

Wickford Public Meeting

12th July 2017

Wick Community Centre, Silva Way, Wickford

PCC Roger Hirst (RH)

DPCC Jane Gardner (JG)

Ch/Insp Sam Smith (SS)

Supt Nick Morris (NM)

Wickford Crimewatch Sarah Keevil (SK)

The PCC began by explaining his statutory duties and the investment that was being put into police resources, including improving the 101 service, sourcing funding from Whitehall and explaining how the increased precept is being spent.

Ch/Insp Sam Smith spoke about burglary issues which continue to be an issue. There are 46 less burglaries at this time last year, and 12% are from dwellings which are not secure. Police use mobile patrols and covert tactic, and engage with the media and local agencies to publicise where burglaries are happening and what is being one.

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| Issues | Responses | Actions |
|  Can the police bring back community support officers? | The number of PCSOs was reduced last year. We accept that having more police on the ground would be a good thing but need to stay within our agreed budget. We are recruiting new officers and Specials to increase policing numbers and visibility. We have a commitment that for all new funding coming in of which two thirds will go towards local policing.  |  |
| If Basildon is top of the crime stats why isn’t the district getting more resources? | Resources are allocated in respect of the gravity of the crimes being committed.  |  |
| Won’t the closure of the cells at Basildon be an issue as it means transporting prisoners across to Southend and Thurrock, taking up valuable police time? | It is a 3 month trial and it will be monitored to see how it works in practice. The distances are far shorter than in other areas of the county. We have also been allocated more officers to manage this trial so there will be no reduction in the amount of time officers are I the county. The PCC is also watching the trial very closely and will examine any impact on police resourcing.  | PCC to monitor the 3 month trial closure of Basildon custody suite. |
| How many officers are there in Basildon? | On a typical shift there will be 1 Insp, 3 or 4 Sergeant and 32 PCs. This does not include CID, the community policing team and specialist teams. Op Montana also has 4 officers on shift.  |  |
| There have been some vigilantes in the area who have been accosting people and questioning them. Are the police aware of them?  | SS was not aware of the issue and asked to speak to the resident after the meeting to find out more.  |  |
| Are the police losing out on the low level intelligence that used to be provided through the PCSOs? | The PCC is aware that there has been a downward trend in police resourcing which needs to be addressed on a local level. Not all forces use PCSOs and Essex Police are in line with other forces in respect of bringing down violent crime.  |  |
| Does neighbourhood policing still exist | Neighbourhood policing does exist - there are 10 PCSOs and 10 PCs. Local PCSOs have now been given back responsibility for their wards so they gain an understanding of their areas. Hopefully this will improve the level of intelligence received from communities.  |  |
| The lack of police means that people are more inclined to become a vigilante. | If people want to be active in their communities it was suggested they sign up and become Active Citizens or volunteer as Specials so they can work alongside the police in making their community safer.  |  |
| There were 3 police cars at Basildon hospital all day – surely this is a drain on resources? | This could have been because police were visiting victims of crime at the hospital, or they could be chaperoning a detainee experiencing a mental health issue. It is frustrating having officers waiting around and the PCC added that there is a big drive going through to get those who are suffering from a mental health issue into health based places of safety rather than police cells. There was still a long way to go but this was improving. |  |
| Is there a place where a police officer could be situated so people can come along and speak to them? | SS agreed that this is something that should happen and she agreed to facilitate it. | SS to set-up a contact point for the public to access police. |
| Part night lighting – does this impact on crime? Can Wickford pay more on their tax and get lighting? | PCC advised that if Wickford residents want to pay more to keep the lighting on they need to talk to their local council. A survey was carried out 6 months after the part night lighting was introduced and it showed crime hadn’t increased. The PCC has just requested another study to review it and will see if there’s a meaningful difference. |  |
| Essex police were put under extreme pressure budget wise – does this cause conflict with you being elected as police and crime commissioner and being a member of the Conservative party? | The PCC stated that when the Conservative Party came to power they had to deal with a significant financial challenge. By facing this challenge and managing their way out of it they were able to avoid the sort of negative impact experienced in the 70s with the three day week and inflation affecting the living standards of everybody.  |  |
| Is there guidance on how residents can tackle potential ASB? | NM offered to arrange an evening or afternoon training session to help people deal with ASB with young people as often it was about knowing how to engage that can help bring results. NM emphasised that if people aren’t comfortable challenging ASB they shouldn’t do it. | NM to look into the desire for a training session for residents equipping them to engage with perpetrators of ASB. |
| There are quad bikes driving around St Mary’s estate and nothing is being done. It has been going on for three years. What can be done? | SS stated there are specialised resources that can be put in place and asked to speak to resident afterwards.  | SS to liaise with resident around the issue of quadbikes.  |
| Residents are currently paying for police in Basildon and not Wickord - how can this be fair? | The resources are such that officers are deployed where needed, and the fact is that Wickford is relatively safe compared to Basildon.  |  |
| A resident rung 101 the previous week as 2 suspects had entered her home in an attempt to steal a motorbike but no-one came. | The resident was advised that she should always call 999 if a crime is in progress as police react to the threat risk and harm model.  |  |
| Will Basildon custody suite being shut impact heavily on the times officers take detainees across to other areas? | NM would like to keep the custody at Basildon but at the end of the day it is down to the evidence and seeing what allows us to use our resources in the best way. |  |
| People want visible policing and that’s what’s missing | PCC agreed, talked about the role of Specials and volunteering and added that he was looking into how we can also secure additional funding.  |  |
| Wickford seems reactive not proactive – is there a way we can pool resources and blast a hot spot area. | NM advised initiatives take place but they are tasked to go in hotspots where they are needed. It was agreed that the police needed to be more proactive in targeting where they should be. It was noted that there were 26 Specials in the area who gave 744 hours in June alone and they can help support initiatives in the Wickford area. |  |
| Can PCSOs be equipped with Satnavs in their vehicles  | This was currently being factored into police smart phones. |  |
| If I volunteer as a Special will I be in my own area? | It was advised Specials would be allocated their areas.SS added that Active Citizens can also operate in their locality. |  |