



**Braintree Online Public Meeting
19th May 2020 at 19:00**

Panel Members

Roger Hirst

Jane Gardner

Ch/Insp Janette Rawlingson

Cllr Wendy Schmitt

ECFRS Group Manager James Taylor

Questions from the public

Q – Drug Dealing - How do police respond to reports of drug dealing as I see it happening quite a bit and have reported it a few times, but no officers seem to attend. What’s the point in reporting if nothing is being done?

Ch/Insp Rawlingson - It's really important to report drug dealing as it helps with forming intelligence as police can tag all details like car registrations etc. There are a number of reasons why information that is provided to police does not necessarily result in visible overt activity. Every call is judged on a threat, harm, risk basis as well as how quickly officers can get there. These reasons are not

exhaustive and can include the risk to the provider of the information or if there are already ongoing police operations that might be jeopardised if overt activity is undertaken at a premature stage.

Q – Pavement parking and inconsiderate parking. This happens a lot in my neighbourhood and sometimes the parking is downright dangerous. The Fire Service tweeted recently that when attending a fire, they had to contend with vehicles parking over a fire hydrant and not leaving sufficient room for a fire engine to get through. However, when I've reported incidents in the past no one attends. What more can be done?

Cllr Schmitt - it is a huge problem and the council gets more complaints about parking than anything else. Fire appliances and refuse collectors struggle to get through on some estates. If there is a persistent problem the council will pay a visit and speak to the resident. Residents needed to think when parking as the roads are highways and if they are parking inconsiderately then this will impact on their neighbours.

Illegal parking is reported to the council

:

- opposite or within ten metres of a junction
- over a dropped kerb
- on a pedestrian crossing (including the area marked by the zig-zag lines)
- in spaces reserved for Blue Badge holders, residents or motorbikes (unless entitled to do so)
- in marked taxi bays, cycle lanes or red lines
- near a school entrance, bus or tram stop
- anywhere that would prevent access for Emergency Services

If the vehicle is parked below it should be reported as a crime:

- on zig zag lines
- dangerously
- In a way that would prevent emergency vehicles from accessing

Q- Travellers encampments during lockdown. A member of the public was interested to know if it was really police business as usual or were travellers being given “soft” advice? Should travellers be moving at all as they are not abiding by rules that the rest of us have to and were, consequently, potentially spreading Covid-19 with total disregard for the rest of us.

Roger Hirst – the law is still the law and if there is criminal activity then police will act. But travellers in the main seem to have got the message and have found specified traveller sites to remain on. There has been many fewer illegal encampments in 2020. ECTU will continue to monitor/visit any new encampments and where possible to do so safely, carry out welfare checks, and provide support/advise to any occupants on keeping safe and specifically if any are showing symptoms of COVID-19. ECTU will continue to offer weekend/bank holiday cover on the same principles as above.

Essex Police will continue to police encampments and will support the community as much as possible during this difficult time. In order to limit the spread of the virus, S61 direction to leave will only be considered/issued in the most serious cases, where the risk of leaving the encampment in situ, is greater than the risk posed to the public by moving them.

Q - I feel there is still a disconnect between the police in general and the public. The 101/999 system is too remote for good feedback and communications. What more can be done to improve two-way communication between police and people reporting crime?

Roger Hirst – we have been working really hard and investing in the service. If you are in an emergency you must phone 999 immediately. 101 is the non emergency service and if you can do it on line it is much quicker and more efficient. That leaves the phone service for those who can't do it online. We also now have the online chat facility where you can speak to someone in 'real' time. Overall waiting times have come down significantly with extra investment in staff and technology but there is a lot of work that needs to be done. For those who may be experiencing domestic abuse there are other ways to report including charities such as the National Domestic Violence Helpline Telephone: 0808 2000 247. Always dial 999 in an emergency.

Q – Mental Health Awareness Week – given that it's MHAW have the police seen an increase in calls from people suffering from a crisis during the lockdown and how are they responding?

Ch/Insp Rawlingson – from a police perspective we haven't see an increase but have been made aware that people with a vulnerability will find the lockdown really difficult and we do work closely with the mental health trust to go out with a mental health nurse and they can deal with the issue without the need for a trip to custody. What we might see is an increase after the lockdown as people are able to access services more easily.

Q – With incidents of Covid-19 and self-isolation has the Fire Service struggled to meet the required number of crew members to respond to incidents?

Response element of the fire service has excellent availability at the moment, so much so we have released 20 on call firefighters to support the ambulance service as drivers. We are an emergency service so have to plan for the worse so the planning team has been planning for the worse case scenario should things change and we have tested and have robust plans in place, so rest assured we will continue to provide an excellent service.

Q – As lockdown measures are eased over the next few months how will police engage with children and young people who will not have been in school for some time and could potentially be hanging around on the streets and in parks etc.?

- ECFRS cover topics in schools that ensure there is engagement with both Fire and Police
- The Youth Justice Team focus on those at risk of offending and work closely with partners in YOS and wider.
- We now have 33 identified CYP officers who will be engaging much more with schools and children who are looked after – focusing on those most at risk of offending or becoming victims of crime. They will get to know their local senior school children and the children will recognise their own officers much more. Moving from 13 CYP's to 33 shows true commitment by the Organisation to improve and develop our relationships with the younger communities across the County. Picking up on vulnerability and need – not just arresting and enforcement. We must have both.
- The CYP's will want to meet young people in their communities so if there are any local youth groups/clubs then it may be that the officers can include a 'drop-in' whilst they're out on patrol.

Q Please can you give an explanation why retained fire station cannot be used as police basis?

RH – we are utilising these and are rolling out a programme where around 20 of our on call station operate as a base for local police while they are out and about. Across the north of Essex they are used frequently by police and the ambulance service too so they have the chance to log on, charge their technology and have a break.

Q Can we have a virtual coffee with cops?

Ch/Insp Rawlinson – Essex Police are absolutely happy to try that out and would look at doing it in the future.

Q – With the increase in housing in the district how is this balanced with extra police resourcing?

Roger Hirst – new houses pay new council tax and a portion of this goes towards police and fire and rescue funding. The weakness is that its very much on the revenue side when we talk about new towns, they need to make sure in the planning stage that they take into account how the emergency services fit into it, so if we need a new station or a new site, we get one. And we have the ability to invest in things like custody suites.

Q – has there been an increase in fraud reports?

Ch/Insp Rawlinson – action fraud deal with fraud and they do send some cases onto police. There are some particular fraud alerts out there and Essex police share on their social media channels. A lot is taking place online as fraudsters prey on the vulnerable and it's important to check out Essex Police website to keep updated www.essexpolice.uk

Q The Community Safety Partnership is really important, and how have they been responding during COVID 19?

Wendy Schmitt - the CSP are made up of the emergency services, probation, housing, council and we work with partners to look at issues and get a combined response to help residents with issues such as ASB, loud music, parking, begging etc.

Q – Is there any plans to prom the community trigger which enables residents to hold agencies to account when experiencing persistent ASB in their community.

Ch/Insp Rawlinsong - with ASB, the police deal with it using the CSP and a hub where we meet every fortnight and talk about current and future issues and repeat victim of ASB and crime are prioritised by police. WS – personally would be very disappointed if a resident had to trigger this.

Q – Is more collaboration going to happen between the emergency services such as firefighters driving ambulances?

James Taylor felt this was crucial in the services going forwards as it enables joint use of services is great for saving money and working better together. We can support in helping with prevention activities and look to work closely in the future.

Q – Keep Safe Spaces – we have them in towns should we have them in villages?

Keep Safe is a free scheme to help anyone with a learning disability or vulnerability living in Essex. Shops and other venues across the town display the Keep Safe sticker and will offer the use of a telephone or will make a phone call for members of the scheme if they are in need. In the villages you don't have quite so many shops and businesses so it might be more difficult. Nothing to stop us having a broad look at once we get back to 'normality.'

Q - Do you have feedback from the Public in respect to increased visibility of Police in their area and how can Police presence be requested for targeted patrols by residents?

If there is an ongoing issue such as burglaries, anti social behaviour or drug dealing, please report all incidents to police as this will enable them to build intelligence and enable resources to be targeted to repeat problem areas. By working with the community safety partnership, police are able to pull on a range of resources to help with local problems.