

**MINUTES OF CROYDON BOROUGH NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH ASSOCIATION (CBNWA)
COMMITTEE MEETING**

27th February 2025, 2.00 p.m. via Zoom

1) Welcome and apologies for absence.

Present: Paul Voden (Chair), Julian Roche (Treasurer), Kate Clark (Secretary), Sarah Wise (Office Manager), John Kennedy, Christopher Adams, Inspector Ryan Holliday, Inspector Rodney Kenny.

Apologies: Caspar Kennerdale, Chief Inspector James Weston, Inspector Andy Smith, Inspector Miriam Chapman-Rosenfeld.

2) Minutes of last meeting, 30th January 2024. Accuracy and any matters arising not covered below.

The minutes had been circulated with the meeting papers.

Action: regarding minute 12, PV to forward the Neighbourhood Watch Network (NWN) newsletter for young people to RH.

Action: regarding minute 12, KC to add brief details of the NWN 2025 campaigns to the minutes and forward the final minutes to PV and SW.

Action: regarding Minute 13, PV to arrange a date for himself, JR, KC and other committee members wishing to attend, to review CBNWA policies.

3) Treasurer's Report

JR had circulated his report with the closing balance of 25th February: £ 16030.23. £58.00 had been received from the Croydon Community Lottery (CCL) during the month, bringing the total received from the CCL this financial year to £624.50. The only expenditure was on the Manager's Costs, which had been lower than usual. He flagged up that the purchase of a badge machine would involve considerable expense and also raised the need to have posters, stickers and other materials to pass to co-ordinators, especially as we had several new members. PV and JR have a limited number of the street signs but JR observed that we may need to purchase more and do not now have other materials to pass to co-ordinators. We used to make a small selection of window and door stickers available to co-ordinators. Cheryl Spruce, NWN, had emailed to inform Associations that their window stickers, indicating a household was part of a Neighbourhood Watch scheme, were back in stock and that Associations could apply for 5,000 free stickers, just paying for the

delivery charges. PV observed that NWN offer Associations free stickers each year while KC commented that the stickers would not have the meerkats logo.

Action: PV to discuss with Cheryl Spruce the availability of NWN posters and the free window stickers.

CA asked about the donation indicated on the report. JR indicated that the report showed amounts accrued through the financial year, not just for the month being considered. He could provide details if required: CA said he had been curious but did not require the details.

4) Police Report

RH said that the Metropolitan Police are facing challenging times, mainly for budgetary reasons. There are various challenges and the Commander has been negotiating with the politicians. He has said that Emergency Response Policing and Neighbourhood Policing will both be protected. It has been said that the force would need to lose 2,300 officers but this will not be through redundancies but by not replacing retiring staff and staff moving to work outside the Metropolitan Police. There are 9 ward officer vacancies in Neighbourhood Policing at present. Recruitment is proving difficult generally. Voluntary transfers into Neighbourhood Policing are possible and, as probationers become available, they will remain with Neighbourhood Policing rather than being rotated to different departments.

Crime figures show that there has been a reduction in most categories over the end of 2024 and the beginning of 2025. However there was a 7% increase in January 2025 in residential burglary, mostly targeting Asian gold jewellery. The incidence of shoplifting has also increased by almost 10% over the same period. With Operation Retail, all incidents of shoplifting are investigated by local officers. Police are working closely with retailers. One retailer is particularly problematic as staff are advised not to attempt to detain shop-lifters, just to talk with them: at most others, security staff are supported to detain shop-lifters and call the police. The Co-op have introduced a task-force to try and help prevent shop-lifting. The Croydon Police licencing team, which cover all licensed premises and retail licensing issues, are working with them. Police have run some plain-clothes operations with some success but, where shops are run by franchisees, engagement depends on the franchisee involved. Robberies are, technically, down as the team are continuing with their end and beginning of term initiatives, with Operation Zoedone activities led by an excellent Detective Inspector for Robbery. The spike in school-child on school-child robberies did not occur as anticipated in January, at the start of the new term. SW reported that PV had asked her to produce some tips for parents about children travelling to and from

school. She asked if the Police had anything that she could use on which to base it. RH commented that dispersing as quickly as possible after school and not travelling alone were important. Also only using one ear pod, so that one ear is free to hear local noise and not having mobile phones on view at bus-stops and by the roadside where someone on a moped could snatch it. Neighbourhood Officers do still go into schools at least once a term and speak with Year 6 pupils. JR observed that he had raised some of these points in a recent CR5 article and said that things like spatial awareness were as relevant to adults as well as to children. RH agreed and said that CBNWA could highlight the need for spatial awareness, particularly around railways, following the tragic death of a 12 year old on an unmanned level crossing at Kenley Railway Station. PV noted that CBNWA is planning to establish NW co-ordinators in schools and a proposal has been prepared to bid for National Lottery funds. The proposal, has been sent to Ola Kolade, to some of the Council and to the Croydon MPs, requesting feedback. Consultation with Council, MPs and the Police is likely to strengthen the bid.

Action: CA to send the proposal to RH for comment.

Working with Surrey Police and British Transport Police, AS has been continuing to run an initiative to counteract the theft of motor vehicles. While, technically there has been a drop in the number of these recorded, numbers continue relatively high, with Land Rover and Lexus being the most popular cars targeted and, particularly, keyless cars. Several arrests resulted from the last 4 day over-night operation run and, additionally, over 20 vehicles had been seized because they were not covered by insurance. Police had handed out Faraday bags in 2024 though RH felt that a physical steering lock was one of the best deterrents and recommended their use, particularly with vehicles left in driveways overnight. PV observed that an article about car theft in the *Croydon Eye* had featured steering locks and JR noted that he had found that Faraday bags do wear out, ceasing to be as effective and need to be replaced. He queried if chop shops were still a concern: RH responded that though they must still exist, they had not featured in any reports or discussions recently. MC-R continues to run Operation Redwood in the town centre, flooding the town centre with officers undertaking stop and searches on selected days. It continues to be successful, leading to a number of arrests. RH is optimistic that more police constables will become available to Safer Neighbourhood teams over the coming months. At present, Dan Rutland, Detective Superintendent for Headquarters, is temporarily acting up as Borough Commander as Andy Brittain has achieved promotion and is acting as a temporary Commander elsewhere. PV observed that, further to discussion at a meeting with Ola Kolade, Croydon Cabinet Member for Community Safety, 2 vertical strands of the Christmas lighting in the town centre, which had contributed to an improved sense of security in the area, had been left in

place.

RH left the meeting at approximately 2.30 p.m.

5) Funding

JR commented that CA's draft bid to the National Lottery for funding for the Croydon Youth Watch project was very professional. CA responded that he would welcome criticism from Committee members, particularly relating as to whether the proposal was realistic, given CBNWA resources. PV suggested that the bid could include funding for administrative support. He noted that it would be good to be able to show that there had been consultation with other interested parties. Ola Kolade had suggested some aspects which could be useful to include. Positive feedback had also been received from Councillors, with a suggestion that the proposal be sent to the Croydon MPs for comment, which he had done. Additionally, it was suggested that it be sent to the Croydon Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.

RK joined the meeting at approximately 2.32 p.m.

PV briefly described the Croydon Youth Watch proposal to him. RK queried who would act as co-ordinators and PV indicated that it was envisaged to be senior pupils. He also queried the number of co-ordinators needed in each school, as most schools have over 1,000 pupils. PV responded that the plan was to trial the scheme with 2 schools, to see how it works, before rolling it out across the borough. CA indicated the trial would involve schools with sixth-forms, where the Heads will actively support it. A successful trial is likely to encourage other School Heads to become involved. PV commented that, with a decrease in the time police could spend in schools, a Neighbourhood Watch scheme would help replace some of the support and RK responded that it would be good experience for the children, who could learn leadership, information gathering and communication skills.

Action: CA to send the proposal to Croydon Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and to RK for comment, and to Colin Leggatt, Royal Russell School to discuss with the Head and feedback.

CA observed that we are within good time with the consultation, stating that the plan was to have things in place to start in September 2025. He indicated that feedback from NWN was key. KC noted that the NWN person assisting with bid-writing was due to leave at the end of February. PV said that she was being replaced but that the replacement may not have bid writing experience or skills.

Action: PV to let Cheryl Spruce, NWN know that no response had been received

from NWN about the proposal.

Action: Committee members to feedback comments on the proposal to CA.

PV has spoken with the temporary chair of the Safer Neighbourhood Board (SNB). She has contacted Kristian Aspinall, Croydon Council Director of Culture and Community Safety, asking him to release £3,000 of the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) funds to CBNWA.

PV has been informed that no dates are being added to the Croydon Executive Mayor's diary at present, as he has been working on the Council's budget. The budget meeting was on 29th January. PV indicated that he was due to see the Mayor at an April open meeting he is doing Thornton Heath. If a date for the CBNWA meeting with him has not been set by then, PV will raise it.

KC congratulated CA on his successful bid to the NWN: CBNWA has been awarded £150.00 towards the costs of producing and distributing the crime reporting flier. CA said that the bid had requested £300 but, looking at the feedback from NWN, CBNWA was lucky to receive £150.00. He noted that prudent reporting of use of the money would be necessary. It could not be used to fund printing retrospectively and the Committee would need to consider distribution costs, such as room hire at meetings where the flier could be promoted. PV indicated that the flier could be distributed through the Libraries, at Local Community Partnerships (LCP) meetings, at LCP hubs and at the Crime Prevention Day.

Action: SW to attach the flier to the next newsletter.

Action: KC to add a question or questions about the flier and its use to the CPD 2025 evaluation questionnaire.

Action: photo to be taken of the NWN CEO holding the flier at the CPD to add to the evidence about use of the flier.

6) Update from Office Manager

SW reported that she had undertaken all the things she had been asked to do. Information about the proposed Croydon Youth Watch had been sent to all schools in the borough. She had sent information about the Benefact Group Movement for Good lottery to co-ordinators and had registered herself, voting for CBNWA. She queried whether, for now and in order to clear the backlog of people waiting for identity (ID) badges, they could be printed and laminated. To ensure they could be read, they could be A5 size. PV explained that it must not be possible to copy or recreate the badges and that they needed to be the same size as ID badges generally in use. It will be necessary to use a special machine to produce them.

Action: SW to send an email to everyone on Croydon V4 and on the CBNWA database asking them to let her know if they need an ID Badge.

Action: PV to send SW photos of both sides of his CBNWA ID badge, which he knows to be the latest design used.

Action: SW to liaise with Scott Green of Cheap Print to produce plastic ID badges to satisfy the present demand.

SW asked for clarification about the categories of people registered on V4. PV explained that there were co-ordinators, whom Committee members had interviewed and verified on V4. Other people were just members. KC suggested it might be easier to refer to the other people as subscribers, though PV noted that they were members of the NWN. PV reiterated that the majority of people on V4 were not co-ordinators and not all co-ordinators were on V4, as some had not activated their V4 records. KC noted that people can self-register on V4 and receive emails, without being verified, so that we might need to consider the types of message we send out via V4. PV thought that only people who had been verified received emails although the system could have changed. He thought that all the messages we send out via V4 would be relevant to everyone but that co-ordinators would forward the messages on to the people in their Watch. PV noted that anyone who registers a scheme is treated as though they have applied to become a co-ordinator. Their scheme will not be approved until they have been interviewed by a Committee member. He explained that people who have registered a scheme are only able to view details of and communicate with the members registered in their scheme. KC noted that CBNWA has a mailing list of subscribers, a database of co-ordinators and the V4 database with NWN members and most CBNWA co-ordinators. If a message needs to be sent to all co-ordinators, the safest way to do this is to email, using the records on the CBNWA database.

7) Crime Prevention Day (CPD) 2025

SW reported that the invitation to speak had been accepted by Trish Burls and Mitch Carr. She had emailed Jason Perry and then completed and returned the booking form but had not heard back.

Action: PV to ask the Mayor about speaking at the CPD when he sees him on 12th April.

SW has spoken with Colin Leggatt, Operations Manager, Royal Russell School and had booked the school for 11th October. PV said that Mitch Carr would pass on the date to the Safer Neighbourhood Inspectors. CK has confirmed that he will do a

cyber talk again.

Action: SW to invite the John Hayward-Cripps, Chief Executive Officer of NWN, Ola Kolade and the Shadow Home Secretary, Chris Philp to give presentations.

Action: KC to contact Alexa Loukas of Crimestoppers, inviting her to give a presentation at the CPD rather than in one of the workshops being planned.

Action: PV and SW to have a Zoom meeting to begin preparing the programme once presenters have been confirmed.

KC flagged up that she had emailed to Committee members, on 24th February, the responses to Question 4 of the CPD 2024 evaluation: *What topics related to local meetings of co-ordinators would you be interested in and do you know any speakers you would like to recommend?* She encouraged colleagues to look through with a view to speakers at CPD 2025.

8) Cyberhood Watch Champion

PV reported that CK will be able to forward dates and venues for the co-ordinators' workshops very shortly. KC observed that a draft outline of what he is proposing to cover would be useful. She suggested that CK may need more help from the Committee in planning the workshops, though she would be unable to do much more than comment on proposed content. PV said that CBNWA does need more people on the Committee and that people with specific skills or interests could be invited to take on roles such as publicity and assisting with information technology.

Action: SW to email co-ordinators asking for them to register their interest and indicate their availability for the workshops.

9) CBNWA systems, software and communication methods. Update.

SW reported that her husband had set-up a new laptop which she was able to use for CBNWA business for the present. PV reported that CK has a new laptop and mobile to pass to SW. He would deliver them to her and set them up. KC observed that she would probably need to be able to use the mobile for text messages as she may need the telephone to verify her access to some websites.

Action: SW to contact CK to arrange a meeting to set-up the new laptop and mobile.

10) National Neighbourhood Watch Network (NWN).

PV's *National Neighbourhood Watch Update 21-2-25* had been circulated with the meeting papers. He and JR had joined the first of the Regional Meetings. JR observed that some other Associations appear better organised than CBNWA. In a discussion about what was not working so well, he had commented on the lack of feedback from co-ordinators. PV commented that the more localised meetings being planned may improve the situation. CA indicated that getting co-ordinators together to exchange and discuss Neighbourhood Watch issues had worked well in the past when meetings were held in East Croydon. PV suggested that the minutes of the Committee meetings should be posted on the website. CA thought that co-ordinators would be interested to see the Police report. JK queried whether it mattered that anyone will be able to see them if they are on the website. PV and KC thought it would make clear what the Committee do and JK responded that this could attract more people to become involved. KC would remove the word *Draft* once the minutes had been approved and send to PV and SW for CBNWA records. SW would then post them on the website and include a link to them in the next newsletter. KC observed that it would be interesting to know how many times they were viewed.

Action: SW to include encouragement to co-ordinators, in the next newsletter, to be more active, to respond to email communications from CBNWA and to attend the Crime Prevention Day.

Action: KC to remove the word *Draft* from the minutes once they have been approved and send to PV and SW for CBNWA records and to place on the website.

Action: SW to investigate if she is able to post documents on the website.

11) Local Community Partnerships (LCPs)

KC reported that, at a recent Central West meeting that she had attended, there had been a lot of talk about grants available from local organisations running projects. She felt that CBNWA would have to fit in with the overall project involved and that the amounts of money on offer would not be worth the amount of work involved in putting a bid together. PV observed that there was also a lot of work to do once an award had been made, in terms of monitoring and reporting progress. He felt that half the award could well be spent in the costs of monitoring and reporting progress. He observed that the National Health Service (NHS) funds for the LCP projects had become available during January and have now been assigned to the bids that had been made by the LCPs. CA observed that all LCP projects will now need to be linked to NHS related foci, as the source of the funding is now the NHS. PV commented that the CVA will need to show that the money has been allocated to relevant projects. The monitoring and reporting are more rigorous with the NHS and need to show relevance to NHS Key Performance Indicators. He noted that at the NWN

Regional meeting, participants had commented on the number of policies which often need to be included with a bid. Cheryl Spruce had commented that local Associations could make use of NWN policies. Money for charities is becoming more difficult to obtain: Croydon Council has stopped all funding for virtually every single charity from the end of March 2025. KC observed that this must mean that CBNWA would not receive any funding from them in the next financial year and that one or two people on the Committee who could focus on fund-raising would be useful. She acknowledged CA's excellent work in this area. CA observed that CBNWA has been in difficult financial situations in the past but has survived.

Action: KC to check for more detail on the sources of funding mentioned at the LCP Croydon Central West meeting and pass any information on to CA.

12) AOB

KC reported that JK had just telephoned her to apologise for having to leave the meeting early, at approximately 3.35 p.m.

PV reported that the temporary chair of the SNB is stepping down at the end of March. There will be an emergency meeting of the Board on 27th March, to determine how it moves forward, ensuring Board members operate in a proactive manner, following MOPAC guidelines. Croydon Council will no longer support the Board administratively. It has been suggested that CBNWA resources could be used for this: money would be paid to CBNWA to organise the 4 meetings a year, booking rooms, sending out meeting invitations and taking minutes. PV has spoken with SW about this: if she did this work she would invoice CBNWA separately for SNB work. SW said that she would not do the minutes.

13) Date and venue of next meeting: Thursday 27th March 2025, 2.00 p.m. via Zoom.

Kate Clark,
Hon Secretary