

No doorstep selling zones”

Frank Yabsley from Trading Standards came to the June Police Surgery to talk about “No doorstep selling zones” and what this could mean for Slapton.

The idea of making a village or district “No doorstep selling zones” was started in North Yorkshire five years ago. Until then, doorstep selling of goods and services, often at inflated prices, was seen as a civil matter. Although it was a huge problem, no-one was reporting it. It was only when two retired police officers joined Trading Standards that it became recognised that doorstep selling was criminal deception. Trading Standards were successful in making arrests and getting cases through the courts. The important thing was to catch those guilty on site.

Doorstep selling is closely linked with distraction burglary. Many of the victims are pensioners, as they are more likely to be at home, than other groups. In addition, pensioners may have a minor disability which makes them poor witnesses.

If a community decides to become a “No doorstep selling zones” area, notices to this effect are put up on notice boards and stickers are provided for individual houses. Any resident who does not wish to take part does not display a notice. If anyone knocks at a house despite the notice, the homeowner can point out that this person is committing civil trespass, a common law offence, if they refuse to leave. The homeowner can phone the police and ask them to escort the seller from the premises and the police will respond.

In 2004 a pilot scheme was set up in Princes Risborough and the surrounding villages. The area was a doorstep crime hot spot. The partners were Trading Standards who police the scheme, the local Neighbourhood Watch Association who administered it and Wycombe District Council who provided the financed. Before the “No doorstep selling zones” were in place Trading Standards were almost weekly visiting elderly victims in the locality, who usual lost thousands of pounds in bogus property repairs along and distraction burglaries.

Once the scheme was up and running the incidence of bogus property repairs dropped dramatically to a handful a year. Distraction burglaries dropped by almost third.

This article is the first step in making Slapton a non-doorstep selling zone. Do you as residents want to join the scheme? If most of you do, the Parish Council will be given the posters, free of charge, to be put up in every street together with door stickers for every household. Anyone who objects does not receive a door sticker. The campaign is not aimed at stopping initiatives from within the village such as Avon and Bettaware. The sticker on the door is very important as it conveys the message immediately to would-be sellers.

Could you let us know what you think? Contact Maggie Godsland, the clerk on 01525 220415 or on email at im.godsland@btinternet.com or Gerallt Griffiths the editor.