

## **IPSWICH BOROUGH FORUM**

The Forum was held at the University Campus Suffolk, Waterfront, Ipswich on Tuesday, 22 October 2013 at 6.30 pm.

### **PRESENT:**

#### **Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner**

Melissa Bryan (PA to the PCC); Sandra Graffham (Communications Manager), Tim Passmore (Police & Crime Commissioner), and Vanessa Scott (Policy Officer).

#### **Suffolk Constabulary**

Inspector Danny Cooper and Acting Superintendent Steve Denham (Ipswich Local Policing Command) and Douglas Paxton (Chief Constable).

### **1. POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER OVERVIEW**

- 1.1 The PCC welcomed over 40 members of the public to the meeting and made introductions. A copy of his slides will be attached to these notes for the record.

### **2. POLICING UPDATE**

- 2.1 Following an overview of the position across the county from the Chief Constable, Acting Superintendent Steve Denham and Inspector Danny Cooper gave a presentation on policing in the Ipswich area; a copy of their slides will also be attached for the record.

### **3. QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM THE FLOOR**

- 3.1 *Cllr Judy Terry said she was pleased there was an emphasis on the work of SNTs because she thought the SNT in North East Ipswich did a great job. She asked what the PCC and Chief Constable's view was of the new national 'FBI style' organisation.*

The Chief Constable, Douglas Paxton, explained that he felt this was quite a welcome change. The national Serious and Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) used to operate quite distinctly from the police service and this led to a lack of co-ordination with forces. The new organisation was managed by two ex-Chief Constables and so he expected that there would be a better flow of information between the organisation and police forces. He reminded people that crime extends from the streets of Ipswich to national organised crime which feeds in to the national picture, and can exist across and beyond police areas, so we needed an entirely connected model of law enforcement.

- 3.2 *Cllr Mary Young advised that she was delighted the police were recruiting new officers but what about Special Constables?*

Tim Passmore advised that in his view Specials did a fantastic job and put in tremendous effort and needed to continue to be used across a wide range of activities. Douglas Paxton explained there were approximately 250 Specials and the force would not be able to guarantee the current quality of service without them. He advised that the force needed to ensure they are provided with professional development and resources to do the job and would consider, at the PCC's request, innovative ways to use the skills Specials bring to the force. He also reminded the audience that some colleagues in the Special Constabulary had given up to 40 years of their time to benefit the Constabulary and the community.

- 3.3 *A member of the audience asked if burglary figures were down because people were being more diligent in making their homes secure.*

Acting Superintendent Denham advised that the police have played a significant role in improving the position in relation to burglary. This included support to schemes like Integrated Offender Management and better relationships with probation and focussed work on detecting crime. However he agreed that the public play an important role in protecting their property because that acts as a deterrent to a potential offender.

- 3.4 *A member of the audience felt that the crime statistics looked good but he wanted to know if there were any areas of performance the police considered to be of concern.*

Acting Superintendent Denham advised that there had been a spike in cycle thefts in Ipswich over the summer months, however in general, the Ipswich area was seeing falling crime levels.

The Chief Constable considered there were two worlds emerging in relation to crime. Traditional crimes such as robbery and burglary were coming down but what was coming in from left field was an increase in on-line crime and fraud. He felt the internet was a massive game-changer in this respect. The demands on the police were also changing, for example 25% of the business was linked to people presenting with mental health issues.

Tim Passmore added that we need to encourage people to have confidence to report crimes, especially those types of crime which were under-reported such as serious sexual offences and domestic violence. We needed to understand the breadth of the crime picture we faced. This included using expertise where necessary in relation to internet and technological crime.

- 3.6 *A member of the public was concerned about the changes to mental health services and advised that with St Clements about to shut was it likely to be replaced by care in the community? He questioned what processes were in place to protect people and how was this going to benefit the people of Suffolk?*

Tim Passmore advised the ability to support people with mental health problems was a key concern. In his view there needed to be an explanation to the public as to why the change was being made and what arrangements were being put in place. Often the police picked up the pieces when there were gaps in provision and he would be watching the landscape.

The Chief Constable advised that there needed to be dedicated places of safety. In particular there needed to be enough places of safety to keep people with mental health issues out of custody suites. In addition to this, public services needed to ensure they understood the issues, for example he advised that he and the PCC were both Dementia friends and there were officers and staff who acted as single points of contact for advice. In addition staff and officers were being given half day training to be better equipped to deal with vulnerable people. He advised there was also a

community psychiatric nurse available to front line officers to provide appropriate advice and support.

- 3.7 *A member of the audience suggested that while it was gratifying that crime had gone down, this should mean there was less crime to investigate and therefore should the public expect an improvement in the solved rate?*

Acting Superintendent Denham admitted this was a valid question and advised that the solved rate was all cases where the police knew who was responsible and the crime had been admitted to; this included restorative justice and community resolution. A high proportion of crime was low level offending, where in some cases there was not sufficient evidence to conclude who was responsible. There were also some cases where the victim did not want the police to take any further action. Those factors impacted on the solved rate which can be achieved.

- 3.8 *How do Suffolk's detection rates compare with other forces?*

The Chief Constable advised that generally across the performance priorities the detection rates compared favourably with the national average. The Police regularly considered its performance against other forces and those forces that were considered nationally to be most like Suffolk.

Where the risk was greatest, the sanction is most effective e.g. robbery, burglary and serious sexual offences. He advised that the force was focussing on the crimes that caused the most harm and, where appropriate, learning from other forces and research in criminology. The most problematic days of the police service was when it criminalised people in order to get cheap detections. The targets for detections often unnecessarily criminalised young people. Now the focus was on those people, and those crimes, which should be put before the courts.

- 3.9 *A resident of the Bramford Road and Norwich Road area complained about a business having their licence revoked while another larger store was licensed.*

Acting Superintendent Denham advised that the Constabulary worked closely in partnership with the Borough Council regarding licensing. Inspector Danny Cooper explained that while he did not wish to discuss individual cases, the St Matthews Street area had been plagued by reports of ASB linked to drug and alcohol misuse and this had prompted action to be taken with specific premises. The Constabulary's policy was clear; it was about requiring businesses to comply with the licensing regulations. In this respect, the same approach would be taken with any business whether small, medium or large. The size of the business does not matter, the way the business operates, in terms of compliance, was the main factor.

- 3.10 *Cllr Sandra Gage advised that, in her view, Suffolk was 'blessed' with 30mph speed limits and wanted to know where the police were in relation to enforcement of those and what were the views on 20mph limits.*

The PCC advised that the key issues arising from the speeding survey responses were that people felt there should be more enforcement in villages, outside schools, and in residential areas. He added that the Chief Constable had responded by reviewing all enforcement sites.

The Chief Constable advised that while he fully understood people were concerned by the dangers posed by speeding, the Constabulary was also concerned about drivers' behaviour. For example, those instances where someone might not be speeding but was driving too fast for the conditions. The audience was advised that alongside reviewing sites where cameras and enforcement activity was used, the Constabulary had freed up capacity to allocate enforcement activity to sites based on public

concerns. Initiatives such as community speedwatch, enabled local people to get involved in flagging up speeding issues. Other initiatives, such as use of Speed Indicator Displays could be a further gentle warning to motorists.

The Chief Constable believed 20mph limits were worth evaluating and it would very much depend where they were used. The Constabulary operated to a national standard in terms of thresholds for speed enforcement work.

The PCC advised that there was additional work being done by the County Council to support young people who had just passed their test to become better drivers. The Get in Gear course was aimed at giving more practice to young people aged 17-19 and he was investigating whether a course of this nature would support insurance companies to provide better deals to help younger drivers.

- 3.11 *A member of the audience, who advised he had served as a police officer, felt the PCC should ensure there were more warranted police officers in Suffolk instead of PCSOs. He felt that it was more cost effective to have warranted officers than PCSOs. He was critical about the effectiveness of PCSOs and felt they were very limited in their powers. His main point was that he felt the PCC should challenge for greater funding for Suffolk.*

The Chief Constable was very clear that he found the comments about PCSOs ill-informed and did not subscribe to the negative view expressed. PCSOs, in his view, played a significant and important role in policing local communities. He was certain the police service could not offer the range of support to the public without them. The Chief Constable's comments sparked some compliments and support from the audience for the role of PCSOs in the local community.

Tim Passmore acknowledged that the funding situation was difficult and he obviously intended, wherever possible, to fight for Suffolk's share of resources. He was well aware that Suffolk was one of the lowest cost forces nationally. However he had recently agreed with the Chief Constable to increase the number of warranted officers in Suffolk.

There were a number of comments from the audience to explain their positive view of their local PCSOs. Rebecca Crerar from Suffolk Refugee Support, an agency that helped support asylum seekers, advised she had received good support from PCSO Ginny Shoemith. This was particularly positive as many communities she worked with came from countries where there was not a good relationship between the public and the police.

Other views expressed were that PCSOs gave a lot to their local communities and should be supported, and that the community finds out a lot of information from their PCSO and they were a welcome addition.

- 3.12 *A member of the audience said facebook, tweets and social media were a much better way for the police to interact and communicate with younger people.*

Tim Passmore advised that he felt engagement with young people was important and was pleased that the force was utilising social media.

Acting Superintendent Denham advised that the Ipswich twitter account was a good addition for the police; it was a positive and quick way to communicate with local people.

- 3.13 *Cllr. Judy Terry commented on the story in the Evening Standard that another cyclist had been hit by a lorry. She felt it was time for greater protection of cyclists and for lorry drivers to be more regulated?*

3.14 *Bhupindar Sually (Chair of the IAG) understood that the Suffolk Constabulary had raised the pass mark for new recruits to 58% which was above the pass mark of 50% used by some other forces. He knew of an applicant who had been rejected by Suffolk but had been taken on by another force. He felt that this might inhibit people from more diverse backgrounds from applying to the force and he wanted to understand why the decision had been taken.*

The Chief Constable advised that the ambition was for the police service to better reflect the community it served. However it was important that the service understood the barriers including the things that prevented people seeing the police service as a career choice. Several positive action initiatives had been undertaken to try and overcome the barriers and make the workforce more representative. Meanwhile he advised he would look into the rationale for the current pass mark.

3.15 *A member of the audience remarked that some years ago it was usual to see the local PC out and about on their bike in the Bramford Road/Norwich Road area. Before that, there was an officer who had been the local officer for a number of years and was known to local people. Nowadays he felt as if it was unusual to see a police officer or for them to communicate with the local community.*

Inspector Cooper advised that PSCO Ginny Shoesmith was match funded to work specifically in that area of the town. However if someone needed the police, but it was not an emergency, then he advised to dial 101 and ask for Ipswich Central SNT. Inspector Cooper agreed to take some details, and if necessary, ensure someone would visit.

#### 4. QUESTIONS POSED TO THE AUDIENCE

4.1 Questions were posed using the interactive voting equipment and the results will be published with the notes for the record.

The PCC thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.45 pm.