

Colchester Public Meeting

15 April 2013
Council Chambers
16:30 to 18:30

Speakers

Nick Alston (PCC) – Police and Crime Commissioner for Essex
Chief Inspector Richard Phillibrown - Local District Commander
Cllr. Tim Young – Planning, Community Safety & Culture Portfolio
Inspector Jim White – Neighbourhood Policing Inspector
Sergeant Rob Temme – Neighbourhood Sergeant

Agenda items

1. Essex Police all crime overview
2. Community Safety Partnership
3. Knife Crime
4. House Burglary
5. Evening and Night Time Economy
6. Topics for discussion raised by the audience

Highlights of Presentation

All Crime

- Colchester district has shown house burglary has increased by 44.9% (190 more offences), other theft and handling has increased by 8.6% (110 more offences) and assault with injury has increased by 3.6% (38 more offences). Theft from vehicles has reduced by 16.3% (132 fewer offences), theft and taking from motor vehicles has reduced by 18.1% (36 fewer offences). Shoplifting has reduced by 22.4% (279 fewer offences) and racially aggravated crime has reduced by 43.9% (36 fewer offences) when comparing reports between 1st March 2012 to 28th February 2013, against reports for 1st March 2011 to 29th February 2012.

Community Safety Partnership

- Community Safety Partnership works with a number of agencies to include Police, Essex County Council, Essex Probation, Trading Standards and Essex County Fire and Rescue Service.
- On April 15th, 2013, Colchester was awarded the Purple Flag status for night time economy status
- Crucial Crew project for older people giving advice and information on home and personal safety
- Crucial Crew project for young people to raise awareness of risks they may face and how to deal with them

Knife Crime

- Serious offences involving knives reduced to 22 this past year against 35 the previous year
- 'Only Cowards Carry', knife-crimes organisation and other anti-knife crime campaigns are undertaking excellent work to change the attitudes of people to ensure they do not use or carry knives. This work is supported through the delivery of educational programmes in local schools

House Burglary

- Burglary offences in Colchester have increased by over 40% against the previous year
- A series of offences in Tiptree targeting elderly people with key safes, stealing the keys by prising open the boxes and using them to enter their houses.
- Burglaries of student residencies

Night Time Economy

- Colchester has nearly 100 registered entertainment and licensed premises
- Multi-agency approach to ensure a safe environment e.g. SOS bus, Street Pastors

1. Knife Crime

To address any emerging problems in relation to knife crime and drugs an operation has been implemented in the Colchester district to collect information and intelligence and conduct activity around identified offenders.

Q.1 How often is Stop and Search used? How does it work?

A.1 A police officer has powers to stop and go on to search you if they have 'reasonable grounds' to suspect you are carrying drugs, a weapon, stolen property or something which could be used to commit a crime. There are times, however, when you can be searched within a certain area where there is evidence that serious violence has or may take place (Section 60 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994).

Chief Insp Phillibrown will be ensuring that officers have the confidence and training to use Stop and Search powers where appropriate.

Q.2 Are you aware that Colchester hospital do not report knife crime?

A.2 Essex Police is working with hospitals in Colchester and Chelmsford to ensure that there is a proper, ethical, flow of information around the treatment of trauma injuries in A&E departments. This work is developing, and the PCC will be following its progress closely.

Q.3 Should there be a minimum sentence if you are caught carrying a knife?

A.3 The PCC is keen to ensure that the intervention genuinely changes attitudes and reduces reoffending. Short term prison sentences for young people typically result in an increased chance of reoffending, when compared with other, supervised,

interventions such as community payback work. However, for the most serious offences, a prison sentence should certainly be an option for strong consideration.

Q.4 Is it possible to have a knife license and fine parents if their child is caught carrying a knife?

A.4 Educational programmes via schools and working with parents will help to address issues around raising awareness of risky behaviours and the consequences.

Q.5 Police visibility on the streets seems to be few and far between. How many officers are on duty at any one time?

A.5 Daily levels of policing are covered by the Neighbourhood teams, supported by a response team. 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.6 What programmes does Essex Police run within schools?

A.6 The Community Safety Partnership works closely with Essex Police to run a series of educational programmes in primary schools highlighting consequences of their actions, e.g. Crucial Crew project. The council would like to extend this programme to include secondary schools.

2. House Burglary

In the Colchester district police have adapted operational activity to target both the identified offenders and the locations of highest incidence.

Since Christmas around 15 prolific burglars have been arrested and imprisoned as a result of tactics targeting offenders; house burglary rates have dipped significantly during this period.

Q.1 What is the position of cautions and burglars?

A.1 No household burglaries have resulted in a caution in Colchester. There are rare occasions where a caution may be given. Burglary committed by a stranger would normally be taken to the Crown Prosecution Service with a view to charging the suspect with burglary with sufficient evidence.

Q.2 There are a number of Street Pastors who could work with Essex Police with Homeguard which aims to enhance public awareness of criminal activity, providing an opportunity for people from across the community to work with the police as volunteers.

A.2 Homeguard is being developed in partnership with the Safer Colchester Partnership and Colchester Community Voluntary Services to address emotive crimes such as burglary. Essex Police will continue to work on this and will look to develop with Street Pastors.

Q.3 What is the link between drug abuse and burglaries?

A.3 Some burglaries are committed by people with a drug or alcohol problem. There are a number of operational activities set up to target the identified offenders using intelligence led information.

Q.4 What work is being done to trace back goods that have been stolen?

A.4 PCSOs are working closely with second hand shops providing a full description and photos of stolen goods. Shops are encouraged to proactively report back to Essex Police items brought into their shop matching the description.

- Q.5 Can the council work with the planning department on how to secure and design the housing layout on private developments?
- A.5 It has been recognised that there are design faults on some estates and that more can be done to improve crime prevention when working in partnership with the planning department. Crime Prevention Tactical Advisor Stephen Armson-Smith talked of his work on new builds as a qualified Architectural Liaison Officer for Essex Police.

3. Night Time Economy

Colchester is one of the busiest, night-time venues in the county, with nearly 100 registered entertainment and licensed premises.

- Q.1 Is there a drugs problem in Colchester?
- A.1 Colchester is no different to anywhere else within the county. There are operations within the district to target areas.
- Q.2 Open spaces are being used by drug dealers, how is Essex Police dealing with this?
- A.2 Certain areas are known to be problematic and the police are continuing to address this as well as balancing priorities across the district.
- Q.3. There is the perception that there are no go zones in Colchester. What can be done to deal with that perception?
- A.3 There are no 'no go' areas in Colchester. The police are working very closely with all partner agencies to reassure members of the public. There is a need to improve confidence and the increased visibility of officers can assist this.

4. Open Questions Raised By Audience

- Q.1 Detection levels in Essex are poor how is this being addressed?
- A.1 It was noted that detection levels in Essex are poor. There is a falling trend in reported crime over the last few years and Essex continues to be one of the safest counties in which to live or work in.
- Q.2 There are anti-social behaviour drinking and graffiti hot spots in the town centre, how is this managed?
- A.2 Police officers are posted within certain zones in the town centre to deal with these issues at known times when there are likely to be problems.
- Q.3 Local businesses are reporting an increase of incidents of drug dealing occurring in the day time. How is this being dealt with?
- A.3 Specific incidents should be reported to Essex Police as soon as they known. If the incident is on-going, please use 999 to report the matter. There is a need to improve confidence and the increased visibility of officers to assist this.
- Q.4 The non-emergency 101 telephone number has a poor response. What is being done to improve this?
- A.4 It has been recognised that there are problems with the non- emergency number and there is work currently underway to address this. The PCC and the District Commander encouraged the reporting of suspicious activity and the calling of 999 if the activity seems highly suspicious.

Q.5. What is the PCC role and costs of the office?

A.5 PCC is committed to holding at least two public meetings in each district yearly. The purpose of these meetings will be to discuss key issues that relate to crime for that district. The PCC has removed targets for all crime types and has tasked the Chief Constable to bring all crime down and to have fewer victims. Over the last three months the PCC has been listening to people's issues and concerns. A statement of accounts will be published on our website in June outlining costs of the office.

Q.6 How are Neighbourhood Action Panels matched?

A.6 Neighbourhood Action Panels are matched to zones as agreed by the Community Safety Partnership. Cllr Tim Young advised that there will be seven NAPs in the future.

Q.7 What is the future of PCSOs?

A.7 PCSOs have been cut by 25% as a result of budgetary constraints but there are no current plans to make any further cuts in this area.

Actions

- District Commander to arrange training for officers on the use of stop and search powers
- PCC and District Commander to pursue contact with the health service to improve reporting on knife crime injuries
- Community Safety Partnership to encourage schools to raise awareness on the consequences of carrying a knife – refer to 'only cowards carry' campaign
- Community Safety Partnership to have continuous educational awareness programmes in primary to secondary schools on risky behaviour
- Members of the public to report hot spots of crime so the police can catch offenders
- PCC to review 101 non-emergency telephone number in response to concerns
- PCC to ensure crime detection rates data are published on the website
- District Commander to report back on progress on burglary initiatives
- District Commander to continue to work on Homeguard and to report on progress.
- District Commander to see what advice Street Pastors can offer on community involvement
- Neighbourhood Action Panels to report back how these are working