



Epping Public Online Meeting Notes
Wednesday 10th March 2021

PFCC Roger Hirst
DPFCC Jane Gardner
Ch/Insp Antony Alcock
ECFRS Group Manager Tony Clark
EFDC Cllr Holly Whitbread - Housing & Community Services Portfolio Holder
DC/Insp Lewis Basford

PFCC Roger Hirst welcomed everyone to the meeting and encouraged those watching to post in their questions. He thanked the public for their continued support around the pandemic. Lockdown, wearing masks and social distancing had made the infection rates come down but it was important to keep going so we can get our way out of it. He also thanked the emergency services for the huge effort they have made in continuing to provide an excellent service.

Q - Some residents were considering investing in private security service contracts. However, those that cannot afford the £50-100 per week that the firms charge, are asking what they can do to minimise their risk of crime. There is also the concern that private security firms themselves are almost an advertisement to burglars. In the panel's experience which is more effective, a private security company or Neighbourhood Watch?

PFCC – in my view NHW is a much better option. They can give good advice on crime prevention as well as sharing updates on crime in the area. We also really encourage people to report all incidents of ASB etc to police by 101 or online so police can allocate resources effectively and record patterns of crime.

<p>Q - Post lockdown will the PFCC and Essex Police resume meetings in the community or will they keep them online?</p>	<p>PFCC - the online meetings have worked well as it's enabled us to reach a lot more people and get more engagement. However, we also understand the importance of engaging with the public face to face so we will look to combine both virtual and physical.</p>
<p>Q - I've seen on social media that the Fire Service are recruiting. How long is the training and for on call fire fighters what's the minimum hours they can give each month?</p>	<p>Tony Clark – the Fire Service are constantly recruiting for on call and for regular firefighters. To find out more visit the Fire and Rescue Service website https://join.essex-fire.gov.uk/.</p>
<p>Q – Epping police station has been sold and flats are being built. Surely, we need more officers in the town not more flats? And the second part of my question is with the growth in towns and population, is more money allocated to the emergency service?</p>	<p>PFCC – we believe officers should be out in the community solving and preventing crime not sat behind desks. A lot of the police estate was old and needed a lot of investment which would have cost a lot of money. We put the investment instead in extra officers and in mobile technology so officers can spend longer out on the beat. With the growth of town and more houses it means that more money is being paid into the policing precept which means more investment in officers.</p>
<p>Q – I saw in the news that knife crime has increased in Essex and I see incidents of stabbings with young people losing their lives. How can this be combated?</p>	<p>DCI Basford – we are making a difference and we are putting a lot of investment in and around knife crime. A significant step has been taken in that police are investigating those who are orchestrating the lines and are taking out those individuals from the top to the bottom. Courts are also handing down longer prison sentences for those up the scale of the county lines and keeping them off the streets. We are also working with young people who have been recruited and coerced by drug gangs and are looking at the child exploitation angle.</p>
<p>Q – Great result last week when police seized a large amount of drugs at an address in Waltham Abbey. Do police think they are turning the tide against drugs or is more investment needed?</p>	<p>Ch Insp Alcock – We are having a lot of success with operations and will continue to carry these out and disrupt drug gangs wherever possible. Seizing drugs and getting them off the streets is significant.</p>

<p>Q – There’s been a surge in catalytic converter theft. What crime advice can police give to stop thieves from taking them?</p>	<p>Ch/Insp Alcock – unfortunately there has been a rise in catalytic converter theft in Essex and across the country. Ways to help prevent theft include marking the catalytic converter with a serial number to identify it, and register it on sites such as Immobilise, in case it is stolen.</p> <p>Fit protective coverings over the converter – which may not prevent it from being taken but would make it more difficult to remove.</p> <p>Officers have been told to install alarms and CCTV if possible where their car is parked and to leave their vehicle next to good quality lighting to improve natural surveillance and act as a deterrent.</p> <p>Anyone who notices anyone acting suspiciously or appearing to be working on a car in a public car park should call police immediately.</p>
<p>Q - With the lighter evenings and after weeks of lockdown, are police and council anticipating ASB levels to rise? We’ve had issues recently in Royston.</p>	<p>Cllr Whitbread – we are really conscious that once lockdown is eased we might see more ASB but we are looking at combined service input where issues arise. The team and the CSP are working hard to get plans in place and be ready to put resources where they are needed.</p>
<p>Q - How have the fire service reached out to children to give fire safety advice when they haven’t been in school?</p>	<p>Tony Clark– we began putting our lessons online and this has proved hugely popular and one of the most visited pages. We are looking at a blended approach once schools are back fully.</p>
<p>Q - What are police doing to address the concerns over facial recognition and peoples privacy?</p>	<p>PFCC – facial recognition cameras can be a really useful tool but should only be used where it is vital and can make a difference. There have been national discussions in the last week on governing the ethical use of how biometrics is used. A board is being set up which isn’t led by policing and will be led instead by an independent panel which takes into account our privacy and rights and you can be</p>

	assured that people like myself who are an elected official will be looking after your interests.
Q - If a theft is happening on the Essex/Met border is there a grey area over who deals with it?	Ch/Insp Alcock - there are no grey areas – if you are in Epping it will be Essex Police and if you are over the border in Woodford you'll be under the Metropolitan Police.
Q - With the change in trespass laws how will this affect how we move illegal encampments on?	PFCC - This is not a law yet and will take some time to be made into law. The government did a great consultation in 2018 and Essex MPs did a lot of work around illegal encampments. We need to make sure that people aren't criminalised if they don't break the law, but those who do and make the lives of landowners and communities a misery can and should be moved on. Cllr Whitbread – challenges are when they move onto private land but really welcomes the legislation.
Q - What are police doing about young people driving scooters on the pavement?	Ch/Insp Alcock – a driving licence is required to ride scooters and they should not be ridden on pavements and can lead to the scooters being seized if ridden illegally.
Q - What are police doing around dog theft?	PFCC – there is a lot of concern around dog theft and it is really distressing to have your pet stolen. Although reports are down in Essex year on year we need to understand the level of what is happening. Incidents must be reported to police so we can get an accurate picture and allocate resources effectively. We recently ran a survey on dog thefts to understand both the level of the crime and the concern it's causing.