LUTON NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH
MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD AT FUTURE HOUSE, THE MOAKES, MARSH FARM, LUTON
ON 20TH NOVEMBER 2012

Steering Group Attendees: R Dean, J Fullarton, J Hannah (Treasurer), D Hopkins, L Woodman

Guest Speakers: Chief Constable, A Hitchcock, Bedfordshire Police
Area Commander Tony Rogers, Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Service
Councillor Hazel Simmons, Leader of Luton Council
Chief Insp. R McCaffray, Local Policing Team

The meeting started at 7.00 pm with a welcome and thanks to all present for attending, and ended at 9.00 pm after a general Questions and Answer Session.

1. The Minutes of the 2011 AGM were discussed and agreed by all as correct.

2. Introduction of the Steering Group members was made.

3. Apologies - from 5 co-ordinators and also Steering Group Member, F Hunter.

4. Secretary’s Report (in absence of Chair).
   The Steering group exists to support co-ordinators and build links with partners. It has had major changes this year, had two Chairs, but been without one since September. This has left a very small group. The Constitution allows for 4 Executive Members and 15 others, and the group would welcome more people to help. LNW require a Chair, Vice-Chair, and area coordinators - anyone interested should contact Neighbourhood Watch direct on our email nhw4luton@gmail.com or via the Town Hall address.

5. Accommodation - the Steering Group have moved from Town Hall to Lewsey Community Centre (with thanks to the Centre for this) and members of the SG can meet residents, members and partners there. The postal address remains the same.

6. Communication - the mobile phone service has now been in operation for a year, allowing people to get in touch, however again volunteers are needed to give residents the support they need. New leaflets, etc have been printed. Cards were distributed to houses and several enquiries received from them. There was also an article in the Herald and Post; the SG would like to give a monthly update to promote what’s going on - a communication-minded volunteer to support this would again be much appreciated.

7. “Our Watch” Website this site is safe, free and very useful; co-ordinators can register their own schemes, although only 12 of the 200 have done so far.

8. Police Liaison - the police liaison officer was lost during the recent restructuring of the Police; the SG are working to re-build the link.
9. **Area Meetings** - only three were held this year; in west, north and central areas, mainly due to the difficulty in finding venues. NHW aims to have a representative at the Area Boards and Ward Forums.

10. **Luton Adult Learning** is planning training for co-ordinators - to be launched in next twelve months. Police will help to develop this.

11. **Charity status:** won’t be pursued, at this present time.

12. **2013 AGM:** it was proposed and agreed that the 2013 AGM be held at the end of September. This was agreed by all at the meeting on the night.

13. **Thank You’s** - LNW expressed their thanks to some of the people that have supported them during the last rocky year. Thank to Colleen Atkins, Lynn Arch, Bedford Neighbourhood Watch. Paul Reddington, Bedfordshire Police. Michelle Brawley and Gary Roberts from LBC. Richard Fensome and Shamsuz Zaman from Lewsey Community Centre who have all played a very large part in our existence this year.

14. **Treasurers Report.** Luton Borough Council have given LNW funding of £11,300 over the last three years; and we hope this may continue in the future. This year the money has mainly been spent on hall costs, posting membership information, expenses and purchase of 1 laptop & 1 mobile phone. There was no east area meeting this year as no suitable hall could be found. There was a debate about the mailshots as several attendees had received no post; in future letters may be distributed via the co-ordinators, with letters emailed to them to pass on. Attendees noted LutonLine was the preferred information route as most received it direct.

**Presentations**

**John Fullarton** welcomed everyone to the meeting. Everyone is concerned about the impact of crime on residents, and the loss of resources to deal with it. John advised as well as being a member of the Steering Group, he was also on the Independent Advisory Group (AIG) for Beds Police. He was keen to ensure engagement with the new Police and Crime Commissioner. NHW is also going through major changes; the aim is to create a more effective membership, strengthen systems to get information about residents concerns and create a platform for them. The IAG is a tool NHW can use to feed information into the police; members are more aware of the crimes in their areas.

Luton NHW has been working with the police this year; following the recent murder they worked with local policing teams to put in support networks for friends and neighbours during that difficult time. John acknowledged that police officers were working long hours to provide the best service possible in challenging times.

**Chief Inspector Rob McCaffray** started by introducing himself; of 22 years service with the police, 19 of them had been served in Luton.

Rob thanked Luton Neighbourhood Watch for the work they are doing in the communities, and being the ‘eyes and ears’ on the streets in the fight against crime; and this was needed more than ever.

He outlined some operations the police had run through the year; **Operation Oklahoma** looked at muggings, particularly by, and on, young people. This helped to focus resources over a long period (October to June) on hotspot areas, which led to a reduction
in offending and an increase in capture; this had a big impact - muggings were reduced by 51 percent. The police made 70 arrests in total - partly because officers were in the right place at the right time.

There was also an initiative around educating High School age students on the consequences of offending. Presentations, partly funded by Luton Borough Council are being given across the borough. Another activity involves PCSOs going into schools to raise robbery awareness. A theatre group has also been commissioned to educate children on the consequences of their actions.

Operation Fearless looked at burglary reduction. Figures have risen since the clocks went back. The police are firstly engaging with known burglars, and secondly ensuring resources are placed around hotspot areas.

A stop and search system has led to four arrests of burglars. Inspector McCaffray asked Neighbourhood Watch members to pass on any information they may have.

Inspector McCaffray noted the crime statistics for the previous twelve months have fallen in all areas; overall, crime has fallen by 11 percent.

Chief Constable Alf Hitchcock noted the police had reviewed their core activities following a 20% cut in government grant in January 2011. The key focus remains to protect the public by fighting crime. They want to ensure the public knows what to expect - with officers saying what will be done and doing it; is reassured by having visibility; and seeing performance continue to improve (Bedfordshire police have moved from the bottom ten to the top ten forces in the country). So far £12M of cuts have been made; £7.2M are still to be found, and another Spending Review is due.

Bedfordshire police now operates around a review threat/harm/risk analysis showing where forces should be allocated - and a lot are going into Luton. Another initiative is Integrated Offender Management, which gives offenders an opportunity to stop offending - however there are penalties if they do go on to commit another offence.

The work pattern for officers has changed; teams have been created across the county, and new shift patterns are in place - this means more officers at times of need as shifts overlap - especially during late afternoon into the evening. Each local authority area now has a Chief Inspector, and staff are based out of either Luton or Kempston.

Some specialist teams have been set up across Beds/Herts/Cambs; this allows savings to be made whilst maintaining a good service. Back of house functions have been cut by a third and vehicles and buildings are being reviewed.

Leader of the Council, Hazel Simmons noted her focus is looking at how the voluntary and community sector can work with the Council, and on bringing business into the town.

There are over 600 voluntary organisations of all sizes signed up to the Luton Assembly, and the Council works with most of them in different ways across the town. However, Hazel noted, the cuts to council funding will mean they have to cut their funding to the voluntary sector too. All money spent across the town in the voluntary sector will go into a single area, with identified workstreams from which work will be funded.
The council is involved in lots of partnerships; Luton Forum brings together all the statutory agencies, colleges and 18 members from the voluntary sector. It meets twice a year to discuss where we go strategically across the town.

The council’s Community Development team is very involved with volunteers; they recently arranged a volunteers evening, and also run the Ward Forums and Neighbourhood Governance. This enables the community to decide on their own neighbourhood plans and also how a small pot of funding is spent on their areas; projects agreed so far include environmental improvements and a project with schools teaching first aid to pupils.

The Council is creating a ‘Prospectus for Luton’ which focuses on key areas such as housing, encouraging business, expanding skills, health (especially diabetes and heart disease), and the vulnerable (the elderly and children). The shape of the council, and the way it works will change; some work will be done outside the council, and some staff will lose their jobs - but we will do our best not to outsource the work to private companies.

The council is also working with businesses on a number of projects, for example the shops at Power Court; houses and hotel at Napier Park; the Junction 10a work; and also work on the inner ring road. The Council continues to promote a positive image of Luton in the media, with the aim of encouraging businesses to locate in the town. The council is also expanding its apprenticeship scheme across the council and also in business.

Tony Rogers, Area Commander - Beds Fire & Rescue Service spoke next. He started by noting that for every one person rescued from a fire, the Service cut seven people out of cars - it is a growth area for them.

They too are facing cuts through the spending reviews. Posts will be lost, but duties will be altered to ensure people will not be put at risk, for example fire stations will be manned at times of most need. Resources will be focussed across the county on areas of most need; based on risk. There will also be an increase in partnership working. The Service has made massive improvements already; from being second from worst in the country for dealing with arson in schools three years ago, they are now in the top ten best; schools are the centre of the community and a major resource that no one wants to lose.

The Fire and Rescue Service carried out 14,000 home fire safety checks over the last twelve months, giving advice and guidance to residents, giving them fire alarms, and organising a follow up visit.

Tony has previously been working out of Bedford, including:

- working with Neighbourhood Watch to organise an action weekend where over 600 checks were carried out, and other partners came along eg to do bike checks;
- Teaching young children to ride bikes to promote healthy living, thus eventually, keeping cars off the roads;
- Running a six week course for Princes Trust candidates, which received very positive feedback.
- Working with YOS and young offenders to change their views about working in the community whilst working within boundaries and to deadlines - and 90 percent didn’t offend again.
- Working with children to reduce the number of hoax calls made.
- A motorbike riding course to Met Police standards
- Driving courses including road sense, car maintenance and post driver skills.
- won an award for making people safer in houses of multiple occupation.

The Fire Service are looking at creating two apprenticeships next year, and setting up cadets across the county.

Finally, he noted we are in it together, without your help and support we couldn’t get through the times to come.

There was then an opportunity for the speakers to be questioned. The following were noted:

- Local officers are allowed to give feedback to people who have provided them with information, and should do so.
- The number of PCSOs in the county will be cut, but alternative funding is being sought to reduce the cuts implemented.
- PCSOs have been put into one group per area after the recent reorganisation led by one sergeant and one inspector.
- All information should be reported via the new ‘101’ service; it helps the police to build a fuller picture of what’s happening and where – please keep them informed.
- The police reorganisation means resources will be available round the clock, with the aim of having resources in the right place at the right time. Capacity may be expanded by using Special Constables. Senior officers are now also on duty round the clock.
- Educating the public to keep themselves and their properties safe is an ongoing challenge.
- The new PCC gives the community a single point of contact to raise any issues. Luton had one of the highest turn outs of the country.
- Lutonline is valued by the community as a means of information.
- More properties will be built for smaller households; this is an issue with the upcoming ‘Bedroom tax’.
- A consultation is beginning regarding refuse collection; green bins are not going.
- The Fire Service has ongoing issues with people parking incorrectly or illegally and blocking access to roads; however saving life is a priority and they will find a way through. They are looking at educating people or taking enforcement measures. Anyone seeing cars parked on fire hydrants should report it to the Fire and Rescue Service so they can deal with it.

GENERAL DISCUSSION ITEMS

It was requested by residents that a regular article in Luton Line to Promote Neighbourhood Watch and their meeting dates around Luton.

Feedback to be given to PCSO’s in the North Area for their support. PCSO’s will be cuts from 111 to 72 next year.

Various Areas discussed for Anti Social Behaviour, drugs etc and points of contact if residents want to report issues.

Change of date and venue for next year’s AGM to be better publicised.