

PUBLIC MEETING

DATE 23RD JULY 2013
LOCATION COUNCIL CHAMBER, THURROCK COUNCIL, GRAYS
TIME 17:30 – 19:30

SPEAKERS

Nick Alston (PCC) – Police and Crime Commissioner for Essex
Ch. Insp. Ben Hodder – District Commander
Cllr Angie Gaywood – Portfolio Holder for Public Protection
Graham Farrant – Chief Executive Thurrock Council

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Burglary and theft
2. Police response and visibility
3. Cruisers
4. Serious sexual crime
5. Hate crime

HIGHLIGHTS OF PRESENTATION

Ch Insp Hodder opened this section of the presentation by explaining how policing the Thurrock district is unique in respect of its geographical position. As well as dealing with local offenders there is the added challenge associated with cross border criminal activity.

1. BURGLARY AND THEFT

- There were 146 more burglary offences during the period 1st July 2012 to 30th June 2013 when compared with the same period in the previous year, representing an increase of 18.3%.
- Theft from vehicles increased by 6.3% (74 more offences) and theft and taking of motor vehicles increased by 10.3% (67 more offences) when comparing recorded offences for 1st July 2012 to 30th June 2013 against the same period the previous year.

Currently there is a pan Essex operation tackling house burglary. Locally, there are additional initiatives in place to combat the problem. These range from targeting the offenders through to working with the local communities to gather intelligence.

The detection rate for burglary is low at 17% for the district. However, Ch Insp Hodder explained the difficulties the police face when proving beyond reasonable doubt that the offence of burglary has been committed. Offenders can be charged with burglary, handling stolen goods or theft.

Around 30% of reported burglary offences are attempted. This reinforces the need for communities to take preventative action and ensure their properties are kept secure. For further crime prevention advice contact the local **Crime Prevention Officer, Alan Twine on 01375 362135.**

Vehicle crime is often closely linked with burglary. A local operation has been in place targeting vehicle crime. As a result, there has been a reduction of 100 offences during the period 1st April to 30th June 2013 when compared with the same period in the previous year.

As part of the local investigation, Det Insp Wheeler's team looks at crime trends, utilises automated number plate recognition (ANPR) cameras and visits local known offenders. As with all crime the public can help by:

- Reporting any suspicious or unusual activities, however insignificant it may seem
- Make a note of any unusual vehicles or people in your neighbourhood

Report anything of a non-emergency nature by dialling **101** within Essex, or **01245 491491**.

2. POLICE RESPONSE AND VISIBILITY

- Essex Police aim to attend 90% of all emergency response calls within 15 minutes in urban areas and 20 minutes in rural areas.
- For the period 1st April to 30th June 2013 Essex Police achieved their target responding to 92.7% of urban emergency calls and 93.2% of rural emergency calls within these times, an improvement in the figures for the same period in the previous year.
- Response and Patrol (R&P) policing teams, who attend the majority of the emergency incidents, are based at the Grays Response Hub.

The neighbourhood policing teams operate locally but are able to draw upon resources from other areas when required. To continue to build confidence within the community PCSOs routinely patrol their own areas. To support the local policing teams there are six dedicated neighbourhood constables who specifically tackle complex community problems.

Q ~ What confidence can the residents of Thurrock have that they have a fair distribution of police officers in proportion to the rest of the county?

A ~ It is the role of the PCC to hold the Chief Constable to account for the delivery of the policing service across Essex. The Chief Constable has operational independence and the deployment of his officers is his responsibility. When considering deployment of his officers the Chief Constable looks at the mix of the population, crime and threat of harm. The south of Essex receives the greater share of policing, which is right and appropriate when considering these factors.

3. CRUISERS

Essex is one of the top ten police forces that has experienced problems associated with cruisers.

These issues predominantly affect the Lakeside retail park and surrounding areas. Again this demonstrates Thurrock's unique position, with Lakeside being in close proximity to the M25 and A13. Evidence has shown that some drivers have travelled considerable distances to take part in cruising events.

In addition to the location there are a number of factors that lead to the problems associated with cruisers. For example, the retail park cannot be closed early due to the night-time economy in the area. Some, but not all of the problems are illegal, however all issues are being considered, using a joined up multi agency approach. Funding has been secured and work is ongoing with the Highways Agency in redesigning some of the road layout, preventing roundabouts being used inappropriately.

A police operation in early July saw 300 warning letters sent to the registered keepers of vehicles stopped at a cruising event. As a result of the operation 60 people will be appearing in court over the next few weeks.

The PCC will revisit this issue at the next meeting for an updated position.

4. SERIOUS SEXUAL CRIME

From April to June 2013 there have been 32 reported offences of serious sexual crime, an increase of six incidents when looking at the same period last year. There are a number of offences that fall within this crime category, most notably sexual assault and rape.

Essex Police has dedicated teams that investigate serious sexual crimes. The number of 'solved crimes' has increased when compared with last year. Since 1st April 2013 81 incidents of serious sexual offences have been solved when compared to the same period last year, where 53 crimes were solved.

The use of cautions issued for serious sexual offences was raised by the PCC. Det Supt Wilson is the Essex Police Strategic Lead for serious sexual crime. He briefly explained the criteria used when considering the appropriateness of issuing a caution. The number of cautions issued this year has reduced when compared to the same period last year.

Det Supt Wilson and his team work alongside the South Essex Rape and Incest Crisis Centre (SERICC) taking a proactive approach in addressing these crimes. Mr Wilson praised the work of SERICC and thanked them for their continued contribution. Sheila Coates, SERICC, stated that the number of incidents recorded by SERICC show approximately three times as many incidents as those recorded by Essex Police.

SERICC is pleased that there has been a reduction in the use of cautions but asked that these figures are monitored by the PCC. The PCC asked for further detail to be provided to explain the reason for the increase in the number of cautions issued last year. Further detail around this increase and future statistics concerning the use of cautions will be made available on the PCC's website in due course.

Q ~ Sheila Coates asked the PCC for reassurance that the commissioned funding would continue in the next financial year.

A ~ The PCC said he would do everything he could to maintain funding levels to victims' services; however at this stage he is unaware of the amount of funding that will be available in the future.

5. HATE CRIME

Thurrock has a disproportionate amount of hate crime incidents linked to race when compared to the whole of Essex, but this does reflect the multi-cultural community. Essex Police is aware that hate crime is under-reported; however the force works closely with the Independent Advisory Group (IAG) to obtain a more accurate picture. The PCC will ask for an update report from the IAG to be presented at the next meeting.

The vast majority of recorded hate crime incidents are abusive words or language, with only a small proportion of incidents of assault.

Later this year the Strategic Hate Crime Prevention Partnership will be hosting a conference to raise the awareness of hate crime. It will be an opportunity for partners to come together and discuss new ways of working to prevent hate crime. The new third party reporting system, the Hate Incident Reporting Centre (HIRC), will be officially launched at the conference. HIRC is currently being trialled and allows incidents of hate crime to be reported by individuals who may have witnessed the offence, but not necessarily been involved in them. The trial, which is taking place in Basildon, Southend and Chelmsford, is already proving effective.

Q ~ What is the definition of hate crime?

A ~ The Association of Chief Police Officers defines hate crime as any hate incident, which constitutes a criminal offence, perceived by the victim or any other person, as being motivated by prejudice or hate.

Q ~ How many hate crime convictions were recorded last year?

A ~ This information will be published on the PCC's website in due course.

6. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION RAISED BY THE AUDIENCE

a. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ALONG CHURCH PATH

Q ~ What can be done about the anti-social behaviour (ASB) along Church Path?

A ~ Ch Insp Hodder is aware of the incidents of ASB along Church Path. It

is subject of a Dedicated Public Place Order (DPPO). DPPOs give police officers discretionary powers to require a person to stop drinking and confiscate alcohol or containers of alcohol in public places.

Eight to ten persistent offenders are frequently found in Church Path. As it takes time to gather the evidence required to obtain a court order to place Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, intermediate ways of dealing with these offenders have been implemented. For example, police patrols in this area have been increased, both on foot and on cycles. CCTV is being utilised, and the deployment of mobile finger print devices to name a few.

It is an ongoing issue that will continue to be addressed. An update will be provided at the next meeting in November.

b. STATISTICAL DATA

Q ~ Who prepares the statistical data that are included within the briefing paper?

A ~ The statistical data within the briefing paper are prepared by Essex Police using information that is collected in accordance with the Home Office Counting Rules. This is then passed to the PCC's office where separate analysis is completed and this is included within the briefing pack.

7. NEXT MEETING

- 22nd November 2013
- 17:00 – 19:00
- Venue to be confirmed.