



Report to Inspector Brian Goodall on the Highfield Residents' Association (HRA) Crime information sharing WhatsApp Group (WA) for Highfield

1. Background

The Crime information sharing WhatsApp group for Highfield was set up by HRA in July 2020 to share information on crime and anti-social behaviour incidents across areas and roads in Highfield. The group comprises 22 area/road representatives and the three Ward Councillors. Area/road representatives post incident information in the Group and report shared incident information back to their own neighbourhoods, mainly via local WhatsApp or email networks. It is in this way that the information is disseminated across swathes of Highfield.

A full list of represented areas/roads and other information can be found here: <https://www.highfieldresidents.org.uk/crime-info-whatsapp-group>

The aims of the Group are to:

- raise awareness and encourage greater vigilance among local residents,
- encourage and increase police reporting,
- reduce crime.

Representatives are asked to encourage victims of crime to report all incidents, however small, to the police using 999 in an emergency; 101 or the police online website portal for non-urgent incidents; or report to Southampton City Council as required. This system naturally relies on victims of crime to report all incidents, which might not always be the case. It is hoped that at least 60-70% are reported.

Regular WhatsApp Group reports are made to monthly HRA Committee meetings.

2. From 13 December 2022 to 20 January 2023

2.1. Summary

The number of crime and anti-social behaviour incidents reported in the Group has been steadily increasing since its inception.

For example, there were 35+ incident reports since the last HRA Committee Meeting on 13 December 2022, compared with 33 reported over the previous two months from 11/10/22 to 13/12/22. This shows that there were more reports in the last

month than in the previous two. For a similar period 2 years' ago, from 13/12/20 to 17/1/21, there was a maximum of 12 incident reports against 35+ now, nearly a threefold increase. This was around Covid lockdown, however, so some of this disparity might be attributable to lower crime rates recorded at the time.

From the analysis of incidents listed in 2.2 below, it can be seen that the majority from 13 December 2022 to 20 January 2023 were for crimes such as theft/robbery, car and garage/outbuilding break-ins (or attempted) with one house break-in; and damage to property and cars. These were relentless, occurring most days, whole communities being targeted, causing hardship, distress and financial loss to victims.

Those representatives whose areas have been impacted are getting increasingly "fed up" with the barrage of incidents. It is recognised that some reporting might be due to better communication systems and improved reporting. However, as the figures demonstrate, it is much worse now.

We understand that some people on the Uplands Way Estate are starting to see the number of claims affect their insurance renewal premiums. Another representative said: "Our once good postcodes are going to be soon recognised as problematic by insurance companies and it's us who will pay the price."

Aside the above, there is also concern about the police apparently not following up on good CCTV ID captured in the case of two locked bikes stolen, on separate occasions, in broad daylight. We understand that the police declined to take these cases further. Why is good CCTV in these instances not being followed up?

2.2. Analysis of incidents

Some of the reports below contain multiple incidents.

Car break-ins / attempted car break-ins (total 15 +)

Incidents were in Highfield Close, Welbeck Avenue, Ripstone Gardens, Crofton Close, Glebe Court, Orchards Way, Donnington Grove, Highfield Lane, Church Lane and Russell Place. Small items sometimes taken; locks broken or some left undamaged in break-ins; often cars are rummaged through; one car was unlocked; one involved climbing gear & car key strewn over another driveway; some were door handle tries.

Items stolen from car bodywork or parts of bodywork damaged (total 1)

Volvo mirror removed - Highfield Lane

Break-ins / attempted break-ins of garages, sheds and other outbuildings (total 3)

Incidents were in Highfield Crescent, Church Lane and Holyrood Avenue.

Other reported crimes: (total 16+)

- 2 locked bikes stolen - good CCTV ID but this was not followed up by police.
- 1 attempted house break-in; Portswood Residents' Gdns area. Nothing taken.
- 2 cold caller incidents – Brookvale Road: the caller did not react well when

items were not purchased. Also reported in Abbots Way.

- 1 suspicious incident in Orchards Way: someone repeatedly banging on the door at midnight and asking for a cigarette light.
- 8 (at least) reports of traffic violations, including speeding e-scooters and cyclists on pavements in Highfield Lane and Portswood Road; speeding vehicles along Shaftesbury Avenue and Portswood Road; parking on pavements - one obscuring the junction at Sainsbury's traffic lights; driving the wrong way round a Highfield Lane traffic island.
- Southampton cannabis factory found in Portswood Road, in between Victory Gospel Church and Admiral Casino (Daily Echo 17/12/22). Fire at the cannabis factory on Sunday 15 January 2023. Now under investigation.
- Large, deep and dangerous pot hole for cyclists and cars - lower Brookvale Road. Reported on WA Group 2/1/23 and filled by 4/1/23, thanks to the speedy efforts of Cllr Savage and Balfour Beatty.

All incident reports are logged on the HRA website here:

<https://www.highfieldresidents.org.uk/crime-incidents/>

3. UPDATE 20 January 2023 to present (6 February 2023)

Approximately 16 incidents were reported during this period. Seven were in the category: theft/robbery; damage to property and cars; and break-ins (or attempted) of cars, sheds, garages and outbuildings. Half occurred in the Oakmount Triangle area. The number of crimes has continued at the same rate as the previous period.

Additionally, there were reports of recurrent anti-social behaviour incidents, ranging from littering, loud music, nox consumption to drug dealing on the Little Common at the end of Khartoum Road. These have previously been reported to the police.

Also, however, some alarming and distressing incidents were reported:

- Several recent incidents of children being approached by a man in a van and a woman in a car asking if they would like a lift, around the Gregg School in Winn Road. We understand that the school, a prep school for 4-11 year olds, brought these incidents to parents' attention on Wednesday 1 February.
- One report about a female being harassed by 4 male teenagers in the dip of Church Lane one evening last week. In addition, there were three reports of new and increased activity in the 'cut' between Church Lane and Highfield Crescent. These reports described adults/youths loitering in and at the entrances to the cut and cars parking outside and pulling up at the junction of Highfield Crescent/Shaftesbury Avenue, picking up youths appearing from it and then speeding off. People no longer feel safe using this cut through.
- Reports of some boarded up windows/broken windows (break-ins or attempted?) in some shops/café's along Portswood High St and at Waitrose. There is a belief that crime is one factor in driving retailers out of Portswood.

4. Questions

4.1. Incidents of theft/robbery; damage to cars and property; car, shed, garage and outbuilding break-ins (or attempted) and one house break-in. There have been 29 incident reports from 13 December 2022 to now. These form 57% of crimes.

- What is police policy with regard to these recurrent crimes?
- What measures can be taken by the police to prevent them?
- Can we have more beat officers on our streets?

4.2. Use and retention of good ID CCTV when items such as bikes are stolen

- What is police policy on the use and retention of good ID CCTV when items such as bikes are stolen? What is the policy on retention of CCTV in general?

4.3. Recurrent incidents of anti-social behaviour on The Little Common at the end of Khartoum Road?

How is the police dealing with these?

4.4. Approaches to young children outside the Gregg School, Winn Road

Is the police aware of these worrying incidents? What is being done about it?

4.5. Recent and increased activity in the Church Lane dip and in/around the cut

Is the police aware of this? What is being done to tackle this?

4.6. The number of shops/cafés in Portswood with broken/boarded up windows, which might have been broken into (or break-ins attempted)?

We understand from the 'Broken window theory' in Criminology, that visible signs of crime like this, fly-tipping and graffiti can sometimes create an environment that encourages further crime, including serious crimes.

- Is there CCTV in Portswood Broadway? Is it sufficient?
- What is being done to combat crime in Portswood Broadway?

4.7. Is it possible to clone modern car keys from outside the home if within range of a programming device and, if so, should people therefore keep their keys at least 15 metres from their car as per our understanding of the recommendation?

- Can you confirm this, or otherwise?

Thank you.

Nadine Johnson
HRA Digital Communications Officer

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