

**Rochford Online Public Meeting
Tuesday 10th November 2020**

Panel:

Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Roger Hirst
Deputy Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Jane Gardner
Group Manager for Essex County Fire and Rescue Service Dave Barnard
Councillor Mike Webb
Superintendent Claire Talbot
Chief Inspector David Miles

PFCC Roger Hirst updated on the COVID-19 situation. He expressed his gratitude to the residents complying with the regulations and understanding of how difficult this situation is in terms of mental health and businesses. The emergency services were doing really well and have had low levels of sickness, and continue to remain keen to help the public. A lot has been done via remote media and leaflets to help people understand how they can keep safe. As for policing, most of the issues officers face were anti-social behaviour incidents, but burglary and organised crime had decreased as a result of lockdown..

Questions	Answers
<p>This question was given to Roger Hirst when he was first elected in 2016, it is in regard to the declining policing numbers.</p> <p>What are the numbers now? What has the impact of COVID been on these numbers?</p>	<p>PFCC Roger Hirst – When he was first elected, budgets were tight and there were 2790 officers. After working with chief officers and putting together an analysis of budget, they suggested the idea of investment to the home secretary. From this, they raised council tax precept and hired 400 officers.</p> <p>There is another 150 officers arriving this year. There are new town centre teams and community policing has doubled. Op Raptor and Sector deal with drug-related violence. Crime has gone down by 6% in the last year.</p>
<p>So, Roger, you said that we've got another 300 officers to come as part of the government uplift program. Is the government still committed to that in the current climate?</p>	<p>PFCC Roger Hirst – advised he had been involved in the negotiations around the spending review and was disappointed to be told it would be only a one-year spending review.</p> <p>His understanding was that he has submitted a bid for year two of the uplift program and that is has been strongly supported by the Home Secretary. The Prime Minister has said that it must be funded.</p> <p>The treasury is yet to decide, which is due on the 25th November. He was moderately optimistic.</p>
<p>There are concerns about Anti-social behaviour in Hockley, Hawkwell, Ashington and Rochford. What are the police doing about ASB in this area?</p>	<p>Chief Inspector David Miles – There has been a 3.5% rise in ASB across the districts in the last 12 months. Community Safety and Engagement officers help tackle this. They reach out and engage with the public to improve links and increase understanding.</p> <p>Particularly when discussing Rochford, they have had some issues around Clements Hall Leisure Centre, Hall Road Estate, White Hart lane. PCSOs have patrol plans to keep visibility</p>

	and engagement high. Town centre teams also engage and see what they can do.
Councillor Gooding has asked could she meet up with the local PCSO to discuss what more can be done in her area?	Chief Inspector David Miles – Yes that can be arranged, that would be PCSO Peeling.
Anti-social behaviour is one of the priorities in the Police and Crime Plan. How do you think that priority has been delivered and is being delivered since you took up your election in 2016?	PFCC Roger Hirst – what made the difference in tackling ASB was the partnership with the local councils, the community safety hubs and the focus on working together. Local Council Enforcement Officers pick up 10% of ASB. ASB was falling for three years before COVID-19. The statistics are now quite disruptive as most of the reporting of COVID-19 engagements are reported as ASB. Officers ensure they firstly explain the importance of compliance to regulations, then instruct. There have been 6,500 engagements of this sort and a few hundred fixed penalty notices. From surveys, there has been 80% endorsement of the approach. Whilst ASB figures are up, underlying is a trend where we know how to deal with it.
I saw leaflets are being sent to homes in Rochford claiming COVID-19 is a hoax. Are Rochford council aware of this?	Councillor Mike Webb – Rochford district is aware of the issue and a press statement has been issued condemning those leaflets. They are encouraging people to follow the government guidelines and regulations. If you want to get the proper information then go to rochford.gov.uk/coronavirus for the latest accurate information about the virus.
There are many reports of motor thefts on Facebook. What are the police doing about that? There is also a similar question on the theft of catalytic converters?	Chief Inspector David Miles – They are acutely aware of these incidents. It is a nationwide problem. It is something they're building intelligence on and how to tackle it. They are trying to push an awareness campaign on social media, which has been linked in with the council to deliver the crime prevention message. There are ongoing enquiries and arrests, and also funding for Operation Bland which looks at the key times and places where officers need to be. Some of the work is unseen and goes on in the background alongside the high visibility work in terms of prevention.
Question for Essex County Fire and Rescue Services - How stretched were you over the Halloween and bonfire night period and how did you cope with that?	Dave Barnard – The service coped very well. It was the quietest year for four years, and they dealt with 140 less incidents. Lockdown prevented firework displays, and there were less home displays. There weren't any terrible injuries.
Over the period of COVID, have you seen crime types change? Are the calls different that you're receiving now? And what are the emerging crime types?	Superintendent Claire Talbot – They have received quite a few calls on COVID breaches. There have been fewer burglaries. ASB features in the calls quite heavily. There was also a reduction in road traffic collisions when in lockdown, and then we saw them gradually increase. With pub closures, we're seeing less night-time economy crimes and violence.

	<p>Chief Inspector David Miles – Speeding vehicles and ASB involving vehicles has increased. The rise in ASB is being targeted, and they are looking at where to direct their resources to.</p>
<p>We never see patrols or speed traps. What is being done about speeding, what tactics are being deployed?</p>	<p>Chief Inspector David Miles – In the past they have used active citizens, but they cannot use them at the moment. They have used speed watch and officers will go out to hot spots and particular reporting. They also respond to MP and constituent letters and look at proactive targeting in areas. They also liaise with the council and highways to discuss road design.</p>
<p>What more can be done about speeding in the partnership space? Is there more that you think could be done?</p>	<p>PFCC Roger Hirst – The Safer Essex Roads Partnership has been very successful. He recommended that if people are in a car with an irresponsible driver (e.g. drugs, alcohol), please remind them to be responsible. A lot of it is cars killing pedestrians and cyclists. We also do around 80,000 remedial driver courses a year and the work. The frequency of reoffending after that is much lower than the fine and points system. They also work with the highways authorities to ensure good road design, such as investing in road resurfacing. Since working in the partnership, injuries and fatalities have reduced by 40%. But he has a goal to reach zero deaths on Essex roads. They also talk to car manufacturers on car safety features.</p> <p>Dave Barnard - They educate road safety to motorcyclists which has been very popular. The fire car is used to educate younger drivers on the issues that the commissioner has raised.</p> <p>PFCC Roger Hirst - The fire rescue service also supports community speed watch with a lot of the administration work. If there are people that would like to volunteer, put together a speed watch group and get out there with a speed gun. The PFCC does it locally where he lives outside the schools and it makes a difference.</p>
<p>Can you please clarify the issue on officer uplift figures? How do officer uplift figures correspond with officers leaving and retiring?</p>	<p>PFCC Roger Hirst - All of the figures mentioned earlier were net. They have to recruit 250 officers a year to stand still due to retirement. At the moment there are less retirees than anticipated. The expansion plan takes retiring and leaving into account. By the time the officer uplift program is completed, Essex Police will be larger than it's ever been. And as a result of the investment in technology, it's stronger than it ever has been too.</p>
<p>Who is in charge of the PCSOs? Who are they deployed by?</p>	<p>Chief Inspector David Miles - They fall under the Community Policing team which is overseen by the Chief Inspector. They are tasked by their inspector and sergeant.</p>
<p>There seems to be a view that Rochford has experienced an increased amount of travelling encampments this year. Are the council and the police going to do</p>	<p>Councillor Mike Webb - The council had a summit a couple weeks ago which was well attended. There was a strong representation there from the Essex Countywide traveller unit who do an excellent service in terms of working with the traveller community and the police force in terms of moving</p>

<p>something about it, so it doesn't happen again in 2021?</p>	<p>the traveller community elsewhere. They target hardware of sites as well by ensuring barriers are put in place such as padlocks. PFCC Roger Hirst - The majority of travellers are law abiding, but some do cause issues. The worst hit was Harlow, so partners have got together and discussed what needs to be done to work out a consistent approach. The rural engagement team was another of the investments, which has been a guide to make sure LP teams and CP teams understand what a consistent approach is. So, they have halved the number of unlawful encampments and reduced criminal damage.</p> <p>Chief Inspector David Miles - He states that he works closely with the force's rural engagement team. They proactively engage with travellers to reduce it. County-wide there has been a drop in unlawful encampments over the last three years. He says that he'll use the team for high visibility and engagement.</p>
<p>When are the police going to stop hare coursing in Rochford?</p>	<p>PFCC Roger Hirst - Working with local community policing teams and the drone operators has made a difference. Op X-ray is going on which is a targeted intervention.</p> <p>Chief Inspector David Miles - Received an email today from a member of public with details of information. They value this information so they know how they can counter these issues.</p>
<p>There is a Police station in Rayleigh High Street, but the front desk is not open. Can the desk be reopened? What are your plans on that?</p>	<p>PFCC Roger Hirst - There is no front desk because when there was one, it was very poorly used, around ten people a month. Resources were stretched so it wasn't a luxury they could afford. The officers have instead been deployed out patrolling and making a difference in the community. In some cases, the station has been moved, e.g. to the town hall in Brentwood. He will raise it with the chief constable and see what they can do.</p>
<p>We feel disconnected with the police. 101 calls take a long time to get through. What is the position of 101? Has the timing of it improved?</p>	<p>Superintendent Claire Talbot - Yes absolutely. The average answer time is three minutes for a non-emergency matter. But live chat is also available 7am-11pm. This can be used to report non-emergency incidents or pass on information. Or it can be reported online.</p>
<p>What is being done about the fact that low-level drug dealing can lead to other forms of crime for people later in life? Cannabis is being openly smoked in streets and cars, what are the police doing about that?</p>	<p>PFCC Roger Hirst - It was important to focus on drug-related violence and domestic abuse. A lot of support has been done for domestic abuse victims. Drug dealing will be dealt with by increasing stop and search, supporting education programmes for young people and stopping gangs. It is also important to create things for kids to do such as sports clubs. Interventions and mentoring also work to teach kids how they can change their lifestyle.</p>

What is the position in Rochford?	Chief Inspector David Miles - Essex Police works closely with Operation Raptor. They look closely at what Children and Young Persons' Officers can do when considering interventions and liaise with schools. They also look into intelligence so they can find out where and what is going on.
A lot of social media messaging is done for Halloween and Bonfire night. Will the same be done for the Diwali festival?	Dave Barnard - there is already an article on Facebook around Diwali. The advice centres around the social aspect and the COVID restrictions. A lot of guidance is given in regard to safe cooking, use of candles and firework use. If people head to essex-fire.gov.uk , they can see the latest news banner and the article on Diwali safety.