

Meeting with residents and PCs 13th June 7pm at the Wheel in Blackwell

17 residents attended as well as the chair Cllr Nick Forknell, Cllr Janet King and the 2 PCs Barney Kelso and Marc Ginder.

Nick Forknell the Chair gave a short introduction explaining that the meeting had been called to discuss a few ongoing issues of concern to residents as well as to meet and speak to our local PCs.

PC Barney Kelso spoke first and explained a little about his role. He works mainly in Bromsgrove but also covers some rural areas such as Blackwell and Fairfield. Cuts mean that the force is now reduced from 9 PCs in his area to just himself and 2 support officers now. The main role is to prevent crime. He works closely with Hunters Hill School in Blackwell and on issues such as burglary and minor criminal damage. Patrols do take place until 2am but no specific pattern/areas visited.

PC Mark Ginder is new to post and covers the Lickey side of the parish. He has come from patrol where he worked for 13 years on call outs. He works in Cofton Hackett where there has been an increase in vehicle crime including opportunistic theft from vehicles. In Barnt Green he has been working with victims of burglary and notes that car key theft is a problem especially for cars such as high-end Audis and BMWs. PC Ginder explained that many burglaries were entry through UPVC doors with locks that could be snapped – as a preventative measure he suggested the use of ‘anti-snap’ locks.

Residents were given the opportunity to ask questions.

‘What can we do to prevent attempted burglaries?’ Measures were suggested to deter criminals such as having home CCTV (which can send alerts to your phone and even record audio), modern alarms (or fake boxes), leaving a light on overnight downstairs, leaving the radio on during the day, flicker box devices, solar motion activated security lights outside (very inexpensive and easy to fit), having a Neighbourhood watch and using the Neighbourhood watch Bromsgrove Facebook page to share information on suspicious activity. It was noted that daytime burglaries are becoming more common as it is obvious when people are not at home. One resident commented that his house was subject to an attempted burglary during the daytime when he was at home – suspected for his car keys (car was on the drive). Luckily the burglar was disturbed and fled the scene.

‘Where should we keep our car keys?’ PC Kelso suggested to keep them downstairs in a visible place rather than taking them upstairs with you. Many of these car thefts seem to be related to a gang of ‘professional criminals’ who will keep looking until they find the keys – including going upstairs. Best to avoid any confrontation. One resident did comment that keys should not be left near the letterbox/door - if visible from outside also encourages theft. Do not confront burglars.

PCs talked about the work being done by the police to prevent burglary and apprehend the gangs concerned – there is an operation ‘Enzyme’ taking place led by the CID. Forensics do attend burglaries but it is rare to find a print, blood is useful.

Vandalism to Forest School and to trees in Blackwell was discussed. Sian the Forest School leader explained the issues that have been ongoing for some time including malicious damage structures built by children and to trees planted by children on the site. Graffiti has also been found there. Before use each week inspections on site take place for the safety of children and evidence of drink and drugs has been found. The school are raising funds for a ‘wildlife camera’ which may be used to monitor the site when not in use by the pupils. There is no real clue as to who is responsible for the damage. It seems to be worse after weekends and school holidays. One resident living opposite

says that she hears noise coming from the site at night and even at 2am in the morning. Cllr King explained similar anti-social behaviour has been an issue in Blackwell before and the measure taken to prevent it was the opening of a youth club.

Parking was another issue discussed. Bromsgrove district council is responsible for enforcement of parking law. On rare occasions the police may attend but only if they are in the vicinity. The problem outside schools in the parish was discussed but no real solution available – one resident suggested banning parking outside the school altogether at certain times for safety. On Linthurst Newtown at the bend it was explained that the white line is to mark the boundary of the carriageway, but parking there could be illegal if there was a dangerous obstruction. Double yellow lines would be the obvious solution, but again the problem of enforcing them would remain, residents were encouraged to contact Cllr Kit Taylor if they wish to pursue having double yellow lines or speed limits in the village.

Speeds were also discussed, Cllr Forknell explained why we have been monitoring speeds on St Catherine's Road, and that we may be putting up a speed sign there soon. Outside Blackwell stores there are plans to place a portable speed sign there to monitor the problem of speeding and hopefully help to prevent it. A resident suggested improving signage warning of the school would be helpful, road marking would also be useful, crossing the road at the main crossroads can be dangerous.

PC Ginder provided information leaflets and free resources/tools to help protect and prevent crime.