

Policing in Essex: the Way ahead and the role of the PCC

Introduction

Good evening everyone and thank you for coming to listen to me this evening. I'm rather surprised there is anyone here – if it was me I'd be at home with a glass of Pinot Grigio or perhaps tonight a glass of Guinness!

I will talk for about forty minutes, but then there will be chance for you to ask questions which I will very much look forward to!

As I approach the last few weeks of my time as the first Police and Crime Commissioner for Essex, I am grateful to Professor Iain Martin, the very new Vice Chancellor, for inviting me to give this lecture. I will talk about the issues affecting policing, the way ahead for Policing here in Essex and the role of the PCC. It is a companion lecture to one that I gave at Essex University last November when I asked the question, 'What's the point of PCCs?' I won't rehearse the answers to that question tonight - though if you want to challenge me later, I will happily debate it.

One part of the answer to that question however is that PCCs should be leading the public discussion not only about crime and policing but also on all issues that bear on public safety. I have tried to do just that over the past four years: in public meetings right across the

county; in the media both in the local and national papers and on the radio; in a large number of considered articles published on my website; and even on social media where I have tried to embrace Twitter to ensure what I am doing is visible to those who may be interested. My strong view is that the new PCC should continue to do this; the discussion about policing is an important one - but it is also one that needs framing so that the breadth of issues that need to be addressed is properly accommodated.

In this lecture at the end of my time as the first Police and Crime Commissioner for Essex I want to look ahead to what I see as the challenges for Essex Police, Some are challenges that affect policing across the UK and beyond, some are particular to Essex. I have known our great county all my life but I have learned so much more over the past four years as I prepared for and have carried out this role.

I will tackle this look ahead in two parts.

In this first I will share my thinking about what is changing now, and likely to change in the future that will require a different response from our police. I will talk, inevitably briefly, about changing crime, about the changing understanding that we are gaining of vulnerability; about our changing communities; and about the relentless march of new technology. We might call these the drivers for change.

In the second part I will move on to how I believe Essex Police will have to change; indeed how they are already doing so. I will go further to what changes I would be recommending or even perhaps urging my successor – whoever that will be after the election 5 May – to seek to influence in the coming few years.

And let's remember that Essex Police are our police – at their best they are of the people serving their own communities. One of the privileges for me was appointing a Chief Officer who was born and brought up in Essex and who has always lived here. Indeed like me his father was an Essex Police Officer. Yes I believe our senior officers should ideally have served in other forces, as did Stephen Kavanagh who served his entire career in London before I appointed him as Chief Constable of Essex. But at the heart of British policing is serving the local community with the consent of the community. I would like to see all of our Chief Constables identifying more with their communities – as ours does. Too many have had a tenuous connection at best, and if not that then often a relatively short term relationship with the counties they serve. Local matters; and so does continuity of leadership.

The drivers for change

There are currently many drivers for change, but I will expand a little on just four, all of course in the context of continuing austerity. Austerity and the need to find savings year on year are overarching

factors that affect Essex Police in particular as there is a compelling case to show Essex police is about the least well-funded in the Country. I intend to do all I can even in these last few weeks to urge the Government to address the issue of the funding formula which significantly disadvantages Essex, the more so as other changes bite.

1. Changing crime

Firstly crime itself is changing. Probably influenced by several factors, the rates of many types of 'volume crime' have fallen steadily over more than 10 years. I am talking about crimes like car crime, robbery, burglary, criminal damage, and shoplifting. Some still doubt the data but both the Home Office and the quite separate Crime Survey of England and Wales clearly show that fall, even if they vary on the absolute numbers. I will avoid speculating on what has influenced this fall; sadly the evidence base is really poor. Indeed the research evidence on crime and policing is woefully thin. We know for sure that better treatment of heroin addiction had a big influence in earlier years, as did making cars harder to steal.

But around the country there clear indications that the rate of these reductions in crime levels may be slowing or even reversing. As an example here in Essex over the past year compared with the previous year, burglary and theft figures have levelled off after several years of decline, while robbery is up more than 5% and car crime up more than 12%.

More significantly there are two major trends in crime. The first is the exponential growth in fraud and all sorts of internet enabled crime. The debate about fraud will get much attention in June when the Home Office publishes the figures for the first time. It will become evident that many criminals, from local individuals to international organised crime groups have embraced internet enabled fraud with vigour and the number of crimes, and the losses to individuals and businesses are great.

It is clear to me that at a time when PCCs in particular have tried to bring a new focus to putting the victims of crime much closer to the centre of all our thinking about policing and crime, the victims of fraud have too often been left bewildered at the inability of the criminal justice system to offer them any satisfaction.

But alongside fraud there is a long list of other crimes enabled by the internet: stalking, theft, harassment, extortion and the viewing of child abuse imagery. It is hard to find them in the crime data but half of the total increase in crime in Essex over the past year has been in the Home Office category of 'violence without injury'. This is where internet based harassment is recorded and is a major factor in that rise.

The second large increase in recorded crime is in serious sexual offences, the numbers of which have increased by close to 30% each year for the last three years. I am sure part of the increase is due to

the increased confidence that people now have to report these offences to the police. The profile of them has rightly become very high particularly since Savile's abuse came to light. One reason for the lower profile previously was that most offences happen within families or between people who know each other. This sadly remains the case but the taboo on talking about the problem has to some extent been lifted.

However the internet again features in serious sexual violence in two important ways. Firstly and distressingly, the police have to investigate child abuse that is being carried out while being viewed on line by other people in real-time. This is urgent and complex work often involving perpetrators in several countries. Secondly I am clear there is growing evidence showing that the viewing by young people of often extreme pornography and violence is encouraging the commissioning of serious sexual offences by increasingly young boys in particular. Serious sexual offences committed against young people have increased steadily in recent years; and many of the offenders are themselves young.

2. Changing understanding of vulnerability

This internet-enabled abuse and I would suggest internet-encouraged abuse takes us into the second key driver for change. We are now more aware than ever before of the concept of vulnerability, whether this is in the context of domestic abuse, child

abuse, child sexual exploitation, forced marriage, modern slavery, stalking, harassment and many others. All have elements of grooming or control of the vulnerable by the powerful. Most of these forms of abuse have probably always been with us but somehow we have come to a new understanding of them. I have found that this has tested Essex Police as I suspect it is also testing partners in social care and the CPS. The scale and scope of the problem and the need for a more thorough and transparent response to it are profound challenges. Working with the victims of such offences is also much more complex than for more routine traditional crime types.

3. Changing communities and expectations

The third really important change is to our communities around Essex. It would be quite wrong to think this is a new phenomenon. Everybody here probably has an understanding of how Essex has changed over the centuries. Most of those changes have been driven by the migration of communities from East London, though we have also absorbed rural and indeed industrial workers from other parts of the UK or Europe for hundreds of years.

These changes continue and I would advance a strong argument that some of the recent crime trends – for example the knife crime associated with the drugs trade - are a spill over of London Gang crime into many towns across Essex. It is quite common in our towns across Essex for both victims and perpetrators of serious violent

offences, including murder, to be from London. They may be exploiting the knowledge they are gaining of the drugs markets in our towns from those moving here from London. Please don't think I am suggesting we don't have our home grown Essex criminal talent. Sadly we do – indeed we always have done. But with London councils rehousing significant numbers of social tenants in houses in Essex, with a large number of units of accommodation for those being released from prison in our county and with younger individuals who were becoming involved in gang activity being settled in Essex for their own safety, the risks are clear.

Another example of the impact of changing communities on crime is the Romanian run brothel discovered recently in Maldon where trafficked East European sex workers were being exploited. Well not long ago this would have been inconceivable and would anyway have stood out like a sore thumb. No longer.

We might also look at Clacton where over a relatively few years seaside hotels and boarding houses have become houses of multiple occupancy attracting use as hostels for those on release from prison or with drugs or alcohol problems, or as low cost accommodation for migrant workers. It has had a profound effect on the town.

The expectations of our communities are changing too. With social media in particular communities have access to both facts and opinion about crime. And despite an awareness of the challenges of

austerity we have the twin effects of communities being less resilient than they used to be; and of having increasingly high expectations of service. Meeting these expectations is difficult

4. Technology enabled information

The fourth and final driver for change that I want to mention is how fast the access to information is changing as new technologies emerge and develop. We are already getting used to 4G with the very powerful capability it offers to access multi-media at high speed. Most people here with a smart phone will have the capability to gather voice and high quality video and imagery evidence highly securely, geo-tagged and ready for transmission. We can also search numerous databases to acquire a rich picture of our surroundings. This poses tremendous opportunity but also difficulty for the police to keep up and to decide how to interact with each of us as victims, witnesses, possibly as offenders or simply to exchange information – both ways – on threat and risk.

There are many other drivers for change I could dwell on but we should move on to how Essex Police should respond.

Responses

So what about the way ahead? At the heart of this lecture is the future of policing in Essex and I will get to that shortly. If however the ambition of policing is to help create and sustain safer

communities then we simply cannot look at policing in isolation. Policing is special, but the days of organisations working in isolation have surely gone. We have to explore how Essex Police will work with all those others who contribute to our safety – or whose inaction or ineffective action increases risks to public safety.

The Criminal Justice System

Traditionally closest to the police among those partners are the other criminal justice agencies: the prosecutors, the courts service, the magistracy, the judges, probation and the prisons. Much of the criticism I hear from the public is not about policing but about what happens to offenders. The system to outsiders appears impenetrable, and even to insiders it can be confusing and very hard to get at reliable data. Why are so few of those who commit serious sexual offences against children prosecuted; why are so many offenders ‘let off’ with a caution.; what is the point of suspended sentences and probation – why not send them to prison and, I often hear, in some cases why not throw away the key; why are offenders sentenced to long terms of prison let out so early.

The list of these sort of challenges is endless and the usually unanswered public criticism undermines confidence in the whole CJS including policing.

The problem I have grappled with is that the Home Office in establishing PCCs has very deliberately and very determinedly driven a policy of delegation to a local level with democratic accountability. At the same time the Ministry of Justice has been pursuing a centralist agenda, largely I believe in the interests of efficiency, closing local courts and centralising or regionalising the management of the Crown Prosecution Service.

I have a statutory responsibility for contributing to the efficient delivery of Criminal Justice in Essex. I am not sure I would go as far as Douglas Carswell did when he first proposed the concept of PCCs in 2002 when he also said that the Sheriffs – as he termed them – should also be responsible for the administration of local prosecutions. In the way that some of my colleagues have been doing around the country, I do believe that the PCC as an elected representative of the people could be more influential in driving the efficiency of the CJS at a local level. Why should we not have a democratic say in how are courts are organised and administered. The courts service, the prosecutors the magistrates and dare I say even the Judges are public servants. Of course we should not interfere in the independence of the judiciary in the context of the delivery of justice, but should they not be held to account to work efficiently? I think it worth looking again at whether the police and

prosecutors could work more closely through colocation as they once did.

In the budget yesterday it was announced that as part of the new devolution deal, the new devolved authority in Manchester has been given the power to manage many more aspects of the criminal justice system. This will include offender management and issues like education in prison. I believe this joining up of the system is a welcome and important step.

The Police themselves should also take more responsibility for understanding the outcomes of the cases they take forward. Many cases are dealt with by out-of-court disposal. I am not in favour of imprisoning offenders when it is not necessary but I would ask how effective are the 'out-of-court' disposals; what do we know about reoffending rates; what impact to such disposals have on victims. If the police are to take responsibility for disposals, then their actions need to be transparent, and the effect of those actions should be researched and reported on. My office has been monitoring this and we have found there are again some important questions to ask, just as when I took on this role, asking the question about the use of cautions by Essex Police led to a tightening up in some areas.

Local Government and other Agencies

The hard reality is that the overwhelming number of those who do offend are known either to the police or to one of a number of other local agencies, whether it social services, health, or the education system.

The disheartening truth is that even though some really good and effective work is done, sometimes the criminal justice interventions with young offenders will not deter those offenders from future offending. It then gets increasingly hard to stop reoffending once it has become ingrained. What is clear is that when the interventions are early, and when they are well coordinated between the agencies – such as the police, the probation service, the youth offending service and the schools or colleges - those interventions really can - and do - transform young lives.

When we then superimpose the effects of substance misuse and the often linked issue of mental illness, not only do the problems become more complicated but finding solutions becomes more difficult as the NHS with its own complexities is layered across the issue. Austerity has put all of these issues into a sharp focus as budgets have been cut everywhere. There has been much talk of a 'Parity of Esteem' for Mental Health services, but it is hard to see that that is a reality in Essex.

I have often talked about some of the impacts on policing of not getting either the social care or medical care of those who live in

Essex right. The quoted figure is that at least 20% of all police time is devoted to dealing in one way or another with those affected by mental illness. 25% of all incidents that the police are called to involve someone with a mental illness. Missing people, suicides, vulnerable victims, rare but sometimes serious violence associated with incidents of paranoia, domestic violence, offering reassurance to worried members of the public, sitting with violent patients in hospital A&E departments. The list goes on.

There is an equally long list of reasons why so much time is spent dealing with those affected by substance abuse, from late night fights, the dreadful consequences of drunk or drugged driving, domestic violence again, and so much acquisitive crime. Most of those arrested in Essex for acquisitive crimes such as burglary, robbery or shoplifting are tested for the use of Class A drugs. Around 50% of those tests are positive. The proportion of drugs users among those going to prison is even higher.

We also have to tackle those and other issues as prisoners are released from prison if there is to be any chance of stopping them reoffending. But that requires housing, employment, health and other interventions to be coordinated and resourced. You might argue we can't afford that; and anyway why should we bother? Well the answer is unless we can get that support right, without question most of those offenders will simply reoffend bringing the associated

misery and loss to victims and high ongoing costs of policing and almost inevitable subsequent imprisonment.

There is nothing new in this and we should ask why this has not been better joined up before now. One of the frustrations of doing my role has been the need to interact with so many local councils – there are 15 top tier or district councils that I have to work closely with in Essex as well as many town and parish councils; and we have a really complex NHS with 7 CCGs 5 acute hospital trusts, 2 mental health trust and many other community providers. There is no natural mechanism for bringing all this together. I believe increasingly strongly that there is a need for radical reform of local government and for bringing the NHS more closely under local control to deliver truly integrated health and social care. We are nowhere near where we need to be. I am envious of the opportunity that some metropolitan areas such as Manchester will have to truly restructure and integrate the delivery of the full range of public services. Within such a reformed structure policing can use its unique powers and the information available to it to identify those in need of a range of interventions and when necessary to use the law to detain and prosecute

The Blue Light services

It may not deliver the same impact on crime reduction as the restructuring of the delivery of public services, but Blue Light reform

– bringing the police, fire and ambulance services much closer together has, I believe, the potential to deliver more efficient emergency services and to make those services more visible in communities. That visibility point is important: I know from my many public meetings that the public find the visible presence of uniformed officers reassuring even if there is little if any evidence that it makes communities safer.

An obvious point is that fire engines and ambulances need to be dispersed close to the communities they protect. The same is not so true for the police: they do not need the fixed bases and complex equipment. Already in other parts of the country, police, fire and ambulance personnel operate from the same bases and there are even jointly liveried specialist vehicles. Offering that reassurance through a visible presence, even if it is little more than a blue lamp outside the building, and ideally giving the public the chance to interact in some way with the emergency service personnel in more places across Essex is a prize worth seeking and I believe now within our reach.

I am delighted that at the Fire Authority meeting yesterday, members gave approval for the next steps of developing the business case for change. It will be for my successor to take that forward, but it is an exciting opportunity.

Volunteers and the Third Sector

Finally before I get to Essex Police itself, talking about the Fire Service reminds us of the role we can all play through prevention and through volunteering to create safer communities. ECFRS has been particularly effective at using capacity, as the number of fires has reduced, to promote safer communities, encouraging everyone both to look to their own safety- through good fire prevention measures such as smoke alarms - and through working with volunteers to help the vulnerable in our communities, especially the elderly.

The 'Who Will Care' commission three years ago, led by Sir Tom Hughes Hallett, showed starkly that in Essex we will not be able to cope with the growing demand for social care for the elderly in Essex without mobilising the volunteer community and at the same time harnessing modern technology. If you take social care beyond the big issues such as preventing falls at home, to include the prevention of fire and of crime affecting the elderly is an obvious and necessary need. The majority of victims of fraud are elderly and as the use by the elderly of modern technology increases, I am afraid the risks of theft and fraud will increase steadily. The police can in reality do little. We all, acting in a coordinated and organised way with volunteers working in partnership within a joined up emergency service and social care framework could so much.

Essex Police

So what about the police? Well however well we restructure the Criminal Justice System, the delivery of local public services, the Blue Light organisations and the voluntary sector across Essex, do you know what, there will still be criminals of all sorts, from youngsters going off the rails, to local villains doing and dealing drugs and thieving to fund that, organised crime gangs who are increasingly involved in fraud, paedophiles, those who abuse their partners and sadly still the very serious threat of terrorism. We will also still have bad driving and arson and missing people.

We will always need a police service – and sometimes a police force – and one that has to be increasingly efficient and increasingly proficient at dealing with the many different challenges it faces. And for the next few years in Essex in particular it will have to manage demand that is putting more stress on the organisation than, as the Chief Constable says, at any time since the since world war.

The Current Transformation Programme

I won't say much about the changes to policing in Essex that are already in train and about which the Chief Constable and I have already talked about previously. These are now well underway. Old underused police stations are closing. Other key facilities are being refurbished and modernised and the first of those, Southend, reopens in just a few weeks. Plans continue for a new Headquarters to enable us to move out of the costly and sprawling Springfield site.

As of yesterday you can report crimes online and the proper launch of that will be in just a few weeks. A new website with greatly improved functionality goes live in the summer. We start a trial of new automated public contact points shortly.

Behind the scenes we are investing in the IT infrastructure and we are about to buy the next generation of mobile technology for officers, building on our learning so far and on a recent very successful trial of new mobile devices.

Nor do I want to talk in detail about the deep and now well established collaboration with Kent. More collaboration with other Eastern Region forces is inevitable particularly on common functions like procurement, vetting and internal corruption investigations. We will collaborate on specialist capabilities such as air support and perhaps capabilities such as digital forensics and firearms training.

In driving forward this transformation programme and collaboration, the Chief Constable and I have been seeking to ensure not only that today's force is efficient but also that we set down firm foundations for a modern and effective force for years to come.

What I do want to move to now is to expand on where I believe Essex Police needs to develop further over the next few years to be equipped to take on the challenges it will face from those drivers for change I talked about earlier.

Professionalism

The first is professionalism. I reflected on this a few weeks ago as I welcomed the last intake of police recruits. They had varying experience, but all of them after relatively short training will be out serving their community. The harsh reality is that almost from day one they may be confronted with a complex and risky domestic abuse situation. There are about 85 emergency calls to such incidents every day in Essex. They have to work out who is the real offender - is it obviously the man? Might it be the woman? Are the children at risk? Let's recall the rape of a child is reported every day in Essex. They have to think about evidence gathering, about safeguarding and about welfare. How well with they cope as they ask the difficult questions about disclosing sexual offences within the relationship? Can they be sure when they leave the incident that it won't flare up again possibly resulting in serious injury or death. And they do this now knowing that every decision they make may be exposed to very public examination.

Or they may be called to take the first report from a business where the computers have been affected by a cyber-attack that has used malware to steal tens of thousands of pounds from the firm's bank accounts.

Or God forbid they may have to try to protect members of the public when terrorist – or someone suffering a major mental health episode

- is running riot with a machete. Of course there will be back up – but when will it arrive?

Some of these incidents will require raw courage. But more often and now increasingly we need officers and staff with the sophisticated skills, specialist knowledge and experience to deal with the increasingly complex situations to which the police are called.

I believe firmly that Essex Police must commit to increasing the professionalism of all their officers and staff where the training and skills they gain are based on well evidenced research into ‘what works’. The College of Policing is promoting that strongly but there is a need for so much more. The question has been reduced by some commentators to ‘Should policing be a graduate profession?’

Personally I rather doubt it should - but I am clear policing must attract, develop and retain high calibre officers who can get their heads round the increasingly complex crimes – whether child sexual exploitation, cyber-crime, fraud or organised immigration crime.

When I became PCC you didn’t even need education to A level standard to join Essex Police. You do now; and I feel we need a higher proportion of officers with further education who are prepared to invest throughout their careers in continuing professional development.

Partnership skills

At the same time they must – and I should say I am confident will – develop the partnership skills to work effectively with the many agencies I have outlined earlier. The challenges for a command and control organisation like the police in making this shift of mind-set and culture are considerable. New skills and competencies are needed to be effective in joint working, particularly with organisations where the culture is quite different from that of the police.

Just as a small example, this is really important now as Essex Police establishes new Community Safety policing teams working from new partnership community safety hubs. This is a great idea, and the right thing to do. But it will test those relationship building, negotiation and other softer skills that partnership working requires.

I am not always sure that police officers recognise how strong and somewhat inflexible their organisational culture can be.

Leadership

To guide the police through these changes it will need strong leadership. Appointing as Chief Constable an experienced and highly credible police officer who was also a strong leader was an absolute priority for me as I took on this role, and we achieved it with the appointment of Stephen Kavanagh. The leadership of the police

service is in a time of great transition. For years no one held a mirror steadily to the leadership of policing in this country to help them look deeply into the how they had been leading the service. The Inspectorate of Constabulary was formed entirely of former Chief Constables and to many it looked like an old boys club. Without question this Home Secretary has been determined to change all that with her programme of police reform. In just the same way as she replaced the old police authorities with PCCs, she has faced down the Association of Chief Police Officers and has asked tough questions of the Police Federation.

Our police leaders might have joined the service at the age of 18 or 19 and then risen through the ranks to chief officer level with little more than a very few months formal leadership training. Inevitably I contrast this with the training my son has received as an army officer. Supported through university on an army bursary in the 17 years since graduating he has spent nearly three years in full time training. The contrast with the police is stark. This is not an Essex issue, and I should make clear again my view that we have an excellent Chief and Deputy here in the county. But it is good that British policing is now seeking to improve the leadership training at all levels in the service.

Governance

If I sound critical please don't think I am simply criticising police officers or former Chief Constables. I am rather more criticising those who held them to account. The police are our public servants – something they espouse and hold dear. But as society changed I believe that the governance structure based on the old Police Authorities simply failed to keep up. That is why the Home Secretary has been so resolute in introducing PCCs. It is why the forthcoming election for my successor on 5 May is so important and why everyone should find out about the candidates and vote. They have a big job to do in challenging and supporting the Chief Constable ensure that Essex Police is just as good as it can be.

Community engagement and communications

One of the things that Essex Police has to be good at is engaging and communicating with all those they have to work with if we are make our communities safer. As they engage with those partners, whether in councils, the many voluntary sector organisations, social care, or the health service, every police officer also now needs to be more confident in dealing with the public in this age of immediate communication and media interest.

Day by day Essex Police officers do remarkable work; keeping vulnerable people safe, preventing harm to the lost or suicidal, catching criminals, preventing crime, helping teach our children about the risks they will encounter. But what do we read about in

our papers? It is rarely the very effective work that Essex Police do day by day. Essex police at every level must learn to engage with communities confidently, openly, honestly and professionally. That way they will regain the confidence of the public, which is more than half the battle.

So as we ask all this of our officers in Essex, especially at a time when resources are so very stretched, we must ask even more of its leaders - at every level with in the organisation.

And the organisation itself will become more complex and will need to respond more quickly to changes. This means that in addition to improving leadership skills, it will also need more professional management skills, whether financial management, personnel or project management, in the areas of organisational learning and development or strategy. There is much to do.

Information and Technology

Finally and I may have underweighted this point this evening, Essex Police – and the police service more generally must build the skills and learn to become a truly information based organisation. Until it learns to use the information that is available to it, it will not make the best use of new technological developments. So often the discussion is about the technology – which is exciting – but the technology is really only enabling information to flow more quickly to

and from the officers in the field dealing with whatever confronts them. It is the information that matters. I remain critical of the Police that it is far more comfortable in response mode that acquiring, analysing and assessing the information available to it. The Chief and I have been addressing this underinvestment, but there is still a long way to go.

The Police certainly recognise that their powers of arrest and their power even to take life if necessary are unique and precious. The power to hold and use our personal information is an equally special power and I believe they have a responsibility - and a duty - to use that as effectively as possible to help detect and prevent crime. My view is that this capability is not yet being fully exploited.

Conclusion

I have covered a lot of ground this evening and some of it has been complex. Thank you for staying with me. That is, however, the reality of the challenge faced by policing. I have a high regard for our police officers but they need to change and do so quickly to keep up with the many challenges they face. Making that change will be all the more difficult because of the tough funding situation that we face.

Resources will remain very tight.

In addition to seeking the right level of resources for our police, and I have done all I can to achieve that, the role of the Police and Crime

Commissioner on behalf of all of us who live in Essex is to challenge and support the Chief Constable as he delivers the changes I have described. It won't be easy, and with resources constrained there will be added complexity. There will also be the voices from the community who say they want a return to how it used to be; or for the police to focus on problems that we would all want ideally to receive some police time but which in reality will never be a priority. The PCC will need to help ensure those voices are properly heard, and that the police carefully and continually communicate with us about the challenges they face and how they are responding to them.

I am optimistic about the future. Essex Police now has a realistic and affordable long term plan, even though resources are below where I feel they should be for a county facing the challenges that we do.

While those resource challenges remain, the Chief will have to confront some difficult choices about what can and can't be delivered. The police can't do it all. It will be the role of the new PCC to set the strategic direction of that work, to ensure the work is done efficiently and to continue to seek the right and affordable level of resources. This Chief Constable has faced up to the need for some radical improvement to important areas of work. The difficult steps to make those improvements have been taken, and I am confident they will deliver. Again it will be for the new PCC, though careful scrutiny, to ensure that journey of improvement continues.

It has been a privilege to play a part in this programme of police reform that we are undoubtedly living through, though it would have been even more rewarding to do it when there was just a bit more money in the system! I look forward to seeing how my successor takes this important work forward. Above all I commend the tremendous work that the men and women of Essex Police whether officers or staff do, day by day, to keep us all as safe as they can.

Thank you