

Rochford Public Meeting

28th March 2013

Hawthorn Centre – Rochford Hospital

18:30 to 20:30

Speakers

Nick Alston (PCC) – Police and Crime Commissioner for Essex
Chief Inspector Ian Cummings - Local District Commander
T/Chief Superintendent Luke Collison – South Policing Area Commander
Cllr. Jo McPherson – Chair of Rochford Community Safety Partnership
Inspector Jeff Appleby – Neighbourhood Policing Inspector

Agenda items

1. Licensing and the Night-time Economy
2. Anti-Social Behaviour / Graffiti
3. Shoplifting
4. Vehicle Crime
5. Topics for discussion raised by the audience

Highlights of Presentation

All Crime

- Rochford district has shown an all crime increase of 5.7% (150 more offences) when comparing reports between 1st March 2012 to 28th February 2013, against reports for 1st March 2011 to 29th February 2012.

Licensing and the Night-time Economy

- Rochford Licensing authority is responsible for the granting of licences.
- The police take a robust approach to the enforcement of licensing conditions
- New Pubwatch scheme being implemented enables licensees to share information
- Behave Or Be Banned (BOBB) is also to be introduced which enables licensees to ban offenders from all participating licenced premises

Anti-Social Behaviour / Graffiti

- ASB incidents cover a broad range including noise, abandoned vehicles and graffiti.
- Partnership approach exists between police, council, retailers and the community.
- Civil Anti-Social Behaviour Orders have recently been placed on two prolific graffiti offenders in the Rochford area

Shoplifting

- Reports of shoplifting in the Rochford area have increased over the last year
- Prolific offenders are known to travel in from outside the district
- New Retail Action Panel now in place to promote closer partnership working between retailers and police
- Operation Pepper provides officers dedicated to the reduction of offences

Vehicle Crime

- Over the past year vehicle offences have increased
- Theft from a vehicle is the most common vehicle crime offence
- Many offences of theft from motor vehicles could be avoided by securing vehicles and removing items of temptation

1. Licensing and night Time economy

Rochford Council is the licensing authority. Licensing meetings are open to the public and all decisions are evidence based. The Rochford district does not have a significant Night-time Economy (NTE) and most licenced premises have a 2am closing time. However, the NTE in Rayleigh is growing.

Q.1 How many Officers are on duty on Saturday evenings in the Rochford district?

A.1 Daily levels of policing are covered by the Rayleigh Neighbourhood Crime teams, supported by a response team from Southend. The Force Control Room can draft in additional resources from elsewhere if required, e.g. to cover seasonal events or in response to intelligence.

Q.2 Fear of crime is a concern, particularly for the elderly. How is this addressed?

A.2 There is a need to improve confidence and the increased visibility of officers can assist this. To ensure the most suitable deployment of officers in the local area the force may draw additional resources from the wider South Local Policing Area.

Q.3 Are Officers from the Special Constabulary routinely used?

A.3 Specials are used to provide support, mainly at weekends and for planned events.

2. Anti-Social behaviour / Graffiti

The police work closely with the local council to reduce incidents of ASB. A meeting is held monthly to discuss problem solving with partners. Intelligence from street cleaners and liaison with British Transport Police is helping to develop a database of graffiti 'tags'. Tags are often painted as high and large as possible to gain impact.

Q.1 Do cameras located on high buildings pick up graffiti incidents?

A.1 Not routinely as these cameras are often placed to pick up incidents related to the night-time economy, on the ground, rather than graffiti, which is sometimes on tall buildings.

- Q.2 What restraints does an Anti-social behaviour order (ASBO) impose?
 A.2 The conditions applied may be extensive. A civil ASBO carries wider conditions than a criminal ASBO, but any conditions must allow the offender to go about their normal business. Essex Police and Rochford Community Safety Partnership consider ASBOs to be effective.
- Q.3 Is it advisable to photograph graffiti before cleaning it off?
 A.3 Yes, as this helps to build up intelligence. Photographs and details of the date and the location of the graffiti can be e-mailed to communitysafety@rochford.gov.uk .
- Q.4 Are guidelines available for the public should their CCTV pick up evidence of a crime?
 A.4 Essex Police and the Crime Prevention Officer can provide specific advice. The type of recording device used and where and when recorded will be documented in a statement. The Crown Prosecution Service will determine whether the information constitutes admissible evidence.

3. Shoplifting

There has been a rise in reported shoplifting in the Rochford. The current policing response to this increase aims to promote closer partnership working between retailers and local police to combat crime. Retailers have been approached to sign up to Essex Retailers Against Crime (ERAC), which provides pictures of known offenders to assist their identification. If an individual is identified within the area this information can be ethically shared amongst local participating shops/stores.

- Q.1 A Rochford trader stated that he received information from national sources, but had received nothing from local resource and queried if any assistance was available?
 A.1 A Retail Neighbourhood Action Panel has been implemented in the Rochford district for this purpose. The panel meets monthly and all local retailers are invited to join.
- Q.2 The briefing states there were 245 incidents of shoplifting. Of these how many ended in prosecution of the offender?
 A.2 Approximately 1 in 5 offenders are convicted through the court processes.
- Q.3 There should be fewer cautions and warnings and an increase in cases sent to court.
 A.3 It is essential to use the right intervention to prevent re-offending and the police are working with partners to ensure this . Officers should be able to exercise professional discretion and there may be occasions where putting an offender through the court system may not be the most appropriate course of action.

4. Vehicle Crime

Vehicle crime is low in Rochford district comparative to others areas of Essex. One third of vehicle crimes are due to vehicles being left insecure and many crimes are committed by opportunist criminals.

- Q.1 Are there any limitations as to police following a stolen vehicle?
 A.1 There are no 'no go' areas.

5. Open Questions Raised By Audience

- Q.1 Is there a rationale for assessing the number of police officers required when making an arrest?
- A.1 The lead officer will make a professional judgement as to the requirements to respond to each individual incident.
- Q.2 Are burglaries undertaken to obtain money for drugs in most cases?
- A.2 Rochford district generally does not have a burglary problem but it remains a priority. Some burglaries are committed by people with a drug or alcohol problem. There is an emerging drug problem and it is essential to raise awareness in young people by education. Youth alcohol consumption is also a concern.
- Q.3 There have been several burglaries in an area of Rayleigh, yet when 101 was called to report three suspicious suspects it took a long time to get through and the response received was poor. An attempted burglary occurred a few days later in the immediate area. Why was the response poor and no link made between the first report and the offence?
- A.3 The area in question has been identified as a current hot spot by analysts. An operation is in place providing extra patrols in the area and enquiries are on-going. The District Commander and the Crime Prevention Officer discussed the incident with the members of public concerned directly after the meeting. The PCC and the District Commander encouraged the reporting of suspicious activity and the calling of 999 if the activity seems highly suspicious.
- Q.4 Are attempted burglaries treated the same as actual burglary offences?
- A.4 Yes, they are treated in the same manner in terms of police response.
- Q.5 There is inadequate feedback and communication to victims of burglary.
- A.5 The PCC agrees that customer satisfaction is important forms part of his on-going scrutiny of the force. This matter will be reviewed when the PCC returns to the district in six months.

Actions or priorities

- OPCC to review response and follow-up to 101 calls
- Police to follow up specific incidents raised during the meeting by members of the public.
- OPCC to obtain information regarding the outcomes of dwelling burglary cases sent to the Crown Prosecution Service.
- OPCC to obtain data for re-offending rates and publish the figures on the PCC website
- PCC to review customer feedback and communication satisfaction upon return to Rochford district in six months.
- Promotion of new retail Neighbourhood Action Panel (NAP) - meets monthly.
- Photographs and details of the date and location of the graffiti can be e-mailed to communitysafety@rochford.gov.uk .