- **Further expand the neighbourhood coverage.** It's very good already, thanks to the untiring efforts of you all, but there are still some gaps. 100% coverage would be a good target to aim for!
- **Even better working and liaison with the force.** It's got better in the last few years and I notice - and of course have encouraged - that local policing teams, led by Borough Commanders, have taken a renewed interest in the scheme. As a recipient of the force's communications co-ordinators myself, I can testify that the force is making a renewed effort to engage: this must continue so that every single area is covered, and NHW coordinators in particular are given the right information and feel that the dialogue with the force, already good in many areas, is even better.
- **With these basics in place - as they largely are - I would like to see NHW go further.** There is scope surely for NHW members to be on the alert not only in their own communities but when, like all of us, they venture further afield. Surrey Police depend crucially for the public to report anything suspicious. Signs of modern slavery for instance can be spotted by alert citizens (is that car-wash all that it seems?). There must be other areas where NHW members can help us all make Surrey a better and safer place.

How can I help as PCC? First of all, to keep spreading the message that NHW is a vital partner in making our county safer. You matter to us! Secondly, although money is always tight, I stand by to provide vital seed-corn funding to make sure that the essential financial underpinning is there. I am always ready to support interesting and innovative projects - and often they need money. Thirdly, the core of my job is to hold the force to account for its actions. I think that, after arguably a difficult time when resources were really

tight, there are now greater opportunities to expand into the area of crime prevention, and I will be scrutinising the force to ensure that its partnerships with local organisations are as Rolls-Royce as they should be.

But the most important message is that NHW is nothing without you. What do you think should be our joint priorities? We need to work together, take everyone along with us, to forge a fresh relationship. My pledge to you is that I will listen, take on board your concerns and ideas and together make NHW a force to be recognised. If re-elected, I look forward to working with you.