

**Minutes of the 689th meeting of Toft Parish Council  
Parish Council Consultation Meeting held on Monday 15 April 2013  
in The People's Hall, Toft at 7.30 pm**

Present: Councillors: M Yeadon (Chairman), J McCarten, J Betson, and P Gouldstone  
In attendance: Ms Polly Wilderspin, Secretary to the Cambridgeshire Neighbourhood Watch Association and Village Co-ordinator for Swavesey, 22 members of the public, and Mrs A Griffiths (Minutes Secretary, LGS Services)

The Chairman welcomed those present to the meeting and explained that Item 2 regarding the shop would not be discussed as a buyer had been found and the possibility of a community shop was no longer under consideration. The shop would continue to run as a village shop but it was not known at this stage whether the Post Office would continue in its present form.

**1. To consider setting up a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme**

Ms Wilderspin gave a presentation on the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme (NHW). This countrywide voluntary association aims to ensure that communities remain safe and happy, and aims to encourage neighbourliness, reassure communities, and ease dialogue with the police. The Police wish the community to engage with them, and encourage the reporting of crime and the spotting of potential crime.

Neighbourhood Watch has operated for 20-25 years in Cambridgeshire. It has participated in the re-design of the Police force and has entered into a formal written agreement with the Police. A number of improvements have recently been agreed, including a new alert system for the Police to send messages to the NHW in a very targeted and timely way.

Ms Wilderspin explained that the scheme was very effective and provided examples of successful prevention and solution of crime, such as finding stolen goods or cars. NHW also supports the community, working in partnership with the Police to tackle vandalism and abuse.

Each village has a village co-ordinator who oversees the street co-ordinators and provides updates for local newsletters and websites. The Village co-ordinator is the point of contact for the Police in the village. Co-ordinators are Police checked. Residents are encouraged to join and email contacts are maintained. A NHW scheme can sometimes lead to reduced household insurance premiums. An analysis by the Police has provided evidence that NHW has been effective in reducing crime.

The meeting was then opened to questions.

Q - How much training does the Village Co-ordinator receive and how much time should they give?

A - The role takes longer in the first year but when set up the scheme runs smoothly, with time being given to new residents, and updating the newsletter and websites. The village co-ordinator might spend one hour a week communicating via email.

Q - What happens if not everybody joins?

A - The level varies - often 100% of a street will join but sometimes a street is not covered.

Q - Does everyone receive something to show their membership?

A - Free stickers are provided and emails are free. Street signs cost £12 each.

Q - Where are the street signs located?

A - Usually on lamp posts - Balfour Beatty are happy for them to be erected at NHW discretion.

Q – Are there any concerns about privacy?

A – NHW blind copies all emails and does not distribute email addresses. The Police keep a database of co-ordinators. Data is never circulated outside the NHW and cannot be accessed from outside. No-one will see the contact details of members. The Data Protection policy is on the county website. Members only receive emails that are appropriate and under the alert system information is even more targeted.

Q – Are meetings held and what happens next?

A – The village is put on the Police message system and information is shared by email or notices in the shop or village newsletter. Elderly people might be visited or leafleted in a sensitive and appropriate manner.

The pattern of meetings varies between villages.

Q – What happens if co-ordinators are out at work?

A – Residents should phone the Police first and let the co-ordinator know later. The 101 system has now improved.

Q – How many co-ordinators would be needed for Toft and how many houses would each cover?

A – It would depend on the arrangement of houses. A co-ordinator might take on a group of 10 houses but there is no hard and fast rule.

Q – What is the level of financial commitment and who pays?

A – Street signs are £12 each. In some villages the Parish Council pays but there may be donations, fundraising or help from local businesses.

Q – How do industrial estates fit in?

A – It is good for the village co-ordinator to engage with businesses but there is also a Business Watch scheme in Cambridgeshire.

Q – Is there a need for NHW in a small village with a low crime rate where residents already look out for each other?

A – It is important to know what the Police are looking out for and good for residents to receive the information. If the Police are concerned they will wish to speak to a village co-ordinator who is vetted. Knowing what is going on enables a community to take appropriate precautions. NHW is also good for communities and breaks down barriers.

Residents were asked, if they were interested in the role of village co-ordinator, to contact Cllr McCarten in the first instance and she will then contact Polly Wilderspin.

Ms Wilderspin was thanked for attending in her own time and at her own expense on two occasions to explain the aims and benefits of Neighbourhood Watch.

2. **Village Shop – to consider the possibility of a community-run organisation**

Item no longer required.

There was no further business and the meeting closed at 8.30 pm.

Signed .....Chairman .....date.