



SUFFOLK COASTAL PUBLIC MEETING

A public meeting was held at the Town Hall, Felixstowe on Thursday 7 June at 19:00.

PRESENT:

Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner

Tim Passmore (Police and Crime Commissioner), Sandra Graffham (Communications Manager, OPCC) and Greg Songer (Correspondence Officer, OPCC).

Suffolk Constabulary

Gareth Wilson (Chief Constable), Inspector Mark Jackson (Locality Inspector Halesworth, Leiston) and Inspector Andrew Pursehouse (Locality Inspector Ipswich East, Felixstowe and Woodbridge).

POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER AND ASSISTANT CHIEF CONSTABLE OVERVIEW

The PCC welcomed 20 members of the public to the meeting and made introductions.

The PCC spoke briefly about the key elements of his role and current priorities. He discussed the Police Precept, Government funding, local issues and the importance of partnership working as well as details of the Commissioning work undertaken by the office of the PCC.

Chief Constable Gareth Wilson spoke about the demand on the Constabulary and the additional challenges with both the changing patterns of crime and mental health as well as the increase in traditional crime types. He spoke about how the Constabulary prioritise the challenges faced and work together with the public sector on wider community concerns. Chief Constable Wilson also spoke about the introduction of innovative technology within the Constabulary including new crime recording systems and body worn video whilst highlighting the long term benefits of these within the force. He concluded by discussing the transparency of the force including details of both internal and external scrutiny and the recent HMICFRS inspections.

Inspector Pursehouse gave an introduction into neighbourhood policing as well as details of local community engagement work undertaken. He spoke about the proactive work around responding to local crime traits such as burglary, ASB, drugs and criminal damage including the use of analytics and forensics. Information was also given around the work undertaken on speeding as well as information on the Community Speed Watch groups. Inspector Pursehouse concluded by detailing police plans for the summer periods around ASB and the use of analytics to target key areas.

Inspector Mark Jackson gave an overview of neighbourhood policing and the work undertaken with vulnerable members of the community. He detailed the ongoing work undertaken in the Leiston area focussing on drug offences. This included details of recent arrests, seizures and work undertaken with young and vulnerable people supplying drugs.

Inspector Jackson spoke about the recent burglary patterns including thefts from garages, sheds and out buildings highlighting crime prevention advice and the effect this can have in successful prosecutions. Inspector Jackson concluded with giving details of the Constabulary 'Get Tool SMART' campaign and the benefits of marking tools in both successful prosecutions and the ability to return stolen property.

QUESTIONS ASKED AND SUBJECTS DISCUSSED

- **Police visibility in local areas**

A question was asked surrounding the visibility of local policing in view of the growing size of the community.

The Chief Constable spoke about the resource made available to Locality Inspectors and the balance between being visible and making the best use of resource to combat crime. Inspector Pursehouse also spoke about targeting key areas of crime with the resource available as well as highlighting the role of the new Community Engagement Officers who will be available to communicate with local communities on local policing concerns.

There was also a discussion around police coverage and the support available to the Safer Neighbourhood Teams. It was confirmed that all areas of Suffolk Coastal will be covered by response officers 24/7 as well as targeted policing on key areas away from neighbourhood policing hours. Details were given on the changing pattern of crime and the resource needed for 'hidden harms'. The Constabulary confirmed they will always try and be as visible as possible but will always be available when needed by the public.

- **101 Telephone Service and time taken to report incidents to the Constabulary**

A question was raised in relation to the time taken to report incidents to the police using the 101 service.

The attendees were advised that an improved telephone system had been launched which should result in calls being handled more effectively. The Chief Constable acknowledged the delay in the implementation of this system but explained the need for rigorous testing in view of the cutting edge technology used. The benefits of the IP Telephony system were discussed which included the ability to prioritise calls to ensure high priority cases are handled on an urgent basis and signposting is given to lower priority calls in the form of direction to the Constabulary website or other agencies. Details were also given of the improved data that is provided by the new telephone system where response times to calls can be broken down into priority groups allowing detailed scrutiny of performance.

- **Potential sale of Suffolk Police Headquarters**

A question was raised regarding the recent announcement of the consultation process to obtain the value of the current Suffolk Police Headquarters site for potential development. A further question was raised on the impact that relocating could have on response times to Suffolk Coastal areas.

The PCC confirmed that the exercise undertaken is to find out the value of the site and no decision has been made around relocating. Once the value of the site is known then a decision can be made on the best long term future plan for Police Headquarters which will include reviewing the maintenance needs of the current site. The PCC reiterated that the funds made from any sale of police property goes directly into the forces budget and not central government and so he will be looking at the best possible value for money whilst

making sure people's safety remains the top priority. A public exhibition with details of the consultation will take place between 15:00 – 20:00 at Martlesham Heath Pavilion on 18th June 2018.

The Chief Constable commented that no current response time targets would be compromised by any potential move and the force would remain committed to the targets detailed within the Police and Crime Plan regardless of the Headquarters location.

- **Police scrutiny over the use of Strip Search and Stop and Search Powers**

Concerns were raised about the police use of strip search and in particular the use of this power on children (10-15 years). Details were also given regarding the success rate of police searches and the level of scrutiny applied to them.

The PCC confirmed that this question had already been addressed at the previous Ipswich public meeting however detail was given surrounding the current scrutiny in place around Stop and Search involving ISCRE as well as the PCC scrutiny within the Accountability and Performance Panel.

The Chief Constable gave context around when strip search is used and the links with the vulnerability of the person being taken into custody. This included details of the strict procedures followed when reviewing if a strip search should take place as well as confirmation that a search would only take place after an individual was in Police Custody at one of the dedicated Police Investigations Centres. It was confirmed that an intimate search can only be carried out by a medical practitioner and details were provided of the modern facilities available within the Police Investigation Centres to ensure that the safety of the individual and officers remains paramount.

The Chief Constable concluded by giving details of his work on a national framework which includes additional scrutiny on Stop and Search and other search methods. He also gave details of the recent HMICFRS custody inspection which is an unannounced inspection scrutinising the whole custody process.

- **Police funding**

A question was raised around the PCC's continued campaign for a review of the police funding formula including what channels remain available to continue to campaign.

The PCC spoke about the challenges facing the Constabulary including the caseload per officer figures. He confirmed he had received support for his campaign from the public, local councils and businesses and has regular communications with Suffolk MP's and the Policing Minister on the subject. The PCC reiterated the need to be able to provide strategic evidence to government on both the challenges facing the force and the key areas that will benefit from receiving extra money through any change in the funding formula. It is hoped the statistical information provided from the new systems implemented within the Constabulary will only improve the campaign. The PCC concluded by sharing information on the regional collaboration work being undertaken by the Constabulary and the benefits this work has on improving efficiency within the current budget and the ongoing conversations with the Home Office over a change to the funding formula.

The Chief Constable also clarified a question from the attendees that there were no plans to move police pension into central government budget and away from individual forces.

- **Speeding and Parking**

A question was raised around what priority can be given to speeding and parking enforcement in view of other Constabulary priorities.

The PCC discussed the continued investment in the Roads Policing Unit and Speed Enforcement Team as well as the work carried out by the Casualty Reduction Team in relation to the enforcement and education of the 'Fatal Four'.

Inspector Pursehouse confirmed that Safer Neighbourhood Teams do target parking offenses where possible subject to other priorities. He also gave details of the targeted approach to speed enforcement which included working with the Roads Policing and Speed Enforcement Teams as well as the valuable work undertaken by Community Speedwatch volunteers.

The PCC expressed his frustration in the delay with the implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement. He confirmed that all the necessary work has been completed by the Constabulary and respective organisations and he has expressed his frustration to the Ministry of Transport regarding the delay in completion.

- **Knife Crime**

A question was raised regarding the increase in knife crime in Suffolk and what work was being done to combat this trend.

The PCC acknowledged that the knife and gang related crime was a challenging problem facing the Constabulary and the importance of working together in partnership as these issues will not be solved by enforcement alone. The PCC spoke about engagement work already undertaken by the Constabulary in local communities and schools as well as the schemes commissioned to provide support for younger members of the community who could be at risk of being groomed into a life of crime.

The Chief Constable gave information on the work already undertaken by the Urban Street Gangs unit with the emphasis on prevention rather than detection. The Constabulary are trying to be visible and are working on targeted operations as well as being committed to supporting a multi-agency approach on a longer term strategy.

- **Specials and Volunteers**

A question was raised regarding the use of Special Constables and other volunteers to improve police numbers and maintain public confidence of policing by consent.

The Chief Constable spoke about the valuable work that all Special Constables and Volunteers currently do within the Constabulary. The importance of policing by consent was discussed as well as the targeted approach to ensure the resources available to the Constabulary are efficiently used.

- **Police Communication and engagement with the public**

A question was raised around the communication and engagement with the public on current police priorities.

The PCC confirmed both himself and the Constabulary always try to communicate with all members of the public wherever possible. This includes Public meetings, Council meetings and business forums. The PCC spoke about the Police and Crime Plan which sets out his

objectives and priorities for Suffolk Constabulary. It is also important to note that each locality area will have their own individual priorities relating to that specific location and it may not always be possible to detail all of these to the public.

The Chief Constable stated the level of scrutiny faced by the force has never been greater which, as well as the PCC, includes internal and external groups. He gave detail on the transparency within the force and the development opportunities available to staff to ensure that Suffolk has high quality skilled staff to work within the challenging environment they face.

Discussion also took place around the role of the new Engagement Officers and how they will work on communication through all formats including social media. The Constabulary confirmed that they are hopeful these officers will work within these roles for a long period of time to ensure continuity and stability.

- **Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs)**

A question was raised around the use of PCSO's including the possibility of local councils funding PCSO's for their local community.

The PCC confirmed that local councils do have the option to fund PCSO's and gave examples of PCSO's working in many areas including Kesgrave and Rushmere that are funded by local councils. The PCC confirmed that there are no immediate plans to significantly reduce PCSO's like other areas in the region and emphasised the important role PCSO's play within the community and engagement with the public.

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The meeting was finished by a member of the attendees publically thanking the Police for the work that they do and sharing the gratitude of the local community.

The PCC thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 20:45