

Smartwater meeting: 7pm Tuesday 15 December 2015

People present: Simon Thompson, South Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership, Gary Higgins, Smartwater, and Councillors Sheridan Tranter, Lesley Cleaver, Peter Holden, Neil Davis and Andy Murcott

After the introductions Simon Thompson outlined the process in two other villages, Cleobury Mortimer and Cropthorne, where similar schemes have been introduced. Cleobury Mortimer, which has about the same number of households as Hartlebury has now delivered Smartwater kits to every one of them. It has taken about six months to complete, involved consultation with households before the scheme was rolled out and required local Police Cadets, Special Constables and about 30 local volunteers to deliver the kits and explain how they should be used.

Gary Higgins, who works for Smartwater described the contents of a Smartwater kit: several stickers to be prominently displayed on the premises, front and rear; a document that has to be filled in by the householder and sent to Smartwater so that they can update their database; and the Smart water, which is a mixture of water, a polymer that provides adhesion and the unique chemicals that identify the mixture.

He explained the process that follows somebody being found in possession of an item with Smartwater on: swabs are taken by the police and sent to the Smartwater laboratory where technicians match the Smartwater to addresses on their database; they notify the police who continue with the investigation. There are no cost implications from this process for the householder.

There was then a general discussion about funding. Cropthorne and Cleobury Mortimer have both used New Homes Bonus (NHB) money. Hartlebury certainly has enough NHB money but it was agreed that the Council should seek some match funding. However a consultation process will have to be pursued before the Council can seek funding from anywhere and the consultation will have to show that a majority of residents are in favour of the scheme.

Simon Thompson agreed to send Andy Murcott details of the consultation process followed by the Cleobury Mortimer Council, including the name of the Councillor who led the project and the leaflets they used to consult with residents. He also agreed to have crime figures in Hartlebury analysed by one of his team and to supply the information to Andy Murcott. It could potentially be used in the leaflet used to consult with residents.

Following a question by Lesley Cleaver Gary Higgins explained that the Trading Estate, Local School and other businesses could be included in a similar scheme but there would be additional cost implications so it would be better to keep the two schemes separate. However he also stated that Smartwater would offer a preferential scheme to the businesses on the Trading Estate and to the local school if it coincided with the scheme intended for residents of the village.

Sheridan Tranter agreed to raise the issue with Hartlebury C of E School and all Councillors agreed to raise the issue with representatives of the Trading Estate at the next meeting with them.

Following a question by Neil Davis Gary Higgins strongly recommended that St James's church should use Smartwater to protect the premises. Many local churches are being attacked for their lead. He mentioned that insurance costs could be greatly reduced if Smartwater was used. Neil Davis agreed to explore this issue further.

Simon Thompson agreed to attend the next Parish Council meeting on 5 January '16.

Andy Murcott suggested that the scheme should be in place by the beginning of May 2016 because local crime tends to increase in the Spring and continues to rise during the Summer.

Finally, a course of action was proposed:

1. A consultation process should begin to establish the level of local support for the scheme: it should include a leafleting campaign; a report in the Parish Magazine (February issue); an email facility on the PC website; a petition in the Post Office, Farm shop and, possibly, the Esso Service Station; and a public meeting at the Parish Hall in early March attended by Simon Thompson and Gary Higgins. The consultation process should be completed by 31st March.
2. Assuming there is public support for the scheme applications should be made for match funding.
3. Volunteers should be identified who can help to deliver the scheme.
4. Volunteers should be trained by Smartwater.
5. Kits delivered and posters erected by 1st May.
6. A publicity campaign should be used to alert local people and potential offenders.

Andy Murcott