

OPCC Public Meeting

Harwich

The Pavilion, Barrack Lane

Harwich

29th June 2017

Panel Members

PCC Roger Hirst (PCC)

DPCC Jane Gardner (DPCC)

Harwich Ch/Insp Russ Cole (RC)

CSP Chair Linda McWilliams (LM)

The DPCC began the meeting by explaining she had attended a public meeting in Harwich last November. At the time she had committed to return to the town along with the PCC to see how the points raised had been progressed.

The PCC welcomed members of the audience and explained how the rise in the precept was being spent to increase the numbers of officers, improve 101 and equip officers with mobile technology in order to cut the time it took to complete paperwork.

RC went on to talk about local initiatives and actions that had arisen from the meeting in November. The good news was that there had been convictions for five individuals responsible for a stream of burglaries and they had received 9 years in jail. He asked that residents continue to report crime as it was important that EP knew about key issues.

The anti social behaviour issues the previous year meant Essex Police had put a more robust procedure in place. The recent unlawful encampment on a cricket pitch had been dealt with swiftly.

Crime had gone up in Tendring by 15% which was not where RC wanted to be. He had received extra resources from EP and was also working hard with council partners and other agencies. Violence with injury had increased significantly and about a third of the offences were accounted for by domestic violence (DV). DV is an issue and is taking up a lot of Police time but they are well trained to deal with the victims involved. The majority of the rest concerned the night time economy and the town centre. He had spoken to business leaders, council leaders and outlined the problem. There would now be additional officers on the street to increase activity and deploy resources where they are needed.

Other vulnerability issues are around young people who have gone missing and the impact of drugs and county lines. RC was working with CID and Operation Raptor, an Essex Police gangs’ initiative.

Understanding why a number of young people were going missing is crucial. In the past two weeks there had been forty children reported missing, and a significant number of those were high risk, resulting in over five hundred man hours being spent tracing them. Operation Meteor was a new initiative focused around young people and the causality of anti-social behaviour.

**Questions from the audience**

Young people – It was asked how issues around young people are being dealt with? *RC - there can be a variety of reasons for their behaviour. Essex Police had a missing persons’ officer and a school’s officer who work closely with these young people to educate and prevent them from falling into crime.*

Officer Morale – It was asked how the Police and Crime Commissioner would overcome the pay cap of one percent for the police in respect of any effects on officer morale? *PCC -* *The PCC explained that he visits a lot of police stations and goes out with officers and is constantly surprised with how high morale is and how ready officers were to go out and do their job. A lot of education and resourcing had been put into supporting officers, helping them stay fit and physically and mentally healthy. This has helped reduce sickness rates in the force considerably.*

Part night lighting – It was asked if the PCC and RC had a view on whether part night lighting effected policing? *The PCC had asked for another study to be carried out to see if there was a correlation between darkness and an increase in crime and he hoped to have those figures shortly. RC advised that he had the power to have lights put back on where needed, such as happened in Clacton where there had been a series of sexual assaults.*

Access to policing for the elderly – It was asked if there were ways to help the elderly access policing? *The PCC advised that in other districts police had co-located with other services such as the council and provided a walk in service for people to speak to officers and this was definitely something that could be looked into in Harwich. RC further added that officers really enjoy personal interaction with members of the public and could use police and partners to put in some bespoke initiatives.*

Police numbers – It was asked why police numbers have been reduced in Essex and why funding is below the national average? *The PCC explained how funding works and that the funding formula follows crime not the amount of people in an area. He explained that he was working to get a better deal for Essex. However, if the public reports crime then this can be logged and thus impact positively on the funding formula.*

Police visibility – It was asked why there wasn’t a police presence in Bathside at night? *RC advised he was deploying officers on a day by day basis according to need. There was a 24/7 police service in Harwich with thirty percent of officers on a three shift rolling basis. He believed the force in the area could act and react quickly where needed.*

Police numbers - How many police officers did RC have ten years ago and how many now? *RC advised that the police had reduced in numbers and now policing has had to change the way it polices. It was really important to deal with the smaller crimes as the petty crimes can lead onto more serious crime.*

Joint governance of Essex County Fire and Rescue Service and Essex Police – How will this help improve the services? *The PCC advised that the analysis carried out shows we can save 31 million through better collaboration which could then be reinvested back into the services.*

Gangs – A resident asked what the police were doing about gangs? *RC advised the specific gang the resident had referred to was known to police and agencies, as were the families involved. There was a collaborative approach being put together around the families in question.*

Reckless Driving – It was asked what was being done about speeding and reckless driving? *RC explained the police have been running operations in the specific area mentioned. Road traffic offending costs lives and blights lives and rightly so the police are concentrating on it.*

Gangs and drugs – What is being done about gangs coming in from other areas? *RC explained that the police were working proactively with associate agencies to tackle this problem.*

101 – It was asked how the 101 service could be improved? *RC advised there extra resources had been put into 101 but new call handlers will take time to learn about the communities and districts.*