



## **WAVENEY PUBLIC MEETING**

A public meeting was held at the Wherry Hotel, Oulton Broad, Lowestoft on Monday 9 July at 19:00.

### **PRESENT:**

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

Tim Passmore (Police and Crime Commissioner), Sandra Graffham (Communications Manager, OPCC) and Sarah McNulty (Business Co-ordinator, OPCC).

#### **Suffolk Constabulary**

Steve Jupp (Deputy Chief Constable), Inspector Liz Casey (Locality Inspector Lowestoft) and Police Sergeant Steven Wright (Neighbourhood and Partnerships Team, Community Engagement and Crime Reduction Sergeant).

### **POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER AND ASSISTANT CHIEF CONSTABLE OVERVIEW**

#### **QUESTIONS ASKED AND SUBJECTS DISCUSSED**

Tim Passmore welcomed approximately 70 people to the meeting and explained his role as the PCC. He spoke about the decision to increase the Police Precept, Government funding and changes in the pattern of crime.

DCC Steve Jupp spoke about the large geography of Suffolk, the poor road network and how that impacts on police response times. He gave assurance that there had been improvements, particularly in the Halesworth area.

He spoke about the Comprehensive Spending Review and re-modelling of the force two years ago and said that there would be further re-modelling this Autumn with a key emphasis on enhancing local policing capabilities. Comparatively speaking, using the government formula, Suffolk was one of the poorest funded forces. He said that the introduction of Community Engagement Officers would help to improve local engagement. He gave assurance that the main focus was on protecting people, keeping them safe and catching criminals. External inspections by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Fire and Rescue Services reflected the improvements that had been made.

Inspector Liz Casey introduced herself and spoke of the structures of the Safer Neighbourhood Team, Neighbourhood Response Team and introduction of the local Community Engagement Officers. She also spoke of the close working with partners in housing, schools, hospitals, social services and how the police continually try to focus on the jobs that matter to the public. She also explained how the Threat Harm and Risk model was used to assess and prioritise the police focus.

She acknowledged that parking and speeding were issues that mattered to the public and urged people to keep reporting concerns so that police were aware of the demands. She gave assurance that plans for the summer and school holidays were underway with Design Out Crime Officers continually analysing trends and working with the cadets, special

constabulary, neighbourhood watch and others in the wider police family to plan deployment and engagement activities.

She said that presentations on knife crime were being delivered in schools in the area prior to breaking up for the holidays. There was also work to be done to manage public perceptions given people often felt threatened or concerned about anti-social behaviour when youths congregate even when they might not be doing anything wrong.

Sergeant Steven Wright spoke of his role in supervising the nine Community Engagement Officers across the county, one in each locality area. He said that previous changes to the structure of the Constabulary had made the police more detached but these officers would help to improve those local connections. The officers would be feeding information out to the community via social media, attending public events and working with the media and locally in problem areas.

- **Visibility, saving money and collaboration**

A member of the audience spoke of the Council Tax increase and said that this did not represent good value for money. He said that the police force was 'invisible' and queried why, if Suffolk was so stretched and already working so closely with the Norfolk Constabulary, why costs savings were not being made by merging forces and having one Chief Constable, one PCC and one Police Headquarters.

The PCC and DCC replied explaining that the police conditions were different across forces and therefore that would need to be aligned, taxation would need to be harmonised, thought given to maintaining local delivery/knowledge and what would be a scalable model to ensure maximum efficiencies. Given the Constabulary was involved in a number of Eastern Region collaborative ventures with six other forces then consideration would need to be given to alternative models if merger was deemed an option.

A member of the public asked why there were no police patrols on the streets. Following a recent incident patrols had been increased for the foreseeable future, but where did those officers come from? (He handed a paper to the PCC for consideration).

Inspector Liz Casey said that officers were visible where there was demand. Often people had a fear of crime and it was acknowledged that whilst patrols made people feel safer, they were based on intelligence, local knowledge and targeted at where the most impact could be made. Assurance was given about the recent incident to confirm that it was between two individuals and the offender had been charged two hours prior to the meeting.

A question was put to the PCC and Deputy Chief Constable as to how much more money would be needed to provide the police service that they feel is needed.

The PCC said that if Suffolk received the same level of funding as its neighbouring county Norfolk then the Government funding would equate to an additional £5 per person, so £3.5M which would equate to 70-80 more police officers. This would enable the Constabulary to have four more officers in each Safer Neighbourhood Team which would make a big difference. The DCC supported this by saying that crime patterns are continually changing so it would be difficult to say exactly how much, or how many people would be needed. The police were also dealing with other non-crime issues such as mental health and dementia so it was also difficult to quantify the resources required to manage those complex areas of work. Suffolk Officers had a caseload of 150 whereas Norfolk officers had 132 so the funding was not equitable. The funding was based on an historic formula so the PCC and Constabulary would continue to put forward the case to change this.

- **Sentencing and Rehabilitation**

A local councillor for the St Margaret's Ward spoke of the recent stabbing in the area and said that he felt that police had done a good job. He felt that the penalties for knife crime and

gun crime should be greater and that it was the Criminal Justice System that was letting people down. He queried how that could be changed.

It was acknowledged that sentencing needed to be at the right level to act as an effective deterrent and that rehabilitation was important in breaking the cycle but also to recognise that some offenders are very young and make mistakes so in some cases they should be given a second chance rather than criminalised and restricting their future opportunities. The PCC confirmed that he sat on the Local Criminal Justice Board for Norfolk and Suffolk and that there was a Crown Prosecution Service representative at that group. He would also endeavour to feed this in to the Ministry of Justice Sentencing Guidelines Council. He urged members of the audience to keep raising their concerns and also write to MPs.

- **Civil Parking Enforcement / Cycling and Enforcement of Pedestrian Areas**

A member of the audience asked when the move to Civil Parking Enforcement would come into place.

The PCC confirmed that £190k of the Constabulary budget had been set aside for this project and that the local councils were also contributing £10k each. The County Council was in process of upgrading all signage and road markings. It was expected that it would be implemented in April 2019 but this had not been confirmed as the Minister of Transport had not signed off the paper. At a recent meeting of local MPs they had agreed that they would push for this to proceed.

Concerns were raised about parking in the High Street and cars on the kerb so prams and wheelchairs could not pass. It was suggested that the police go past but do nothing.

Sergeant Steven Wright said that he had been involved in dealing with some of the parking issues when he worked in the Safer Neighbourhood Team. Efforts had been made in the past to get bollards to stop people parking on the kerbs but agreement had not been granted.

A local town councillor queried why cyclists were allowed to ride in the pedestrian area in London Road North unchallenged.

Sergeant Steven Wright explained that there were three areas to the road and signage in place. It was only in the section between Gordon Road and Station Square that cyclists were not permitted to cycle and this was enforceable. Between 10am and 4pm vehicles were not permitted in the section between Regent Road and Milton Road but cycling is not prohibited at any time. He said that Police Community Support Officer Michael Soanes had spent a lot of time enforcing this, which in the main was in an advisory capacity rather than issuing tickets. It was agreed that the Constabulary would provide an update at the next Town Council meeting to confirm the position and answer questions.

A councillor for Waveney District Council covering the Pakefield ward said that regular concerns were raised about dangerous parking, particularly around the High School and Primary School. This was not unique to the area so he queried why the various levels of government were not doing more about the management of parking and giving greater consideration to issues even at the planning stages. In some areas children had even been involved in parking enforcement themselves as asking parents to justify their parking decisions. The PCC and DCC acknowledged this was a problem that needed to be addressed.

- **Scams**

A question was raised about how older people could be protected from scams on phones, websites or even at their front doors.

Inspector Casey spoke of the work of the Design Out Crime Officers and agreed to speak to the individual following the meeting in more detail about that the work that was being done to protect vulnerable people.

The DCC said that with an older society and more and more cases of dementia this presented a challenge for policing. He spoke of work with local charities and said that literature, advice and education was being made available. The improvements to local police engagement would also help to address specific issues.

- **Public Safety / Parental and Societal Responsibility**

A member of the audience said that she had challenged some youths about not putting their litter in a bin and confronting people for parking in disabled parking bays. Police officers advised this lady to take care as they could not be certain how individuals would react.

It was acknowledged that people should not feel threatened but understood why they did. The need for and responsibility of parents and guardians in guiding children on the right path was acknowledged.

- **Communication and police feedback / Use of Cannabis**

Concerns were raised about the smell of cannabis in the Whitton area and people openly trading and smoking it. The lady said that she had e-mailed the SNT to raise the concerns but was disappointed in the response she had received. She was not looking to be told of specific police activities but would have liked some re-assurance that the police were aware and would do something. Separate concerns were also raised about cannabis use amongst families with parents sharing these habits with children. This had also been reported but it appeared nothing had been done.

Inspector Liz Casey apologised that the response was not what was expected and said that the Community Engagement Officers would help to improve communication. She said that the police were aware and were alive to issues in other areas such as Carlton Colville. She urged people to keep reporting concerns and assurance was given that the information was all recorded and would be used.

A councillor for Oulton said that it was sad to lose so many Police Community Support Officers and that level of contact with the public. She said that many people supported the local parish meetings so police attendance at those forums was important. It was acknowledged that there were 460 parishes and that it was difficult to attend all of those meetings but the Community Engagement Officers would be making efforts to attend every parish and town council Annual General Meeting.

Councillors were advised that if they call meetings together collectively then the police would endeavour to support them. Inspector Liz Casey said that the police also attend the quarterly meetings of parish councillors and she would be attending the one in September. There was some confusion as to the audience for those meetings but Inspector Casey confirmed that all parish councillors could attend, not just parish clerks.

- **Hate Crime / Hare Coursing**

A member of the public asked for the Constabulary's definition of hate crime and how that was applied.

The DCC said that there was a Ministry of Justice and Crown Prosecution Service definition but said that the National Policing Council had not issued a definition for the police.

The same individual said that he was still awaiting a response from the PCC from his letter of three years ago and said that the PCC spoke at the last public meeting of eradicating hare coursing so queried whether that had been achieved.

- **Openness and Transparency**

Concerns were expressed about the openness and transparency of the Public Sector Leaders Group given there were no published minutes, agendas or accounts and members of the public were prevented from attending or observing the meeting. There were concerns about public confidence, credibility and he felt that the police appeared subordinate to the County Council. The attendee said that he would welcome a meeting with the PCC and a Police Officer to discuss the concerns in more detail.

The PCC responded by saying that he had no problem with the agenda being published and was supportive of the need to communicate what the Group is doing. He said that the use of Transformation Challenge Award of £3.2M and Pooled Business Rates of £8-£10M should be open and transparent. It was agreed that contact should be made with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to arrange a surgery appointment.

- **Mental Health Support**

A lady advised that her son had passed away three weeks ago and had been suffering from mental health issues. She had required help from the police for her son's safety and her own and a referral had been made by the Mental Health team but this was not acted upon until a month later which was too late for her son. She urged the PCC and Constabulary keep pushing for changes to be made to provide better support.

It was acknowledged that police custody was not the right place to provide this care and the Government needed to provide more appropriate facilities and care.

The PCC confirmed that he sat on the Health and Wellbeing Board along with the Chief Constable and he would certainly raise these concerns again. It was recognised that the Mental Health Nurse in the Contact and Control Room and Triage car had been positive but more needed to be done by local authorities and the Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation Trust to provide the right care and facilities.

It was also suggested that longer contracts for support services were required to aide stability and acknowledged that there were different levels of funding and care amongst local health districts.

- **Young People / Criminalisation / DNA and Fingerprints / Public Servants**

A lady raised concerns about how readily the police seemed to take DNA and Fingerprints, particularly from young people and how they should not underestimate the impact that it has on those individuals and their families. She also sought views on the impact of the change from police officers being classed as public services rather than public servants.

The DCC advised that the police had very strict guidelines in police custody and in respect of taking and holding DNA and Fingerprint data. He was clear that the police did not wish to criminalise young people unnecessarily and spoke about how closely regulated the police were and regularly inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Fire and Rescue Services.

***The PCC thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 20:40***