Halstead Public Meeting 7th September 2017

Present PCC Roger Hirst

DPCC Jane Gardner

Ch/Insp Craig Carrington

Braintree Community Safety Partnership Chair Andy Wright

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| The Police and Crime Commissioner, Mr Hirst welcomed those present and explained his role in holding the Chief Constable to account, setting the strategic direction for policing in the publication of a Police and Crime Plan and setting council tax precept in relation to policing.  Mr Hirst explained how the precept set for the current financial year had generated an additional £3.1 million and clarified in broad terms that this additional funding had been invested in more front line Police Constables, supporting doubling the size of the Special Constabulary and funding smart technology to enable officers to spend more time out on patrol.  Mr Hirst also informed the meeting that he was due to meet with the Fire and Policing Minister to continue to make the case for greater investment in policing.  Ch/Insp Carrington set out the challenges around policing at the moment in terms of resources and the value that he places on close collaboration with councillors and the Community Safety Partnership (CSP).  Andy Wright, Acting Chief Executive of Braintree DC and Chairman of Braintree CSP highlighted how the CSP were bringing agencies together to support the police and are doing a lot of work around domestic violence, cybercrime, reducing reoffending etc… He further explained that a lot of work was being invested in educating communities around child exploitation and preventing crime. | |
| **Questions / Issue** | **Answer** |
| People are concerned that there has been more crime in the town since the police station closed. There seems to be less police in town. Why is this? | Crime has risen across the County regardless of whether police stations are closed are not. What is being done with the money from police stations is kitting out the police with better technology supporting officers to be more visible for longer in their communities.  Ch/Insp Carrington added that resourcing was a real issue. Part of the reason the number of visible officers has gone down is that resources are being spread across cybercrime, terrorism and counter terrorism, online grooming and child abuse investigation. What Police are trying to do is make sure that those left in the Community Policing Teams are visible to the public. The PCC again stressed that he was working to secure additional funding for policing form central Government to invest in more Local Police Officers. |
| Will Halstead receive more funding? As a victim of crime I received a very quick response from the police but even though there was lots of evidence the criminals still managed to go on a commit further crime that day. If police were more visible this wouldn’t happen. | There is a need to have more local, visible, policing and this is something the PCC has identified as a priority in the Police and Crime Plan and he remains committed to securing this. |
| If the PCC is going to Westminster can he give his assurance that he will do his best to get more funding for the police? | The PCC gave his assurance that he would and will continue to do his utmost to secure more funding for Essex. |
| Does the PCC draw on expenses? | The PCC confirmed that he does not draw expenses. |
| What skills does the PCC have to take on the Fire Service? | The PCC confirmed that he views his role as similarly to his role with Policing; hiring and firing the Chief Fire Officer as required, holding the Chief Fire Officer to account, setting the strategic for the Fire and Rescue Service, and setting the Fire element of the council tax precept. Chief Fire Officer will be delegated authority to operational manage the Fire and Rescue Service. |
| Some reports say crime is up other say it is going down. | It changes depending on what data you are using and the length of time you look at. There is a dip from the 1990s, but with new crime statistics things like cyber are not included. |
| A witness saw a hate crime involving a knife and alerted police over the phone. It took over 30 minutes for officers to turn up. The police didn’t take a statement and no follow up information was given. | PCC accepts this was unacceptable and the manner in which it was followed up was also unacceptable. It was requested the member of the audience speak to officers afterwards so details could be taken and looked into. Ch/Insp reiterated the pressure on resources for the Local Policing Team, and only that evening had signed off overtime spend of £500 for officers to follow up leads in an investigation, which basically amounted to the overtime budget for Uttlesford for the entire year. |
| Is it illegal for a member of the public to have a taser? | It is illegal for members of the public to have tasers. Recently a gang using tasers in robberies had been prosecuted and were serving prison sentences. |
| A local park has significant issues with ASB and drugs. Numerous calls to the police had been made but no-one attended. A resident had also been abused and no longer felt safe in her own home. How do the police make prioritisation decisions?  There was also a danger of young girls being groomed by one of the adult men. These people are also locked in the park at dusk so how does this work. | Ch/Insp Carrington committed to going to the park along with the CSP. It was also requested that those affected remain behind at the meeting so details could be taken and an action plan put in place. |
| Has Essex Police considered a mobile custody unit in Braintree on Friday and Saturday nights given the number of custody suites being closed? This may save police time? | A request would be put in for a mobile custody in Braintree but it depended on budgets available. Unfortunately tough decisions have had to be made in the time of austerity. Members of the public were urged to please report all crimes as the more evidence of criminality taking place as at the moment the level of funding allocated from central government is dependent on the level of crime reported. |
| What is the PCC going to do to improve visibility of police in Halstead? | Essex Police are actively recruiting and improving technology. There is also a review of custody suites being carried out which the PCC is keen to monitor in respect of times taken transporting detainees. Shift patterns were another area that the Chief Constable is currently looking at. We need to stop crime rising, and we need to make a difference. This is the case we are making to the Home Office. |
| Do we need to double the Police force? | When police numbers were cut from 3,800 to 3,200 crime was still falling but when it dropped to 2,800 it has proved unsustainable. Ideally numbers need to increase to around 3,200. |
| Are there to many managers and not enough workers? Is the PCC worth the money? Why is there a treasurer and CE? | The PCCs office costs far less than the previous Police Authority. The treasurer and CE are necessary by law as they hold him to account. |
| How is the PCC coping with the low morale of officers and the lack of experienced officers? | There has been a lot of work done with mental health awareness and training given to staff. The PCC had also had new gym equipment installed and had strengthened the occupational health team. There is still some staff turnover, but over the last year it has been improving.  Shift patterns are an issue and are complicated. Now there are staggered starts and this has had a big impact on people.  Ch/Insp Carrington had arranged a 100 mile cycle ride on his and his staff day off and got sponsored and raised several thousand pounds. |
| What areas have diversionary tactics for young people? | There are still a range of activities being done all around the district, but given the points being raised around Halstead it was recognised the CSP needed to bring something into the area to help. |
| How are officers deployed? | When coming on shift officers are briefed on issues, sergeants give out jobs, have tasking such as arrests, missing persons, mental health crisis. However, if there’s an emergency this will take precedence. |
| Could the police come into the new community hub that’s being built in the area? | The PCC would definitely be interested as this has worked really well in other areas. |
| The community could help if only the police would come and speak to residents | Again it was acknowledged that more local, accessible policing was paramount in community policing. |
| Are dog units and Serious Organised Crime Officers available 24 hours? | SOCO will come the next day but if there’s a murder or serious incident they will attend straight away. Dog units are available 24 hours. |
| How are pursuits carried out | Decisions are made according to different circumstances. It is down to the assessment of risk, seriousness of the crime and potential threat to life. |