

Braintree Public Meeting – Wednesday October 12, 2016

District Profile

Braintree district is one part of the Braintree and Uttlesford District Policing Area (DPA) which comprises two of England's largest districts, covering 484 square miles. The DPA consists of five growing market towns at Braintree, Witham, Halstead, Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow and the surrounding rural areas. The population of the DPA is increasing and is currently estimated to comprise over 224,042 residents and 93,300 households.

The DPA presents a challenging mix of urban and rural policing. Stretching from the middle of the county to the borders with Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire, it is split into 124 parishes with 107 parish councils and four town councils.

The M11, A120, A12, A130 and A131 run through the DPA and the DPA is linked to London by two separate railway lines, with stops in Braintree, Kelvedon, Witham and Hatfield Peverel and Great Chesterford, Wendons Ambo, Newport, Elsenham and Stansted Mountfitchet.

The rail and road links to London allow a high proportion of the population to commute to work. These links also make cross-border travelling more viable for criminals.

Braintree district covers 236 square miles. The population of Braintree district is increasing and is currently estimated to comprise over 149,000 residents and over 62,000 households.

The 2011 census lists the largest ethnic group in the Braintree district as 'White British', comprising 93.15% of the population. The next largest ethnic group is 'White Other', representing 2.65% of residents.

Braintree's population includes 0.71% 'White Irish' people. The number of people identified in this category has fallen since 2001 - this could be due to changes to the census questionnaire which now records 'Irish Traveller' as a different category consisting of 0.09% of the population.

Other ethnic groups defined in the census are 'Asian' – 1.35% of the population, 'Mixed Ethnic Groups' – 1.26%, 'Black/African/Caribbean/Black British' - 0.62% and 'Other Ethnic Group' - 0.17%.

Braintree is home to the sole Muslim prayer centre in the district. The police have a good relationship with the prayer centre elders.

Policing Structure and Resources

The Uttlesford and Braintree DPA is part of the North Local Policing Area (LPA). The DPA is run by one District Commander, who has one Community Policing Team Inspector and three Local Policing Team Inspectors.

The DPA has two operating bases, Braintree Police Station and, currently, Great Dunmow Police Station. The DPA is covered 24 hours a day, seven days a week, by the Local Policing Teams (LPTs) operating from these two bases.

The DPA is only operating from Great Dunmow on a temporary basis whilst it awaits the fitting-out of 'The Lodge' police office at Uttlesford District Council, as a replacement for Saffron Walden Police Station.

The custody suite at Braintree has closed and so all prisoners from the DPA must be taken to the nearest custody suite with available cells - usually Colchester, Chelmsford or Harlow.

There are two police front counters within the DPA that are currently open to the public: Braintree Police Station is open between 9am and 5pm, seven days per week and a police front counter facility is maintained from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, within the reception at Uttlesford District Council, Saffron Walden.

Community Policing Team (CPT)

Braintree and Uttlesford have separate district councils and Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) but the DPA has one Community Policing Team (CPT) to serve them. The CPT divides itself to cover two Community Safety Hubs, one at Braintree District Council and the other at Uttlesford District Council. Uttlesford and Braintree CPT has an establishment of one Inspector, two Sergeants, eight Police Constables, nine Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and ten Special Constables. The Uttlesford and Braintree CPT's current actual strength is one Inspector, one Temporary Police Sergeant, one Acting Police Sergeant, 5.5 Police Constables, 9.37 PCSOs, plus two PCSOs funded by Uttlesford District Council and seven Special Constables. However, these CPT officers are split across two shifts. Also serving the two district councils/CSPs are one Police Licensing Officer, one Crime Prevention Tactical Adviser and one Missing Persons Liaison Officer.

The DPA is supported by an active and vibrant cadre of Special Constables, consisting of one Special Inspector, three Special Sergeants and 24 Special Constables who perform various roles and support patrol and community policing

team activities whilst also policing large community events such as the Witham carnival.

Essex Police will soon be launching a Volunteer Police Cadet unit in Witham, and is seeking volunteers to assist.

Local Policing Teams (LPTs)

The LPTs for Braintree and Uttlesford have an establishment of three Inspectors, 12 Sergeants and 82 Constables. The current actual strength for the LPTs is two Inspectors, 13 Sergeants and 72.83 Constables.

The LPTs work shifts to provide 24 hour cover for the DPA. Each team deals with a range of policing duties, including responding to emergency and priority incidents, critical incidents, other incident demand, appointments, missing persons and the investigation of volume crime.

Criminal Investigation Department (CID)

There is a Criminal Investigation Department (CID) based at Braintree Police Station, with detectives investigating crimes such as serious assaults and burglary.

Braintree District Community Safety Partnership

In 2016-17 the Strategic Priorities of Braintree District Community Safety Partnership will be:

- Reduce the risk and impact of Hidden Harm;
- Reduce Re-offending;
- Effective partnership working to meet emerging local threats and issues.

The Partnership will address these through the identification of agencies and resources that are best placed to respond and deliver improvements.

The Community Policing Team and Community Safety Partnership work in a close and coordinated fashion through the Community Safety Hub.

Community Concerns

District Commander Chief Inspector Craig Carrington works with the media, and has invited the editor of the local paper to a briefing and regular meetings. The press have been invited to several policing events and operations.

The local Community Policing Team, Specials and District Commander are active on social media, commenting on events, incidents and campaigns. This is supported by the Braintree District Community Safety Partnership.

Police Visibility and Police Station Closures

Although Essex Police and their Community Safety Partners help maintain Braintree as a safe, low crime district, the community remains concerned with the perceived level of visible police officers. It should be noted that Braintree and Uttlesford districts cover vast geographic areas.

Communities are also concerned regarding the closure of Witham, Halstead and Saffron Walden Police Stations. They fear that closure of the stations will/has lead/led to an increase in crime and ASB.

The Chief Constable and Police and Crime Commissioner are committed to continuing to drive the modernisation of Essex Police stations and buildings. The PCC will seek to ensure that any money raised through this process is used primarily to help deliver more local, accessible and visible policing, a priority in the new Police and Crime Plan for Essex.

Officers from the Community Policing Team recently met with Priti Patel, MP, in Witham at a meeting organised by the Witham Chamber of Commerce to discuss policing in the town.

Unauthorised Traveller Encampments

The community has raised concerns regarding unauthorised traveller encampments. For example, there has been a recent encampment in Black Notley. Essex Police maintains a proportionate approach to enforcement in line with legislation and the human rights of all concerned. Both Braintree and Uttlesford councils are members of the Essex Countywide Traveller Unit. Unauthorised encampments are managed according to policy and supported by the Community Policing Team. The police have a good relationship with the Essex Countywide Traveller Unit.

Death of a Child

A tragic event occurred recently in Halstead when a three-year-old child was mauled to death by a dog. This has had a profound effect on both of the families concerned and the officers who attended the scene. Intense interest was received from the national press regarding this tragic incident; however, community engagement remains positive. The case is on-going and a woman remains on police bail in relation to this matter.

Street Drinking and Nuisance Motorcyclists

Reoccurring concerns have been raised in Witham by members of Witham Town Council, members of Braintree District Council, Priti Patel MP on behalf of her constituents and Witham Chamber Of Commerce regarding occasional problems with people drinking in parks and in the High Street. Some of the reports have been

linked to local businesses employing workers who choose to drink in the parks after completing their night shifts. Other reports have been linked to local resident street drinkers. In both instances, joint problem solving initiatives have tackled the problem.

Similarly, motorcyclists riding across greenswards and along footpaths around the estates are an occasional re-occurring problem that is tackled through joint problem solving and targeted activity.

Tackling Local Burglary

Braintree District has recently suffered a marked increase in dwelling burglaries. Braintree Community Safety Hub co-ordinated a partnership response to target the offenders and to raise public awareness of techniques used by the criminals. Neighbourhood Watch targeted hotspot areas with a leafleting campaign and offered crime prevention advice where necessary. Clive Stewart, Chair of County Neighbourhood Watch, was interviewed on BBC Essex and promoted safety advice to the public. Essex Police also mounted a press campaign advising residents how to properly lock their UPVC doors and deployed Active Citizens (vetted volunteers who assist Community Policing Teams) to the affected area.

Community Policing Team officers targeted offenders and worked on the district's burglary issue; this activity was supported by officers from CID and a group of detectives who were dedicated to investigating a series of offences. It was also supported by work from Essex Police's Intelligence and Integrated Offender Management departments.

As a result of this activity, six offenders have been charged, and other offenders have been disrupted. The series of crimes has stopped. The police have also recovered property, including eight stolen vehicles.

Addressing Anti-Social Behaviour

Following reports of frequent low-level anti-social behaviour (ASB) from a specific address which was blighting other residents' lives, Braintree Community Safety Hub coordinated a detailed plan to tackle the ASB. There were some concerns regarding drug use, but the majority of the ASB appeared to be related to the occupant's vulnerability to exploitation by undesirable visitors to the address and the ASB caused by the number and behaviour of these visitors. Following multi-agency meetings it was decided that an application would be made to the court for a closure notice. The application was successful and has been enforced by Essex Police since 24th June. This has resulted in a 75% reduction in the amount of calls to Essex Police to the address (of the calls we have received since the closure notice, the majority are reports of breaches of the closure notice over ASB calls). Essex Police has made one arrest concerning a breach of the closure notice and is continuing to work with partners to extend the closure notice for an additional three months.

Neighbourhood Watch and Active Citizens deploy with police officers and Police Community Support Officers on foot in the community, on crime reduction initiatives.

The aim is to help reassure residents, provide crime prevention advice, engage with the public and to be a highly visible deterrent to criminals. The Special Constabulary has also patrolled and distributed information in the area. Essex Police are seeking to recruit more Active Citizens in this area.

Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Data

Braintree Crime Comparison

The table below sets out the crime figures for Braintree, comparing reports for 1st September 2015 to 31st August 2016 with 1st September 2014 to 31st August 2015.

Crime/Incident Type	# offences		# diff	% diff
	2015	2016		
ALL CRIME	6251	7231	980	15.7
Violence with Injury	676	849	173	25.6
Violence without Injury	913	1188	275	30.1
Sexual Offences	174	303	129	74.1
Robbery	31	45	14	45.2
Dwelling Burglary	302	507	205	67.9
Other Burglary	471	509	38	8.1
Theft from Vehicle	453	356	-97	-21.4
Theft of Motor Vehicle	102	155	53	52.0
Theft from the Person	78	84	6	7.7
Theft of Pedal Cycles	159	153	-6	-3.8
Shoplifting	407	477	70	17.2
Other Theft	848	742	-106	-12.5
Criminal Damage (incl. arson)	993	1029	36	3.6
Anti-Social Behaviour Incidents	3684	3287	-397	-10.8

Areas of note:

- All Crime has increased by 15.7% (980 more offences);
- Theft from Vehicle has decreased by 21.4% (97 fewer offences);
- Other theft has decreased by 12.5% (106 fewer offences);
- Dwelling Burglary increased by 67.9% (205 more offences);
- Violence with Injury has increased by 25.6% (173 more offences);
- Violence without Injury has increased by 30.1% (275 more offences);
- Sexual Offences have increased by 74.1% (129 more offences);
- Anti-Social Behaviour has decreased by 10.8% (397 fewer incidents).

Dwelling Burglary

The Braintree and Uttlesford District Policing Area (DPA) suffered several burglary series during the past year. The first series largely targeted rural areas around

Braintree, as well as affecting other areas of Essex and neighbouring counties such as Suffolk. The mobility of offenders and the wide range of locations which were targeted made this a particularly difficult crime series to target. To address the matter, a co-ordinated approach was undertaken which aimed to stop people becoming victims, to develop any intelligence opportunities to identify suspects, and to deploy a dedicated team to investigate and attend incidents to capture evidence. Extensive intelligence work across several forces and departments, including intelligence support from the Serious Crime Directorate, led to three suspects being identified. Once identified, tactics were put in place with dedicated resources to arrest the suspects. A team of officers from several forces co-ordinated their investigative resources and evidence to present the true extent of the group's offending across East Anglia to the court. The group have recently been to court and received long custodial sentences.

The second series mainly affected Braintree, but did see some offences in Witham and Halstead. The efficiency with which the burglars operated left little evidence, despite the proliferation of their offences. Under Operation Astra, a dedicated team of investigators, intelligence experts, community policing, crime prevention tactical advisors, offender managers, media staff, volunteers and partners worked together to identify offenders, provide crime prevention advice to the public through use of the media and visits to premises, gather intelligence and bring offenders to justice. Intelligence activity identified two prolific offenders as being potential suspects, who were then targeted to stop their offending. The proactive work which was undertaken identified offences, for which the suspects were arrested, and as a result, the series was stopped, with one offender being imprisoned and the other diverted away from offending.

Unfortunately, a further series has recently developed within Braintree and intelligence-led targeted work is again underway to identify, arrest, and/or, disrupt the offender.

The DPA works closely with its Special Constabulary, Community Safety Partners and Neighbourhood Watch, both of which attend the DPA's tasking meetings, to tackle burglaries. The DPA is advancing the development of its Active Citizens Scheme to provide crime prevention activity in threatened areas.

Violence without Injury

During the reporting period, offences of Violence without Injury increased by 30.1% (275 more offences). Of the 1188 recorded Violence without Injury offences, 367 of these were related to domestic abuse.

As with the rest of the force, the DPA is under daily scrutiny for its effective and timely handling of domestic abuse cases. The DPA is supported by dedicated domestic violence investigators based at Colchester as well as officers who pro-

actively target perpetrators of domestic violence. Tackling domestic abuse is part of each of the two CSP's priorities.

Braintree district does not have a significant Night Time Economy (NTE), but the DPA continues to drive NTE initiatives; for example, Operation Benison licensing checks, supporting the Community Safety Partnership delivered Pub Link radio system, door staff using Body Worn Cameras and actively supporting the district's Pubwatch schemes which have banned over 100 offenders under the 'Behave or Be Banned' scheme.

Sexual Offences

Approximately 80 of the sexual offences were historic offences committed by one individual who was subject to a Public Protection Team investigation and prosecution. Increases in Domestic Abuse and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) reporting are once again a positive indication of the focused police activity in these areas.

A raised awareness around vulnerability has resulted in an increase in the recording of 'sexting' (the sending/receiving of indecent images by phone) offences and investigations aimed at preventing and/or identifying cases of CSE.

CSE is also a part of the Braintree CSP's priorities and, together with Uttlesford CSP and the District policing team, a Hidden Harm Conference was held in December 2015 to ensure that all of its community safety partners were appropriately briefed and aware of hidden harm, including CSE.

Such cases feature in the DPA's police tasking meetings as well as the two Community Safety Hub tasking meetings, with community safety partners in attendance and taking part in the tasking activity.

Your feedback is most welcome.

Should you wish to contact the PCC about this meeting, or any other matter you can do so through the following routes:

By email: pcc@essex.pnn.police.uk

By writing to:

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Essex

3 Hoffman's Way
Chelmsford CM1 1GU

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

www.essex.pcc.police.uk

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

<https://twitter.com/essexpcc>

Reporting Crime:

All criminal information and intelligence reported to Essex Police allows them to build a picture of criminality and emerging issues in the area, and therefore plan and respond to these more effectively.

Local policing teams will always act on intelligence received from the community. If you have information regarding any criminal activity please either call the force control room on 101, your local policing team, or contact Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111. Crimestoppers is a completely anonymous line where you can report any criminal activity.