

Chelmsford Group of Neighbourhood Watches

www.chelmsfordneighbourhoodwatch.org.uk

Safer & Stronger Communities Together



NEWSLETTER: Spring 2016

New Police and Crime Commissioner

The new Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Essex was elected on 7th May: he is Roger Hirst and takes over from the out-going PCC, Nick Alston.

According to the PCCs' own website, the role of a PCC is to be "the voice of the people and hold the police to account." Their aim is to "cut crime and deliver an effective and efficient police service within their force area," and they have been "elected by the public to hold Chief Constables and the force to account, effectively making the police answerable to the communities they serve."

Mr Hirst's declared aims are to:

- be tough on anti-social behaviour;
- reverse the increase in serious violence;
- have a zero tolerance of domestic violence;
- eradicate organised crime and people-traffic-king; and
- make our police more local, visible and accessible.

From the perspective of Neighbourhood Watch, we hope Mr Hirst's endeavours will have a real impact

on helping communities to be safer together: helping people to keep themselves safe and their homes and property secure. Theft, burglary, and violence (in all its forms) are dreadful: but let's remember, whilst there have been some nasty headlines recently (reporting street and domestic violence), Chelmsford (city and district) remains one of the safest places in the country to live and work. But fraud (including *cyber crime*) is a big worry and an invasive crime that can affect us all and one which we must remain constantly alert to—especially if we use any form of on-line communication.

In a strong community, people help one-another, keep a watch-out for one-another: they are *neighbourly*. So we hope that we can work with the police to help communities to be neighbourly. Policing and community engagement has to be a partnership: we can help one-another and the police—but we need the police to help us; so we welcome Mr Hirst's last aim of "making our police more local, visible and accessible." Let's trust it happens.

Chelmsford Neighbourhood Watch Annual General Meeting: 19th July at 7.30 pm

The AGM of the Chelmsford Group of Neighbourhood Watches will be held at the Great Baddow Millennium Centre at 7.30 pm on Tuesday, 19th July, 2016. In addition to the normal business of the group, and the election of officers, there will be the opportunity from this meeting to find out more about Neighbourhood Watch and how communities can work to make people's lives and neighbourhoods safer—and maybe how you can help.

Come and find out more. Check out our website for more information:

www.chelmsfordneighbourhoodwatch.org.uk

Personal crime is cowardly: despicably mean, covert, and unprincipled: an insidious assault

"Despicably mean, covert, and unprincipled," this is a dictionary definition of *cowardly*, and indeed *cowardly* is what "personal crime" is: whether it's burglary of a home, theft of personal property (however small or large), bag-snatching, purse-dipping, or pick-pocketing; violence and aggression, bullying, abuse (in the street, in the home, at work); and fraud and deception (by telephone, on-line, or even personal calling).

Individuals or gangs who perpetrate these kinds of crimes want to get our money and valuables as quickly and as easily as possible, then go, slink ►

Contact us: ☎ **07926 462610**
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 Chelmsford
City Council

Personal crime

(from the front page)

► off, depart, and (often) get clean away ...

Neighbourhood Watch is about promoting common-sense precautions (hopefully without being “nannyish” or over-stating the obvious) and spreading the word; here are a few points (not exhaustive) of advice to share.

Personal Safety

- Zip up purses and handbags, and don't leave them exposed (backs of chairs in cafés and other public places, in shopping trolleys, etc.)—you'd be surprised how often you can see this happen around Chelmsford city centre, for example.
- Take care of mobile phones: it's careless to leave them on tables in bars and cafés, for example—again, you can see this so often. Be aware that when using a mobile phone in the street it can easily be snatched from your hand—it happens (even in “respectable” areas).

Home Security

Burglary is by and large *opportunistic*. Individuals and gangs may “scout” an area, looking for opportunities, or an individual may just come across an opportunity—so don't help them:

- *Lock* windows as well as doors: always lock windows and doors when you are not right there (for example, in light evenings you may be in the back garden, so close and *lock* front doors and windows).
- “Just nipping next door—won't be long”: so *lock* your doors and windows.
- Let them think you're in: keep radios on (on speech rather than music). If you're away for days or weeks, get electronic timers that turn radios and lights on at particular times of the day and evening.
- You can get devices than simulates the light from a television: you can set timing so it comes on as dusk, for example, and goes off late in the evening. Search for *Fake TV* in Google and you'll find Maplin, Argos, and other outlets will have them.
- Leaving keys, wallets, etc., in view through a letter box or kitchen window so they can be taken (with a fishing rod—another kind of *phishing*): particularly if you have a (nice, expensive) car parked on your driveway or on the street outside your home, someone may link the car to your house and take a closer look.

And there's much more—check our website for further sources of advice.

Fight fraud: the threat is on-line, by phone, and even at your door

There's nothing quite as despicably mean, covert, unprincipled, and insidious, as the kind of personal fraud we see today, perpetrated through telephone calls, phishing emails, rogue web sites, or even a knock at the door. People have had their life-time savings taken having been duped into departing with their cash. The victims are often—but by no means always—vulnerable people.

Telephone and Internet Fraud

“Cold calling” (where you receive an unsolicited phone call out of the blue) is the bane of our lives today, typically with a land-line. Some cold calling may be from a legitimate business, but it's a moot point whether cold calling is a legitimate activity these days: but many cold calls are criminally intent.

Such calls can be generated by computer: there is often a silence at the other end until a human being comes on the line. If you receive a ‘silent call’, hang up immediately. You can buy telephone sets that will screen calls, such as BT's *Call Guardian*: this can be a bit of a fiddle, but you'd never have to answer a computer-generated cold call again!

- NEVER give pin numbers or passwords out over the phone or on-line—or face-to-face. Your bank, for example, may ask for the first and third characters of your point or password when you do telephone or on-line banking—but they NEVER ask for them in full.
- BE VERY CAUTIOUS about clicking a link in an email—NEVER is safest. Many organisation do not put links in their emails anymore and ask you to log on via a secure website if you need to access an account. Many emails are very sophisticated now and sometimes it is very hard to distinguish a fraudulent one from the real thing.
- BEWARE of look-alike websites—even websites that are ‘legitimate’ businesses can charge a hefty fee for an otherwise free service from, for example, HM Government.
- Don't be duped into parting with your money: if an offer comes out of the blue, and it appears a great opportunity for investment, STOP: if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

We're tight for space in this newsletter, and there's a whole lot more on our website—check it out.

If you can—join us.