****

**NORTH WALSHAM GOOD NEIGHBOUR SCHEME**

**CHAIRMAN/SECRETARY’S REPORT 2015/16**

I took over the Chairmanship in late 2015 from Ian Adams who, as our first Chairman, was instrumental in setting up the scheme and getting the basic infrastructure in place. My thanks go to Ian for his work in those often fraught first months.

About 12 months ago we were in the throes of setting up the scheme and beginning to recruit volunteers with a view to launching on September 1st 2015. This involved creating a number of procedural and policy documents; establishing a bank account; getting registered and able to make DBS checks on behalf of volunteers as well as a lot of administration. We were very much assisted by Henry Meiklejohn of Community Action Norfolk, who has been an invaluable source of advice throughout this first year. The official launch, at the Farmer’s Market was very successful and resulted in good publicity and a number of new volunteers signing up. Much of the initial printing and other set up work was made possible with the assistance of Joe Ballard of Arts North Norfolk, who continues to support us.

We have recruited, DBS checked and trained 23 Volunteers: 4 of these are no longer actively involved for various reasons but we have been able to consolidate our position as one of the most efficient schemes in the county. Before launch we decided that the use of a mobile phone as the means for people to contact the scheme might deter possible clients and could also lead to problems when being handed round from one co-ordinator to another. As we only operate within the town we therefore opted to have a hosted local number which would allow clients to leave a message which is immediately relayed to the duty co-ordinator via an e-mail to the scheme laptop. The voicemail can be read and a suitable volunteer found for the task. This system seems to work well and is cheap and easy for clients and co-ordinators.

A grant from the Big Society Fund was applied for and awarded through NNDC. This allowed us to purchase a laptop computer for the administration and co-ordination of tasks, as well as commissioning the creation of a website which was officially launched on March 10th 2016 at the Arts North Norfolk shop. The scheme has a Facebook presence also and is regularly updated by our webmaster.

We were lucky to be chosen by Waitrose as a beneficiary of their green token collection in late 2015 which resulted in the scheme receiving £300 towards our running costs and future fund raising and publicity.

A total of 10 committee meetings have been held both before and since the scheme launch. We have distributed several thousand leaflets as we systematically try to reach all residents in the town. We have had press and local radio coverage to help raise public awareness of the scheme. Our MP Norman Lamb has expressed his support for what we are doing and has agreed to meet with our volunteer team sometime in 2016. We also enjoy the support of the Town and District Councils.

An ever increasing number of other agencies and organisations have linked to the scheme, either via our website or via personal contact with the Committee. This broadens the offering of assistance that we can give and a number of clients have been referred or signposted to other organisations.

We have had 159 requests for help from 54 different people:

* 12 requests were for information only;
* 8 requests were withdrawn as other people helped out and one person died;
* 12 requests were researched and signposted to other agencies or businesses
* 1 request was from out of area.

We have successfully completed 125 jobs:

* These range from giving lifts (28), taking or doing shopping (33), walking dogs (9), ‘befriending’ (30), practical tasks around the house or garden (15); computer help (3), sitting with someone (1), collecting and delivering items (2) and dumping rubbish (3)
* We have had one safeguarding case – linking and supporting the client with Social Services and the Police;
* 1 further jobs awaits completion; 1 befriending rota is running
* We have undertaken an audit of many jobs completed, with a high level of satisfaction expressed in all cases.

As Secretary and now Chairman, I am very much indebted to the other Committee members for their help and encouragement during this initial 18 months. Without their input and wise council, it would not have been possible to get to where we are now. All involved, Committee and Volunteers alike, should feel justifiably proud of their achievements.

**Peter Tobitt**