

Briefing Note for the Police and Crime Commissioner
Colchester Public Meeting - Wednesday 18th January 2017

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 Constable country 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 second division and has a stadium and conference complex to the north of the town. This is adjacent to the new junction on the A12, developing industrial areas and a new Park and Ride facility.

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 Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 2010, identified two small areas within Colchester's 27 wards as being in the top 10% of deprived areas in England; these were St Andrews Ward and St Annes Ward.

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 15,000 students at Essex University. These include over 3,000 post graduates from 140 different countries, which is instrumental in supporting the university's excellent globally recognised reputation. 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.

These short-term residents provide a significant boost to the local economy. The soldiers, students and support officers provide a cultural mix not seen anywhere else in the county of Essex.

Ethnicity

In the 2011 survey, Colchester was the third most ethnically diverse area in the whole of Essex, with the district consisting of 92% White, 3.7% Asian, 1.8% Mixed Race, 1.5% Black, 0.6% Arab and 0.4% other ethnic groups.

Policing Structure and Resources

Colchester Police Station

Colchester Police Station is the single operating base for the district. It is open to the public daily from 9am to 5pm.

The following resources are based at Colchester Police Station:

24/7 Local Policing Teams

There are six Local Policing Teams (LPTs) working 24/7 on a 'six days on and three days off' shift pattern. Each of these teams is managed by a Duty LPT Inspector. The LPTs deal with a range of policing issues including response policing, major incidents, incident demand, crime investigations and missing persons. Each Inspector manages 2 Sergeants and 16 Constables. In addition, there are 27 Special Constables aligned to the LPT that are shared equally amongst shifts.

Community Policing Team

The Community Policing Team is managed by an Inspector. The team consists of 2 Sergeants, 10 Constables, 10 Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and 21 Special Constables. The team works in a Partnership Hub, alongside partners which include the Community Safety Partnership (CSP), Licensing and the Colchester Anti-Social Behaviour Team.

The team's priorities are decided by the CSP and are:

1. Reducing violence
2. Protecting vulnerable people
3. Tackling urban street gangs
4. Repeat high-harm anti-social behaviour

Criminal Investigations Department

This team consists of 1 Detective Inspector, 3 Detective Sergeants and 15 Detective Constables. They investigate more complex crimes, such as robberies, burglaries and serious assaults.

Domestic Abuse Crime Investigation Team

This team consists of 1 Detective Inspector, 3 Detective Sergeants and 15 Detective Constables. They investigate incidents of domestic abuse where the level of risk has been assessed as medium or high.

The following functions are also based at Colchester Police Station:

- Custody Suite (for use by the county)
- Dangerous Offender Management Team (responsibility for the North of Essex)
- Child Abuse Investigation Team (responsibility for the North of Essex)
- Adult Sexual Assault Investigation Team (responsibility for the North of Essex)

- Intelligence Unit (responsibility for the North of Essex)
- Integrated Offender Management Unit (responsibility for the North of Essex)
- Criminal Justice Unit (responsibility for the North of Essex)
- Crime Scene Investigation (responsibility for the North of Essex)
- Multi-Agency Policing Hub
- Licensing
- Front Office

Community Concerns and Media

Violence Connected to the Night-Time Economy (NTE)

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

Violent crime connected to the NTE has received media attention following an incident of large scale disorder involving 300 plus persons in the early hours of the morning in Colchester town centre.

In Colchester, there is now a strong partnership approach to addressing violence that occurs within the NTE. Colchester is seen as leading the way in Essex for its proactive stance and problem solving. Street briefings take place weekly and are attended by the police, Street Pastors, staff from the SOS Bus, door and bar staff and licensing officers from the council.

There is also an evidence-based proactive operation, which recognises the link between people that take cocaine and alcohol and the link to them becoming vulnerable or violent. This includes using trained passive drugs dog to locate persons in possession of cocaine prior to them consuming alcohol. When appropriate, the suspects are provided with a conditional caution, with the requirement for them to attend a drug diversion course. When this tactic has been utilised, incidents of violence and disorder have significantly reduced. This is now a tactic that is used throughout Essex, following its trial in Colchester.

Examples of Problem Solving Initiatives

Development of intelligence led to the discovery of an individual within the Colchester district who was suspected of exploiting young females and committing sexual offences against them. Officers within the Community Policing Team took ownership of this and created a comprehensive plan to target the individual not only from a criminal angle but also to disrupt the person in any way possible through partnership with other organisations and agencies. This work has led to the individual currently being on police bail for historic sexual offences identified by the officers. As important, are the prosecutions that our partners are now progressing (such as HMRC) which work towards disrupting this individual and removing the opportunities that they once had.

A licensed premises within the Colchester district was causing concern in relation to failing to safeguard people who were vulnerable due to intoxication and certain practices relating to cheap drinks promotions which had led to record levels of patrons needing assistance from the SOS Bus as well as the East of England Ambulance Service. The Community Policing Team, in conjunction with Colchester Borough Council, met with the Designated Premises Supervisor and implemented a robust action plan. Over a period of three months, the results witnessed through covert and overt licensing checks have been very

positive in terms of improvement. The manager of the premises has taken additional measures to ensure that people are kept safe.

The Community Policing Team was made aware that an individual within the community was persistently abusing local residents. The abuse included racial abuse and repeatedly stealing items and the individual had committed other acts that harassed local residents. The Community Policing Team met with residents and this led to the identification of further victims and potential witnesses to assist the evidential chain. The result of this, via the Force solicitor, was that an injunction was obtained. The individual took the decision to sell his property and leave the area due to the amount of attention that he had been subject to. No further reports of anti-social behaviour have been received regarding this matter and the residents are pleased with the robust action that the Community Policing Team undertook.

A property was identified via local intelligence and partners that was connected to drug dealing - the occupants were suspected of being linked to local robberies and gang related activity. The Community Policing Team provided written impact statements to the local authority to enable them to take the appropriate action. The local authority sought and obtained a closure order and ultimately an eviction. On an individual basis there was insufficient evidence to proceed with a criminal investigation; however, the relief that the eviction provided to the community was significant.

Information from the Serious Crime Directorate

The Serious Organised Crime Unit investigated the activities of an Organised Crime Group supplying high purity cocaine to a network of dealers in North Essex. The head of this organisation, Steven May, used his brother Terry as his trusted runner who actively collected and supplied controlled drugs in the area.

Following a proactive police operation, officers executed warrants under Section 23 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 at the home addresses of both and they were arrested. They found sums of cash at Steven May's home which he had tried to hide.

During the investigation, cocaine with a value exceeding £350,000 was seized. Also seized was £200,000 in cash, a firearm and ammunition.

Steven and Terry May were sentenced at Chelmsford Crown Court on Monday 12th December 2016 and were jailed for nearly 20 years, along with several others who also received jail sentences.

In January 2014, two men armed with a handgun and meat cleaver threatened staff at Coral Racing just after 8:30pm. They demanded that cashiers hand over money from the till and fled with a three-figure sum of cash.

Two weeks later, a man entered Ladbrokes bookmakers at around 8pm and threatened staff with a handgun before making off with another three-figure sum of cash.

The Serious Organised Crime Unit commenced an investigation during which a gun and clothing matching those used in the robberies were recovered.

Following a trial at Chelmsford Crown Court, on 22nd January 2016 Jay Connelly was sentenced to six years imprisonment and Sheldon Dodge was sentenced to seven years imprisonment.

The Major Crime team launched an investigation following a fire on 4th September 2016, in Rochdale Way, Colchester, which tragically resulted in the death of 78-year-old Frederick Payne.

A person is currently awaiting trial in connection with the offence.

Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Data

Colchester Crime Comparison

The table overleaf sets out the crime figures for Colchester, comparing reports for 1st December 2015 to 30th November 2016 with 1st December 2014 to 30th November 2015.

Areas of note:

- All Crime has increased by 2.7% (323 more offences);
- Violence with Injury has increased by 11.3% (152 more offences);
- Violence without Injury has increased by 25.9% (512 more offences);
- Sexual Offences has increased by 15.6 % (55 more offences);
- Dwelling Burglary has decreased by 37.2% (274 fewer offences);
- Other Burglary has decreased by 34.2% (228 fewer offences);
- Anti-Social Behaviour has decreased by 3.3% (184 fewer incidents).

12 Months to November

Crime/Incident Type	# offences		# diff	% diff
	2015	2016		
ALL CRIME	11893	12216	323	2.7
Violence with Injury	1349	1501	152	11.3
Violence without Injury	1980	2492	512	25.9
Sexual Offences	353	408	55	15.6
Robbery	92	93	1	1.1
Dwelling Burglary	736	462	-274	-37.2
Other Burglary	666	438	-228	-34.2
Theft from Vehicle	537	499	-38	-7.1
Theft of Motor Vehicle	229	218	-11	-4.8
Theft from the Person	184	177	-7	-3.8
Theft of Pedal Cycles	367	277	-90	-24.5
Shoplifting	1227	1235	8	0.7
Other Theft	1316	1317	1	0.1
Criminal Damage (incl. arson)	1626	1628	2	0.1
Anti-Social Behaviour Incidents	5635	5451	-184	-3.3

Violent Crime

During the above reporting period, violent crime increased both in Colchester and nationally. In particular, there was a large 25.9% increase in Colchester district of violent offences recorded within the category of 'Violence without Injury' (512 more offences). It is thought that one of the main reasons for the increase is a change made by the Home Office in the type of incidents that are recorded as crimes; for example, offences of Malicious Communications (such as abusive text messages, emails or social media posts) were previously recorded by the Home Office as non-crime investigations; however these are now recorded as offences of Violence without Injury. This type of crime, depending on the circumstances, can be classified as harassment, which once again is classified by the Home Office as Violence without Injury. Some of these incidents might previously have been recorded as anti-social behaviour.

Please see page 3 for information on violence connected to the night-time economy.

Sexual Crime

Over the past 12 months, sexual crime in Colchester district has increased by 15.6%. This follows a 34.2% increase the year before.

The police continue to adapt operational activity to target both the identified offenders and the locations of highest incidence. This process continues to evolve with the current development of predictive crime mapping. Specific operational activities have been set up where a trend has been identified, using high-visibility options to suppress criminal activity and supported by covert activity to secure evidence and target known offenders.

Officers from the Management of Sexual and Violent Offenders Team engage in communication with identified individuals, often calling on them to remind them that they are of interest to the police who are monitoring their movements. A full range of other tactics is also employed to ensure that the few people who commit these serious offences are arrested and brought to justice. The police Public Protection Unit based at Colchester, work 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 since a number of high-profile cases have been reported upon by the media. It is believed that people have become more confident in reporting these types of offences. Of all the sexual offences reported, 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 crime and teams have made access to services for victims easier. Working closely with partner agencies, the force adopts a positive approach that encourages victims to report crime. Crimes recorded as sexual assault include a number of different offences that are all of a sexual nature.

During the summer of 2016, a number of sexual assaults were reported to police by women who had been assaulted whilst travelling in Colchester on public transport. The investigation led to the arrest of a suspect who was later charged with 15 sexual assaults.

Dwelling Burglary

There has been a significant 37.2% decrease in offences of dwelling burglary, in Colchester district, over the last 12 months (274 fewer offences). This is as a result of some excellent work by the CID, who have arrested, charged and imprisoned a number of prolific burglars.