

Uttlesford Public Meeting

19th September 2013

Saffron Walden, Friends School

19:30 to 21:30

Speakers

Lindsay Whitehouse (DPCC) – Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Essex

John Mitchell – Chief Executive for Uttlesford District Council

Richard Melton - Chief Inspector & Local District Commander for Essex Police

Colin Cox – Inspector for Essex Police

Sean O’Callaghan - Chief Superintendent for Essex Police

Leon Dias – Head of Specials

Peter Caulfield – Crime Prevention

Agenda items

1. House burglary
2. Vehicle crime
3. Rural crime
4. Questions from the audience

Highlights of Presentation

All Crime

- Over the past two years there has been an overall increase of crime by 4.7% (125 offences), burglary dwelling by 55.7% (73 more offences), burglary in other dwelling has increased by 16.1% (67 more offences), criminal damage has increased by 10.2% (42 more offences) for the period of 1st September 2012 to 31st August 2013 when compared to the same period the previous year.

Community Safety Partnership

- Priorities for Uttlesford District Council
- CSP supporting the work of the police

House Burglary

- Work to address house burglaries has included additional police patrols and cross border operations, liaison with local partners and the district, town and parish councils, crime prevention visits and liaison with the local neighbourhood watch.

Vehicle crime

- Over the past year, theft from motor vehicles in the Uttlesford district reduced by 73 offences, from 415 between September 2011 and August 2012 to 342 offences during September 2012 and August 2013.

Rural crime

- The current rural crime trends in Uttlesford include the theft of portable equipment, fuel and small vehicles such as quad bikes from outbuildings, theft of gas canisters from bird scarers, battery theft from farms and tack theft from equestrian establishments.

1. House burglary

House burglaries in the district increased by 73 offences last year. Despite this increase the district has the second lowest number of house burglaries for all the districts in Essex.

Q.1 The perception in Saffron Walden is that police resources are diverted elsewhere and as a consequence there is an increase in crime. Why is the local police station in town not used?

A.1 The response and patrol unit are based at Braintree which provides a challenge. Resources are tight and how the police manage that strategically is reviewed on a weekly basis, crime stats and patterns are discussed between the Superintendent and District Commander. Targeted crime and any spikes in the district are reviewed so that resources can be deployed appropriately.

Q.2 What was the reason for the recent spikes?

A.2 A small group of individuals from Sawbridgeworth were responsible for some of the recent increases which has subsequently been addressed.

Q.3. What reassurance can victims of crime expect from the PCC?

A.3. From April 2014 funds will be re-directed to the PCC for victim crime via commissioning services. This entails looking at mapping exercises in conjunction with Essex Police to have a fuller insight for future services.

Q.4. Why does it take over an hour for the police to respond to a burglary? In addition to this details were given to local officers informing them that a tracker device was fitted. The item was tracked down to the Metropolitan Police district. Essex Police's response was that because it was in the Met district that they had no powers to proceed with recovering the stolen items.

A.4. Essex Police is looking at cross border crime. Essex Police work closely with the Met and local forces via monthly meetings to share intelligence and look at offending patterns as well as cross border operations.

Q.5. Metal theft such as cables from trains has been an issue in the district, what has been done to tackle this?

A.5. A recent change to legislation has meant that scrap users are held to account. All transaction must be clearly audited and cash sales are no longer valid.

2. Vehicle crime

A reduction was seen in theft from motor vehicles in the last 12 months. High valued vehicles are being targeted by organised criminals who travel to the district to steal cars.

Q.1 Does Essex Police have sympathy and compassion if individuals leave their keys in the car? What is the approach from the police?

A.1 Every victim is treated with empathy there is a corporate frustration that something so easily could be prevented. The job of the police is to protect the public but it the onus and responsibility also lies with the owner.

Q.2 Criminals are stealing keys from households to target high valued vehicles. What are the police doing?

A.2 These are referred to as Millennium burglaries – this is generally a low type crime in Uttlesford. Essex Police have good links with the docks and operations with Suffolk Police.

3. Rural Crime

Local work to address rural crime includes developing intelligence, targeting local suspects and increased patrols in local areas.

The force is looking at using volunteers from the Special Constabulary to become more involved within the rural community.

Q.1. Will the PCC be supporting the Special Constabulary in future years?

A.1. The intention for the future is currently under discussion with the Chief Constable who has re-affirmed his commitment. The PCC New Initiative Fund will support what is already in place with regular colleagues by having a dedicated rural crime team. There will be 12 officers in the Uttlesford area (who has knowledge of a rural community) to go live in November 2013.

Q.2. Will Specials be mobile?

A.2. Initially officers will be based at Great Dunmow but the intention is for them to become mobile. The force is looking at utilising different kits such as quad bikes to deal with issues such as hare coursing. Chief Superintendent Luke Collison wants to develop a community messaging system, soon to be launched.

Q.3. Can Saffron Walden have resources returned to deal with theft of fuel on farms?

A.4. The fleet was re-distributed due to restructuring 18 months ago which is currently being reviewed and addressed.

Q.4. What can be done to deal with off road motor cycles?

A.4. This falls under anti- social behaviour, Specials are looking at addressing 4x4 and also forming part of the rural crime team agenda.

Q.5. Hare-coursing is an issue in rural areas, has Essex Police improved it technology to find victims of crime?

A.5. Officers were moved around the force approximately 18 months ago – which had an impact on local knowledge – this is now being addressed.

Action: Sean O'Callaghan to look at what the Fire Service system has in place

4. Questions from the Audience

Q.1. There is concern on how cyber victims are dealt with as this is seen as an invisible burglary. What are Essex Police doing to tackle this type of crime?

A.1. Action 4 was set up by Central Government based in the City of London as cyber-crime is dealt with in isolation. However in terms of claiming detection rates – this is covered by the City of London.

Action: PCC to look at victim commissioning

Q.2. The Essex Watch Administrator covers a wide area and therefore the district does not appear to be getting the service it requires. What is being done about this?

- A.2. The force is looking at becoming more efficient in this area and it is on the agenda to be tackled later in the year.
- Q.3. Saffron Walden seems to be lacking basic policing – e.g. dealing with speeding. What approach is being adopted to tackle this issue?
- A.3. A realistic approach to deal with excessive speed is dealt with via stop checks. Resources are deployed to highlighted areas where traffic officers can deal with any issues.

Action: District Commander to monitor highlighted speeding issues

- Q.4. What are the plans to amalgamate the Police and Fire Service?
- A.4. The Home Secretary recently highlighted this as a possibility going forward to combine services as part of efficiency savings. The PCC has been invited to look and discuss this subject by the Home Office.
- Q.5. Will reported crimes be pursued?
- A.5. The PCC is aware that the crime solve rate is not very good and is an area for improvement. The PCC wants every crime type to be addressed.
- Q.6. What has been the impact of police station closures?
- A.6. The PCC and Chief constable are adopting a flexible approach to deploy resources rather than occupying buildings. It is about getting the right police officers in the right places. Modern technology will aid where the officers need to be deployed.
- Q.7. What measures are in place around offender released into the community?
- A.7. The Integrated Offender Management deals with those offenders at highest risk before release. A review is undertaken by probation as to what levels of supervision is required. The police take an intrusive approach and those who do not engage the police will work closely with partner agencies to get those offenders back on track.
- Q.8. What is the stance from Essex Police on travellers who pitch up at the cricket ground?
- A.8. Anyone in the travelling community who commits a crime will be dealt with rapidly, this is the commitment made by the Chief Constable. Human rights work both ways and it is up to the land owner to request for the travellers to be moved on.
- Q.9. At this time of year there are many vehicles that are out on the road with faulty headlights. What is being done to address this?
- A.9. The PCC is committed to improving road safety which is highlighted as a priority in the police and crime plan.

Action: District Commander to task team to deal with issues as and when they see them.

- Q.10. What is the symptom of house-hold burglaries?
- A.10. Crime statistics indicate that 20-30 year olds are usually committing house hold burglaries to meet a drug habit. Items such jewellery or cash being taken and then sold at second hand shops.

Action: A detective to respond to a burglary within an hour of being reported to police and scenes of crime officer. If there is a delay, the victim will be notified at the earliest opportunity.