



Rural Area Working Party 12 September 2011

Community Safety

1. Background

- 1.1 Suffolk benefits from low rates of crime and anti social behaviour by national standards and, St Edmundsbury in general. The rural area, in particular, is a safe place to live where statistically there is a low incidence of crime. Crime and safety are always high on the public agenda, however, and being in an area with low crime rates, is no consolation to victims or the communities they live in. Everyone wants to live in a safe place where levels of crime are kept to a minimum.
- 1.2 St Edmundsbury rural area borders Norfolk, Essex and Cambridgeshire, in addition to the towns in the Borough, which can result in some transference of crime, such as thefts from outbuildings, mainly related to the farming community and equestrian premises, metal/lead and heating oil thefts.
- 1.3 Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) is also a feature in some of the larger villages but speeding, dog fouling and litter are the issues most frequently raised by members of the community. Fear of crime in a rural low crime area outstrips the reality of crime levels (although it should be recognised that in a low crime area, a single serious crime can have a far greater impact on the perception of the safety of the area, than a number of serious crimes in a higher crime area.)
- 1.4 Domestic abuse and substance abuse (including alcohol) are also issues which occur in the rural area but tend to be 'hidden'. This does not mean that work is not undertaken around these issues but it is carried out with individuals rather than communities.
- 1.5 There are two multi agency Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) in the rural area, one covering the northern area and one covering the southern area. The public are invited to community meetings each quarter to raise the issues which are important to them and they wish the teams to concentrate on. This is not the only way for the public to raise issues. Parish Councils, Neighbourhood Watch, elected members and the Community Safety Officer at the Borough Council are all avenues for the public to discuss issues of concern to them.
- 1.6 Overall, comparing the 12 month period ending July 2010, against the same period in 2011, total crime in the rural area is down by 296 offences. (145 in rural north and 151 in rural south). Attached as Appendix A are the crime statistics.

2. Types of activity undertaken to address areas of concern

- 2.1 Speed enforcement has taken place on specified highways as identified by the community.

- 2.2 'Community Speed Watch' groups have been developed. These are members of the community who have volunteered to undertake speed checks in their own area. They are trained to use the speed monitoring equipment (which has been purchased by themselves through various funding streams), which then result in an advisory letter being sent by the Police if the motorist is exceeding the speed limit. There are now a number of groups operating in the area; namely eight in rural south, (Cavendish, Great Bradley, Cowlinge, Great Wratting, Great Thurlow, Little Thurlow, Withersfield and Stoke-by-Clare) and nine in rural north (Stanton, Bardwell, Coney Weston, Fakenham Magna, Hopton, Barrow, Horringer, Risby, Fornham All Saints) . There has been a suggestion that it would be helpful to have a presentation on "Community Speed Watch" at a forthcoming Parish Conference which is being progressed.
- 2.3 Expansion and support of the Farm Watch scheme, in association with the National Farmers Union (NFU), which encourages gathering and sharing of intelligence around suspicious persons/vehicles, crime reduction advice and regular information seminars for the members. The last seminar attracted 100 members.
- 2.4 "Farmers fighting crime" initiative is being rolled out across Suffolk in conjunction with BBC Radio Suffolk. This is 3 phase initiative with Phase 1 involving the SNTs visiting all farms in their area with a questionnaire which hi-lights their security needs. In Phase 2 they get appropriate tailored advice and stickers to put on plant/vehicles to alert to illegal use or theft. In addition, more tracking equipment has been put in police vehicles. During Phase 3 plant/vehicle etching events in rural crime hot spots will be offered and this will be complemented by various media promotions.
- 2.5 Crime reduction information in respect of oil theft has been distributed via Neighbourhood Watch, parish council newsletters and Farm Watch. There is also an initiative with oil suppliers being explored.
- 2.6 2 seminars in rural churches have taken place regarding metal and lead theft and further sessions are planned across Suffolk. Havebury Housing Partnership is also identifying possible security risks in their properties in the rural areas. Nationally and locally, BT are working with the Police to safeguard cabling. Several Police operations have been undertaken to identify perpetrators which, in the main, have been found to be from out of the area.
- 2.7 Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) largely falls into three groups; neighbour disputes, young people congregating causing noise/damage, sometimes associated with alcohol and modified vehicle users. Neighbour disputes are dealt with by the appropriate agencies or the multi agency co-located ASB team if the victim is high risk, vulnerable or repeat. Since the team began in October 2010 there have been 9 cases out a total of 65 which relate to the rural area. Issues with young people hanging around have been noted in some of the larger villages and various actions have been engaged which include enforcement (high visibility presence from SNT, acceptable behaviour contracts being drawn up and test purchasing for illegal alcohol sales), diversionary activities such as the 'Woz Up' truck and target hardening eg the installation of a gate at the recreation field at Stanton. Modified vehicle users have been reported as an issue again in some of the larger villages. A mixture of education and enforcement (Section 59 Notices whereby the car can be impounded) have been employed to combat these issues. Work around ASB issues will always be ongoing.

3. Looking to the future

- 3.1 In the current climate of reducing funding and resources it will become increasingly important to work with the community, voluntary organisations and Parish Councils (who have a statutory duty under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act to consider community safety in the exercise of all its functions), to combat crime and find solutions to issues which are of local concern, using a problem solving approach. The Council are already moving towards this as shown by the excellent work around Speed Watch and Farm Watch. By encouraging communities to be better informed and take part in solving issues it is hoped that this will also allay some of the fear of crime.
- 3.2 Encouraging good communication and positive engagement with young people is important and it should be encouraged and supported with proper advice for the community from statutory agencies.
- 3.3 Elected members have an important role to play acting as community champions for their residents, encouraging individuals and the local community to take a collective responsibility for keeping villages safe.
- 3.4 Using the media to promote good news stories and embrace the use of new technology eg social networks, in a positive way will continue. Ensure that accurate information is shared so that myths are not perpetuated which raise the fear of crime.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 The Rural Area Working Party is asked to **NOTE** the current position.

For further information please contact:-
Helen Lindfield, Community Safety Officer
Telephone: (01284) 757620 or via email: helen.lindfield@stedsbc.gov.uk

APPENDIX A

Crime statistics as extracted from Suffolk County Council Data for 12 months to the end of July 2009/2010 and 2010/2011, by SNT area

<u>Offences in St Edmundsbury Rural North</u>	<u>12 mth total 2010</u>	<u>12 mth total 2011</u>	<u>Offences in St Edmundsbury Rural South</u>	<u>12mth total 2010</u>	<u>12 mth total 2011</u>
Arson	16	13	Arson	5	4
Criminal Damage	257	233	Criminal Damage	68	69
Domestic Burglary	46	56	Domestic Burglary	38	18
Drug trafficking Offences	6	9	Drug trafficking Offences	4	5
Fraud and Forgery	31	30	Fraud and Forgery	10	12
Most serious Violent Crime	4	5	Most serious Violent Crime	6	5
Other Burglary	137	123	Other Burglary	131	76
Other Drug offences	32	34	Other Drug offences	6	12
Other notifiable offences	24	26	Other notifiable offences	4	8
Other sexual offences	3	4	Other sexual offences	0	1
Other theft and handling	227	240	Other theft and handling	106	67
Other violence Against the Person	205	163	Other violence Against the Person	55	50
Public order and harrassment	64	51	Public order and harrassment	12	9
Robbery	3	4	Robbery	0	2
Serious Sexual Offences	11	18	Serious Sexual Offences	4	6
Shoplifting	34	21	Shoplifting	1	10
Theft from Motor Vehicle	104	96	Theft from Motor Vehicle	44	36
Theft of a Motor Vehicle	17	17	Theft of a Motor Vehicle	13	8
Theft of Pedal Cycle	27	22	Theft of Pedal Cycle	5	4
Vehicle Interference	9	9	Vehicle Interference	6	3
Violence with Injury	102	86	Violence with Injury	37	37
TOTAL	1319	1174	TOTAL	556	405

St Edmundsbury Rural North team covers the following wards and has a population of 26,976*: Bardwell, Barningham, Barrow, Fornham, Great Barton, Horringer, Ixworth, Pakenham, Risby, Rougham, Stanton and Whelnetham wards.

St Edmundsbury Rural South Team covers the following wards and has a population of 14,943*: Withersfield, Wickhambrook, Cavendish, Chedburgh, Kedington, Hundon and Clare wards

* Estimated population figures for mid year 2010 as used by Suffolk Police.