

SOUTHEND ON SEA DISTRICT - PUBLIC MEETING

DATE: 17 JANUARY 2014

LOCATION: THE FORUM, ELMER AVENUE, SOUTHEND ON SEA

TIME: 18:30- 20:30

Speakers

Nick Alston (PCC) – Police and Crime Commissioner for Essex
Chief Inspector Matt Bennett - Local District Commander
Superintendent Nick Morris – Local policing area
Inspector Bill Potter – Neighbourhood policing team
Simon Ford –Community Safety Partnership Manager

Agenda items

1. Acquisitive crime
2. Partnership working

Highlights of Presentation

Nick Alston introduced the speakers and discussed his first year in office and the future public meeting schedule, including the [Essex Police Challenge meeting of February 27](#), where the PCC and members of the public can ask Chief Constable Stephen Kavanagh questions about local policing.

The PCC stressed the importance of his continuing to meet the public and local officers in each area to understand local issues and concerns.

All Crime

Chief Inspector Matt Bennett stated that the force has a good working relationship with the local authority and partnerships.

Overall crime in the district has increased slightly and there were 112 more offences recorded than the previous year. There were increases seen in incidents of house burglary, vehicle crime, shoplifting and robbery.

There were fewer incidents of criminal damage and assault with less serious injury.

The Chief Inspector added that policing in these austere times can be challenging, but efficient use of available resources helps to provide a good service.

The full Southend briefing document can be seen [here](#).

Agenda items

1. Acquisitive Crime

Acquisitive crime is defined as offences where the offender derives material gain from the crime, such as burglary, shoplifting and vehicle crime.

Chief Inspector Matt Bennett stated that it was essential that crimes continue to be recorded correctly so the police and partner resources can be deployed in an informed and appropriate fashion to reduce crime.

He informed the meeting that fluctuations in burglary are usually associated with seasonal swings (weather related and dark evenings) and factors such as prolific offenders, technically known as Public and Other Priority Offender (PPOs). Essex Police works with offenders, partners and probation services to provide support to ex-offenders, which is key to preventing re-offending. However, where individuals show signs of returning to offending, robust action will be taken.

The current response times to burglary in the Southend district are very good. Under Operation Insight, Essex Police is trialling predictive policing techniques with the aim of reducing burglary numbers and preventing them from happening. Officers patrol areas with high numbers of incidents to identify vulnerable properties and alert the occupants.

Chief Insp Bennett also advised that the police work closely with the retail community. The force is providing the best possible service by investing resources in areas suffering the highest volume of incidents. Crime prevention information is regularly provided.

Mr Alston emphasised the importance that the public ensure their homes and cars are locked securely.

2. Partnership working

Essex Police works closely with partners in the Southend district, and in particular the Southend Community Safety Partnership. Partnership working ensures an efficient approach and the best use of available resources.

For instance, examples of initiatives which help keep Southend's thriving nightlife safe include:

- Behave or Be Banned (BOBB);
- Door staff accreditation;
- SOS bus – recently awarded the prestigious Queen's Award for Voluntary Services;
- Street Pastors;
- All plastic drinking vessel clubs;

Questions from the audience:

Stop the hate Conference

Question (Q). Why was there a £70 charge if you booked but failed to attend this conference held December 2013?

Summary of answer (A). Nick Alston advised that he had attended this conference which was excellent and would look into this matter after the meeting and respond.

The PCC added that he is actively working to engage with groups who have previously been hard to reach, to enable understanding of their concerns.

Chief Inspector Matt Bennett added that the minority community elements in Southend district had grown to 13-14% and Essex Police were engaging with the emerging communities. The number of hate crime incidents in the Southend district is low.

Action: Nick Alston to clarify the £70 charge for non-attendance at the Stop the Hate conference.

Update: Update: The Essex Police conference organiser advises that there was an application form process, to enable numbers to be gauged in advance and encourage attendance. The application form stated that if delegates booked and then failed to attend without prior warning or good reason, they may be subject to a £70 charge. This is now fairly standard practice for conferences as there have been problems with large numbers of non-attenders at some events. A few potential delegates did contact the Essex Police organiser regarding this and were reassured that if they had genuine difficulty in attending on the day and advised the force, there would be no charge. The conference had excellent attendance, and no-one was charged.

The PCC is sorry if anyone formed the impression that they would be charged if they applied to attend the conference and were then unable to attend at the last minute for good reason. He stresses that it was not the intention of the conference organisers to deter people from attending the conference.

Policing of Southend district

Q. How is a balance established policing the dynamics of Southend district?

A. Chief Inspector Matt Bennett responded that seasonal adjustments required due to the influx of visitors to the Southend district in finer weather do increase the strain upon policing resources.

He stated that it is essential to use the budget available to best effect. Resources are placed where the demand arises, with any changes in requirement soon realised and deployment adjusted accordingly. Intelligence sharing supports officers on duty and they respond accordingly.

Nick Alston reiterated the importance of undertaking preventative work to avoid crimes occurring and to reduce reoffending, in addition to the solving of crime. This is not just about policing but also includes partnerships and the whole available resource.

Predictive model to address burglary

Q. What have been the outcomes of the use of the predictive model?

A. Chief Inspector Matt Bennett responded that Essex Police is running Operation Insight to tackle burglary across the county. This consists of a new system of analysis and deployment of resources into 'hot spots' likely to suffer burglaries, reducing the chance of them occurring. This provides a more efficient use of police resources and maximises the opportunity to prevent crime. Maps are produced weekly to highlight areas for more intensive patrolling based on their vulnerability to offences. Partner agencies are fully involved in this process.

Fluctuations in burglary are usually associated with seasonal swings (weather related) and/or active Prolific and Other Priority Offender (PPO's). Provision of accommodation and other support for ex-offenders is also key to preventing re-offending

Serious assaults

Q. What is the number of serious assaults in the district and what policing is being undertaken?

A. Chief Inspector Matt Bennett advised that there are approximately 2 incidents a week of serious assault. This figure includes Domestic Violence incidents, in addition to any offences related to the night-time economy. Southend has large pubs and clubs with the capacity for over 20,000 people. The force and PCC actively encourage the reporting of all assault incidents.

Simon Ford stated that the Community Safety Partnership identifies the key priorities and how to address them through multi-action groups and initiatives.

Retail Crime

Q: What is the PCC doing to help address retail crime?

A. Mr Alston advised that he has established a Business forum, to ensure that the Chief Constable (CC) hears the business point of view on crime.

The meeting was informed that retailers in the town had funded a small team of Street Rangers to address concerns of businesses within the town.

Mr Alston stated the importance of long-term investment in technology and the importance of reducing the demand on resources to improve efficiency and response. The effective use of the Special Constabulary, volunteers and liaison with partners is essential.

Night-time economy

Q: What is the effect of the night-time economy on the town, including the perception of others?

A. Simon Ford advised that Southend was awarded the 'Purple flag' for its' night-time economy work. Purple Flag is a national accreditation scheme that recognises excellence in the management of town and city centres at night. The Community Safety Partnership and police work with managers and staff of the pubs and clubs in the Southend district to reduce crime in the night-time economy. Other initiatives include the SOS bus and help points.

Chief Inspector Matt Bennett stated that the general trend shows the number of incidents of crime is decreasing. However, public perception does not appear to reflect this. Police officers are motivated and professional and aim to meet the high expectations. Challenges to local policing arise with more officers in specialist roles.

Increase in gambling and betting shops in the district

Q. There has been an increase in betting shops and fixed odds machines in the district. Who licences these and what impacts have been seen?

A. Betting shops are licensed by the local authority. Consideration of applications follows a policy framework, which includes consultation with Essex Police and respective agencies.

Chief Inspector Matt Bennett reported there was no current evidence regarding any impact of betting shops on local communities, but if links between gambling debts and crime emerged, then this would be an area of concern for police.

Simon Ford stated that engagement with betting shops required further development as many are open until 11pm, which makes them a part of the night-time economy.

As with other licensing processes, members of the public are able to provide evidence to local authority licensing committees of any direct impact on daily life.

PCC – Political appointment

Q. Does the PCC's political affiliation influence his role?

A. Nick Alston stated that he was elected as a Conservative and of course supports Conservative principles. However he works for and represents every person in Essex. His political affiliation does not prevent him working closely with other Police and Crime Commissioners regardless of their political affiliation. As a Conservative Mr Alston has excellent access to senior politicians in government, which can be advantageous. Ultimately however, the PCC will always seek to do the right and responsible things in the interests of all the people of Essex to continue to keep them as safe from crime as possible.

Drugs effect on number of acquisitive crimes

Q: What is the effect of drugs related crime?

A. Chief Inspector Matt Bennett stated that the force is proactively dealing with drug issues and crime that may be drugs-related. Some illicit drug users not receiving treatment for their addiction may commit acquisitive crime to fund their drug use. The police work in liaison with retailers in the Southend district to catch shoplifters. Useful information is also received via Crimestoppers.

Nick Alston advised that high level drug crime is the focus of the Serious Crime Directorate. Essex Police have significantly increased the number of arrests of Class A illegal drugs suppliers this year compared with the previous year.