

2026 Neighbourhood Watch Report

In 1964 a woman was stabbed in a New York street. None of the many witnesses came to her aid. Following that, Neighbourhood Watch came into being. Homewatch began in the UK in 1982 and has evolved into the Neighbourhood Watch Network of today.

Penshurst parish is a rural community and farming is a key activity.

In rural areas isolated homes and farms are targeted by criminals. Small tools, chainsaws and strimmer's are easy to steal and easy to sell. Dog owners walking their dogs thoughtlessly let them off the lead when on farmland – even during lambing time. Farmers are entitled to shoot dogs attacking sheep but very rarely do and having firearms can be a poison chalice in the rural community. When a farmer calls the police because criminals are on their property, they may have gone before the police arrive. If the farmer has firearms, the police feel it their duty to confiscate them in case the farmer takes aim if the burglars return.

Farming is hard enough, but theft, dogs attacking sheep and fly-tipping are adding to the burden on **our** farmers.

Fly tipping has been a major problem elsewhere in the county and clean-up costs can run into millions of pounds. Recklessly riding quaddbikes and scrambler bikes often occurs over fields, damaging crops and frightening livestock. All of these things have occurred in the parish in the past year.

A really effective way to prevent crime is Farmwatch. This is a networking service using Whatsap which allows farmers to report any suspicious activity to other farmers and to the Regional Task Force, a police unit specialising in rural crime. For example; a photo of a vehicle seen parked by a field gate, alerts the police and other farmers to look out for it. It's rather like a rural ANPR and overall it is a great success.

While the level of farm crime has reduced in recent months, the theft of high end cars is a real problem and keyless entry vehicles continue to be stolen. There are a number of measures residents can take to avoid becoming a victim to this type of crime:

- When at home put the keys in a screened or signal-blocking pouch, such as a Faraday Bag and If you have a garage, use it.

45% of crime today is due to scams. Impersonating the police or your bank and saying that your bank account is at risk unless you transfer your money into another account is a typical scam. In an instant an unlucky victim can lose thousands of pounds to a scammer. Romance fraud, unnecessary roof and building repairs are well known scams. Some of the most common versions of these scams include AI voices claiming they were from the police, bogus offers for phones and impersonations of bank staff and employees from HMRC and Amazon. Scam secrets is a series currently on BBC's Radio 4 which investigates the ways scammers use. Even your local vicar gets involved! It's well worth a listen.

If your email address or phone number is in the public domain that's all a scammer needs to relieve you of wads of cash. Callercheck.co.uk gives advice on How to Block Unwanted Calls or you can let calls go to an answer phone to put scammers off.

We have two police constables serving our parish which is part of the Edenbridge policing Ward. Following a freedom of information request I calculated the total Community Charge from all of the homes in each property band in the Edenbridge Ward. Kent Police get 11% of this which is over £2000,000 by my calculation. Employing two beat bobbies costs a fraction of this. So are we getting value for money?

Thank you

Councillor Norman Furnell

April 2026