

1. Welcome

Welcome to the Solihull Rural Neighbourhood Area Newsletter for November 2015.

2. General News

Poor broadband on many new housing developments

Coventry Solihull and Warwickshire Broadband report "We are increasingly being contacted by people who have bought homes on new housing developments and then find that there is no broadband connectivity. The situation is made worse by the fact that house builders have to build to an EU standard which requires that all new homes are fully internet ready. Therefore, the house is wired, lots of connection points, and a connectivity point situated in a prominent position, often right next to the front door. However, because there is no broadband available on the estate all of this technology is completely worthless.

This situation occurs because there is currently no legislation requiring developers to install broadband. BT makes ducting and other equipment available free of charge to developers, but still, many do not undertake to provide what is now becoming a basic daily requirement. We accept that in some areas there may be no fibre spine available to connect to, but as the CSW Broadband project rolls out we are reaching into the most rural areas and so the cost to developers of providing connectivity is vastly reduced. If fibre were provided from the outset on new developments and brought to a central aggregation point it would be a comparatively low cost to connect the development to the fibre spine when it is available.

We are regularly contacted by residents wanting to know what we can do for their development, and the answer is - very little! Unless it is designed in from the outset, developers will not allow access to utility companies to install fibre spines or cabinets until a development is complete and the roads have been adopted - and this can take many years from the occupation of the first homes. We are aware of at least one case where a developer was prepared to allow access and to pay 50% of the costs, as long as the residents covered the balance of the cost of the installation themselves. The only problem was that there are only 70 completed properties on this development and they were asked to cover the cost of the whole estate, including over 200 homes that had yet to be built!

So, what can you do? In the first instance, approach the developer before buying to ask what broadband speeds/availability are - and get this in writing! If more people ask this question it should prompt the developers to consider being proactive in this matter.

If you already live in a new home and there is no broadband you could:

- Approach the developer to ask what their plans are
- If they have no plans to provide broadband and the development is still being built, consider starting a campaign with posters in windows stating "No Broadband Here". It will act as a warning to others who may be thinking of buying new houses, and may prompt the developer to do something if they want to sell houses
- If you do decide to go for a community solution then BT have a very helpful section on their website about Community Fibre Partnerships: www.openreach.co.uk/communityfibre.

Green Flag Award - 'Bees Needs' Special Award

Solihull Council's Landscape Architecture, Ecology and Urban Design Team has recently won a Green Flag Innovators Award - 'Bees Needs', for its environmental improvements at Shirley Park which is all about planting for pollinators, in line with Defra's National Pollinator Strategy for England.

The Shirley Park Improvements project was informed by consultation with residents and park users. Local people wanted to see improved nature conservation and a variety of new areas of planting were created to increase biodiversity and to develop areas of different character for park users to enjoy, they include a Four Seasons Garden, Formal and Informal Nature Areas, Commemorative Tree Avenue, Spring Walk, Park Boundary Trees, Community Woodland, Wildflower Area and Spring Bulbs.

The themed areas have been planted with 104 different varieties of trees, hedging, shrubs, climbers, perennials, bulbs and grasses, both native and ornamental varieties. The Formal Nature Area was designed primarily to attract wildlife and provide for pollinators all year round.

The planting has been awarded one of only 10 'Bees' Needs' awards presented by Green Flag Award, and is a reflection that the Council is making positive changes to our green spaces that encourage and increase pollinator-friendly habitats and food sources throughout the year.

International Day of People with Disabilities

An event is taking place on Thursday 3rd December at the Renewal Conference Centre to celebrate International Day of People with Disabilities. For more information contact Emma Smith on 0121 709-7097 or or Alan Keen on 0121 704 6104.

Free Health Checks

Solihull Health Trainer, Aaron Garvey, can offer free health checks for people within Solihull. For under 40's its a mini health check and for 40's he can deliver a full NHS health check free of charge. If you would like Aaron to come along to any of your community groups/events etc. please contact Aaron on:

Aaron.Garvey@healthexchange.org.uk or 07956183456. I have also attached a leaflet with some useful information on Solihull Health Trainer.

Do you qualify for a Healthy Start?

With Healthy Start, you get free vouchers every week to spend on milk, plain fresh and frozen fruit and vegetables, and infant formula milk. You can also get free vitamins.

Pregnant or have children under the age of four? You could qualify if you're on benefits, or if you're pregnant and under 18. <http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/>

Vulnerable people set to benefit from new 'Safe and Well' visits from West Midlands firefighters.

The initiative builds on the long-standing success of Home Safety Checks (HSCs), which have helped to protect thousands of people throughout the West Midlands from the risk of fire in their home.

Safe and Well visits will still incorporate an HSC, but will now include advice to help an individual improve their health and wellbeing - with the ultimate goal of reducing their risk from fire.

Phil Loach, Chief Fire Officer of West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS), said: "Our Home Safety Checks have had a huge, positive impact on people's safety in the West Midlands, sustained over several years. We are now building on that success, by taking a far more holistic view of the circumstances in which our vulnerable residents live.

"We will still be assessing the physical risks of fire in a home, but also considering health, social and lifestyle factors. There can be clear links between these and someone's vulnerability to fire."

Councillor John Edwards, Chair of West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority, said: "The prevention work that firefighters have carried out for many years has been critical in driving down fires and other life threatening incidents.

"It makes sense to expand this activity into areas of health and wellbeing to reduce the higher risk that impacts on vulnerable people".

Safe and Well visits will be carried out by operational firefighters, based at the West Midlands' 38 fire stations, and are expected to take no more than an hour. Fire crews will assess the risk of fire in the home. With the resident's agreement, they will also cover a range of issues and topics, including:

- weight, exercise and healthy eating
- mobility and falls
- mental health, memory loss and dementia
- loneliness and social isolation
- smoking, alcohol, medication and drugs
- hoarding
- employment
- road safety
- home security

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A handbook complements the visits, providing information on safety, health and well-being. A copy will be left with the household, along with details of any actions or referrals made by the visiting fire crew. <http://www.wmfs.net/content/new-safe-and-well-visits>

SIAS training workshop on alcohol use - 20 Nov

1.30 – 4.00pm

At, The Loft

West Mall

Chelmsley Wood

Solihull B37 5TN

This training aims to cover the following topics:

- What services are on offer in Solihull and how to refer
- What are the health concerns associated with alcohol
- How to start a discussion with someone about their alcohol use
- How to offer support to those affected
- Understand how alcohol affects the body
- Understand alcohol units and guidance

Places are limited, please use the link below to book your place now

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2PFVLFN>

Neighbourhood Activity Programme

FREE boxing session on Wednesday at Lode Heath School 6-8pm

FREE street dance session on Thursday at Lode Heath School 6-7pm

For further information please contact:

David Turton

Neighbourhood Activity Programme Manager

Neighbourhood Services

0121 704 8339

dturton@solihull.gov.uk @NAPSolihull

Environment Champions

For any enquiries e-mail:

environmentchampions@solihull.gov.uk

or call:

Christopher Edgell - 0121 704 8517 mobile - 07884236021

3. Priorities

A message from Solihull Police Commander Alex Murray

Dear All

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I am writing to talk through developments in Solihull including the planned closure of Shirley and Balsall Common Police Stations. Crime is steady across Solihull although vehicle crime is always a big problem and at the moment we are having vans broken into on a frequent basis. As a result we have put out our van full of trackable goods. It was dutifully broken into and we managed to get some prolific offenders in custody. We rightly spend a large amount of time focusing on high harm offenders – sex offenders and domestic violence perpetrators and tragic event like the murder of Levi-Blu Kassin remind us that it essential to get it right when we attend calls for service in this area.

Our efforts to work much closer with the Council are continuing. It is clear that the Council and Police focus a lot of time on the same people and places and as money is tight it is more important than ever to join forces to deal with issues in a much more multi-agency way. Our relationships with the teams in Solihull Council and Solihull Community Housing are excellent, perhaps the best in the West Midlands, and this provides a great opportunity to examine how we can be much more co-ordinated.

As you know the budget cuts to the police are significant and this means we have to examine everything we do to maximise our impact with less resources. That means sometimes having to do less of what is desirable to concentrate on what is essential. Naturally we will always focus on those individuals causing the most harm. Often this is behind closed doors (like domestic violence) where policing is less visible to the community. I am keen though that we still tackle overt community concerns. I encourage our teams to still do traffic enforcement – albeit in areas where there are the most killed or seriously injured, and also using traffic regulations to target offenders. I am incredibly grateful to all the volunteers who work in neighbourhood watch, street watch and community speed watch groups. Collectively it is making a big difference.

As we often say it is police officers and staff who offer a service and not buildings. As our service has shrunk in size it has meant that many buildings are underutilised. We need to save £26 million every year and 80% of our budget goes on staff – the thing you and I value the most. To minimise the impact on our staff we have to be sure that our estate bill is as lean as possible. Currently West Midlands police has 124 buildings. The schedule of 28 sites proposed for disposal will provide an annual saving of

- £1.3m in revenue costs
- A reduction of £3.1m in backlog maintenance
- £7.3m in capital receipts
- Reduce the overall estate footprint by 22,254 m²

In Shirley the building is in need of maintenance (a bill of £50k) and currently houses a single neighbourhood policing team. It costs nearly £50k to maintain it every year and is far too big for the staff within. We would look at moving that team to Homer Road, giving them access to Shirley via public transport, police vehicles or bikes and creating points in Shirley that they can do essential work from. Balsall Common also has neighbourhood officers in as well as a

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team of volunteers who daily give up their time to offer reassurance and advice to the community. Balsall Common is open to the public and well used but we are working on the same service being delivered from a different location, hopefully shared with a local authority service. This again will save around £15k a year. I would just like to offer my sincere thanks to that team of volunteers for all they do in Balsall Common and I hope that long may it continue.

If you have any feedback on these closures please let me know. I am interested in your views of the impact but also if you feel it presents any opportunities to do things differently. Similarly, is there a better more cost-effective way we as Solihull police can build relationships, meet and understand the concerns of communities without necessarily having a building in the locality? Please respond to Barbara (b.cresswell@west-midlands.pnn.police.uk) and I will read every email/letter and report it back.

Thank-you for your support, without it we would be so much more ineffective in creating a safe environment in Solihull. As you know there are many more structural changes coming over the hill to realise the savings we need to make (the estate is only a very small part) and I will keep you updated as the picture becomes clearer. One thing I can reassure you of is the commitment of my team of police officers and staff to get crime down, protect the most vulnerable and to give a service we would want to receive ourselves

Blythe Ward

Neighbourhood Coordinator	Matt Gardner	0121 704 6573	mgardner@solihull.gov.uk
Neighbourhood Police	PC Andy Timmins, PC Sharon Grant, PC Tariq Dost. CPSO Wendy Shale	101 ext. 891 6011	blythe@west-midlands.pnn.police.uk
ASB Officers	Marcus Crockett and Gemma Ashington	0121-779-1515	mcrockett@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk gemmaashington@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

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- Tesco Monkspath has come up with plans to help partners tackle antisocial driving/boy racer gatherings on their/Notcutts car park. These include the installation of 2 manual barriers in the far part of the joint car park; installation of 9 bay wide speed bumps in the other area opposite the Tesco store and installation of a number of galvanised steel bollards by the entrance of the Notcutts store to prevent vehicles from passing over the bays. These very positive measures are warmly welcomed.
- Partnership officers will be tackling ASB in Dickens Heath including large groups of youths congregating at Waterside and the Village Centre. Please report any incidents on tel 101
- Officers will continue to raise awareness not to leave valuables in vehicles and to check that 'the fob has done it's job'. High visibility patrols will be carried out at key locations and to target Offenders. Please report any suspicious activity to tel 101.
- Matt reports that youths have caused damage to the Recreation Ground in Cheswick Green on Halloween. The team will be investigating. Again please report any incidents on tel 101.

For details of Ward meetings with the NPT see the West Midlands Police website www.west-midlands.police.uk

Dorridge and Hockley Heath Ward

Neighbourhood Coordinator (Dorridge)	Tom Rogers	0121 704 6425	trogers@solihull.gov.uk
Neighbourhood Coordinator (Silhill)	Matt Gardner	0121 704 6573	mgardner@solihull.gov.uk
Neighbourhood Police	PC Andy Timmins, PC Sharon Grant, PC Tariq Dost. CPSO Wendy Shale	101 ext. 891 6011	blythe@west-midlands.pnn.police.uk
ASB Officers	Marcus Crockett and Gemma Ashington	0121-779-1515	mcrockett@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk gemmaashington@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

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- 25th November is the date for a clean and tidy up project in Dorridge - to remove litter and untidiness within the "Spinney" area near the railway station, tidy up the Village Centre and around Conker Lane. All assistance welcome. Please contact Kerry Mountjoy if you can help.
- To help deter dropping off on the station frontage Kerry is arranging to place the recycled planters on Station Approach in the next few days. These will be maintained by local volunteers, and will be refurbished on site.
- Dorridge Christmas lights switch on will take place on Monday 23rd November.
- Officers will be carrying out high visibility patrols in the evenings especially with the darker nights that are upon us to deter any burglaries. Please help us by ensuring that all doors and windows are locked and secure and that you leave a light on if you are going out. Also consider the use of timer switches for household lights. Please report any suspicious activity to the Police on 101.
- Harlequinade amateur dramatics group meet at Dorridge Methodist Church on Wednesday and Friday evenings. The Main contact is Jackie Staite 01564 775069 and new members are always welcome. The next production will be Ali Baba and the Four Tea Thieves to be performed from the end of January.

For details of Ward meetings with the NPT see the West Midlands Police website www.west-midlands.police.uk

Knowle Ward

Neighbourhood Coordinator (Dorridge)	Tom Rogers	0121 704 6425	trogers@solihull.gov.uk
Neighbourhood Police	PC Andy Timmins, PC Sharon Grant, PC Tariq Dost. CPSO Wendy Shale	101 ext. 891 6011	knowledorridge@west-midlands.police.uk
ASB Officers	Marcus Crockett and Gemma Ashington	0121-779-1515	mcrockett@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk gemmaashington@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

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- Officers will be tackling ASB in Knowle Park and Kixley Lane following reports of drug taking and ASB involving motorbikes/scooters from local Residents. Please report any ASB to the Police on tel 101 or via our email address on this website
- Officers will be conducting patrols to deter vehicle crime and will be carrying out security checks of vehicles to ensure that they are locked and no valuables are on display. Please ensure that your key fob has done its job and your vehicle is secure. Please report any suspicious behaviour to us on tel 101.
- Monday 23rd November Christmas lights switch on
- Bulbs have now been planted between Wychwood Avenue and Knowle Village centre as part of the community volunteer project and should look beautiful in the spring. The newly planted beds in the Precinct are now ready for the mulching and the addition of a final small tree. Congratulations to the Knowle Society Environment team for all their hard work.

For details of Ward meetings with the NPT see the West Midlands Police website
www.west-midlands.police.uk

Meriden Ward

Neighbourhood Coordinator	Bruce Brant	0121 704 6435	bbrant@solihull.gov.uk
Neighbourhood Police	PC Jackie Brown, PC Simon Harrison, PCSO Tom Attwood	101 ext. 891 6011	bickenhill@west-midlands.police.uk
ASB Officers	Marcus Crockett and Gemma Ashington	0121- 779- 1515	mcrockett@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk gemmaashington@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

- Officers are conducting patrols and observations in Willow Park to tackle the ASB that has been occurring at the location and to deter youths from congregating. The Parish Council have already removed the planters at the entrance and the picnic table and this has helped to deter the youths from hanging around. Please report any suspicious behaviour on tel 101
- Local Officers will be carrying out high visibility patrols in the area to deter any offences with the darker evenings that are now upon us. Please help by ensuring that you leave a light on if you go out and all doors and

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windows are secure. Also consider the use of timer switches for household lights and the use of burglar alarms. Please report any suspicious activity to the Police on 101

For details of Ward meetings with the NPT see the West Midlands Police website www.west-midlands.police.uk

4. Ward Contact List

Neighbourhood Manager

Kath Hemmings	0121 704 6358	kathrynhemmings@solihull.gov.uk
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Police Inspector

Meriden Inspector	Alan Green	101 ext 7922 6520	meridensector@west-midlands.pnn.police.uk
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Neighbourhood Police

Blythe, Dorridge, Hockley Heath, Knowle, Meriden	Sergeant Mick Lloyd PC Andy Timmins, PC Sharon Grant, PC Tariq Dost. PC Jackie Brown, PC Tom Attwood CPSO Wendy Shale PC Simon Harrison	101 ext 891 6011	blythe@west-midlands.pnn.police.uk or knowledorridge@west-midlands.police.uk or bickenhill@west-midlands.police.uk
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Rural Area Neighbourhood Coordinators

Blythe & Hockley Heath	Matt Gardner	0121 7046573	mgardner@solihull.gov.uk
Dorridge	Kerry Mountjoy	0121 704 8304	kmountjoy@solihull.gov.uk
Knowle	Tom Rogers	0121 704 6425	trogers@solihull.gov.uk
Meriden	Bruce Brant	0121 704 6435	bbrant@solihull.gov.uk

ASB Hotline

The hotline for reporting anti-social behaviour is available Monday to Friday between 8am and 8pm and Saturday 8am to 1pm.

If you experience anti-social behaviour or hate crime incidents and want to report them, call 0121 717 1500.

Safer Travel

Report nuisance or ASB on the public transport network as part of the See Something Say Something campaign text "Bus" "Rail" or "Metro" leave a space, then tell us details with time, date, location and route number to 83010, or use the self-reporting facility at www.safertravel.info or call 101 and ask for Safer Travel.

Solihull Active

Solihull Active improves lives through sport and physical activity by inspiring communities to be more active, more often. To find out about activities in your area:

Web: www.solihullactive.co.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/solihullactive1

Email: solihullactive@solihull.gov.uk

Tel: (0121) 704 8201

West Midlands Fire Service

For Fire Safety advice contact www.wmfs.net or freephone 0800 389 5525

For more information or to arrange a free Home Safety Check, phone 0800 389 5525 or visit www.wmfs.net

West Midlands Police - Neighbourhood Policing

<http://www.west-midlands.police.uk/np/solihull/yourneighbourhood/index.asp>