

Colchester Public Meeting

Thursday December 3rd 2015

District Profile

Colchester District is part of the North Local Policing Area (LPA) covering an area of 125 square miles and including a diverse mix of rural and urban communities from Dedham Vale and in the north, to the oyster beds of Mersea Island in the south.

Colchester is the oldest recorded town in Britain and therefore attracts a high number of visitors a year. The town centre has a vibrant economy with retail, cultural and evening entertainment facilities attracting a diverse mix of people.

Colchester Football Club plays in the national first division and has a stadium and conference complex to the north of the town.

In recent years, successive house building programmes have seen the expansion of the historic main town of Colchester and fast developing satellite towns such as Tiptree on the southern border of the district.

The local resident population of Colchester is the second largest of any district in Essex. The 2011 census recorded a total of 173,100 residents, although in 2012 Essex County Council estimated the population to be over 180,000 and the largest district in the county. Colchester has 47.1% of all recorded short-term residents in Essex. This influence is illustrated by two significant community groups. Firstly, there are over 11,000 students at Essex University. These include over 3,000 post graduates from 140 different countries. Secondly, there are over 11,500 military personnel living and working in the town, including some of the UK's most elite rapid reaction forces from the Parachute Regiment, making Colchester the second largest military town in the country.

Current Policing Structure and Resources in Colchester

Neighbourhood Policing

The current Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) is managed by a Local Policing and Partnerships Inspector based at Colchester police station and is supervised by two Neighbourhood Policing Sergeants who are based at The Garrison police station covering the north and south of the district.

The Neighbourhood Policing Team consists of Neighbourhood Constables and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs). These officers' responsibilities include long-term problem solving, community reassurance, offender targeting and proactive enforcement

operations. In addition, there are PCSOs and a Constable dedicated to the town centre, overseen by one Sergeant.

Local Policing Teams

There are six Local Policing Teams (LPTs) working 24/7 on a 'six days on and three days off' shift pattern. These teams are based at the main Police Station in Colchester. The Local Policing Teams deal with a range of policing issues including response policing, major incidents, incident demand, crime investigations, appointments, missing persons, town centre retail incidents, community safety and evening entertainment related incidents.

Operating Bases

There are five police operating bases within the 17 neighbourhood policing areas of Colchester. These are Colchester main police station, the Garrison police station and Mersea, Tiptree and Wivenhoe fire stations.

Colchester Police Station

Colchester police station is the main operating base for policing the district, with a 24-hour Local Policing Team and Custody Suite to cover the entire district and officers dedicated to policing the town centre communities.

The following are just some of the resources based at Colchester Police Station: 24/7 Local Policing Teams; Neighbourhood Policing Team; Child Abuse Investigation Team; CID; Domestic Abuse Crime Investigation Team; Custody Suite; the Multi-Agency Policing Hub; and Licensing. Colchester police station is currently open to the public daily from 8am to midnight.

The Garrison Police Station

The Garrison police station is a shared premise owned and operated by the armed forces, where Essex Police officers work in partnership with the Royal Military Police and Ministry of Defence Police as a joint operating base. The Neighbourhood Policing Team officers cover areas to the north and south of Colchester town. The Garrison police station will close late 2015/early 2016 with all staff relocated to the main police station at Colchester.

Fire Station Premises

The Neighbourhood Policing Team also has accommodation within three fire stations in the district, which are used as shared operating bases with the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service. These are located at Tiptree, Wivenhoe and West Mersea.

Youth Officers

There are currently three dedicated youth officers within the district. Their role is to reduce youth related crime and anti-social behaviour. They are closely involved with local schools and other partners to divert young people, wherever possible, out of the criminal justice system.

Proposed changes to local policing in Colchester

Essex Police is continuing to face significant financial challenges. Following the Comprehensive Spending Review announcement on November 25th the precise financial situation is currently unknown and is likely to remain so until mid-December. The following section details the proposed changes already announced.

With around 83 per cent of Essex Police's budget spent on the salaries of police officers, staff and PCSOs, the financial cuts will inevitably mean that the force will have a smaller workforce.

In addition to this the force faces further financial pressures caused by its ageing estate. Essex Police's 80 buildings are in a poor state of repair requiring £30million of maintenance work to bring them up to standard and £2million a year to keep them in their current condition. This expense comes at a time when analysis shows very few people use police stations to report crime.

Under current proposals, developed according to operational policing need, there are currently proposals to reduce the estate from 80 to 30 buildings.

Essex Police is also proposing to close 15 of its existing 25 police station front counters and reduce the current number of PCSOs from 250 to 60. These proposals are currently under consultation with affected staff.

In Colchester district it is currently proposed to keep the front counter of Colchester police station open. Under the proposals the station would provide front counter services seven days a week from 9am to 5pm. The station would also continue to house local policing teams, CID, custody and domestic abuse investigation teams.

FRONT COUNTER FOOTFALL IN COLCHESTER DISTRICT

Research over two separate months showed:

- **4,317 people visited Colchester police station's front counter.**

Under proposals West Mersea, Tiptree and Copford police stations are proposed for sale. All of these stations closed to the public in 2011. West Mersea is being sold as an asset for use by the community.

Essex Police currently shares accommodation with the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service at fire stations in Tiptree, Wivenhoe and West Mersea.

Under further changes to local policing Essex Police is introducing new Community Policing Teams. They will be locally based and prioritise: protecting people from harm; preventing and reducing crime; bringing criminals to justice; engaging with the public; and ensuring the public are satisfied with the service they receive. They will work closely with partners to deal with all aspects of neighbourhood policing from tackling night-time economy related violence to responding to emerging crime trends.

Under proposals currently under consultation with affected staff, 14 of the 20 PCSO posts may be removed from Colchester and affected staff would either be retained as PCSOs, redeployed elsewhere or made redundant. It is proposed the new Community Policing Team would retain six PCSO posts and would also be made up of a local policing and partnership inspector, two sergeants, nine constables and one dedicated youth officer. It is also proposed that the Colchester Town Team will no longer continue as a separate dedicated team but core aspects of the team's role will be picked up by the new Community Policing Team.

Crime data for Colchester district

At the meeting on December 3rd there will be a detailed discussion about the crime trends in Colchester and the facts which lie underneath the statistics.

Comparing reports for 1st November 2013 to 31st October 2014 with 1st November 2014 to 31st October 2015, areas of note include:

- All Crime has increased by 11.1% (1177 more offences);
- Violence without Injury has increased by 34.6% (486 more offences);
- Violence with injury has increased by 4.2% (53 more offences);
- House burglary has increased by 47.0% (244 more offences);
- Theft of Motor Vehicles has increased by 36.9% (66 more offences);
- ASB incidents have decreased by 1.4% (83 less incidents);
- Sexual offences have increased by 30.2% (81 more offences);
- Robbery has increased by 23.4% (18 more offences).

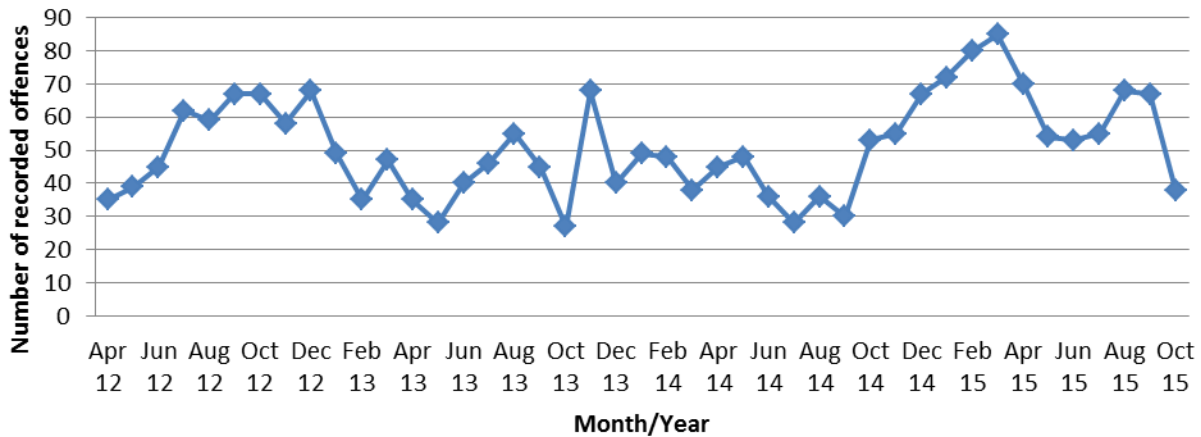
All Crime

Colchester district has seen an 11.1% increase in all recorded crime (1177 more offences) during the above reporting period. According to Essex Police they have identified areas with increases in crime and implemented actions plans around these issues. These plans include partnership working with other agencies, including campaigns such as 'Reduce the Strength' and policing operations to target offences of burglary. After concerns raised by the public, the council and police obtained a Section 222 Civil Order granting them additional tools to tackle issues such as begging in the town centre.

House Burglary

Offences of house burglary increased by 47% (244 more offences) during the reporting period. Police in Colchester continue to use Operation Insight to tackle burglary. This scientific approach sees officers using predictive policing and intelligence analysis to target resources at areas which are most at risk of burglary. In addition suspects believed to be committing offences are targeted to disrupt their activity.

Colchester District - House Burglary

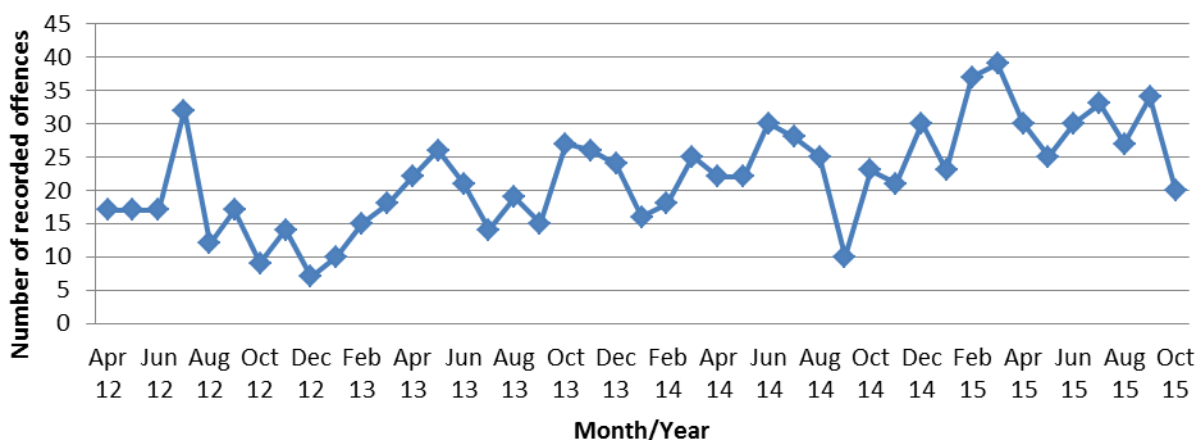


The Operation Homeguard volunteer scheme in Colchester continues to be successful. It currently has nine accredited volunteers in Colchester. Operation Homeguard is used where there is a crime trend or crime hotspot identified and the scheme aims to help prevent and deter criminal behaviour. Volunteers join police officers and staff in order to target high volume emotive crime areas in Colchester by offering public reassurance. Volunteers talk to residents about crime trends in their area and give out crime prevention advice. Volunteers also seek intelligence which can lead to the detection of crime. The volunteers act as a visible deterrent but they are non-confrontational and police are always present when volunteers are out and about.

Sexual Crime

Sexual crime in the district increased by 30.2% during 1st November 2014 to 31st October 2015 (81 offences) when compared with the same period in 2013/14.

Colchester District - Sexual offences



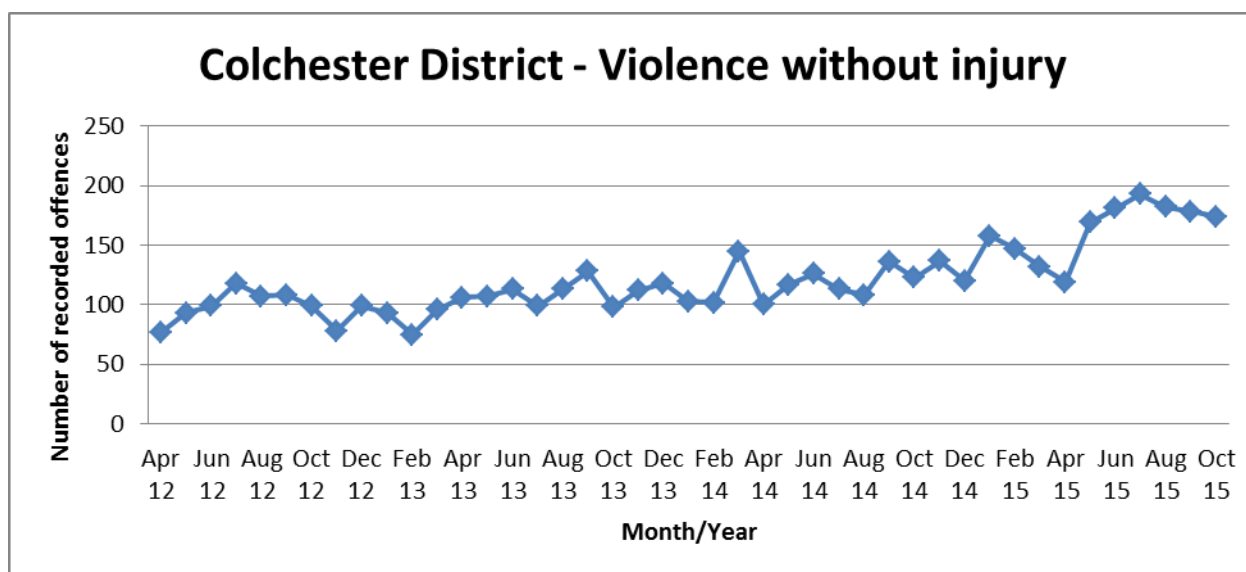
Officers on the Dangerous Offender Management Team engage with convicted offenders and monitor their movements. The police Public Protection Unit also works with partners

such as probation to continue to manage offenders whilst in prison and on their release, with the aim of preventing re-offending.

There has been an increase in reports of serious sexual assault both across the county and nationally following publicity around a number of high profile cases. It is believed a greater confidence in victims to come forward and report these types of offences could also have attributed to the rise. Of all the offences reported to Essex Police only a small number of offences are committed by strangers. Essex Police has taken proactive steps to ensure the processes governing the recording of sexual abuse are robust. The force has encouraged the reporting of these crime and the specialist investigative teams have made access to services for victims easier. Crimes recorded as sexual assault include a number of different offences that are all of a sexual nature.

Violence without Injury

Offences falling into the Violence without Injury category have increased by 34.6% (486 more offences) during the reporting period. It is believed that part of the increase could be attributable to Home Office changes to crime recording and an increased confidence in victims to report incidents of domestic abuse. Essex Police has domestic abuse investigation teams, known as Operation Juno, dedicated to investigating these types of crimes and supporting victims.



Anti-Social Behaviour

In Colchester, anti-social behaviour decreased by 1.4% (equating to 83 fewer incidents) during the period 1st November 2014 to 31st October 2015 when compared with the same period in 2013/14.

These incidents can range from youths causing a nuisance by playing, to specific targeted behaviour such as playing loud music.

Essex Police has recently changed its policy in respect of the handling of cases of Anti-Social behaviour and now assesses all reported incidents of anti-social behaviour in relation to the level of threat, harm and risk involved. There will be occasions where Essex Police do not attend low-level incidents of anti-social behaviour, and where this is the case, the

incident will be referred to the relevant team at Colchester Borough Council to progress, or private landlords and outside organisations if appropriate.

Late Night Crime and Licensing

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

Joint partnership work has recently resulted in Colchester achieving 'Purple Flag' accreditation, which recognises that the district has a varied, safe and enjoyable night-time economy and also has good transport links. The committee were impressed with the multi-agency approach within the district, the Street Pastors, the SOS Bus, the local council Zone Managers and the use of doormen from a local nightclub monitoring the taxi ranks. Premises checks are regularly undertaken by the police, the regular joint patrols with the Royal Military Police and the strong interaction that the police and the council licensing teams have with the licensees also impressed the committee.

The police also work in partnership with the Anglian Community Enterprise (ACE) that provides sexual health awareness to young people enjoying the entertainment the town offers and run an anti-drink spiking campaign supported by the police. Staff from ACE attend premises and speak to customers and, if agreeable, they test their drinks for known chemicals.

Colchester has some of the best support services in the county for people who may become vulnerable from drinking alcohol and those who are homeless. It also has a working group to which the police belong to tackle the problem of alcoholics gathering in public places and causing a nuisance. Police powers are exercised to prevent drinking in public places and the majority of Colchester town is now covered by a 'Designated Public Place Order'. This empowers officers and PCSOs to seize alcohol and dispose of it, and enables police officers to disperse people they believe will engage in alcohol-related crime and disorder from the town.

Central to all of this is the ability to work with the licensees and to visit premises whilst they are open and in full use, without prior notice that the police will visit. These visits are conducted every weekend at licensed premises across the town centre and involve the officers meeting with the licensee or bar manager and walking through the venue to observe that there is no disorderly behaviour or unacceptable business practices being used by the premises.

The Safer Colchester Partnership

The Safer Colchester Partnership (SCP) works closely with Essex Police to keep the borough safe. It aims to prevent and reduce crime, anti-social behaviour and disorder and identifies local needs and priorities.

The SCP's priorities are:

***Protecting vulnerable people** – including encouraging reporting of Domestic Abuse and Hate Crime. It also provides support to troubled families and helps prevent young people and vulnerable adults becoming victims of crime.

***Reducing reoffending** – Delivering initiatives to reduce reoffending and support the Integrated Offender Management Scheme to focus on individuals causing the most harm in our communities.

***Addressing alcohol & drug misuse** – Supporting initiatives that can tackle the night-time economy and issues such as daily street drinking.

***Reducing crime and the fear of crime** – Engaging with local communities and vulnerable groups to develop support and prevention mechanisms.

Partnership Working

Colchester has a very strong tradition of partnership working. Over the past year, this work has included a flagship project called the Safer Colchester Project, involving police officers and PCSOs working with partners in local communities to address issues such as nuisance and anti-social behaviour and support engagement with local youths.

One of the Safer Colchester Project objectives is to reduce crime and harm. The objective has recently been reviewed to ensure that any 'Days or Nights of Action' specifically focus on crime prevention and harm reduction.

'Nights of Action' run periodically and these involve an influx of large numbers of officers to the town. The town centre is split into sectors and officers operate within each area. All agencies come together for these events including the Royal Military Police, the SOS Bus, Zone Wardens, Street Pastors, PCSOs, and the use of CCTV. Licensing officers from the police and council check premises and taxis.

Colchester Council employs Anti-Social Behaviour Officers and the police work closely with these officers to target individuals and premises. Civil litigation is used to take out injunctions and orders, providing solutions to problems that fall short of criminal intervention measures.

Colchester police, working with partners from the council, rehabilitation services, homeless services and other partners, have introduced a 'Reduce the Strength' campaign that has been running since August 2013 and has seen 40% of off-licenses in Colchester agree to stop selling high strength low cost drinks. The campaign aims to decrease anti-social behaviour and crime committed by people that are intoxicated.

Colchester police station is the permanent working base for four of Colchester Council's Zone Wardens. These wardens are located in the Local Policing and Partnership hub at Colchester police station and work from this location for directed patrols and visit specific locations across the town. The future continued development of this hub will see more partners, including Essex County Fire and Rescue Service staff and the military, using the hub as a hot desk facility. This will enable direct and effective communication in one location, to maximise the effectiveness of the work conducted by all partners.

Your feedback is most welcome.

Should you wish to contact the PCC about this meeting or any other matter please e-mail:

pcc@essex.pnn.police.uk

or write to:

Police and Crime Commissioner for Essex
3 Hoffmanns Way
Chelmsford, CM1 1GU

News alerts will usually be tweeted via the Essex PCC Twitter account:

<https://twitter.com/essexpcc>

You can learn more about the PCC's work at:

www.essex.pcc.police.uk

The neighbourhood policing teams will always act on intelligence received from the community. If you have information regarding any criminal activity please either call your local team or contact Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111. Crimestoppers is an anonymous line where you can report any criminal activity.