

New leadership at Bexley Neighbourhood Watch

Ahead of Neighbourhood Watch Week, members of Bexley's Neighbourhood Watch met at their Annual General Meeting this week to elect a new leadership and set priorities for 2012.

Longstanding Chairman, Ray Hudson, stood down after 8 years and Dana Wiffen of Bexley, the previous Vice Chair was elected to take over. He will be supported by Vice Chair Joanne Leech (nee Tanner) of Bexleyheath who joined the Committee last year.

The meeting was attended by Bexley Neighbourhood Watch Patron James Brokenshire, Conservative Member of Parliament for Old Bexley & Sidcup and the Parliamentary Under Secretary for Crime and Security. He thanked the Executive and paid tribute to all of the Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinators for their hard work over the course of the last year and the contribution this had made in making Bexley Borough safer. Mr Brokenshire went on to thank Ray Hudson for his many years of service and congratulated Dana Wiffen on his new appointment.

Speaking at the meeting, James Brokenshire said:

"Neighbourhood Watch provides fantastic support to the Police and makes an important difference in helping make our communities safer. Our local group in Bexley is working hard to encourage more neighbourhoods to get involved and make it that much harder for criminals to commit crime. It was good to hear of the progress made over the last year and how greater awareness of simple steps to help secure your home can cut crime."

Chief Inspector Ian Broadbridge of Bexley Police updated the meeting on the work of local Safer Neighbourhoods police teams and stressed his commitment to ensuring the police and Neighbourhood Watch continued to work together.

Once the general formalities of electing new members and approving accounts was completed, the meeting opened up to a range of discussion topics from preventing burglary, the use of 'SmartWater' to mark items and deter theft; ensuring UPVC doors are locked correctly; and how to deal with fraudster emails, often designed to trick recipients into divulging confidential personal details.

Local members heard how finances were healthy as Bexley's Neighbourhood Watch group had been innovative in securing sponsorship from Cory Riverside which had helped raise awareness of crime prevention in the area.

The next steps for the new Executive Committee are to explore new ways of supporting Bexley's residents, including making efficiencies where possible, expanding the reach of Neighbourhood Watch throughout the borough as well as the creation of 'Plot Watch' aimed at reducing thefts from the borough's allotments and 'Faith Watch', which hopes to help churches and other places of worship, particularly vulnerable to metal theft and Horse Watch to try and deter theft from stables.



From left to right – Claire Tack (Secretary), Ray Hudson (former Chairman), BBNWA Patron - James Brokenshire (MP for Sidcup & Old Bexley), Dana Wiffen (Chairman) & Chief Inspector Ian Broadbridge.