

## **An agreement between South Wales Police and Neighbourhood Watch South Wales**

### **The Background**

In order to maximise the impact of Neighbourhood Watch Groups across the communities of South Wales, there needs to be clarity of vision, purpose and expectation on the part of everyone involved.

This draft agreement is being drawn up initially between South Wales Police – signed up to by both the Commissioner and the Chief Constable – and the South Wales Association of Neighbourhood Watch. The intention is to provide a template for agreements at the level of each local authority, involving the County Neighbourhood Watch Association, the Local Authority, the Local Council of Voluntary Action and the Local Police Team, supported by the Chief Constable and the Commissioner.

Such a local agreement is intended to ensure that local Neighbourhood Watch Groups are able to work effectively, to “own and tackle local issues” and to empower local people. That can best be achieved if Neighbourhood Watch Groups are able to work within an agreed framework with the neighbourhood policing team and local partners, and have their voice heard at County partnership & Police Command level.

### **Our shared vision**

**The stated aim of the Neighbourhood Watch movement in the UK is to bring neighbours together to create strong, friendly, active communities where crime and anti-social behaviour are less likely to happen.**

### **The Neighbourhood Watch statement of vision is clear :**

*“Our vision is that of a caring society that is focused on trust and respect in which people are safe from crime and enjoy a good quality of life. Neighbourhood Watch is about making sure that no one has to feel afraid, vulnerable or isolated in the place where they live. It’s about people looking out for each other, crossing barriers of age, race and class to create real communities that benefit everyone.”*

That vision is entirely consistent with the vision that has been spelt out by the Police and Crime Commissioner and by the Chief Constable.

- The Police and Crime Plan is about creating strong, healthy communities as the other side of the coin of tackling the crime and disorder that afflicts our communities in South Wales. It is about a partnership approach to cutting crime and building on local strengths.

Agreed 8<sup>th</sup> April 2014

- The Chief Constable's vision is of police officers who are proud, positive and professional in their engagement with their local communities.

There is ever-increasing local engagement with the public through neighbourhood policing teams – particularly by Community Support Officers – so it is important to have a shared understanding between Neighbourhood Watch Groups, the Neighbourhood Policing Team and others who represent local interests, in particular local Councillors and voluntary community groups.

**With that in mind, Neighbourhood Watch South Wales and South Wales Police are committed to a joint approach, soundly based on seven key principles :**

To be .....

- evidence-based about local needs and issues
- evidence-based in terms of understanding what works
- clearly focussed on cutting crime and antisocial behaviour and increasing public confidence
- objective in seeking to inform the public locally
- responsive in terms of seeking views from the public
- ambitious to enable residents to own local issues and develop solutions to local challenges
- and collaborative in working together for the common good.

Each community across South Wales has its own needs and issues, and our aim is to empower those local communities, not to impose a “one size fits all” model. That empowerment may call for the development of skills, for example through the training offered by South Wales Citizens and their local groups. If each community is able to identify and tackle local issues effectively, that will aggregate to success at a local authority and South Wales level – but the communities we serve are local in nature and that is where the emphasis must be placed.

There may be more specialised needs that can be addressed in addition to the neighbourhood model. Developments in some parts of the UK have included Farm Watch, Pub Watch and Business Watch. Using the same criteria set out above, we will support such developments in South Wales, normally based on the local authority footprint. We are also encouraged by the interest of Faith groups to engage with the connections between their own needs and the safety of the wider community around them, and we will work together on the development of a “Worship Watch” scheme which will involve faith communities working together for the common good.

Agreed 8<sup>th</sup> April 2014

We will encourage members and representatives of ethnic minority groups to become involved in Neighbourhood Watch. We will take account of levels of crime and antisocial behaviour in order to encourage the development of Neighbourhood Watch groups in the areas and communities with the greatest need.

Many organisations seek to work with both Neighbourhood Watch and the Neighbourhood Policing Teams. Approaches have been made by Age Concern, NSPCC, the RSPCA, Trading Standards and others. We see the County Association as the best means of communicating with those organisations, enabling co-ordination of messages with community safety partnerships and others and the development of mutual understanding and common purpose.

The activities undertaken by local Neighbourhood Watch groups have long been characterised by their diversity, including everything from home security improvements to youth workshops and to visiting schemes for the elderly and neighbourhood clean-up projects.

The results have often been striking. As well as specific outcomes, many Neighbourhood Watch groups have made a significant contribution to making their local community more friendly and cohesive as well as achieving a fall in crime. The good really can drive out the bad.

Neighbourhood Watch in South Wales will continue to participate in the Neighbourhood & Home Watch Network, which is the charity and umbrella body which represents Neighbourhood Watch and Home Watch members across England and Wales. However, South Wales Police and the South Wales Neighbourhood Watch Association cover over 40% of the population of Wales and we are conscious that many of our partners fall within the aegis of Welsh Government and the National Assembly for Wales. That is why we need our own model of engagement, which draws on the best examples of national and international best practice, but allows us to make the most of our own skills, systems and resources in delivering our shared vision to and with local communities across South Wales.

***To be signed by the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Chief Constable and representatives of South Wales Neighbourhood Watch. It is envisaged that this will be followed by agreements involving each local authority and the respective Councils of Voluntary Action***