



Visit our website at: www.villagewatch.co.uk and join our Group on *Facebook*

We Need Your Help

In the last edition of Village Watch News we asked for your thoughts on the future of our Neighbourhood Watch. The Covid lockdown severely curtailed our ability to operate and it will now need time and effort to re-establish our activities. Over the Covid period we have lost a number of our more active members because of age, health and other personal circumstances.

We need your help if we are to return the Watch to its

previous level of activity. If you have skills we could use and some time to give, we would love to hear from you.

More information about our current situation and what is needed can be found in the *NHW News and Crime Report* article in this month's *Birstall Post*.

If you email us we will be happy to send you a copy of the article or, if you include your phone number, to ring you back to answer any questions.

watch@villagewatch.co.uk

If You Cannot Speak to 999

Occasions arise when a person in physical danger is able to dial 999 but dare not speak for fear of being overheard by their assailant. The emergency operators regularly find themselves answering 'silent calls' and have to decide whether it is simply a mistake, a hoax or a genuine call for help.

There is a belief circulating on social media that all silent calls result in a Police response but this is not true. Apart from anything else, a call from a mobile phone does not give the caller's location. It could be anywhere.

To address the problem, the Police have established a procedure called *Silent Solution*, that the caller can follow in such circumstances.

The methods differ slightly when calling from a mobile phone or a landline.

Full details are available on our website at:

www.villagewatch.co.uk/silent-solution

Identity Fraud Protection

If you suspect that your personal details have been stolen, have noticed unusual activity on your bank account or have dealt with an organisation that has recently lost or leaked sensitive data, you could be at risk of becoming a victim of identity fraud.

Cifas offers a *protective registration service* that places a flag alongside your name and personal details in its secure National Fraud Database. It costs £25 for two years.

Companies and organisations who are signed up as members of the database will see that you are at risk and take extra steps to protect you, so preventing fraudsters from using your details to apply for products and services.

Registration will not be required by most people but it is a valuable safeguard for those who may find themselves at risk.

You can find out more about *Cifas* and its services at:

www.cifas.org.uk/pr

The Watch Phone

We have to apologise to anybody who has tried to contact us on the Watch Phone during the past few weeks.

Unfortunately, the phone recently developed a fault and did not always register that a message has been left. We are in the process of correcting this but if you have left us a message recently and have not received a return call, please try again if it is still relevant.

0756 2422 756

Use Your Old Stamps

Royal Mail has changed the design of postage stamps by adding a barcode. Stamps without the barcode will cease to be of valid in early 2023.

Many of us will have unused stamps or books of stamps that we may only use occasionally, so it will be a good idea to collect them together and use them sooner than later.

Royal Mail will be announcing a scheme in the near future by which older stamps can be refunded or exchanged for the new versions.



New Rules are for Everyone

Many people will not have read *The Highway Code*. Those who have will have done so either when they were learning to drive or if they have been involved in court proceedings or insurance claims. Liability is decided on how well the Code was or was not followed by the parties involved.

The rules apply to ALL road users and have been updated in the latest edition to give extra protection to pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. They introduce the principle of the *Hierarchy of Road Users*.

- * Those in charge of vehicles that can cause the greatest harm in the event of a collision bear the greatest responsibility to take care to reduce the danger they pose to others. This applies particularly to drivers of large goods and passenger vehicles, vans, minibuses, taxis, cars and motorcycles.
- * Cyclists, horse riders and drivers of horse drawn vehicles have, in turn, a responsibility to reduce the danger to pedestrians.
- * All road users must remember that other people they encounter may have sight, hearing or mobility problems that may not be immediately obvious.

The new rules address when a pedestrian has priority when crossing the road as well as the priority to be given to cyclists and horse riders.

You can read about the new rules in full at:

www.gov.uk/guidance/the-highway-code/introduction

Police News

Our Beat Team produces a monthly Newsletter with news of crime and other local policing matters.

You can read it in full each month on our website:

www.villagewatch.co.uk/police

(Article for 'NHW news' column in the March 2022 Birstall Post)

Where are We at Present?

The Covid-19 lockdown in March 2020 led us to suspend some of our Watch activities at very short notice. The situation was very uncertain but it was seen as only a temporary measure. Two years later many of the issues remain and it is an appropriate time re-assess the situation.

Our primary source of income, Members' subscriptions, was not available in 2021 although we have been supported by a grant from Birstall Parish Council for which we are very grateful. Thanks to our Reserve Account we remain viable for the next year or more. Our main expenditure is publishing the Newsletter with a few other minor costs.

Collecting, counting, recording and banking the cash subscriptions and issuing individual Membership cards involved a considerable amount of time and effort as well as not insignificant stationery and printing costs. One alternative could be for Members to donate online through one of the charity support websites but this would still need to be managed on a regular basis

Committee Members were due for re-election at the AGMs in April 2020 and 2021. Neither of these meetings have taken place and the Committee has remained as previously. We have not met during that period and the constitutional position is unclear. With hindsight, it might have been possible to organise remote meetings using one of the video meeting platforms. It might still be a good idea to consider this option.

Our local volunteer Coordinators have had three main tasks: acting as the local link for the Watch, distributing the Newsletter and collecting the annual subscriptions. Many of them have continued in the first role but the other two have remained suspended.

There has always been a regular turnover of Coordinators with new ones recruited when others left. A number have advised us that they have had to give up since the lockdown, usually because they have either moved away or because of health issues. It is likely that others have resigned without advising us or will do so as we become more active again.

Our Advice Shop was open once a month and it would be good to open it again. The building is used primarily as a playschool and this makes it a difficult location for some of our regular volunteers who remain at higher risk from infection.

On the positive side we have maintained some of our activities. We are grateful to the *Birstall Post* for enabling us to continue to circulate our monthly newsletter. This costs roughly the same as printing and distributing the previous two-page edition that our Coordinators delivered to well over three thousand Members' letterboxes each month.

Our Facebook Group has continued to operate as normal and our website has been enlarged and kept as up-to-date as possible.

Missing and damaged NHW street signs have been replaced as and when circumstances have allowed.

The number of calls to the Watch Phone has diminished over the past two years but those that are received remain relevant. They fall into two main areas: those advising of possible crime (mainly scams) and those seeking reassurance or advice. There is regular email post to the Watch (although a lot of it is unsolicited advertising). Members' messages have content similar to those to the Watch Phone.

We need new volunteers to join our existing active Committee members to share the responsibilities more evenly.

In particular, we need someone to liaise with our Coordinators to establish their current availability.

If you have financial or fundraising experience, we especially need your skills.

We need people to join our experienced volunteers to open the Advice Shop for a couple of hours on a Saturday morning once a month.

If you have any ideas or suggestions, even if you are not in a position to offer much practical assistance, we would love to hear from you.

Please contact us by email at: watch@villagewatch.co.uk

Ed Chambers
Committee Chairman