

**Minutes of the
PRESTON NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH MEETING
held at the Red Lion on Monday 12th March 2018**

Present: PCSO Heather Burrows, PCSO Alex Bridge, Carol Bowden, Alison Bierrum, Jane Cole, Pat Loustau, Lynda Woodward, Ita Leaver

Apologies: Ken Murray, Sarah Gill, Tim Justham, Ian Robinson

The following points were discussed:

1 **Local crime update**

Over the past 12 months, unfortunately crime in Preston has risen - especially since mid December 2017.

At the end of March 2017, a house in **Chequers Lane** was broken into. Two sets of car keys were taken and the offenders stole an Audi S3.

On 27th May 2017 a newly built, unfinished house in **Back Lane** was broken into and workmen's tools were taken.

On 11th August 2017, a wallet was taken from a local gardener's van whilst parked at Ladygrove Lodge, **School Lane**.

We had a quiet period until 15th December when a house in **Chequers Lane** was burgled. Offenders forced open a window at the back, made a very untidy search and took cash and jewellery.

A month later in mid January 2018, a house in **Templars Lane** was broken into. Entry was gained by an insecure window at the back of the property. Apart from a set of car keys, nothing else was taken.

On 24th January 2018, yet another house was burgled. A bungalow in **School Lane** was presumably entered by undoing the front door lock via the letterbox. Offenders took jewellery and cash.

On the night of 7th February, thieves attempted to steal a VW Golf R which was parked outside The Chapel in **Church Lane**. They were unsuccessful in hot-wiring it but caused a lot of internal damage.

An attempted break-in via a rear window at a bungalow in **Templars Lane** was reported on 4th March.

Sometime between 3rd and 4th March, offenders gained access to outbuildings at **Poynders End Farm** and equipment was taken. The Police suspect the house burglaries may be linked to similar crimes in the North Herts area which happened around the same time. Other villages affected were Offley, Lilley, Pirton, Codicote, St Ippollits and Ickleford. Another spate of house burglaries took place in Hitchin on 6th March.

A couple of suspects have been arrested and Police investigations are still on-going.

As a consequence of the recent crimes in Preston, a Crime Prevention Advice session was arranged to take place in the Village Hall on 10th February with our Safer Neighbourhood Team. This was well attended and PCSO's Heather Burrows and Pheobe Coates brought a selection of leaflets and useful gadgets to give to residents. They also enrolled more villagers onto the OWL System.

Heather mentioned that flytipping is still a big problem. It should be reported to NHDC using their online form or to Veolia on 0800 328 6023. Anyone witnessing it taking place should call the Police immediately on 999. Details are advertised in the latest Parish Newsletter.

2 **The OWL System + note distribution**

Ita and Jane are set up on OWL (Online Watch Link) and receive messages via email. Ita sends any relevant information to committee members for distribution by note to households in their assigned area. Jane deputises when Ita is away. Outlying households are informed by email. A notice is also posted on the board at the Green.

The Preston News Service (an email database set up by the Trust) is also a very useful way to get news out quickly. Although, not all villagers have signed up, the committee agreed it would be best to continue with the note system as well.

The OWL System is used for relaying information other than crime-related matters where links and attachments can be accessed easily.

3 **Police Surgeries and Safer Streets with PCSO Heather**

Surgeries are held on **Saturday mornings** from **10am - 12 noon** in the **Village Hall**.

Dates are published in the Newsletter, village website, Preston News Service and on the notice board at the Green. The Primary School and PHC are also notified.

The next one will be on 28th April.

Heather will be doing a Safer Streets session in Preston On Monday 23rd April. She will encourage residents to sign up to OWL if they have not done so already.

4 **Any Other Business**

Local area meetings are held in Lilley every three months or so. PCSO Heather Burrows also attends and recent crimes in the area and examples of policing successes are discussed.

Heather receives a copy of the Parish Newsletter each month.

Be vigilant at all times and always report suspicious activity.
The non-emergency number to call is 101.

Ita thanked Heather and the committee for their help and support.

CC. *John Healey, Chairman Preston Parish Council*
 Richard Coles, Chairman Preston Trust