

FOREST HEATH PUBLIC MEETING

A public meeting was held at Brandon Leisure Centre, Church Road, Brandon on Thursday 19 June at 6.30 pm.

PRESENT:

Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner

Tracey Barker (Communications and Support Services Officer), Sandra Graffham (Communications Manager), Tim Passmore (Police & Crime Commissioner) and Vanessa Scott (Policy Officer).

Suffolk Constabulary

Superintendent Andrew Mason (Strategic Policing Commander West), Inspector Matthew Rose (Forest Heath Local Policing Commander) and Douglas Paxton (Chief Constable).

1. POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER OVERVIEW

1.1 The PCC welcomed approximately 30 members of the public to the meeting and made introductions. The PCC gave a presentation on the key elements of his role and actions taken over the past year. A copy of the presentation 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, Inspector Matthew Rose gave a presentation on policing in the Forest Heath area. A copy of the slides will also be attached for the record.

3. QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM THE FLOOR

Police attendance at Town/Parish Council Meetings

3.1 The lack of police presence at Brandon Town Council meetings was raised. The speaker had attended these meetings for eight months and for first five months there had been no police presence. A representative from Mildenhall Parish Council also stressed the importance of police officer attendance at meetings and said if this was not possible it was important that the police provided a written report.

3.2 Inspector Rose agreed that police had not been attending Brandon Town Council meetings but are doing so now. Inspector Rose had attended the AGM, and he will ensure that an officer attends future meetings in his place if he is not available.

3.3 The PCC and Chief Constable agreed that communication was very important and that reports should be provided if officers are unavailable to attend meetings. The Chief Constable reiterated the need for "well-constructed" reports.

Local SNT Priority Setting

- 3.4 A comment was made that no local policing priorities had been set for Brandon in the past year and that residents were unaware that local priority setting meetings were taking place.
- 3.5 Inspector Rose explained that the Crime Prevention Panel selected local policing priorities from reports collated from a number of sources, and that priorities were set where the need was most prevalent. It was confirmed that some residents from Brandon sit on the Crime Prevention Panel and that members of Brandon Town Council also attended. Inspector Rose advised that local policing priority setting meetings were being held and agreed that more attention was needed to publicize these which he would be looking to do.
- 3.6 A member of the audience highlighted the size of area covered by the Brandon SNT (which includes West Row, Sedge Fen, Beck Row) and said that while it had been raised that meetings were not being held in Brandon, residents in other locations also needed to have their say. It was mentioned that local policing meetings used to be held in varying locations which were very well attended and many issues were raised.
- 3.7 The PCC thanked the contributors for their feedback and said that these comments had been taken on board and would be acted upon.
- 3.8 A representative from Brandon Neighbourhood Watch/member of the Crime Prevention Panel advised that Neighbourhood Watch yielded good feedback on local issues and this information was passed to the Crime Prevention Panel.
- 3.9 The Chief Constable expressed his appreciation of the work done through the Neighbourhood Watch Association as a key resource for the community.
- 3.10 A representative from the Crime Prevention Panel stated that the priorities were set based on a rigorous review of the information provided via 101 and 999 calls. These were also fed to partner agencies. Drug related crime in Newmarket and vehicle crime in Red Lodge had been successfully addressed as information had been forthcoming. The point was made that unless police are made aware of local issues they cannot take action.
- 3.11 The PCC stressed the importance of everyone working together and urged for information to be fed to local officers who would act upon it. The PCC commented that there is a collective responsibility for everyone to work together to make our communities safer.

Anti Social Behaviour

- 3.12 ASB issues, such as littering, had led to the council removing public seating in Brandon as this was not responded to by local police.
- 3.13 Inspector Rose said that he was unaware of the issue with the seating being removed and gave reassurances that ASB is taken very seriously, and urged people to report this by calling 101 or by bringing to the attention of the local PCSOs.
- 3.14 Two members of the audience advised the meeting that that the seating was damaged and had been removed by the Town Council for health and safety reasons and this would be replaced. Local people were also urged to make the police aware of 'local irritations' so that the police could take appropriate action.

Suffolk Police and Crime Panel

- 3.15 A member of the Police and Crime Panel explained the function of the panel in holding

the PCC to account and that part of their remit was to scrutinize policing priorities. The audience was advised that both the PCC and Chief Constable did listen to, and take on board, feedback given to them.

Crime Reporting

- 3.16 Brandon Town Clerk had reported some issues of concern, however local police said that information has not been received.
- 3.17 Inspector Rose gave assurances that every single call is logged and that the local SNT did want to hear about issues as they were there to help.
- 3.18 The PCC urged crime to be reported, and advised that issues could also be reported to his office to pass on to the Constabulary.

Local Crime Rate & Police Visibility

- 3.19 It was suggested that the crime rate in Brandon may have decreased due to the prominence of one PCSO in particular who was very approachable and visible in the community. It was felt that not all of the PCSOs were as visible but overall local officers were doing a good job and tribute was paid to the work of the local Special Constables.
- 3.20 Inspector Rose said that he received very favourable feedback about the Brandon SNT PCSOs with which the Chief Constable agreed. It was stated that each PCSO had a specific area to cover and this included rural villages.
- 3.21 The PCC commented that visibility and engagement with the local community was very important and he was pleased to hear the positive feedback.
- 3.22 A member of the audience said older residents perceived the crime rate in Brandon had not changed and the Town Council was sponsoring a number of functions throughout the year to encourage older people to venture into the community to help them realise that the town was safe.
- 3.23 It was suggested that some local residents were not aware of police officers in the community because officers take the same route when they leave the new police centre, and if officers varied their route this may contribute to a better awareness of police visibility.
- 3.24 The PCC and all the officers present agreed that this was a very good point and something which could be put into practice very easily. The contributor was thanked for this very helpful suggestion.

Parking & Traffic Issues

- 3.25 Complaints about illegal parking and cyclists riding on pavements/ignoring red lights were raised with residents expressing a desire to see increased enforcement.
- 3.26 Inspector Rose agreed that parking was a very emotive issue and this had been raised at a recent Brandon Town Council meeting. Incidents of vehicles being blocked in, or pedestrians being unable to pass due to vehicles parked on pavements, should be reported by calling 101 and local officers would respond as soon as possible. Inspector Rose confirmed that officers have the powers to issue tickets for cycling offences and he would include this on the social media feed (both as a deterrent and to advise local residents to report this).
- 3.27 Concerns were expressed about the size of HGV vehicles passing through Brandon, and that the A11, when fully open, would lead to increased HGV traffic on the Bury Road and one way system. This had been raised with the County Council but it was

felt the approach of the Council was reactive rather than proactive. Another member of the audience spoke about the former 'Bypass for Brandon Action Group' who held a survey via the RHA and 'Roads for Prosperity' and the outcome was that A11 improvements would not be of benefit. Concerns were expressed that increased traffic, coupled with the proposed new housing developments, could result in significant congestion.

3.28 Inspector Rose said that it would be difficult to assess the situation until the A11 road works were completed. If this continued to have an impact after the A11 had been fully re-opened the Constabulary could liaise with the County Council regarding road weight restrictions.

3.29 The PCC asked the contributors to keep him informed of the situation as he would be happy to give his support. Issues concerning HGVs could be raised at the PCC's Business Forum.

Security measures for new housing developments

3.30 It was queried what security measures could be installed into new houses/housing developments so that residents felt safe. An example was given of a development in Red Lodge where there was insufficient space for emergency services to attend if needed. It was mentioned that the Constabulary used to have a planning department which would input into residential planning.

3.31 The PCC and Chief Constable confirmed that the Constabulary's did have input into development planning. The Chief Constable gave information about the national 'Secure by Design' scheme which required Chief Constables to sign off building schemes to certify that both the design and build had met nationally set 'Secure by Design' standards. The Chief Constable gave assurances that a rigorous approach was being taken and that developers needed to make a contribution towards the cost of public services and that a member of police staff worked with Planning Departments to ensure that this was being done.

Rural Crime

3.32 The issue of rural crime was raised, such as the theft of agricultural equipment, fuel and batteries. A member of the audience spoke about an initiative in East Yorkshire which encouraged younger members of the community to communicate these issues via social media, it was felt that this could also be extended to urban issues.

3.33 The Chief Constable thanked the contributor for this information which he noted.

3.34 The PCC confirmed that he had committed to joining the new National Rural Crime Network which worked with partners such as the NFU and CLA to tackle rural crime issues.

Social Media

3.35 It was asked who operated the Forest Heath police twitter account, and how information sent via twitter was processed.

3.36 Inspector Rose advised that this was done by a collective effort by volunteer police staff, PCSOs, SNT members and response officers in each town. It was felt that this was a very effective medium for front line staff to receive, respond to, and disseminate information quickly and concisely.

The PCC thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 7.40 pm.