

## **Cheshire Neighbourhood Watch Association (CNWA)**

### **Chair's Report to the 7<sup>th</sup> AGM**

**Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2024**

The Cheshire Neighbourhood Watch Association continues to work across the 4 unitary authority areas of Cheshire to support and promote Neighbourhood Watch. The county has a population of approximately 1.1 million people in 467,000 households according to the most recent Census data in 2021. As of 12<sup>th</sup> November 2024, we had 1,276 registered main Neighbourhood Watch Coordinators, plus 77 Deputy Coordinators and 2 Area Coordinators. Whilst the overall picture is constantly shifting as Coordinators move away or retire, the number of volunteers and Neighbourhood Watch Schemes has stayed broadly constant over the course of the year. We supported 23 new Coordinators who registered new schemes to get started during 2024 so far and have a further four applicants in the pipeline for approval.

#### **New Process for Coordinator Approval**

Following receipt of guidance from Neighbourhood Watch Network in June 2024 that was mandatory for us to follow, we adopted a new process for approving Neighbourhood Watch Coordinators. This enables more robust data protection for users of the Alert system. Prior to June, we received automatic notification of new Coordinator registrations on the Alert system and completed checks on the system before approving that person and contacting them by email. With the new process we speak to the applicant on the phone to check their reasons for starting a scheme, that they reside in the scheme map area and that they are comfortable with the published Code of Ethics and Standards of Behaviour expected of representatives of Neighbourhood Watch. Additionally, approval of new Neighbourhood Watch Coordinators by CNWA also requires that a member of the Cheshire Constabulary local Beat Team has confirmed to us that the individual is suitable for the role.

The change enhances data protection for Alert users because approved Neighbourhood Watch Coordinators can see the details of members residing within their mapped area, which enables them to contact these people and invite them to join. The new process is administratively more complex for CNWA and is more time consuming but has the benefit that our volunteers make personal contact with new Coordinator applicants. This means that we better understand the reasons why people volunteer to start schemes, and that we are available in person to answer questions and explain how Neighbourhood Watch works.

As before every new Coordinator also receives a welcome email from CNWA with relevant information and is offered leaflets, stickers, signs and support to get their scheme started.

#### **Committee Roles**

Membership of your committee has remained constant over the last year. Mike Jones continues as our Secretary and as a Membership Support Administrator (MSA), therefore able to update the

Neighbourhood Watch database on the Alert system. Our Treasurer Keith Stokes, Communications Lead Grant Shaw, Cyberhood Watch Ambassador Matthew Haynes and committee member Graham Bushill all stayed on throughout the year. We need to refresh and enhance the Committee further so that we have more resource available for support of existing members and promotion of Neighbourhood Watch across Cheshire. In particular we need better representation from the Halton and Warrington local authority areas, and we'd like some Social Media expertise, and we are struggling to recruit these volunteers. We were successful in finding two new volunteers, Clare Whitelam and Morag Humphries, to compile the weekly news and appeals newsletters for members, and I'm delighted that we are now getting this regular support.

Our partnership with Cheshire Constabulary continues to be strong. Our day-to-day contact is with Clare Harrison, Engagement Officer within the Corporate Communications Department of the force. She continues to be a huge support to us and our members, and on behalf of the Committee I'd like to thank her. We were previously supported strategically by Superintendent Peter Crowcroft and Inspector Jason Murray; but they moved on to other roles and are no longer actively involved with CNWA. However, we were pleased to welcome Inspector Anna Galloway to work in partnership with the Committee; Anna has a Citizens in Policing role within Cheshire Constabulary.

### **Financial Statement**

Turning to our finances, our Treasurer Keith Stokes prepared a financial report to the end of our financial year which is September and it is available on our website. Unfortunately, Keith is unable to attend the AGM but if there are any questions regarding our accounts, please email them to [cheshirenw@outlook.com](mailto:cheshirenw@outlook.com) and we will respond. In essence we started the financial year with £482.47 in the bank and are ending it with £256.12. Our outgoings were spent on maintaining our website over the last 12 months and for running our AGM and awards last November. CNWA continued to receive donations as a registered cause with Easyfundraising.org.uk this year and we publicise this to our members and supporters. So far, we have 52 supporters and raised £276.13 via this channel. If you shop online and haven't already registered with Easyfundraising, please do so and choose to support CNWA. This enables us to receive donations from online shopping companies at no cost to you or to us.

Finally, I'd like to say a big 'thank you' to all our volunteer Cheshire Coordinators and Neighbourhood Watch members for their work over the past year. Our organisation exists to represent and support you as you work with your neighbours and communities to keep them safe and reduce the fear of crime. We recognise that much of this effort is often unsung and unrecognised, but nevertheless contributes hugely to community cohesion and wellbeing. Thank you!

Heather Thompson  
14<sup>th</sup> November 2024