

## **PFCC Tending Public Meeting**

**25<sup>th</sup> October 2023  
Clacton Town Hall  
7pm to 8.30pm**

### **Panel Members**

PFCC Roger Hirst  
Ch/Insp Ella Latham, Essex Police  
Craig McLellan, Essex County Fire and Rescue Service

### **Introduction from PFCC Roger Hirst**

Essex Police stood at point where the additional officer increase was completed. The force was the biggest it has ever been with 905 more officers than 6 years ago. There was also extra investment in support staff and technology. This means police were able to make the strategic shift to prevention as there are more officers out and about, patrolling hotspots and using targeted intervention.

Crime was falling, burglary has halved and so has homicide. ASB also reduced by nearly two thirds. However, there are lots of new types of crime such as online fraud, child exploitation as well as rape and sexual assault and more focus needed to be on reducing violent crime, drug dealing and gang violence.

People reported seeing more drug dealing on the streets and while the violent end of drug crime was reducing, much more needed to be done to tackle the issue at street level. A lot of intervention work was taking place around knife crime with 15 – 25 years olds, including getting them into prevention programmes, targeted interventions in schools, and putting outreach workers in A&E who talk to young people brought in with stab wounds.

On the fire and rescue side lots of investment in fire prevention had seen the number of fires reduce. Still too many people dying on our roads; sad fact more people killed on our roads than all other crimes combined and a lot of work is needed to be done to better educate drivers, along with speeding enforcement and working with partners to achieve the goal of Vision Zero where there will be no deaths on the roads.

### **Questions from the audience**

**Q – Thanked police for Op Stronghold which involved high visibility police and partner patrols around town centres and hotspots during the half term week. After the recent incidents on the A12 where people on a bridge had resulted in the road being closed was there something that could be done to limit disruption.**

**Also speeding is a huge issue in Frinton and Walton. CSW volunteers recorded speeds of 70mph which is unacceptable. What can be done?**

RH – tackling bad driving is a priority. About 80,000 drivers go through driver mediation in Essex each year and very few reoffend within three years. Community Speed Watch is valuable and the input

from the volunteers who sign up for it is incredibly useful. If audience members knew of specific areas where speeding happens on a regular basis, please let police know and they can target offences.

A12 was difficult as the persons involved in the recent closures were having a mental health crisis and felt they wanted to end their lives. Not sure what we can do as it was a mediation resolution and can take some time to bring to a safe conclusion.

OP Stronghold is a great initiative and is focusing on high visibility patrols around the county. Here in Tendring the focus was on town centres such as Clacton Town Centre and Brightlingsea, and also conducted speed checks. Subsequently police had successfully carried out arrests. Also using facial recognition for known offenders for the first time in Essex after a lot of discussion and consultation. PFCC is closely scrutinising that the facial recognition is being used correctly.

EL – Thanked the audience member for comments on Op Stronghold. Asked if they could link in with her after the meeting to share info as can use a raft of measures for ongoing speeding.

CM – It was always a difficult to make decision to shut major roads like the A12 and this is usually because there is a threat to life of the person in crisis and dangerous to drivers on the road.

**Q Part 1 – There was an issue with trailers and lorries and trailers parking dangerously on Stepheson Road in Great Clacton. It seems to be viewed as a minor crime as no one is doing anything. Can something be done as only a matter of time before an accident happened.**

**Q Part 2 - CSW in Clacton is collecting an increasing amount of data on certain roads where speeding regularly takes place – how can they get more police action on those particular stretch of road? Also heard about Extra Eyes which looks like a good scheme and worth mentioning.**

RH – Extra Eyes was a really good facility for people to upload dashcam footage of dangerous or reckless driving. Has been really successful and people have been prosecuted fined and had points added to their license off the back of it.

Minor crimes are not necessarily unenforceable – they should be followed up. Thank public for helping to get extra cops but doesn't mean we will get cops out to every shed burglary but will follow up where there is a chance to prosecute.

EL – The trailer on Stephenson Road had been reported and police are looking at what enforcement we can take but not easy as it was a highways infringement.

Minor crime shouldn't be a thing – a crime is a crime. What we are keen to understand is whether there is a theme going on so really need people to report in incidents so police can pull together patterns of crime and do some proactive work to tackle/prevent it.

**Q – Parking in a dangerous position is a criminal offence so why can't police prosecute those responsible and remove them?**

EL – It can be a case that police just don't get there in time and the vehicle has already moved, but if there are repeat offenders they are followed up on.

**Q - Speeding is a serious issue. The council received a lot of mail and complaints about it, but sometimes it's not as simple as putting speed calming measures in place as they may not be an option. What would be more effective is liaising more with officers on what to do.**

**Shoplifting – would like to know about the work being done by police to help tackle the rise.**

RH – shoplifting is a huge issue and Police are doing a lot in Essex to both tackle and prevent it. There is a business crime team in Essex Police that works with businesses to help make them safer and conducts safer business days in town centres across Essex. Violence against shop workers is completely unacceptable and national lead of police has published guidance on what police can do better to help.

EL in terms of shoplifting we have improved and are solving more crime (now 27%). Putting in ShopSafe in Clacton which links in with police and CCTV ad shopkeepers enabling earlier detection.

**Q – A car sales garage was double parking all the time and making it difficult for people to use the pavement. The Council is sending a letter to the company but when a nearby resident complained to police they were told it was not a police issue.**

EL – thanked the councillor for raising the issue around parking. Sometimes call handlers might not see the bigger picture but local police were keen to know about it where it was persistent and caused an issue to pedestrians on the pavement.

**Q – Rural Crime: was there a rise in GPS thefts; how is hare coursing going and how is fly tipping be dealt with as had a road blocked recently by a large tip that wasn't cleared for two weeks.**

RH – Essex Police had the dedicated Rural Engagement Team (RET) who deal exclusively with rural crime and good news is that hare coursing has decreased by two thirds in Essex, as has anti-social unauthorised encampments.

EL – was not aware of there being an increased number of GPS thefts but would look into it. Now have Horse Watch where riders report issues around the rural community. RET will always come down and support and take lead on hare coursing. They also had new drones that they can deploy to look over wider areas.

RH – very conscious of level of isolation in rural communities. There were tri-service community officers in Dengie and Uttlesford that go out and deliver safety advice as well as identifying vulnerable people who may require extra assistance. It was hoped to expand the officers into other isolated areas.

**Q – St James Ward has a majority of stores in the town centre and they are really struggling with an increase in shoplifting. The small shops are also struggling and some risk going under due to the amount they are losing. What is the EP response as there are many different kinds of shoplifting?**

Local CPT officer – There was a lot of work being done to target the shops affected. Police and councils were targeting prolific offenders and getting a Community Behaviour Order (CBO) in place which is both punitive and has a rehabilitation element. Lot of prolific offenders have mental health and substance abuse issues so being to get them help can prevent them reoffending. In last 6 months

there were seven CBOs imposed that covered the most prolific offenders, with three further CBOs pending. There are also regular meetings with police and partners that identify the issues, put targeted interventions in place. These also cover burglars and a recent success saw a burglar being put away for 3 years and a shoplifter put away for 50 weeks. Also have CCTV being upgraded and Town Link being implemented that will help shop owners and staff share information.

**Q – Is there a financial cut off point where police will not attend a crime?**

EL – It is not about a finance cut off point. It is dependent on whether the case has the potential to be solved. In incidents where there is no witness, no fingerprints, no CCTV or any evidence, it may be necessary to focus on the cases that can be solved.

**Q – Has the PFCC managed to get more Special Constables?**

RH – In final push to get to 905 extra officers a lot of Specials joined the regulars which had meant a sharp decrease in Specials. However, a lot of work was being done to encourage more Specials to join the police as they were a great asset.

**Q - Good to see the increase in police officers and staff but what about roads policing?**

RH - Roads policing has increased by around 20% but have put there has been more technology put into roads policing rather than person power.

**Q – Speeding is rife on rural roads like the B1027. People put their foot down with no regard to safety. Speeding at night-time is the worst. Parking on pavement is also an ongoing issue and though the local PCSO puts notices on cars some comply, some don't. Understand it's illegal to park on the pavement in London but not in Essex.**

RH - Parking on pavements not illegal in Essex. Some inconsiderate notices effective with people who don't think but not to others who persistently park inconsiderately. RH found if he kept reporting the same car over and over he has had a response from his council in the past.

EL – roads policing Thorpe Police Station will become a satellite for roads policing so will see more cars.

**Q - With regards to people threatening suicide on bridges would it be possible to put a sign with the Samaritans phonenumber on them?**

RH – Samaritan signs on bridges very good idea. Will feed that back to the Suicide Prevention Board he attended.

**Q – Can ATM cash point stickers be put on ATMs to say be aware of ATMs theft and device. Disturbing that people can buy these items online.**

RH – Thought ATM theft devices were banned online but would check. Stickers on cash machines very good idea.

**Q – What are police doing around cybercrimes against children?**

RH - In Essex we have a cybercrime team/child exploitation teams and have had some good successes, including a prolific offender put away last week for impersonating a young female. Also work with regional serious organised crime unit which scans the web and looks for people being exploited and then traces it back to the perpetrators. In addition, education and awareness raising also takes place in schools for the Essex Police and Essex Fire and Rescue Service. Last year they have reached around 45,000 children but need to reach more and will look to expand the education programme.

EL – There were also Children and Young People officers who go into schools and work with other teams that will address offenders.

**Q – Concerned about huge numbers of uninsured cars and motorbikes. Easy to prosecute as motorcycles have noisy exhausts which are illegal. What is being done about them.**

EL – Asked if people know of offenders, then let police know as police can't always be in right place at right time.

**Q – 60 percent of people say they feel unsafe in Tendring – is there any way we can work together to address the problem?**

RH – there is always a tension between making people aware of crime but not making them frightened by it. It's important to get information out there about the work being done and where the dangerous areas might be. It's also important for people to report crime. We are doing a lot to target ASB hotspots, but need reporting to make sure we are in the places we need to be. This is very much police and council working together to tackle ASB as it is very important to work together. NHW is a good way to disseminate information and also work closely with the Community Safety Partnership.

**Q – Flytipping is also important to report. Can police be more visible in the area and go for a walk, especially in Jaywick.**

RH – Police and partners are doing targeted patrols and can try and get Jaywick on the foot patrol list.

EL – The idea is that officers should be patrolling on foot. We are looking at better way for officers to do as much as possible while they are out in the community rather than go back to the station. Have chargers in cars for laptops and officers also use mobile phones to work on.

**Q – Can money be spent on existing NHW? Tendring could do with some.**

RH – Funding is available but would need to have something tangible for what the funding was for.

**Q – Facial recognition is a real concern as heard over 80 per cent are false positives.**

RH – This was now down to 0.06% and police use a specific list of wanted people not random members of public. Have been through several weeks of looking into where and how to use facial recognition and as PFCC will be monitoring it very closely. In the past couple of days three wanted offenders have been apprehended including a suspected rapist.

Closing comments – On behalf of the audience a Councillor thanked the panel for coming down and to the police and fire and rescue service are doing. While there are some serious issues to be tackled, locally team are doing some great work.