



Neighbourhood Policing Neighbourhood Action Group Case Studies Chalfont St Peter NAG Chairman: Martyn Groves

Launched in 2005, the Chalfont St Peter NAG was the first in the Chiltern Police Area. The NAG is made up of 15 people representing various sectors of the community, including local residents, school teachers, youth workers, faith leaders, local businesses, police officers and representatives from Chiltern District Council and Bucks County Council.

Priorities identified:

1. Anti-social behaviour
2. Litter
3. Speeding

Martyn Groves, Chair of the NAG commented that the primary aim of the NAG was to be realistic about expectations and establish exactly what those expectations were. He added that it would be naive to think that the police could wave a magic wand and solve all the problems in the community – particularly in the area of ASB and Speeding.

The NAG expected the police to act in robust ways to deal with the immediate problems of ASB, the 'balance of power' had to be restored by the Police – taking it from a small group of youths who were causing the majority of the problems and restoring some boundaries. This was mostly done by increasing the Police presence in the village, and changing shift patterns for the Neighbourhood Officers and PCSO to reflect the 'problem hours'. This was very successful at putting a stop to the worst ASB and sent a very clear message that "the police were getting serious" – and this short term response is exactly what was needed. However, the NAG was aware that an increased Police presence was not sustainable so they needed to make sure that medium and long term plans were put in place.

For the medium term the NAG looks to some of their other partners – such as the Council to improve their infrastructure in the village – such as improving CCTV coverage to increase enforcement and prevention in our problem areas (a new CCTV camera has just been installed in CSP High Street as a result of the NAG).

Martyn is a firm believer that whilst these short and medium term responses have an impact – we all know that once 'one batch' of youth move on and in a sense 'grow up' out of ASB there were another lot coming through. For this, Martyn believes the NAG needs deal with – the heart and soul of the community, and to see a transformation in how we deal with these issues. For this the NAG looks at long-term partners to what is essentially an education process. Our long term partners in our community would be the CSP Youth Centre, the Schools (especially the local Community College) and the Church – between them they can deal with issues of ASB & Speeding in the classroom, at the Youth Centre there are 20 adult volunteers from the Community who want to invest in building positive relationships with Young People and the core values of respect. The role the church plays has been to provide a core of people that want to make a difference in the Community and this in turn has provided a critical mass of people that brings energy to Community events – such as the "Clear-Up" days.

Martyn goes onto explain that the church also brings a 'pastoral safety-net' to support people in the community who struggle with various issues, but fall through the provisions of the statutory services. For example the church provides parenting course and 'Drug Proof Your Kids' courses.

Feeding back to the community progress on the priorities

The NAG issues regular press releases to communicate the news of the CSP NAG and has a space on a local community web forum, and dialogue with people through that.

The NAG is in the process of launching a 'Facebook' group/event through which the NAG hopes to disseminate information to a younger age group.

Every May the NAG has an AGM. Last year it was held at a local church and in conjunction held a 'community group exhibition' with lots of partners having stands in the church hall. A well attended event with over 80 people.

Key achievements of the NAG

- **2 Community Clear up days**

Held on in October '06 and June '07 both events attracted over 60 participants – mostly from the local church and a local residents association. Participants spent most of the time clearing up an alleyway that is 'infamous' for anti-social behaviour. The group cleared graffiti and 'opened' up the alleyway by clearing back the undergrowth. Participants also prepared a local skate park and childrens playground for repainting. On the October '06 event the NAG made use of a team of people on the Youth Offending Scheme.

At the end of the clear up days the NAG hosted a BBQ which was very successful at building community and building bridges across various groups within the community.

- **Video Animation project**

A project that was a partnership with the Chalfonts Community College, CSP Youth Centre, NAG, Bucks Art Partnership and Chiltern District Council.

The project aims were developed by the young people and they took on the challenge of bridging 'The Generation Gap', the result was an animation project that looked at how old and young people view each other and the area of anti-social behaviour.

Steve Slee, the Local Neighbourhood Sergeant says "This is a fantastic project and I feel this really could help bridge the gap between the younger and older generations. I am looking forward to seeing the final results.

Hayley White, one of the young people says 'We want to show people that we aren't all scary, hoody-wearing kids with ASBO's, but normal kids just hanging around and learn what it was to be young in the past'



- **Subway painting project**

This project was mostly led by the CSP Youth Centre (who sit on the NAG as a 'partner', Martyn is also the Chair of the Management Committee)

The young people were trained over a 6 month period by professional street artists in a number of workshops. They then consulted the community to come up with words that described the community – these were featured in the subsequent artwork in the subway.

They also prepared and delivered a presentation to the Youth Opportunity Fund for a grant of £11k to cover the cost of the project.

Over a week in August the young people worked on the subway itself and the result was a stunning piece of artwork! Widely appreciated by the community and made a grubby subway feel completely different.

- **Youth Council**

This is an action that has been outstanding from the start of the NAG – Bucks CC youth Services have struggled through sickness and staff changes to deliver youth Council connected with the wider Bucks Community. Currently it looks like the first meeting with some young people will be in February '08.

- **Police vs youth football match**

A one off event that was tremendously successful and received a lot of press coverage – and engaged a lot of the young people who were directly involved in anti-social behaviour and put police/youth relationships forward a great deal.

There are a core of people who are very engaged and motivated to get involved in the NAG and subsequent events. Martyn believes the strongest link and encouragement the NAG has had is with the Church, where they find a solid group of people who are motivated by a faith to engage in the community. Martyn believes the Police's vision of building a 'Safer Community' translates very well into the Christian faith understanding of 'loving our neighbour' and he thinks there is great mileage in the Police and Faith based groups working together to build better neighbourhoods. Martyn believes the agenda's match up, we just use different vocabulary to realise that.

For example on one occasion a Neighbourhood officer took part in a church service by being interviewed about what it was like to be a police officer and the issues in our local community.

After the initial cynicism associated with the NAG and 'yet another police initiative' we have found people in the community being more positive towards the NAG and willing to get involved in community activities.

The main challenges

Funding – the NAG could do with a modest pot of money – maybe in producing a NAG newsletter.

In CSP there is already a community Safety Group as part of the Village Appraisal and Parish Council, so there was scepticism that the NAG was just something that was going to be forced onto the community regardless of groups that were already up and running. As it turns out they were willing to work with the NAG.

Paperwork – the NAG understands the benefit of the SARA process and the associated neighbourhood priority profile etc. However, Martyn finds it inaccessible to the members of the public on the NAG as a practical working document.

Politics – on occasions there have been cases where local politicians have engaged in discussions about council policies and practices that bear no relevance to the work on the NAG, and we've been quite firm in stopping that 'political talk' and getting us back on track.

Another challenge is that sometimes our elected representatives come from a particular socio-economic grouping, and on occasions have not been able to connect with the needs of some people in the community.

Martyn believes that “primarily, to make a community safer we need better relationships within that community, the CSP NAG can attribute a lot of its success to the quality of our relationships with each other and the putting aside of personal agendas and working for the common good. For all the good activities that have happened from clear-up days to speeding campaigns – relationships have always been the key to success. Moreover because we operate from the belief that Neighbourhood Policing and communities coming together are a big part of the solution we are all willing to invest personally in the NAG.”