

Eynsham Parish Plan 2007-08

51 COMMUNITY SAFETY

51.1 The Facts

51.1.1 “West Oxfordshire has a crime rate per thousand population of 49.4, well below the national figure of 112.6 and approximately half the Thames Valley average 99.6.”¹

51.1.2 West Oxfordshire is also the safest place in Oxfordshire; and Eynsham is safer than Burford, Chipping Norton or Witney. Nevertheless, its rate of 60.66 per thousand is above average for the district and significantly higher than Bampton, Carterton, Charlbury and Woodstock. Towns and villages near the A40 are especially vulnerable to vehicle-related crime.

51.1.3 In the period covered by the Audit (April 2001-March 2004), criminal damage and violent crime were the most commonly recorded incidents across the district as a whole. Eynsham saw its share of criminal damage – especially to vehicles – but happily rather less of violent crime:

“Violent crime victims and offenders ... (were) mainly males between 18 – 25 with offences peaking after pub closing hours ... The offenders (were) predominantly local people assaulting local victims.”

51.1.4 For Eynsham theft was the commonest crime, especially drive by theft from the garages on the A40. As the chart shows, the total number of recorded incidents rose dramatically in 2004/5. The rise is probably too great to be accounted for by lower tolerance or higher reporting and may have coincided with the arrival of a new Tesco Express outlet on the A40 east-bound.

51.1.5 However, recorded incidents fell by 19% between 2004/5 and 2005/6²; and while the latest report (April 2007) shows a 3% rise (371 incidents) criminal damage was down a dramatic 23%, from 110 to 85 cases.

One of the year's lowest points was senseless vandalism to the newly-refurbished toilet block on Oxford Road Playing Fields.

51.1.6 Local crime monitoring and management is in the hands of West Oxfordshire Community Safety Partnership, a multi-agency framework comprising police, district and county councils plus health authority, probation and the voluntary sector.

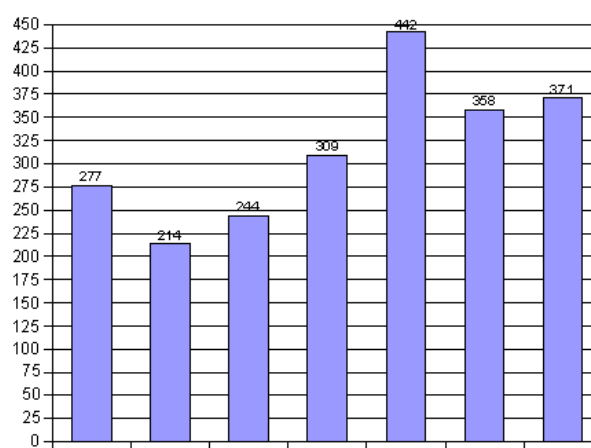


Table 1: EYNSHAM CRIME FIGURES 2000/1 - 2006/7

1 WODC Community Safety Audit, April 2005

2 Police report to Annual Parish Meeting April 2006

Its activities in 2006 were vigorous and wide-ranging:

- i. a neighbourhood framework covering (with Eynsham) the parishes of Cassington, Hardwick with Yelford, North Leigh, South Leigh, Northmoor, Standlake and Stanton Harcourt;
- ii. residents' survey in February 2006 which identified three top concerns: vandalism/graffiti, anti-social behaviour and speeding;
- iii. formation of a small Eynsham Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG) with representatives from police, parish council and the community;
- iv. stronger police presence – Back Lane office, mobile unit and on foot patrol;
- v. steady work on graffiti removal and promotion of a designated graffiti wall;



Illustration 1: NAG members turning a 'kickwall' into a designated space for graffiti, Oct 2006



Illustration 2: Neighbourhood engagement and follow-up survey, July 2007



Illustration 3: The graffiti wall redecorated, July 2007

- vi. poster campaign on anti-social behaviour i.e. threatening & intimidating behaviour, foul language, harassment, drug & alcohol abuse;
- vii. use of regular print media such as the Eynsham Echo for crime prevention messages;
- viii. contributions to Eynsham Online and a dedicated page for Eynsham on the new "Who's My Bobby?" website;
- ix. speed safety awareness-raising, reinforced by traffic calming measures (see Traffic section 56.1.7 below)

51.1.7 Recent work in hand includes a "no cold calling" zone in collaboration with Oxfordshire Trading Standards and a series of Neighbourhood Watch drop-in sessions. Eynsham's first was held on 16 May 2007. There are also many instances of positive action in the activities run by local churches, scouts, social and sporting bodies.

Unfortunately there was a hiatus in (County Council-funded) activities at Eynsham Youth Centre following the departure of the one staff member at the end of 2006.

51.2 Community Safety : The Opinions

51.2.1 Question 20 of our survey asked: “Do you think any of the following law and order measures are needed?” This question was answered by 739 (88.9%) respondents, with 3162 expressions of opinion in all. The top three priorities were:

i.	Greater police presence	557	(75%)
ii.	More activities for young people	485	(65%)
iii.	More drug/drink education/prevention	459	(61%)

51.2.2 Feeling was strong on other issues too:

i.	CCTV	312
ii.	After School Club	309
iii.	Neighbourhood Watch	335
iv.	Good Neighbour Scheme	298

51.2.3 377 people thought there was still a need for better consultation between police and public. The survey went out in July 2006, only half way through the Partnership programme recounted above.

51.2.4 In the free-form section, residents expressed the view that they are:

“unable to socialise at night for fear of being mugged or beaten up by hoodies hanging around the lanes³.”

51.2.5 The pubs and the area outside the Spar and Fish Shop came in for several complaints. These views echo more general concerns. There was strong opposition to extension of opening hours for pubs in 2005; one group of residents went so far as instructing a solicitor to plead their case.



Illustration 4: Conduit Lane, May 2006

One-off licence extensions are now subject to rigorous control across the district and in extreme cases rowdiness on or immediately outside the premises can lead to the loss of a publican's license.

51.2.6 Specific suggestions for improvement included:

- i. regularly re-painted graffiti wall⁴
- ii. extended hours for the youth club
- iii. music centre⁵/coffee bar
- iv. revived swimming pool and tennis courts

3 There were 76 references to 'gangs of youths'

4 Last undertaken October 2006

5 Music facilities have recently been installed in the Youth Centre

51.3 Community Safety: The Vision

51.3.1 West Oxfordshire Community Safety Partnership is:

“Committed to reducing crime, disorder fear, and making offenders accountable.”

51.3.2 Its priorities for 2005-8 are:

“Acquisitive crime, domestic violence, substance misuse, supportive communities, safe communities, and anti social behaviour”.

51.3.3 For each objective but one, the target (and measure of success) is a lower number of recorded offences. The exception is Supportive Communities, dealing with 'fear of crime'.

51.3.4 The published target for Supportive Communities is both surprising and perhaps disappointing:

“To maintain the low level of fear of crime [when] walking alone by day.”

51.3.5 Considering the views expressed above, it can only be hoped that more attention may be given to the night scene as the Partnership develops its Strategy for 2008-11. The two new Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) who take up their posts in September 2007 may have a crucial part to play in helping the community to help itself.

51.3.6 Young People are a specific target area for Supportive Communities. As lead partner in this area, Oxfordshire County Council is to:

“Review existing youth service provision and CSP funded youth projects and report to the CSP on where there is greatest need in Dec 2005/6/7”

51.3.7 Again, a more proactive approach would be welcome: arguably our one half-time professional youth worker is needed by a wider range of young people than the (District Council-funded) joint-use Sports Hall due to open in autumn 2007.