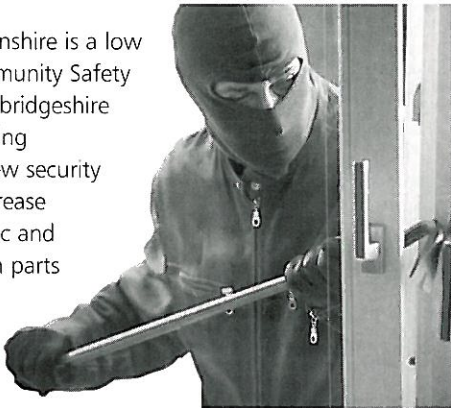


Raising awareness about burglaries

Although Huntingdonshire is a low crime area, the Community Safety Partnership and Cambridgeshire Constabulary are asking homeowners to review security in the light of an increase in reports of domestic and business burglaries in parts of the country.

Advice includes:

- Keep doors and windows closed and locked or in a ventilated but locked position, even when you are inside the house.
- Check and lock doors with a key - never assume that just pushing up an internal handle will lock the door.
- Remove keys from window and door locks. Keep them in a safe place where all the family can find them in an emergency.
- Never leave keys, bags and money in view on a windowsill or on show through a window. They can be a temptation for an opportunist burglar.
- Ensure key racks or shelves next to a door cannot be reached through the letterbox.
- Use timer switches for lights and radios when you are going to be away from your house after dark.
- Use lights at the front and rear of your property that are activated when someone approaches.
- Put bolts and padlocks on side gates at the top, middle and bottom. A single top bolt is easy to reach and open.
- Consider chaining together all high value items stored in a shed or garage. Use a wireless alarm or link your shed or garage into your home intruder alarm system.
- Mark valuable and sentimental personal possessions with liquid DNA kits or with an engraving kit for items such as tools and cycles.
- A visible intruder alarm box can be a deterrent to an opportunist burglar. Consider installing a DIY or supplier-installed system.



Cracking the code

The Council's Standards Committee is responsible for dealing with complaints concerning alleged misconduct of all district, town and parish councillors within our district.

Under our code of conduct councillors must:

- declare any personal and prejudicial interest they have in connection with matters under consideration
- register and declare any gifts and hospitality received in their position as a councillor over £25
- treat others with respect
- not bully or intimidate
- not bring their office or the council into disrepute
- not use their position improperly
- not breach any equality laws
- not disclose confidential information, except in limited situations.

The Standards Committee has an independent chairman, who is not a councillor. Three other independent people also sit on the committee, in addition to three parish councillors and seven district councillors.

Currently the Standards Committee can only deal with complaints about councillors when they are acting, or give the impression they are acting, in their official capacity e.g. at meetings, or as a representative of the council. It cannot deal with complaints about decisions and actions of the council as

a whole, or of officers of the council.

Whilst the Standards Committee deals with complaints, it prefers to try to avoid problems arising, which are more often due to a lack of understanding, rather than a deliberate intent to breach the code.

Doug Hall, the independent chairman of the Standards Committee said: "We deal with all complaints impartially and without political or other bias, imposing appropriate sanctions on councillors who breach the code of conduct."

"However, we consider it to be equally important, to increase knowledge and understanding of the code and encourage good practice, which we achieve by regular briefings, training sessions and presentations for district and parish councillors."

A complaint form can be downloaded from the Standards and Conduct page of the council's website:

www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk and should be sent or e-mailed to Colin Meadowcroft, Monitoring Officer, at Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, Cambs PE29 3TN (e-mail colin.meadowcroft@huntsdc.gov.uk).

- Further advice and information can be obtained from the Standards Board website at www.standardsboard.gov.uk

Internet payments now available

You can now pay your council tax, business rates, sundry debts and parking charges using the internet.

Go to www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk and click on the quick link for online payments on the left hand side of the screen. This will then take you to a secure payment site where you can complete the transaction.

You will need to know your bill or invoice number and have your debit or credit card ready. Council tax and business rates customers who wish to use a credit card will have to agree to pay the 1.6 per cent surcharge we pass on from the internet payment provider. Debit card payments are free.

For more information visit the Home Office website www.homeoffice.gov.uk or take part in a three-minute test that will score your level of protection and offer advice. Information is also available from Cambridgeshire Constabulary www.cambs.pnn.police.uk or the Crime Reduction website www.crimereduction.gov.uk

If you have information about, or witness suspicious activity regarding burglaries or other crimes, call Cambridgeshire Constabulary on 0845 456 4564 or 999 in an emergency.

For more information about Huntingdonshire Community Safety Partnership contact 01480 388388.