

Crime & Emergency Services



The Appraisal questionnaire asked three direct questions regarding crime and policing in Guilden

Morden and only one that covered the other two services, Fire and Ambulance. We have, therefore, concentrated on crime and policing aspects and have made only passing reference to the other two services. The free-form responses to the Questionnaire gave the most insight into villager's views and experiences of crime and policing in the village.

Crime rates for Guilden Morden 2001/2002 and 2002/2003

South Cambridgeshire has the lowest crime rate in the county and, within the District, Guilden Morden is one of the safest villages in which to live. The year 2002/2003 has seen a rise in crime for the village of 25%; this is an increase of 5 crimes over the previous year.

The tables in the adjacent panel give Guilden Morden's comparative crime figures for 2001/2 and 2002/3, with crime categories as described by the Police. It is important to recognise that these statistics reflect only crimes which were reported to the Police; we have no way of knowing about incidents which have gone unreported.

Of a total of 20 reported crimes committed during 2001/2, it will be noted that 10 were of Theft or were theft-related. We understand that, of these ten, six were subsequently solved and dealt with by the Police.

With an overall increase of five crimes for 2002/2003, criminal damage has seen a decrease by 50% (3); however, violent behaviour has increased from 1 incident in 2001/2002 to 7 in 2002/2003. What is not clear is whether these assaults took place in a period of one night or over the entire year.

Burglary and Theft

The Appraisal questionnaire asked villagers whether their household had been burgled or they had been the victim of theft in the village during the last five years. Of the 293 households that responded, 55 said 'Yes' (19%) and 238 (81%) said 'No'. This equates to an arithmetic average of 11 burglaries/thefts per year over the period 1996-2001.

Despite the fact that Guilden Morden is considered an extremely safe and relatively crime free area, it is surprising to find that 19% of people completing this section had been victims of crime. In considering this percentage, however, it needs to be noted that these crimes took place over a five year period.

Asked whether those who responded 'Yes' to the previous question had then reported the crime to the Police, 49 said 'Yes' (89%) and 6 said 'No' (11%). This

Crime rates for our village (reported crimes)

Type of Crime	Number reported	
	2001/2	2002/3
Burglary—dwelling	0	2
Burglary—shed	0	1
Burglary—other premises	4	3
Common Assault—causing actual bodily harm	0	3
Common Assault—general	1	4
Criminal Damage—vehicle	3	1
Criminal Damage—domestic	0	1
Criminal Damage—other	3	1
Obtaining property by deception—cheque cards	1	0
Theft—from motor vehicle	3	4
Theft—other	2	3
Malicious telephone calls	1	0
Possession of Cocaine	1	0
Domestic violence	1	2
TOTAL CRIMES	20	25

NB: The statistical reporting year is April to March

might suggest, on average, roughly a 10% understatement in the Police statistics for crime in our village, owing to crimes going unreported.

Unfortunately, the Appraisal questionnaire did not ask the question why people do not report the crimes committed against them. It may be that they feel that it is not worthwhile, or they have previous experience of a lack of immediate response by the police. This must remain speculation—but may be worthy of further investigation.

Despite not always being able to respond immediately, the Police are keen for people to report crime in order that the figures are not distorted and that the true statistics can be presented, thus giving a more realistic picture of what is happening in the District.

Anti-Social Behaviour

Asked what types of anti-social behaviour (if any) village households had experienced in the last five years, the responses were as shown in the following table:

Breaking into sheds/ outhouses/garages	29 (20%)
Vehicle damage	50 (35%)
Vandalism	40 (28%)
Drugs and drug-taking	3 (2%)
Drunkenness	21 (15%)

Once again, it would appear from these responses that some of these crimes have not been reported to the Police as they do not correspond with the crime figures the Police have given us.

The Police are keen to encourage all victims of any type of crime, however trivial it may seem to the sufferer, to report all crime to them in order that they can form a true picture of what is happening in the community. Their view is that if petty crime is investigated and it is found to be carried out by young offenders, the police have an opportunity to deal with the problem and work with young people to try and deter them from re-offending. The police also need to understand how much crime is being committed in order to try and get the resources to deal with the problems presented.

Asked whether villagers had experienced any other types of anti-social behaviour, 18 households (24%) referred to badly-behaved children involved in a variety of different types of anti-social behaviour including vandalism, bullying, throwing stones at cars and playing in the road, and hanging around the streets using abusive language. 20 (27%) households wrote about noise, with many mentioning the noise made by the patrons of the village pubs when leaving the premises. Noisy neighbours were also referred to, with loud music being the most notable complaint.

11 (15%) respondents complained of dog fouling, dogs barking and one mentioned a dangerous dog, which was walked without a lead. 9 (12%) respondents raised litter as being a problem, with comments about finding rubbish in their own gardens, in the recreation ground and along the pathways. 7 (11%) respondents mentioned vandalism aimed at cars, gardens, the phone box and the cemetery.

Although these figures may appear relatively low, clearly local residents have been affected by anti-social behaviour. It is often difficult to complain, given that laws are probably not being broken, and even if they are, they may be seen as low on the Police priority list as they claim to be over stretched. For a variety of understandable reasons, people can be reluctant to contact the Police or to confront neighbours or parents of badly behaved children.

In the view of the Appraisal Group, anti-social behaviour by children needs to be looked at, as there may be causes that we can address—for instance, lack of facilities and activities in the village for younger people. Left unchecked and unresolved, these problems could increase and thus become more serious.

The kinds of anti-social behaviour described in the Appraisal responses indicate a lack of respect for neighbours and members of the community and is clearly distressing to nearly half the respondents to the questionnaire.

Village perceptions of how the Emergency Services compare	
Community Policing	
Good	8 (2%)
Satisfactory	56 (19%)
Poor	154 (52%)
No Opinion	80 (27%)
Police (emergency)	
Good	13 (5%)
Satisfactory	63 (21%)
Poor	96 (32%)
No Opinion	125 (42%)
Fire & Rescue Service	
Good	43 (14%)
Satisfactory	69 (23%)
Poor	20 (7%)
No Opinion	166 (56%)
Ambulance Service (emergency)	
Good	41 (14%)
Satisfactory	64 (22%)
Poor	37 (12%)
No Opinion	156 (52%)

Asking for opinion rather than actual experience of the four Emergency Services inevitably encouraged in many cases subjective perceptions of the Services by those who have not had occasion to use them, rather than objective assessments based on practical experience. It would appear that a number of respondents recognised this and duly responded "No Opinion" where they had not had cause to use the relevant Service. Unfortunately not everyone did so, and as a result the responses tend to reflect a mixture of fact and opinion.

That said, overall, the Fire & Rescue Service and Ambulance Service appear to enjoy the strongest confidence among villagers. However, these are the two Services that people are least likely to have experienced first hand and so the previous comments may apply.

The responses clearly show some measure of dissatisfaction with the Police service to the village—most notably that of Community Policing.

What the Police are doing to address concerns

In this light of this finding, the Appraisal Group has investigated further the policing situation in this part of South Cambridgeshire. Guilden Morden is part of the Sawston Sector, which has a total of 6 beat managers, covering 54 villages. PC Dave Martin is the Melbourn Beat Manager; he covers a total of 14 villages including Guilden Morden. There is also a Community Beat Sergeant (Steve Poppitt) and a Community Contact Officer (Carol Wilson).

The Community Contact Officer is responsible for setting up Neighbourhood Watch Schemes in every village and supporting existing schemes. As there has been an increase in distraction burglaries over the summer, the officer has been giving presentations to sheltered housing, and Over-60s Groups, the aim being to raise awareness of security among the elderly.

The Beat Managers try to attend fetes and village events so that they can meet villagers and get to know the types of problems they face. They have also been using a mobile station, which has visited Guilden Morden in order to raise awareness and give an opportunity for people to have a chat. PC Martin also visits schools so that he can get to know the younger generation and can build up a rapport with them.

Neighbourhood Watch is well supported in the village with almost every street having a co-ordinator. The Police and Neighbourhood Watch are taking advantage of technology and incident reports are now sent on a regular basis by e-mail. The Community Contact Officer also contacts members of Neighbourhood Watch by leaving messages on voice mail to alert them to any crimes in the area. There are also monthly reports from the Community Beat Manager detailing crimes in the sector, where they took place, if the crime has been detected, who to contact and what to watch out for in the future.

The police run community consultation forums which are public meetings held on a quarterly basis providing an opportunity for the public to discuss their concerns and to raise any issues they may have regarding the policing in their area. The meetings also provide the police with a medium in which to inform the public of new developments and the problems they are encountering.

In addition, the police also run an annual Neighbourhood Watch Conference to give members an insight into the victim's point of view, the witness support service, court proceedings and an opportunity for co-ordinators to discuss their ideas and successes. There is also an annual Neighbourhood Watch Awards presentation held at the conference where recognition is given to individuals and schemes.

There is also a Countryside Watch scheme which anyone can join. The scheme's members keep an eye on what is happening in the countryside around them, reporting crime or suspected crimes in the countryside, including such things as Hare Coursing, which is a major problem in our area. Countryside Watch also distribute a newsletter to their members.

Fire and Ambulance Service

In the case of an emergency (999 call), Guilden Morden

is covered by Royston Fire Station. However, an exception is made in the case of a major road traffic accident, when an appliance would be sent from Cambridge. Anything to do with legislative fire regulations and fire safety is handled by Cambridge Fire Station with respect to Guilden Morden.

If an ambulance is required to go to Guilden Morden, in the first instance the Cambridgeshire service will check to see if it has an ambulance in the vicinity, which will then be asked to respond. If, however, there is nothing in the immediate area, the service will call upon Hertfordshire or Bedfordshire to assist and react to the call.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Although Guilden Morden is considered to be a low risk, low crime area, if you are the victim of a crime, this fact is of little consolation. Anti-social behaviour is clearly the biggest problem faced by the village and certainly appears to cause a great deal of distress.

Anti-social behaviour is clearly not a problem that can be resolved purely by the Police; it requires the community to work together in order to help overcome the dilemma. Some of the types of anti-social behaviour described by respondents to the Appraisal could be solved by people giving more consideration to their neighbours and other members of the community; we refer to dog fouling, noise and litter.

The larger issue of badly-behaved children, in our view, needs looking at very carefully. The Section of this Report 'The Youth View' highlights our findings that young people point out the lack of facilities and activities available for them in the village. This is the responsibility not just of the Police but of the village community as a whole and in order to tackle this particular problem we will need to work together to provide solutions.

The Police clearly have an unenviable task; it is difficult to imagine how you can effectively police 54 villages with just six Beat Managers—although, admittedly, they do not work entirely unaided and are able to call on colleagues in emergency situations and when they have problems in a particular area. As we have a low crime rate, Guilden Morden is certainly not a priority for the local Police and any additional resources will inevitably focus into areas of high crime. It is therefore important that we support our own Neighbourhood Watch and remain vigilant and willing to report crime.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- we recommend that village residents are actively encouraged to report ALL crime, however petty it may seem. This will help the Police to record a true picture of crime in the area, establish where resources are needed and help them back up their claims with statistics.
 - we would like to see village residents more positively encouraged to volunteer as Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators. Councillor Rod Murfitt is the Area Co-ordinator and will welcome offers of help.
 - we recommend that priority is given to the provision of leisure amenities in the village for teenagers in order to encourage them away from anti-social behaviour.
 - we strongly recommend that the Police service provide more visible policing to the village. Additional community policing may reduce anti-social behaviour by making available a special constable to frequently visit the village and build up a relationship with the community, with special attention to holiday periods. More visible policing will also help to build up confidence among villagers—particularly the elderly. It may even deter criminals!
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