In the Loop

Hertfordshire Constabulary Stakeholder Newsletter

Central Area

Welcome to the sixth 'In the Loop' for the Central Area. This is one of a quarterly series of updates on police activity on the Area which covers St Albans City and District, Welwyn Hatfield District and Hertsmere Borough.

This edition will provide an overview of Central Area.

A word from the Area Command Team – Introduction by Chief Inspector Mark Hunter

We are now approaching the end of the policing year which runs from April 1, 2007 and March 31, 2008.

It's been a very successful year with the trend of a downward turn in crime figures continuing.

This year we have seen a reduction of 9.8% in All Crime across the three districts of Central Area. Every crime has at least one victim involved – so in real terms, this means we had 2,417 fewer victims this year which is something we can all be proud of.

We have also seen:

- A 27.4% reduction in serious violent crime
- A 15.2% reduction in personal robbery
- A 6.9% reduction in motor vehicle offences
- A 13.2% reduction in criminal damage
- An 18.5% reduction in thefts from the person

Our figures do demonstrate a small increase in residential burglaries of 2.6% but we continue to work with residents on how to improve security and make their properties less vulnerable.

And of course, we are out there catching and deterring criminals.

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Safer Neighbourhoods has been a huge theme this year and this year has seen the numbers of Neighbourhood and Police Community Support Officers grow, ensuring that each neighbourhood across Central Area has its own Policing Team.

Although Hertfordshire is a low-crime county, our aim is to ensure our communities feel safe and reassured and the Safer Neighbourhoods initiative continues to deliver highly visible and accessible policing to all.

As well as working with members of the community, Safer Neighbourhoods is also about working with our partners such as district councils, Fire & Rescue, County Council, health and education providers.

We are looking forward to the new policing year and continuing building on those valued relationships with our partners.

A problem shared is a problem halved as the saying goes, and it's certainly true that strength in numbers achieves significant results.

Recent Events and Initiatives:

St Albans:

"SPORT is the way to a kid's heart," says one of the founders of youth community football team LC Juniors.

And Kelvin Mackenzie could well be right. Police Community Support Officer Kelvin – or 'Mack' as he is known, founded LC Juniors with colleague Rich Donvaband nearly two years ago.

Also involved are Hightown Praetorian Housing Association, the Youth Officer and Anti Social Behaviour Officer at St Albans District Council.

They began the project with the aim of reducing anti-social behaviour in the village. Mack, who is a PCSO with London Colney Neighbourhood Team says: "Since we started, nuisance behaviour in the village has gone down. Whether it's exclusively down to the project, we can't say for sure but it's markedly down.

"Policing is not just about going out and about arresting people. It's about making these type of things happen.

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"Teaching kids right from wrong, how to earn respect and gain self esteem and about friendship and teamwork.

"The kids who were there at the start of the project have changed. They are genuinely a really good bunch of kids who put a lot of effort into playing. They are not there to muck around – they play to win.

LC Juniors played their first tournament recently, won all four of their games and came away champions!

Hertsmere

ELSTREE Park has become a nicer place to be thanks to joint efforts of the police and Hertsmere Borough Council's Parks Department.

The park, off Sullivan Way, Elstree, had fallen victim to vandals who had targeted signs, play equipment and buildings with graffiti.

Neighbourhood officers spotted the damage during patrols and Police Community Support Officer Claire Morris spoke to mums and children who said the graffiti was putting them off using the park.

Police officers stepped up their patrols and carried out some investigation to discover who was behind the damage. They also liaised with the Parks Department, who brought in a team to clean up the graffiti.

Subsequently, two youths aged 13 were arrested. The first was charged with three counts of criminal damage and was placed on a supervisory action plan with 27 hours community service and had to pay costs of £55. The second youth was referred to a supervisory team for further action.

Claire said: "Damage and graffiti really brings an area down but since the council stepped in and cleaned it up so well, we haven't had any further incidents in the park at all.

"Causing damage or writing tags on public property is a criminal offence and will not be tolerated."

Hertsmere Borough Council's Events Officer Shaz Setoudeh says: "Working with the Police was made easy - they kept me informed as the investigation continued''.

Cllr Jean Heywood added: "This is a good example of partnership working and what can be achieved when partners within the Borough work together - we will continue to work with all agencies within Hertsmere."

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Welwyn Hatfield

A RURAL Watch started by Neighbourhood police officers has made a tangible difference to people who work in the rural communities – with 50 members joining up to take part.

The Watch – started by Hatfield Neighbourhood officers PC Dave Wardell and PCSO Mark Randall – puts farms, stables and other rural businesses in touch with one another and with local police. Members say it makes them feel more secure and urge those who have not yet joined, to do so.

Dave said: “Rural Watch runs along the same lines as a Neighbourhood Watch. It is free and currently covers Hatfield, Essendon, Cuffley, Newgate Street, Welham Green and Brookmans Park – but it is also looking to expand.

“It is aimed at farms but includes business premises such as stables in isolated locations. There are three police officers and four Police Community Support Officers who are linked into this scheme and they will cover all of the areas.

“Members look out for each other and pass on information such as suspicious vehicles’ registration numbers, thefts of equipment or suspicious activity, via email or phone.

”This information in turn will be distributed to all members via email or a printed newsletter.

“We also regularly visit the premises and all members have a single point of contact where they can get help if required. We can also give crime prevention advice and offer a free tack marking scheme.”

If you are interested in finding out more about Rural Watch, please ring Hatfield Neighbourhood Team office on 01707 638812. Officers are often out on patrol so if you get a voicemail, please leave a message and your call will be returned as soon as possible.

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