



Leicester
City Council

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Report of the Community Cohesion and Safety Task Group – DRAFT Report “Neighbourhood Watch Review”

Report of Councillor Bajaj, Task Group Leader

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report provides the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board with the findings of the Community Cohesion and Safety Task Group’s review into Neighbourhood Watch schemes in Leicester.
- 1.2 The Task Group was set up to determine the size, scope and effectiveness of Neighbourhood Watch schemes across the City as well as looking at how the partnership between local communities, local agencies and businesses works and how this partnership working could be improved.
- 1.3 This report sets out the existing position within the city of Neighbourhood Watch and related schemes such as School Watch, Crimestoppers and Allotment Watch.

2. Conclusions and Recommendations

The Task Group has reached the following **conclusions**:

- 2.1 Neighbourhood Watch schemes can be very effective and in some areas, such as the Belgrave United Neighbourhood Watch scheme, are proving successful, as highlighted in the report *Exploring Barriers to Participation in Neighbourhood Watch and Home Watch Schemes* commissioned by Neighbourhood Watch. However schemes are not evenly spread across the city and the report notes that are lower levels of awareness of Neighbourhood Watch within some faith and BME communities.
- 2.2 Cross Partnership working does successfully take place in relation to Neighbourhood Watch. However partner agencies could do more to utilise Neighbourhood Watch, enabling it to be more effective.

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board is asked to endorse the following **recommendations** to which Cabinet is asked to respond not later than December 2011.

- 2.3 Cabinet is asked to support Neighbourhood Watch in raising its profile in Leicester through:
 - 2.3.1 Encouraging more regular invitations from Community Meetings to local Neighbourhood Watch Organisations with the aim of helping them raise their profiles and increase their membership. The appearances of Neighbourhood Watch organisations at Ward Meeting should be co-ordinated with the local police in order to maximise their effectiveness. The Police have recently made requests for Neighbourhood Watch agenda items at Charnwood and Abbey wards and these efforts should be supported and encouraged elsewhere across the city;
 - 2.3.2 Promoting the Leicestershire Constabulary Neighbourhood Alert system to Council Departments and Community Groups so that they can make use of it where appropriate.
- 2.4 Cabinet is asked to encourage the development of greater collaborative working between the City Council and its partners on the Safer Leicester Partnership and suggest that the Safer Leicester Partnership makes greater use of Community Meetings to promote its initiatives and other activities.
- 2.5 Cabinet is asked to consider, through the Safer Leicester Partnership, the value of the different strands of Neighbourhood Watch such as Allotment Watch and Business Watch with a view to working in partnership with them more effectively.
- 2.6 Cabinet is asked to consider, through the Safer Leicester Partnership, how to utilise Neighbourhood Watch and associated strands to mitigate the risks of police and funding cutbacks.

3. Summary

- 3.1 With the Government focus on the “Big Society” initiative, more emphasis is likely to be placed on community / voluntary initiatives working together with such statutory agencies as the Police and Local Government to give citizens, communities and local government the power and information they need to come together to solve the problems they face.
- 3.2 Work is being done by Neighbourhood Watch, the Police and other organisations, including the Safer Leicester Partnership, to raise awareness and encourage membership of schemes.
- 3.3 The use of a virtual Neighbourhood Watch scheme has proved successful in Nottingham, with 2,000 people registering. Leicestershire police will soon be launching the online “Neighbourhood Alert” system which will enable people to receive messages from Neighbourhood Watch, the police and

other agencies at national or local level containing information that is relevant to them.

4. Report

The minutes for the Task group contain the details of the discussions that took place and the reports presented and can be found here:

<http://www.cabinet.leicester.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeeld=627>

In short:

- 4.1 The aims of Neighbourhood Watch schemes are:
 - To reduce the opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour to occur in neighbourhoods by deterring would-be burglars and vandals.
 - To build a community spirit so that all residents can contribute towards the protection of their property through co-operation and communication.
- 4.2 Neighbourhood Watch schemes are not police-run groups. However, in order to be effective in tackling crime, Watch schemes always work in partnership with the police and other agencies. In Leicester these schemes are managed by Leicestershire Neighbourhood Watch Association in partnership with the Police. Neighbourhood Watch has been a part of Police community policy since the 1980s.
- 4.3 Within Leicester City Council, the Community Safety Team has a number of key links into the various schemes for businesses (City Watch), local residents (Neighbourhood Watch) and Crimestoppers. The Safer Leicester Partnership liaises directly with Members of the Leicestershire Neighbourhood Watch Association
- 4.4 In Leicester, there are approximately 293 Neighbourhood Watch schemes. These are affiliated to the Leicestershire Neighbourhood Watch Association which is a registered charity and free of charge.
- 4.5 The 293 schemes are not uniformly spread across the city. However work is currently being done by the Safer Leicester Partnership to raise awareness of Neighbourhood Watch and associated schemes, with the focus on preventative work.
- 4.7 It was reported to the Task Group that volunteering was seen as a big step for people to take and that this could be one of the barriers to greater participation in Neighbourhood Watch schemes. Nationally Neighbourhood Watch membership is lowest in the most deprived areas.
- 4.6 An example of a successful scheme reported to the task group is Belgrave United Neighbourhood Watch scheme (BUNWS), which was set up in April 2009 with the help of funding from the Belgrave Community Meeting and support from the police. The BUNWS has a total membership of 150 residents and is continuing to expand and has managed to reduce anti social behaviour, increased the number of police patrols in the area and

improved street lighting. It has also developed a leaflet and is planning to launch a website in the near future.

- 4.7 The Task Group was informed that a virtual Neighbourhood Watch Scheme has proved successful in Nottingham where over 2000 people had registered.
- 4.8 The Leicestershire Neighbourhood Watch Association will shortly be involved in a pilot study with Leicestershire Police which will look at crime hotspot areas and Neighbourhood Watch. This work will feed into a national pilot study.
- 4.9 The police are planning to launch the online “Neighbourhood Alert” system in March 2011. This will combine residential Watch’s and business Watch’s – enabling people to receive messages from police and other agencies at national or local level with information that they feel is relevant to them. The system is a secure online database that enables multiple organisations to work together, pool resources and combine knowledge and experience and communicate with subscribers in a targeted fashion - enabling it to send messages to interested users via email, web feed or SMS as appropriate. Organisations and communities can apply to create their own micro sites as part of the system that are linked to the central “Neighbourhood Alert” system, meaning that information can be shared across organisations more effectively.

5. Membership of the Task Group

5.1 The members of the Task Group were Councillors Bajaj (Task Group Leader), Glover (Deputy Task Group Leader), Aqbany, Joshi and Shah,

5.2 The Task Group was supported by the following:

Kelvin Bates	Community Safety Team Leader, L.C.C.
Marion Lewis	Leicestershire and Rutland Neighbourhood Watch
Inspector Bill Knopp	Leicestershire Constabulary Community Safety Bureau

6. Terms of reference.

6.1 Terms of Reference were taken to the first task group meeting and agreed at the second meeting of 14 December 2010. They can be found here:

<http://www.cabinet.leicester.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=23864>

7. CONTACT

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