

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

Notes from the Saffron Walden

Public Meeting

2nd February 2017

**Panel Members**

Police and Crime Commissioner, Roger Hirst (RH)

Ch/Insp Craig Carrington (CC)

Supt Darrin Tomkins (DT)

Approx 100 present

RH spoke about his priorities from his Police and Crime Plan, his intentions to increase the Special Constabulary and to put more emphasis on local, visible policing and policing being part of the community we serve. The clear message was that we needed to support rural crime.

DT also spoke about visible policing and presented the CSP priorities.

CC addressed the room and talked about his role and time as a local officer.

**Questions and concerns from the public:**

**Newport** – a resident raised a concern about car crime, stating that even when the criminal had glass on them they were informed that the police could not prosecute.

**Customers not victims** – a resident stated that a member of staff at a council meeting said that people are customers, not victims.

RH asked who it was that said this, but the resident didn’t know.

The resident went on to say that as customers we don’t get a lot for our money and asked RH to explain the funding and reason for increase in precept.

RH explained the funding and increase in the precept as well as stating the Saffron Walden has the lowest crime rate in the county.

**The Lodge** – A resident asked 'what is The Lodge?' and stated that it’s not really a police station and also stated he had seen more police at the event tonight than they ever see in Walden.

Residents felt the safe houses either side of the old police station are better suited as they are in a central location. People could walk in and report a crime.

They are asked if the presence in The Lodge will be 9-5pm.

RH confirmed that the new police base at the council building will provide a 24 hour patrol and response. Walking in to The Lodge to report the crime will be a 9-5 opening operation. He confirmed Specials will be on duty and that there is a community policing team. People can report crime using the Do It Online tool, by calling 101 and 999.

**The role of the PCC** - A resident went from discussing The Lodge to challenge why the PCC should exist, stating that there is disconnect between people and what is happening.

A resident said that the PCC should use language that isn’t political and said that RH should stand down and hand over the 300k to the police. He asked if RH is actually representing the people or somewhere in the middle between the people and the Conservative party.

Further comments asking why do we have two elected people

- A Chief Constable and a PCC?

Cllr Rolf stood and addressed the room, he stated that RH replaced the Police Authority which cost a great deal more to run and stated he is on RH’s side.

**Local shop theft -** Antiques shop owner spoke of an incident that took place in her shop. A theft that could have been followed up more quickly and finger prints could have been taken. She felt she was not given priority and events were not followed up.

A resident, a retired police officer, spoke. He said that on retirement he worked with volunteers and he wanted to thank Essex Police. He said the shop theft just mentioned is not a priority and that the Police’s responses have to be measured.

He went on to question, could the fire station be used as police station and went on to say old Police station, a derelict building is a comfort, but that we’re not in Dixon of Dock Green and we’re not living in the 1960’s. Officers should be patrolling and not sat in a police station.

**CSP Priority 5** - A resident then stated that the CSP priority number 5, Reducing Fear of Crime, should be higher up in the list

**The old safe houses** - A resident living opposite the old police station spoke and said the old safe houses positioned either side of the station are perfect for a new site. Money should be spent on those.

He questioned why when you have a lot of land around it for cars and access to the town would you chose a site that is up in London Road – the police will get caught up in traffic.

He further asked 'why are you selling the police houses? ‘And 'what will you do with them?'

You are the steward of the old police station so what are you doing with it?

Roger stated he was able to comment on strategy to enable policing and further investment in technology but not operational policing. He talked about upgrading custody suits, and reinvesting into the service.

Over the next 18 months money will be reinvested across the county.

**Rural policing** - A farmer from Clavering raised concerns about hare coursing, damage to property and the fact that they are 1 mile from Herts border, close to Cambridgeshire border, close to Suffolk and that criminals are transient – he says this make him vulnerable.

He went on to say that people know I have access to firearms – you have a duty of care to me. There is a backlog for firearms licenses.

Rural people need more support.

CC responded by saying that there is a policy on cross boarder policing. We share resource when appropriate. To answer the rural question, I grew up when shot guns were kept by the door.

CC talked about cross border response – Joint operations run with Herts Police. These officers are out tonight. We do meet and share to understand and discuss organised crime better as a burglar could come from Sussex.

CC went on to say that there are four Special Constables for the rural community.

CC stated that the 10 month delay in shot gun licences applications is due making sure they are processed thoroughly and correctly.

**Action** - CC stated he wants to work with rural residents more and is open to ideas on this.

**Theft in shop** – A female shop owner spoke about a lady’s handbag theft in her shop and another theft when an item was stolen from her shop. An officer came to arrest her but returned saying that the thief is willing to pay and advised she should let her pay for the item. The shop owner said she was told by the officer ‘I’m on the phone to my boss. I’m in trouble for taking the woman in my car. But my boss says we wouldn’t prosecute.’

**Action** - CC and DT said they would pick this incident up and find out more.

DT stated that it depends on the criminal’s background, if they have history or not, we direct younger people to solutions.

Cllr Hesker Asker, Uttlesford stated the district is developing to such an extent in housing and business – but when we grow we need policing to grow with us. Mr Hirst you have a very large task at hand.

**Funding formula** - RH talked about the Home Office funding formula and how it follows crime. So if it’s reported it will support the case to get more funding.

**The Lodge -** Cllr Rolph spoke about The Lodge. He stated it offers a lot of advantages by having the council in the same building, so the two can interact with each other.

He also stated that the PCSOs are still funded.

And that he backs EP in the recruitment drive of Specials.

He went on to say that Essex Police receives the lowest funding and the PCC should be commended for raising the precept by 3.1%

**ASB** - A resident said there needs to be a clamp down on anti-social behaviour - there’s no police presence to deter teenagers; to prevent young people from committing crime.

RH - Specials will be in the community from the community. The single tangible difference will be the technology.

Cllr Short asked who do we ring to report non urgent crime, car damage, criminal damage and what do we report online?

I did see a community officer – he was trying to control some youths, he was dispersing the group. I’d like to see that happening more and more because we are a quiet town. It’s coming in and in and in and we need to get it out and out and out.

**Policing in Schools** - A resident stated that we need policing presence in schools. There used to be two fulltime school officers. School officers are a valuable asset, now we only have one in Uttlesford and Braintree and they only attend when the schools call them.

Why is this not a priority?
Police are pushing schools to the back of the queue.

RH said – The resource into schools was reduced. When I have visited schools with NSPCC and children are asked who their role models are, they never include police officer as an example. Kids do not perceive police officers as ‘go to’ people.

**Austerity**

A resident said that a lack of government funding, NHS, libraries and schools – it a swathe of lack of funding. Austerity budgeting should come to an end.

PCC may take on the fire service. This is empire building, so ECC gives you permission to move to fire HQ and you merge the services.

RH responded we are not merging the services. It’s not ECC; it’s the existing Fire Authority. He add, there will be a public consultation, I’m not closing any fire stations and I’m not changing terms and conditions of officers.

**Local newsletter** - A resident (Judith Rodden) who writes for the local paper stated she doesn’t get information quickly enough. She is happy to promote but you need to give us honest info. People are not reporting crime because people do not see the point; all you get is a crime number.

An ex officer spoke and said he supports the PCC, crime is moving to where the police are not visible and that there is a feeling of abandonment in this town, that the PCC must engage with the press as they influence.

He also said that they must reward and praise officers.

RH stated that officers do a great job on what is a tight budget. He stated that part of his role is to meet regularly with ministers to present a clear picture and to challenge the current funding formula. It costs more to police rural areas.

RH stated that he is lobbying for allocation of funding to areas of deprivation, population and not just volumes of crime reported.

A resident stood up and said we all acknowledge budgets are cut, that we have to make do with much less, but there is a bit of confusion – at a joint performance scrutiny meeting – a decision was held on how an underspend could be spent. Couldn’t this just be spent on more recruits?

RH stated that this was the September meeting. An underspend of 5.1 million was identified via an exercise I asked the force to do. RH stated he is confident he will find more underspend.

**Public involvement in policing**

A member of the public said he moved here two years ago and thought it was a very safe town. He asked how the community can help the police?

RH said:

* We must use the Report It tool.
* We must engage and support neighbourhood watch volunteers.
We must drive up the recruitment of Specials and make it clear that they will need to pass the test.
* We must encourage residents to be active citizens.
* We must support community speed watch
* Rural farm watch
* And I encourage people to sign up for ECM to receive the latest community messages to ensure you are better informed.
* We also ask that people report crime, if we can identify a pattern it helps.

The session went over time.

**Final comments came from:**

David Hills spoke about The Lodge and said we need a fully functioning police station that is in walking distance from here. Thugs broke into our post office in Dunmow. They blew the back off the ATM machine. Surely this is a serious crime.

RH spoke of a time he went to court to witness hearing of serious drug leaders and stated this is what we determine a serious organised crime.

James Bailey from Clavering – Our precept for Clavering raises 97k but we see no police. If Clavering alone raises 97k why can’t we see more officers?

We do use ECM. We are your eyes and ears.

I never realised that until now you get a crime reference, not just an incident number.

The police here in the room aren’t up to speed, yet three are in the room.

Why can’t the village fund an officer that would be real community policing.

A member of the public stood up and thanks RH for attending and being so open and honest.

End.