

Statement

My name is Neil Kenton and I am the Neighbourhood Watch Co-coordinator for St Nicholas Park, Emscote/Myton Road area. I have been a resident in Warwick for twenty years, I presently reside in Warwick.

I am founder of the Myton St Nicholas Neighbourhood Watch Scheme (NHWS) over 15 years ago, during this time I have worked to improve community safety, had notice boards set up, keep some boards supplied with the latest community safety bulletins and seasonal crime prevention information, attempt to bring the community a little closer together and safer, I attend Mid Warwickshire NHW Committee meetings. Recently I have discussed local community safety / CCTV issues with the new Police & Crime Commissioner, compounded by his age of austerity. I am committed, constantly striving for improvements in support of community safety in my neighbourhood. I do this as unpaid voluntary sector community work, I am a registered carer for two of my family now in addition to being a full time shift working professional since 1975, employed outside of the County of Warwickshire.

I regularly attend the Warwick Community Forums and was present at the meeting held on 4th October 2012. We are told to sit in our Wards at these meetings and I sat on the Warwick South table, together with Cllr. Linda Bromley (who is my Ward Cllr) and a man I now know to be Mr Andrew Cowlard, I had not met this gentleman before.

My purpose of attending this Community Forum was because I had been sent, by Bernadette Allen (WDC) a copy of the Warwick Community Forum Programme for the 4th October 2012. At that time I was heavily engaged in correspondence with Warwick District Council over the overdue implementation of CCTV in St Nicholas Park Warwick. This area is a major and vulnerable migratory route for school pupils between Myton and Emscote /Coten End. There is moderate crime and seasonal youth disorder issues here, the Warwick Community Forum Programme for this meeting stated its main topic was 'Youth Issues'.

On Thursday 4th October 2012 the Warwick Community Forum took place as scheduled at Westgate Primary School, Bowling Green Street, Warwick. Cllr. Moira Ann Granger (Chairperson) presiding.

I have had no previous, current, nor intentions for involvement in any of the Boxing Clubs of Warwick.

At this meeting there was a presentation by a lady I now know to be Lydia Turpin of the Warwick Boxing Club, I cannot recall meeting her before. She appeared to be applying for a Community Forum grant.

The Chairperson asked if there were any questions, I understood that this was for anyone with a relevant question at the Forum.

I recall Cllr. Mrs. Bromley begin the questioning by asking Lydia Turpin if the club had received £10,000 from Warwick District Council. Ms. Turpin said "No" and Cllr. Bromley seemed surprised at this and queried the answer. Cllr Bromley then asked when the club had held its AGM and the date was given by Lydia Turpin. Cllr. Bromley then asked how many members the club had and Lydia Turpin appeared to become confused over this and could not give an answer.

Then I heard Andrew Cowlard asked questions about the portacabin they had been using and said that they had had three committees in the past year and the club still owed money to his organisation. I remember these questions because it appeared to me that they were relevant questions when the club were requesting money as a new club, the old club appeared to have unresolved issues through the words that were said here. I was interested in the question about the £10,000, I didn't know the background but it is a significant amount of money from the public purse. I personally felt that it is important that there ought to be no matters of conjecture and it was appropriate that any issues were aired in complete transparency within an open community forum, the very purpose of these public meetings. I also noted that the questions from Andrew Cowlard appeared to "touch a nerve" and Lydia Turpin was becoming agitated.

I had not had an opportunity to read the full draft of this Boxing Club funding proposal and no first hand knowledge of financial issues at any boxing clubs in Warwickshire.

But from my point of view something else had become apparent to me, from Lydia Turpin's initial presentation. It was well delivered, principled and compelling but it raised my concern as I heard no mention of this new Boxing Club's administrative sporting affiliations, I see this as essential for the purpose of maintaining discipline amongst these disadvantaged youths. I fully support, in principle, initiatives for channelling the potential for youth aggression and some anger management into a healthy sporting outlet. My concern remains with the safety of my local community and that whatever this club does it is disciplined, regulated and administered under the auspices of the professional organisations, such as the ABA (Amateur Boxing Association).

I gestured to the chairperson of this forum if I might ask a question, I was invited to stand and speak, I had not previously disclosed my intention to speak on this matter to the 'chair'.

I had in mind a matter of community safety that I felt needed voicing, for the benefit of the forum. My chosen line was that of adequate measures to impose strict discipline upon youths at the this new club, some of whom may be from troubled / deprived background at this new club, being trained to be very fit, aggressive, to fist fight, the sporting term less threateningly known as 'boxing'.

While I was speaking to Lydia Turpin, who appeared quiet steadfast, I could not recall the exact name of the Amateur Boxing Association (ABA) but I had in mind the equivalent as being such as the heavily regulated martial arts of Karate, Aikido and Judo, under current Sports Council Regulations the UK Martial Arts Associations. Also the influence of these strict sporting regulators on students' behaviour outside of the martial arts fight training areas. This coupled with strong often iconic club leadership provides the role models required in such violent, aggressive, testosterone fuelled youth activities, to teach non-aggression outside the ring and make known the possibility of being struck out off from the sport and any other ABA affiliated clubs, to help discipline youths in this new boxing club to be good citizens, the best they can be.

My other concern was for the folk on the pavements of Warwick of a more gentle disposition, also our Neighbourhood Policing Team who may have one more unexpected aggravating factor to consider on the streets, in parks and at events in Warwick, where disputes, arguments, alcohol and substance-related incidents can and do occur.

With this in mind I asked Lydia Turpin a question in a reasonable manner with regards to the discipline regime that would be imposed on the youths training at this new Boxing Club. Lydia Turpin met me with a blunt reply, "What do you mean". This in itself extended the proceedings more for Lydia Turpin I observed. It made me feel a little embarrassed because she obliged me to repeat myself and to include a drawn out account to description of various scenarios that may occur, out on the streets, without good discipline and inspired training club leadership and indoctrination from a head coach or similar, to which I have previously referred.

My now leading question had the potential for Lydia Turpin to give a quick and reassuring account to her benefit and help inform the community forum with this regard, I felt we received neither. Lydia Turpin had not offered the reassurance I was seeking for the gathered forum, I expected her to give a quick and reassuring account by reeling off the new clubs associations and affiliations with the sporting regulators for those who do

boxing, maybe something about the coaches, CRB checks, I had none of this in answer to my two questions.

I would of course have settled just for a mention of the ABA, but I felt that there had been sufficient said. There may have been others with questions and proposals. I heard nothing at this time from the 'chair' and I could not help the meeting anymore, I thanked Lydia Turpin and the 'chair' then sat myself back down.

I cannot recall now, all the words said verbatim.

I did not consider Cllr. Bromley's aggressive or inappropriate in any way. It appeared that some of the questions from Mr Cowlard had caused Lydia Turpin to be very edgy, she appeared to be very halting with her answers after her original initial presentation, I do not know if they knew each other but there appeared to be an agenda, whatever it was.

I had hoped that my questions would have helped Lydia Turpin give the meeting reassurances and bring out, where present, some more good points as the principle was sound.

I have witnessed much more extensive and in-depth questioning of applicants at previous Forums and did not consider this so out of the ordinary. The Chairman did not appear to be concerned enough to stop the questioning. I would have thought that the granting of public money to any organisation should be scrutinised very carefully. The public and those with some specific knowledge, should be allowed to ask pertinent questions when there are so many deserving causes all needing help with funding.

I also recall for example in recent years being joint applicant for funding of a simple grit bin above a steep sloping path. We were questioned by a number of community and other councillors in a rather officious, one might say a court room manner, but I accepted that it was necessary, I came to observe that this was somewhat an accepted 'norm', to simply enquire, expand or on occasion challenge proposals as this is money from the public purse. The representative public present ought to be satisfied as decisions need to be made. I do not often stand up and contribute to the questioning of proposals but I believe it is fundamental that people are free to speak.

Signed: Neil Kenton

Date: 24th October 2013