



LOWESTOFT (WAVENEY) PUBLIC MEETING

A public meeting was held at East Point Academy, Lowestoft on Monday 23 September 2014 at 18:30 hrs.

PRESENT:

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

Tracey Barker (Communications Officer), Sandra Graffham (Communications Manager), Liz Hollingworth (Policy Officer), Tim Passmore (Police & Crime Commissioner) and Claire Swallow (Deputy Chief Executive).

Suffolk Constabulary

Inspector Nick Aitken (Beccles and Leiston), Inspector Richard Hill (Lowestoft North), Douglas Paxton (Chief Constable) and Superintendent Paul Sharp (Strategic Policing Command East).

1. POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER OVERVIEW

- 1.1 The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) welcomed around 35 members of the public to the meeting and made introductions. The PCC gave a presentation on the key elements of his role and action 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 Aitken and Inspector Hill gave presentations on policing in the Waveney area; a copy of their slides will also be attached for the record.

3. QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM THE FLOOR

ROADS AND TRAFFIC

Q. What are the police doing to enforce the 'no traffic' area in London Road North?

- 3.1 Superintendent Sharp said this matter had been looked into but that the signage in the area needs to be improved so it is clear that, for example, bicycles are not allowed in the area. He suggested that, once signage had been improved, there could be some local media coverage. The Local Safer Neighbourhood Team would then be able to

enforce the regulations through visible policing, fines or verbal warnings. It was confirmed that a fixed penalty would be a £30 fine.

Q. By law should all bicycles have a bell on and does that include mobility scooters?

3.2 An attendee confirmed that that all new bicycles sold must have a bell.

Q. What are the police doing about bad driving, parking and how are they enforcing the Highway Code?

Q. A comment was also made on how many cars had faulty lights and that this should be clamped down on, particularly as winter approaches.

3.3 The PCC noted that this is a reoccurring theme at public meetings.

3.4 The Chief Constable said that the police are able to enforce the Highway Code where statements say 'must'. As many more people had been killed in Suffolk in 8 months in 2014 than in the whole of 2013. He said that more road safety education and prevention was needed, particularly with young people. The Constabulary is working with BBC Radio Suffolk on safer motorcycling and provides an advanced motorcycling scheme. Funding from the Road Safe Scheme is also available to improve safety.

3.5 Inspector Hill said that officers would stop and ticket where an offence is committed and the Vehicle Defect Rectification Scheme (VDRS) can also be used to address minor defects. Inspector Hill said that if a member of the public sees dangerous driving they should note the registration and phone 101.

Q. A query was raised about problems with speeding and anti-social behaviour in Victoria Road at weekends, and the lack of cameras and PCSOs in the area.

3.6 Superintendent Sharp asked the member of the public to speak to him about the particular incident where there was video footage. He said that, more generally, they would look into the issues in the area and the prioritisation of officer location.

Q. A similar query was raised about St Peter's Street where walls and lampposts had been damaged and there was inconsiderate parking. The local PCSO had been doing a good job but it seemed he had been moved.

3.7 Inspector Hill said they were aware of issues in that area and that potentially this was an area for traffic calming although further study of speeding would be needed to ensure resources were used in the most efficient manner.

SCAMS

Q. Following a recent scam in a street, where a Neighbourhood Watch volunteer intervened to raise awareness, what should Neighbourhood Watch be doing to help guard against cold-caller scams?

3.8 The Chief Constable said that the Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator had been correct to alert neighbours in the vicinity. Suffolk Constabulary is working with Trading Standards. He told the audience to be aware of a current scam where cold callers are selling on the doorstep saying they are working with the Probation Service. He advised the public there was no such scheme and any such activity should be reported.

SEXUAL ABUSE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, SUPPORTING VICTIMS

Q. *An attendee commented it was pleasing to see the Police and Crime Commissioner was addressing the serious issues of sexual abuse, domestic violence and supporting victims.*

3.9 The PCC said he took these matters very seriously and that supporting victims was a key objective in the Police and Crime Plan. The PCC said he was pleased to be able to support Waveney Domestic Violence and Abuse Forum to deliver much needed support in the area.

Q. *The local MP (Peter Aldous) asked what could be done to ensure there is continuity between the police and other agencies in supporting victims?*

3.10 The PCC said there was Ministry of Justice funding to help with co-ordinating services for victims. The number of Independent Domestic Violence Advisors and Court-based Advisors was being increased. The PCC and Chief Constable were also on the Criminal Justice Board where they were able to help hold the Crown Prosecution to account.

3.11 Superintendent Sharp said that in most cases the first time a person contacts the police about domestic abuse or a serious sexual offence isn't the first time the offence has taken place. Reporting domestic violence or abuse to the police is a life-changing decision and it is important that support for the victim is available so they have the confidence to come forwards.

Q: *What is a victims' hub?*

3.12 In reference to the concept of a Victims Hub, the Chief Constable said that once the court process has commenced, there is a Victim Care Unit that co-ordinates activity on behalf of the different agencies involved.

3.13 The PCC referred to the regional arrangement where victims are referred to support services and also to the recently commissioned Restorative Justice Hub.

POLICE RESPONSE /RESPONSE TIMES

Q. *A local business owner asked about the lack of police response to multiple incidents of abuse, violence and false allegations aimed at him and his business over a sustained period of time. A particular concern of his was that the police had said 'no crime had been committed'.*

3.14 Inspector Hill said that he had looked into the complaint which had been responded to by letter. The letter did include the crime numbers that had been given for various incidents. He suggested that a meeting would be beneficial.

Q. *An attendee referred to an incident in London Road South where a man was subject to a violent attack. The member of the public rang 999 but said it took 23 minutes for the police to arrive.*

3.15 Inspector Hill said that a Grade 1 or Grade A incident (an emergency with threat to life) should have police attendance within 10 to 15 minutes. This level of attendance was delivered in over 90% of incidents but it seemed that, for some reason, it had not been achieved on the occasion in question. He asked that the member of the public provide more details to him so he could look into it and thanked him for the assistance provided to the victim.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR / YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Q. *The local MP (Peter Aldous) asked about anti-social behaviour in North Lowestoft and whether non-participation in the 'Reducing the Strength' campaign is a reason to turn down a premises license?*

3.16 Inspector Hill said that 'Reducing the Strength' is voluntary and Suffolk Constabulary encourage participation. However, a premises license cannot be declined for that reason alone.

Q. *Could police cadets volunteer to work in local hostels to improve the relationship between the police and vulnerable people?*

3.17 The PCC said he was generally supportive and said his Community Safety Fund also supported diversionary activities for young people.

POLICE PENSIONS

Q. *A query was raised about police finances, especially in relation to pensions. Additionally it was raised that the low age of retirement means that officers who have valuable experience are retiring early.*

3.18 The PCC said he understood the police pensions system was changing and agreed that keeping experience is very important.

3.19 Peter Aldous MP agreed and said that the public sector pensions system is being reformed. He said it was important to recognise that some Officers continue to use their experience in public sector partnership work, as is happening with Lowestoft Rising.

3.20 The Chief Constable said that 30 year pension scheme was now closed and a new Officer joining the Constabulary would be serving for 40 years. There were also challenges with the aging workforce for example in maintaining fitness levels.

4. CLOSE

4.1 The PCC thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at Meeting at 20.00.