

## **Maidstone and District Neighbourhood Watch AGM 29/11/18**

Councillor Buller, David Ralph (chairman of Staplehurst NW) and 2 other members attended the Maidstone NW AGM.

The Chairman of the Maidstone Association reported that 6 new schemes had been set up in the district. Unfortunately, the paid police civilian's job to support NW is still vacant, so volunteers are doing their best to keep things running.

Chief Inspector Mark Hedges gave an informative overview of crime in our area. The key focus at present is protecting the vulnerable. Burglaries are prevalent and we were asked to be the eyes and ears for the police and to be aware of our vulnerable neighbours. Some people keep very large amounts of money and jewellery in their homes which is a big risk. Safety deposit boxes are a much better idea. Gangs from outside of the county are carrying out many of these burglaries. Mark reminded us to say NO to 'cold callers'. He also talked about car washes as some are exploiting their work force.

On a positive note new police officers are being recruited at present.

A Detective Sergeant Darryll Paulson of the Cyber Crime Unit gave a very detailed talk on the problems of Cyber Crime. Kent is the 5<sup>th</sup> highest county for fraud reports. The crimes are mainly hacking into email and social media. He also alerted us to the dangers of using free WIFI in public places as other people may collect your information from your computer. His advice was not to use free WIFI for personal matters. You can download an app to protect yourself.

You can get cyber fraud advice from [www.ncsc.gov.uk](http://www.ncsc.gov.uk)

The Chairman of the West Kent NW Association also gave a short presentation. He told us that the Crime Commissioner will be giving some money to bring this group into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Councillor Joan Buller